



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2024

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday, 29 May 2024

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 29 May 2024

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) took the chair at 1.00 pm, read prayers and acknowledged country.

METRONET — COSTINGS

Motion

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [1.02 pm]: I move —

That this house —

- (a) recognises that at a staggering capital cost of \$13 billion, the enormous 400 per cent blowout in Metronet has impeded, and continues to thwart, the planning and delivery of other important infrastructure projects across the entirety of Western Australia;
- (b) notes that Metronet's expected recurrent costs, including future Public Transport Authority operating subsidies, will constrain expenditure on the delivery of other key government services across and beyond the future estimates period, and weaken Western Australia's future capacity to respond to deepening problems and changing circumstances; and
- (c) acknowledges that the Minister for Transport's seven years of grossly mismanaging the Metronet project are indicative of the Cook Labor government's incompetence and fixation on wrong priorities.

The PRESIDENT: Members, Hon Tjorn Sibma has moved that motion and the question is that the motion be agreed.

Hon Stephen Dawson: No.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: An unsurprising interjection, President. It is unsurprising because the government has demonstrated over the course of at least the last three years an inability or lack of will to confront the truth, to see the facts as they are —

Hon Stephen Dawson: The truth? You can't handle the truth!

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Wow! This is great. They often say that politics is a poor person's or an ugly person's show business. I think everybody is reasonably attractive, but I do not want this debate to degenerate too swiftly and for the interjections to come in a way that will impede me from providing this chamber with some very important facts. I will start with the facts and go back to two core documents. These core documents originate from none other than the Minister for Transport, now also the Treasurer, Rita Saffioti, and her partner not in crime but in business at that occasion, Hon Ben Wyatt. This was during a period when they were on the cusp of the government. They were young, hungry, energetic and ready to leave a political legacy that, I will argue, we will pay for rather than themselves. What is this legacy and to which documents am I referring? I am referring to two documents published on 6 February 2017. They are two press statements and a press statement with an appendix. The first one is headed "Liberals' Metronet 'analysis' shows why they cannot be trusted" with a range of disparagements cast by Rita Saffioti largely at the then government as it interpreted what the Labor opposition, now Labor government, was proposing to do with its pet project, Metronet.

It is very important that we go back to these core documents, because at this stage they indicate what Metronet was supposed to be in scope, scale, cost and the like. In fact, they were so pleased with themselves at that time that they were given a tick of approval by an allegedly independent review. Perhaps that tick of approval was appropriate when presented with what Metronet was then intended to be. It is very important to put on the record now that Metronet was intended to be a staged program—a phased program. There was not much detail about what further stages might be, but stage 1 was very clear. What was stage 1? It included the Forrestfield–Airport Link, the Thornlie–Cockburn Link, the Yanchep extension of the Joondalup line, the Morley–Ellenbrook line, the Byford extension of the Armadale line, a program of new and existing train station upgrades, improved signalling, the remediation of four level crossings and 78 rail cars. The cost of this was intended to be \$2.945 billion, slightly under \$3 billion. This program was intended to be delivered over the course of about six years from 2017.

On the face of that, that looks like a reasonable although ambitious investment in the extension of the public transport network, which I have said repeatedly. But what happened? Everything blew out in time, scale, scope and the intended delivery timeline. Let me cite some examples. The Thornlie–Cockburn dimension was promised to be delivered at a cost of \$474 million. The latest budget papers reveal an estimated total cost of \$1.35 billion. The Yanchep extension, originally promised at a cost of \$386 million, is now forecast to cost \$1.27 billion. The Morley–Ellenbrook line, originally promised at a cost of \$863 million, is now likely to cost \$1.65 billion. The Byford extension of the Armadale line, originally costed at \$291 million, is now forecast to cost \$1.34 billion.

The level crossing program then materialised and it has grown out of all proportion. It was originally proposed that it would cost something in the order of \$257 million to deal with four level crossings. That has since been expanded into two programs: the elevated Armadale line rail project through Victoria Park, and some ancillary works. The Armadale line work was not promised originally but was added on later, and it comes at a cost of \$1.67 billion. The railcar program has also grown out of all proportion. It was originally a \$410 million commitment to build 78 railcars. We now have two railcar programs operating separately. One is an acquisition program and the other is a replacement program. They come at a combined cost of \$1.4 billion. The total cost now is slightly more than \$13 billion.

I have been given responsibility by the opposition to effectively ride shotgun on Metronet. I have had this job for only two years. The first thing I had to do was to try to capture where all the money is going, and why. I have estimated the cost of Metronet in each successive budget response speech I have given. My first, very modest, estimation was \$10 billion. Every time I have put a figure to the public I have deliberately led with my chin so that, in a figurative way, I might be disabused of my calculations, but that has never happened. In fact, I think I have perhaps underestimated the cost somewhat, because the Treasurer; Minister for Transport has not rebuked me for my calculations, nor contradicted or disputed them.

Therefore, it cannot be argued that limb (a) of my motion stands in defiance of any of the facts. But one might ask: how have the costs grown, and why? The stock standard responses to that from the Treasurer; Minister for Transport have largely followed this narrative: “Well, there was COVID”; “Well, there were disruptions to the global supply chain”; “Well, there was the Russian invasion of Ukraine”. But there has never been an explanation as to why there was a deliberate attempt to grow the scale and scope of the program in light of, and in full appreciation of, those externalities. If those external pressures had happened to the program as previously devised and constrained, it would have provided the Treasurer; Minister for Transport some justification, but with each successive budget—through COVID, through disruptions to the global supply chain, through shortages in the labour market, through cost escalations of materials, and through geopolitical uncertainty—the minister has taken deliberate steps to grow the program. This was done in full comprehension of what was going on elsewhere. Responsibility for the blowout has to be accepted, but it has instead been discarded and walked past. This is another one of those moments when the opposition will attempt to drag the government back to accept responsibility for what it is doing.

I should also say that the “investment”—in scare quotes, because an investment in the conventional sense is something that gives us a return—or the decision to grow Metronet was made in full recognition of the very modest to negative benefit–cost ratios that applied to each project sub-element.

In the last budget estimates phase of 2023–24, I requested, in questions I asked prior to the estimates hearings, that the Minister for Transport provide the benefit–cost ratios for those Metronet subprojects. The majority returned a benefit–cost ratio of approximately 1.3 to 1.4, and that would be about the median or the most frequently cited benefit–cost ratio. A couple exceed that: the Yanchep rail extension and the railcar acquisition project.

I draw attention to the benefit–cost ratios for the Byford rail extension and the Victoria Park–Canning level crossing removal. These projects cost \$3 billion between them. It costs \$1.34 billion for the Byford rail extension and \$1.67 billion for the rail elevation through Victoria Park. The benefit–cost ratio is 0.45, or 45¢ in the dollar, for the Byford rail extension, and the Victoria Park–Canning level crossing removal project provides a benefit–cost ratio of 0.36, which is a return of 36¢ in the dollar. The Minister for Transport knows this because she provided me with that information in an answer to a question.

Deliberate decisions were made, effectively, to fund projects that will not give an economic return, and this all comes at a severe opportunity cost. I have crafted this motion so that the full implications of that opportunity cost can be remarked on across the health, housing, police and education portfolios or wherever we would like to look. The problems reside not just in the massive capital expenditure blowout but also in the implications of this excessive investment in a constrained period and the implications if it is considered against the likely patronage, the ordinary and now elevated annual running costs of the infrastructure, and the annual fare subsidy that will be required.

Here we have a clue about what this costs presently. Towards the back of budget paper No 3, on page 322, is a useful table called “Expenses from the general government sector to public corporations”. The headline is the subsidisation accruing to the Public Transport Authority. If we look at the bottom of the table, we can determine that the operating subsidies accumulating to the PTA are in the order of \$1.394 billion for budget year 2024–25. Not all of that amount relates to the metropolitan rail network, but it substantially does; almost 90 per cent, if not more, of it does. The subsidisation will only grow as the other elements of the line come on track. As it stands, the running costs of the rail and bus networks in Perth are in the order of \$1.5 billion to \$1.6 billion annually, and that excludes the subsidisation figure I just read. Presently, it is reasonable to assess that the full running costs of Metronet, once all the stations are built and the lines are commissioned, are likely to be in the order of \$2.5 billion annually, if not more, by the end of this decade.

It is then worth comparing what that \$2.5 billion, or thereabouts, would get us. I recommend that interested members read the individual portfolio funding appropriations in the budget papers because they will see figures

the likes of \$1.16 billion or \$1.7 billion to run the entirety of the justice system in Western Australia, and that includes courts, prisons and the like. It costs \$1.8 billion annually to run the Western Australia Police Force. These are the comparisons that we might reflect upon. This is no great artifice of mine. This is no fabrication. The facts are plain, and nobody here, as much as they might wish to, can argue against some fundamental economic laws more than they can argue against fundamental physical laws. One of the principal economic arguments here is that there is always a balance in the ledger. As much as the government might like to pat itself on the back or congratulate itself on record asset investment, or more properly put, asset expenditure, it has to appreciate that there is a liability column that matches the asset column—always; that is a fundamental principle of accounting. Investments made in certain dimensions come at the expense of investments to be made elsewhere, and I think that it is appropriate that the next facet of business, the consideration of committee reports, has listed at the top of the agenda “the funding of homelessness services in Western Australia”. The amount devoted to funding the elevation of rail through Victoria Park, Canning, has come at the cost of enormous investment in social housing, for example, if one wished to draw that example.

What then is a future government to do? I have made the argument, which outside of this chamber seemed to get the grudging acknowledgement and concurrence from the former Labor Treasurer Hon Eric Ripper at a social function, that this kind of expenditure creates a legacy—yes, a political legacy, but also a financial legacy. My argument is that it is not wrong to invest in public transport, it is something that a government needs to do, but this expenditure is not an investment. It creates a massive liability because the length of track, the scale of the network, has been doubled in length when we have not seen a commensurate increase in patronage. Unfortunately, Metronet is the project that will devour future budgets and restrain future governments from dealing with crises as they emerge because the recurrent budget will be gobbled up by Metronet commitments. It is one of the most reckless spends I have ever seen a government engage in, and it has engaged in it willingly, blithely and irresponsibly. We will have no other option but to sweat the assets and make Metronet work, but the minister has no idea how to do it.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [1.23 pm]: I emphatically support this motion, and I thank Hon Tjorn Sibma for bringing it to the house, and particularly for his very comprehensive analysis of the blowout of Metronet. Regardless of everything else, that standalone project in its entirety has blown out of all proportion, and that inevitably has a direct impact on service delivery to Western Australians. That is what I want to pick up on in the part (b) of the motion. It reminds me very much of when I first started in this place in opposition; the service delivery at that time was similar to what it is now. State governments are judged on the delivery of services. Fundamentally, the public of a jurisdiction judges its state government on the delivery of the fundamental services of transport, health, education and law and order—they always have, and they always will—because that is the domain of state governments. The big picture stuff, such as taxes, defence et cetera, is left to the federal government and bins, rubbish et cetera are left to local governments. The role of state government is service delivery. Members may remember that back in 2005 and 2006 just prior to that infamous 2008 state election, we ran out of gas and electricity; we had massive teacher shortages, the lowest paid teachers in the nation and the lowest resourced schools in the nation; patients were on trolleys in hospitals and the great escape happened at the law courts on St Georges Terrace. Basically, service delivery was appalling. If we move on another 20 years, not much has changed under this Labor government. The health system is in crisis and law and order is out of control. The latest Productivity Commission report, which was handed down yesterday, shows that education funding has declined appreciably compared with that in other jurisdictions. That is a shame because when the Barnett government was in power, we had the highest paid teachers in the nation by any comparison and the highest funded schools in the nation by any comparison. What goes around comes around. We are back there again with a second-term Labor government and service delivery is found wanting. I have no issues with the Labor government’s almost obsession with Metronet, but the other aspects of service delivery are low-hanging fruit and, unfortunately, the Western Australian public is suffering as a direct result.

The one area that I want to talk about today, which I talk about constantly because it is part of my shadow responsibilities, is law and order. The latest figures speak for themselves. That is not the Leader of the Opposition saying that; they are the government’s figures. Every single area of law and order in Western Australia has reached record proportions. Members should look at the Western Australia Police Force website to see what I am talking about.

One of the things that has led to that is the problem of not just attracting police recruits, but also retaining police officers. Members will be pleased to know that I will not go through yesterday’s prolonged contribution about problems with the police force. Suffice to say, about seven or eight months ago, I noticed a shift in the rhetoric of the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police when it was becoming blatantly obvious to everyone—apart from the minister—that the government was not going to reach its target of 950 recruits by 30 June this year. Everyone except the minister was saying that the government would not meet that target. I went through all that yesterday. The rhetoric changed a little bit. We started to get juvenile comments at the end of answers to questions, such as “Since 2017, this government has added an additional 500 officers since the Barnett government.” The government is talking about that again. We always get that from the minister; he needs to grow up! The minister wants us to forget about the 950 additional officers and compare the numbers with those under the Barnett government. Let us also have a look at the population under the Barnett government. I received responses from both the minister,

and the commissioner during an estimates hearing three or four months ago, that we have 500 more police officers than we had in 2017. In March 2017, there were 6 427 police officers. In March 2024, we had an additional 724 police officers. The number is around 500, give or take 50, because the figure goes up, comes down and basically continues to come down. The population of Western Australia in March 2017 was 2.57 million. The population in March this year was 2.9 million, which is an additional 330 000 people. In March 2017, there was one police officer for every 400 people in Western Australia. In March this year, there was one police officer for every 413 people. In anyone's language, that means that there are fewer police on the streets than there were under the Barnett government. No matter which way this minister goes, he just could not make this stuff up. Keep on talking about the additional 500 police officers—that means nothing to the people out there who are suffering at the hands of record crime throughout Western Australia, particularly in the regions.

I will show that I am not being selective. I have been all over the state with these statistics. I will read in a couple. Against the five-year average, the latest statistics, which came out a month ago, show that selected crimes against a person are up by 19.7 per cent. Family-related offences, that is, domestic violence incidents, are up by 41 per cent in Western Australia. Selected offences against property are down by 1.7 per cent. Of course, a lot of that comes from the fact that after the COVID pandemic et cetera, a lot of people were staying at home. That is the same with the situation with drugs. Selected offences against a person or property are up by 9.9 per cent. In effect, crimes increased from 266 032 to 273 774 over that period.

In the regions it is parlous; it is shocking. Members just need to have a look at these statistics. People living in Broome, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton or even in Busselton do not need these statistics; they can just leave their car out overnight or go for a walk along the street at night to see whether crime has gone up. In regional Western Australia, there were 56 056 crimes in 2020. In 2023, three years later at the end of last year, there were 75 532. That figure has increased from 56 000 to 75 000. There were 8 636 cases of stealing in 2020 and 13 090 at the end of 2023. Breaches of violence restraining orders went from 4 245 in 2020 to 5 783 in 2023. There is a major problem there. Where is the largest shortage of blue uniformed officers? In the country. There are shortages in literally every regional policing district at the moment.

Let us have a look at Joondalup. In 2020, it went from 1 624 crimes to 1 978 crimes. Family and domestic violence incidents went from 130 to 149 and stealing from 727 to 970. I will have a look at Victoria Park in the south east. In 2020, there were 1 215 crimes in 2020 and 16 87 at the end of 2023 last year. Family and domestic violence incidents went from 58 in 2020 to 74 in 2023 and stealing from 438 in 2020 to 725 by the end of 2023. That captures this first quarter as well. In Kwinana, crimes went from 298 in 2020 to 579 in 2023. In Midland out in the east, crimes went from 3 180 in 2020 to 3 219 at the end of 2023. In Perth, crimes went from 9 238 in 2020 to 11 779 in 2023.

Just listen to this: in Broome, there were 2 827 crimes in 2020, and last year, there were 4 428. That is almost double the number of crimes. In addition to that, there were 348 instances of stealing in 2020 with 608 last year. There were 251 breaches of violence restraining orders in 2020 and 408 in 2023.

Wherever you go, the story is the same. In Busselton, there were 704 crimes in 2020 and 968 in 2023. In Geraldton, there were 1 458 crimes in 2020 and 2 026 in 2023. Those figures are from all over the state—north, south, east and west. It is in the metropolitan area and in the regions—not to leave anyone out. The unsavoury yet real situation is that crime is out of control. Contrary to the rhetoric that we have constantly heard from the Minister for Police over the last three and a half years, there are fewer police officers per head of population now than there were under the Barnett government. Members can look at those figures. I do not make them up. They are from the government's own figures. The population has increased by 330 000 people, which means there are fewer police officers now than in 2017. I do not like revealing those figures. They are the government's own figures. When we hear the nonsense that comes out of the mouth of the minister on this, I cannot help but reinforce that point because, quite frankly, the minister has a tin ear. If you go out there, as I said, and ask people whether or not they feel safe on the streets or safe in their homes now, of course they are going to say no, particularly in the regions of Western Australia.

One area of particular concern to everyone in this chamber, particularly at the moment, is domestic violence. There is a national plague of domestic violence. That is replicated here in Western Australia. We have seen that relentlessly and constantly with hideous stories of domestic violence incidents, some resulting in death. We have to make sure that we as a society do better, but the government also needs to do better, without a shadow of a doubt. I am surprised about this. I asked a question back in 2021 —

Point of Order

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Today we are dealing with a motion in relation to Metronet and its impacts. The member is welcome to make contributions on whatever issue he wants at various times. This is about Metronet, and he is steering off course.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No; I am not. Look at part (b) of the motion.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is drawing to the house's attention matters that relate, in particular, I understand to part (b) of the motion; therefore, I consider that there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER COLLIER: I made it quite clear at the beginning of my contribution.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Perhaps I misheard.

Hon PETER COLLIER: At the beginning, I said I acknowledge the amount of money spent on Metronet, but it has been done to the detriment of service industries. That is why I went through that. It is a specific part of the motion.

In 2021, I asked how many officers were designated to domestic violence. The answer was —

All frontline officers can respond to family violence matters. In addition, 90 officers are currently allocated to family violence response teams and work with Department of Communities' staff.

I asked again in 2023, and the number had been reduced to 87.65. The number of dedicated police officers for family and domestic violence has actually gone down. I then asked in May of this year, just a couple of weeks ago, and the number was 83.35. The number has gone up by one, but it is lower now than it was three years ago. I want to make that clear to everyone in this room. When we talk about domestic violence, I want members to understand that there are now fewer police officers dedicated to the family and domestic violence unit than there were three years ago. Unless the minister has misled the house, that is a fact. That is concerning.

I have also asked, on a number of occasions, for the number of arrests for family and domestic violence, as is my responsibility as shadow minister. I am sure that people want to know. The figures are confronting. Members will know, from the crime statistics I provided earlier, that family and domestic violence is prevalent right throughout the state. In August 2021, I asked how many family and domestic violence incidents police had attended and how many arrests had been made. I got the answer straightaway. The question was without notice, but I got the answer straightaway, so it was available at the push of a button. That was in August 2021. That is probably when the minister had some decent advisers in his office. What happened is that the advisers got the response from WAPOL and they just gave it to me; they did not try to put some political spin on it. The figures were confronting. I will not go through the whole lot because it will consume too much time, but, for example, there were 58 571 incidents in 2020–21 and the number of outcomes, in terms of arrests, was 16 098. The police attended 58 000 incidents and had 16 000 outcomes, or arrests. That is extraordinary. That is not a slight on the government. All I am saying is that the minister was able to provide those statistics. It is compelling that there were so many incidents and so few arrests, but, of course, domestic violence is a complex area that is interwoven with complex relationships. That has not changed, unfortunately. If we look at the last round of statistics, we will see that in 23 per cent of incidents the perpetrators received sanctions. That means that fewer than one in four perpetrators of domestic violence are arrested. I asked exactly the same questions in May 2023 —

- (1) How many family and domestic violence incidents were attended in 2021 and 2022?
- (2) How many arrests were made in each year as a result of attending incidents referred to in (1)?

I was given the answer to the first part. The figures were confronting yet again—almost 60 000 incidents were attended in both years. However, the answer to the second part was —

As this question requires extraction to be undertaken that will remove staff from operational priorities, the WA Police Force advises that it is not possible to provide an answer within the required time frame. It is requested the honourable member place the question on notice.

I did that. Members will remember that I got the answer to that question 12 months earlier, so obviously the advisers in the minister's office had changed. I put the question on notice and got the number of domestic violence incidents and outcomes. They pretty much mirrored the year before—around 60 000 incidents and around 16 000 outcomes. Those figures are disturbing in anyone's language; so many incidents of domestic violence go unsanctioned. Again, that is not a reflection on the government. I understand that a lot of that has to do with the relationships themselves. My issue was that the minister could not provide that information. I asked exactly the same question a month ago. I asked how many family and domestic violence incidents had been attended last year and the year before, and how many arrests were made. I was given the number of incidents—it is always around 60 000; I have got used to that—but then the answer to the second question was —

The Western Australia Police Force is unable to provide a response as the number of arrests resulting from the above incidents cannot be determined in a reliable and systematic manner. Manual interrogation of each incident is required to ensure the family violence incidents attended on the police computer aided dispatch system are directly linked to the arrests recorded in the police incident management system.

How could it be provided in two previous years but not this year? I asked this follow-up question the next day —

I refer the minister to his response to question without notice 396, asked on Tuesday, 3 August 2021, and my question without notice 450, answered on Thursday, 9 May 2024.

Why was the response to the question about arrests made for family and domestic violence incidents possible for question without notice 396, but not possible for question 450, due to the fact that “the number of arrests resulting from the above incidents cannot be determined in a reliable and systematic manner”?

The response was —

The Western Australia Police Force advises that due to operation priorities, it is not possible to provide an answer within the required time frames. A response will be provided for the honourable member tomorrow.

You cannot make this stuff up! Then I did get a response back and it states —

The Western Australia Police Force are unable to link arrests recorded in Incident Management System, (IMS) to the attended Family Violence, Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) tasks as these are different systems/databases.

But why could they do it for the previous two years? How can we possibly confront the scourge of domestic violence if we cannot even get an accurate number of incidents and arrests? Is this government going backwards? How on earth can it provide me the response to those questions in 2021 and last year, but it cannot do it this year because it apparently has some new you-beaut computer system? It is gobsmacking, President. Having said that, crime is definitely out of control in Western Australia. It is one of the essential service industries in Western Australia. I do not mind if the government wants to hang its hat on Metronet, but do not do it to the detriment of the service industries in this state.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [1.46 pm]: I rise to also support this motion. Hon Tjorn Sibma mentioned earlier the young, hungry and energetic opposition in 2017. I think we are now dealing with an old, tired and lost government that has lost sight of its original vision. I keep reminding members opposite that we have a Minister for Transport, who is also the Treasurer, and she has, quite frankly, sucked the life out of the budget of other members opposite. They are no doubt concerned about services in the health, housing and law and order areas, just like we are concerned, as outlined in fine detail by Hon Peter Collier. We are the violent crime capital of Australia. We see ambulance ramping at record levels, and yet the services that matter to the people of Western Australia are having the life sucked out of them by a Treasurer; Minister for Transport who is intent on cutting those ribbons by 8 March 2025, by being in a hardhat to get the headlines and the outcomes. Members on this side of the house support public transport. We support sensible public transport and infrastructure spending. However, we are not seeing it done in a sensible, measured way, and that is the key argument today.

We saw a fresh-faced Hon Ben Wyatt on 11 February 2017 come out with the debt reduction strategy, and I will talk a bit about the general impact on the budget of this \$13 billion spend on Metronet. Hon Ben Wyatt's proposal was to spend 50 per cent of iron ore royalties while the iron ore price was above \$85 a tonne and the GST recovery rate was 65¢ in the dollar. For many years, the government was able to get around that. It was not until the coalition, under Prime Minister Scott Morrison, did the deal with Western Australia to get the GST floor price up. There was no obligation to follow through on that debt reduction strategy, but what we have seen since is effectively money going to a debt reduction account and then basically back-ended through to other projects, particularly Metronet. As I said in my budget reply speech, if we look at the asset investment program of the WA Labor government, we can see the government's priorities. Metronet is number one, with its expenditure on roads and freeways particularly around the metropolitan area. Then coming in right down the bottom is the Department of Communities, health and those important services, particularly in the justice area.

Those asset investments have been severely curtailed because of the expenditure that has been forced on this project, which has been poorly managed. Contract management is a problem. I go back to the claims of the fresh-faced future Treasurer, Hon Ben Wyatt, who said that he would introduce a debt-reduction strategy. We saw a claim in an article of February 2017 that the then opposition would reduce expenditure on advertising by \$20 million. What did we find out from the Auditor General's report of 15 May? We found out that between July 2019 and December 2023, state government entities spent at least \$205 million on buying advertising on television, radio, print, social media and other online digital platforms for the government's campaigns. Over the same time, government trading enterprises spent \$4.5 million on purchasing media places. I have asked questions in this place about how much the government has spent on media. What is the answer I get from the Minister for Finance? The minister tells me to look at the annual reports. There is no transparency whatsoever from this government. It spent \$205 million on advertising when it claimed it would reduce advertising spending by \$20 million to drive savings.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon NEIL THOMSON: It is the same pattern. Metronet is a \$3 billion project that has blown out to \$13 billion. What does that cost us? I outlined in my reply to the budget that the government received \$58 billion in windfall gains, when comparing the fourth year of the forward estimates with the actual out turn over the life of this government. An additional \$58 billion in revenue has poured into this government's coffers. Despite that, we are seeing quite an insipid impact on debt that is now projected to be \$40.9 billion, which is a record level. According to the budget and the Western Australian Treasury Corporation, Metronet is projected to be a \$13 billion spend at the current projected rate. An interest rate of 3.45 per cent equates to \$448 million a year. We also know that the public transport operating subsidy in 2016–17, which I also outlined in my reply to the budget speech, was \$799 million. It is now nearer to \$1.4 billion. That is the closest number I can get at the moment. It is projected to be about \$2 billion in the future.

The problem with this government is that its priorities are not in the right place. That amount is equivalent to building a whole Fiona Stanley Hospital every year at a time when we have record ambulance ramping and it takes two years for a child to see a paediatrician. I met with a dentist the other day who said that there is a three-year waiting list for kids to attend a dental clinic at primary school. Dental health is a real problem across Western Australia because not enough dental technicians are available. These are the things that really matter to Western Australians. Having a healthy life and being able to see the specialists that people need to see and get the world-class treatment they should be getting in a state as rich as Western Australia matters to Western Australians. People having a roof over their head without having to pay a fortune and making sure that Western Australia has enough housing matters to Western Australians. We know that the government's investment in social housing over the last couple of years has been at record low levels. It is only in the last couple of years, before the next election, that suddenly the government has decided that it needs to throw some money at the problem, but it cannot even get the builders to do the job to put a roof over people's heads. We also have a rental accommodation crisis in Western Australia, particularly in the regional centres. People being safe in their own home really matters to Western Australians. They are the things that really matter to Western Australians. Although we all want to have a good and modern public transport system, the problem is that it has been done too hard and too fast, all for the ego of a certain Treasurer; Minister for Transport.

I say to members opposite to speak up in their party room and in their cabinet room so that their voices can be heard and so that the issues that concern them will be highlighted and become a priority for the government. I am sure that many members opposite deep down in their heart of hearts share the same concerns as the people of Western Australia about services. Their concerns are the same concerns that members opposite have. The problem is that we have a Minister for Transport; Treasurer who is happy to agree with the statement that she is the best Treasurer—even though she has done only one budget—in Australia and the best Treasurer ever. The hubris of it all! We would be much better off if we had managed that project in a more structured way and kept an eye on contract management, particularly. This has not been the case because we have a massive \$10 billion budget blowout. We have seen a blowout in the opportunity cost, as outlined by Hon Tjorn Sibma, on interest that has to be paid and on employing all those grano and steel sector workers. Those operators and trades might otherwise have been available in the construction sector during one of the tightest times in our market, with record low construction.

It will be up to a Liberal-led government to sort it out and make sure this asset, which is pretty much committed, will work properly. That is where we see this government's failure in the planning piece. It is a complete failure. It has been unable to get on top of the issue of getting density into the right places to drive that accommodation piece that needs to be done. That is where the work should have been done. In fact, it would have been smart to spend a little less on Metronet and get that system working and then deliver all the headworks that needed to be delivered in and around those key transit-orientated development train stations. The only solution we have to make this asset work so that it does not drain the future budgets of our future generations is to get patronage up. There is no planning, and we have to do more work.

I am a big proponent of better planning and better investment to make sure that we get our assets working. The term used by Hon Tjorn Sibma was "sweating the asset". That asset needs to sweat. It is not going to sweat at the moment with a benefit-cost ratio of some of the things that we are talking about. A benefit-cost ratio of 0.4 is not sweating the asset. That gold-plated asset is not actually delivering for the people of Western Australia. We have to make sure that Metronet works. That is why it will come down to a Liberal-led government to make sure it works. We will do the job to properly populate the precincts in and around Metronet stations so that people could actually live a life, if they so choose, whereby they can walk to a train, get on and go and enjoy services that they normally would have to travel to in a car. That is the only solution.

We have a problem because no real serious planning has been done. The metropolitan regional development authority put out a paper in 2021, which I was reading earlier, about trying to do some work on the east line precincts. We have talked to people in the development sector. I talk to them and they say they cannot make it stack up economically. We must get to the point at which the private sector can actually deliver. The Property Council of Australia says that it is almost impossible to develop an apartment that is suitable for a family in Western Australia for around \$700 000. That is not affordable accommodation. We have to do more to make sure there is an affordable product so that people can choose, if they wish, to live in an apartment and to live their life in that high-density area around the precinct and go down the lift, jump on a train and go to the shops or find a childcare centre or a school. I am giving the Minister for Transport some advice here, if she chooses to listen to it. The problem is that there are hardly any public schools within walking distance of Metronet stations. There are a few private schools nearby that families from the higher socio-economic group will be able to afford, so their kids could get to those private schools on the train. The government can give away all the free tickets it likes for children to catch the train to school, but most of that will go to the people who can afford to pay transport costs because few public schools are located within 100 metres of a Metronet station. There is not much by way of services around those stations. I have done an analysis on that, so I know.

Hon Kate Doust interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Members opposite can go on about it, but I have done the analysis. I have looked at it in detail in terms of sport and leisure services. It is hard to get access to all those things. I looked at health services

and, most importantly, employment. The challenge for Western Australia is that not many of its employment centres are accessible by public transport. A young tradie might want to get out to Wangara or wherever, but it is a challenge because Perth is such a spread-out city. Those sorts of challenges can be addressed only through proper planning and by making sure that those Metronet stations work with density. We have seen an appalling lack of planning by this government. It is all about putting on a hard hat and a fluoro jacket and getting out there and announcing things. No serious planning has happened at all. An obvious example of that is the cost blowout of this program—absolutely appalling. Of course, we know that we cannot rely on the government to tell us anything about what is going on because of its secrecy around Metronet. We saw this happen in government advertising with the fresh-faced Hon Ben Wyatt making all those promises. Sadly, we have ended up with a tired, worn-out government that is not able to deliver the services that matter for the people of Western Australia. That is the problem we have today.

The other day, I was at the Australian Energy Producers conference. I must say, it did not fill me with inspiration or hope when it comes to this government. I really hope, for the sake of Western Australians, that on 8 March 2015, we have a Mettam Liberal government.

Hon Stephen Dawson: You said 2015! Back to the future.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Sorry, 2025. Thank you, honourable member, for reminding me. I was just having a moment reliving the good times. Back then we could actually deliver for the future prosperity of Western Australians, and it was a year in which there was peak capex private sector investment in the mining sector. We are not seeing that now because we have \$318 billion worth of projects in the approvals pipeline, and all we get is platitudes from Minister Whitby about that. Those projects will fund the huge operating losses of the Metronet program. Those projects will fund the interest payments on the capital investment. Those projects will fund the future expenditure that will be sorely needed in the health sector because it has been put on hold and not a single tertiary health facility has been put in place under this government. We have seen the consequences of that and all the other disinvestment going on in Western Australia, including in the education system, as was so clearly outlined by Hon Peter Collier.

I will get back to this point about Minister Whitby who made a comment at that conference.

Hon Stephen Dawson: It is Minister Whitby's sixtieth birthday today.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: , I hope that he does not say that that will be the standard operating system for Western Australians when we do not have reliable power in Western Australia. I hope Minister Whitby contemplates that matter, as we see the power cuts in Kalgoorlie today and the ongoing situation there. This was the comment by Minister Whitby. He said decarbonisation will be the biggest project, ever, in the history of Western Australian governments. Already in the budget, \$5.6 billion is set aside for decarbonisation. Again, decarbonisation is a very noble cause indeed, but there is no transparency about the effectiveness of that spend. There is no transparency whatsoever. It is just like the Metronet project where there is no transparency whatsoever. That is a real problem. I do not trust this government. I certainly do not trust the Treasurer, given her track record in the Metronet cost blowouts. I do not trust this Treasurer. I do not think she is the best Treasurer ever. I think this Treasurer might have been a keen, fresh-faced Minister for Transport but after seven years in the job she has lost sight of the original objective. She has been too long in the job—time is up. If the project is going to be more than \$5.6 billion—we expect it could be—who knows what the decarbonisation project will cost. That is a problem because, again, we could face headwinds. We talk about that in relation to the budget. Those headwinds or royalty under-estimates will keep coming in. That will be a problem.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services) [2.06 pm]: I rise to make a contribution on behalf of the government this afternoon and indicate, at the outset, that we will not be supporting this ludicrous motion before the house. I also acknowledge that it is Minister Whitby's sixtieth birthday. I congratulate him on reaching this age and thank him for the great job he does in the energy and environment portfolios. The previous speaker might want to check the *Hansard* because he referred to the Minister for Finance as not giving him stuff and sending him to the budget papers. I think he means the Treasurer. He might want to check the *Hansard* and correct that, if it is not the case.

What does the motion before us today show? Once again, it shows the Liberal Party is out of touch—plain and simply out of touch. What does it have against the people of Butler, Byford, Mandurah or Ellenbrook? Why do Liberal members not want them to have a train line? Shame. Why should not the good burghers of Butler or Byford have the same train line as the people of Cottesloe? Absolutely, they should.

The people of Western Australia have twice endorsed Metronet at an election. Unlike members of the Liberal Party, we keep our promises when it comes to public transport—members opposite do not, but we do. Our Metronet program continues to go from strength to strength and it continues to be supported by the people of Western Australia. We have now completed eight Metronet projects, including the Forrestfield–Airport Link and the Denny Avenue level crossing removal project. Bayswater station has been completed. All the platforms and the track work are ready for later in the year to have the full lot of services through that station. They will be connected to the Morley–Ellenbrook line—another line that is absolutely supported by the people of Western Australia. The first

WA-made C-series trains were introduced into service earlier this year, delivering on our commitment to return railcar manufacturing to Western Australia. Guess what the people of Western Australia think about that? They love it because, many years after members opposite closed the Midland Railway workshops, putting thousands out of a job, trains are finally being made in WA again, employing Western Australian people. The Yanchep —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I would remind members that that word, whoever did say it, is actually considered unparliamentary.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I was going to say that next the Yanchep rail extension will be ready to open. That is due to be completed in the second half of the year—not too far away. What will the people of the northern suburbs think? They will love the train because it will connect them to the city and make it easier to get to their jobs. What has the opposition got against the people of Ellenbrook? It is outrageous. Another 10 projects are also underway at various stages of development from procurement and initial planning to delivery. They, too, will be supported by Western Australians. A total of 10 Metronet projects are expected to be completed by the end of 2024, including the Yanchep rail extension and the Morley–Ellenbrook line. In fact, by the end of next year, all the new lines that we committed to at the 2017 election will be completed. It will make the lives of Western Australians so much easier.

Metronet is widely supported across the community, as it is in Canberra, by not just the current federal government, but also the last federal Liberal–National government, because of course we have been delighted to partner with federal governments of both persuasions to deliver Metronet. We note the significant support of the former Liberal–National government. It likes trains, but the opposition does not. I will quote the former federal Liberal minister for urban infrastructure, Paul Fletcher, who on 16 March 2022 said —

Working in close partnership with the WA Government, we are getting on with the job of delivering critical infrastructure projects that improve public transport connections and congestion for communities across Perth, and provide a boost to local jobs and the economy.

Since 2017 we have been able to secure \$5.5 billion from the federal government, the commonwealth, to Metronet.

Opposition members like to mislead people about costs. What they fail to acknowledge is that the scope of Metronet projects has changed and grown significantly since the 2017 election, with a significant number of new projects added to it. Since 2017, we have significantly increased the number of level crossings to be removed from four to 15. We have increased the number of train stations from 18 to 23. We have increased the number of railcars being made in Western Australia from 78 to 246, creating local jobs, keeping people employed and of course in doing so, delivering significant and better outcomes for communities across our suburbs.

Of course, for all projects, whether public or private, global cost pressures have impacted things such as concrete, labour and steel, and have significantly added to costs. That is happening across the world. We have seen global and local level disruption to supply chains that has driven unforeseen cost increases across the construction sector. Western Australia is not an orphan in that regard. It is happening here, over east and in many places around the world. These events were largely unforeseeable and have impacted all aspects of construction work from 2019. Whether someone is building a patio at home or a rail line, the price has gone up. That is the reality.

The cost of key materials for civil construction has increased significantly since 2019. That includes a 35 per cent increase in the cost of concrete pipes and culverts, a 62 per cent increase in the price of reinforcing steel, and an 84 per cent increase in the price of diesel fuel. We have worked with agencies like the Water Corporation or Western Power when we have needed asset relocations for Metronet projects, which were not always known at the time of the tender process. In many cases we discovered ageing infrastructure, and so we made a decision as part of the project to upgrade that infrastructure, to make sure it is around for another hundred years. We are now delivering not only train lines, but also water and power infrastructure for future generations. Importantly, projects have delivered significant improvements to network utility assets in the region. We have managed these cost pressures by working with industry to smooth the pipeline of works, with our price per kilometre of rail still the best value of any in the country. We are delivering 72 kilometres of new track and 23 new stations and removing 15 level crossings for less than the cost of a single smaller project over east. When people jump on these new rail lines, they will pay some of the lowest fares in the country. That is because our government has taken significant steps to make sure that public transport is more affordable and accessible for Western Australians. In fact, in January 2022, public transport fees were capped at the cost of a two-zone fare, saving people who live in Perth's outer suburbs and who commute into the city hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars a year. For a commuter travelling from Dawesville to the CBD for work every day, that means more than \$3 000 a year in savings. That is massive.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Why should we not subsidise trains? Why should we not make it easier for people living in Dawesville to access trains, participate in the economy and take on jobs?

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Stephen Dawson.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: In fact, since February this year, travel on Perth's public transport network has been made free for SmartRider users every Sunday. Not only have we capped prices, we are making it easier, and free on Sundays. For example, for a retail worker who has to work on Sundays, this means savings of about \$350 over the course of a year. Since 5 February this year, travel to and from school, Monday to Friday, has been free for school students using their SmartRider cards. That will save a family with two school-age children up to about \$560 a year—again, further savings. We are using the public transport infrastructure that we are investing in to make it easier for families to participate in society and to send their kids to school. This is in addition to our existing concessions and free off-peak travel for seniors.

In this motion Hon Tjorn Sibma and the Liberal Party have criticised the subsidisation of public transport.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: No, I haven't criticised it.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Read between the lines. Public transport is subsidised right around the world. Fares are subsidised to incentivise people to catch trains. We want them using our infrastructure because if they do not use private vehicles, it will reduce congestion, reduce parking requirements and reduce emissions—which is something that we, on this side of the house, believe is something that the world needs to do. Subsidised public transport also means that people who cannot drive a private vehicle are able to get around affordably and can take part in our society, whether they are young people, seniors or people with disability—people who cannot afford the running costs of a vehicle.

Of course, roads are also subsidised to a huge extent, but this does not rate a mention from the Liberals. If the cost recovery targets for public transport were to be increased, fares would need to increase. That would have several detrimental effects, including increased congestion and reduced mobility for people unable to use a private vehicle. It would also lead to a fare spiral; as people turned to private vehicles and reduced their patronage of public transport, it would necessitate further fare increases to meet cost-recovery targets. To meet a 50 per cent cost-recovery target, the cost of a two-zone fare would need to increase by 267 per cent to \$13.90. Is that what Hon Neil Thomson is suggesting? Is he suggesting that we should increase fares? Shame on him; we should not be.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: This would mean that commuters would pay more than an extra \$3 000 a year.

Point of Order

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I refer to imputations and personal reflections of improper motives. I was not saying that. The minister was incorrect with respect to my motivations in relation to this matter.

The PRESIDENT: Honourable member, while I have received your point of order and have had the opportunity to consider it, I do not think there was anything specific that you were accused of, as the standing order requires. There is no point of order. Minister for Emergency Services.

Debate Resumed

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thank you, President. I was saying that if people are suggesting we should have cost recovery and should not be subsidising our train lines in Western Australia, prices are going to go up significantly, and we do not believe in that. Western Australians do not deserve that. As I said, Western Australians voted twice for a Labor government; people in this state support Metronet.

The Liberals and Nationals have no credibility when it comes to Metronet—or, indeed, public transport or rail at all. Why is that? Let me remind people.

Hon Louise Kingston interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The member has not been here that long, but I have been here for a while. Let me remind people why the Liberals and Nationals have no credibility on this issue: it is because they closed the Fremantle line; they decimated regional rail services; they closed the Midland railway workshops; they sold the Westrail freight business; and they privatised our rail freight network. They failed to deliver the Ellenbrook rail line despite their promises in 2008 and 2013. Obviously, they have guilty consciences. They failed to deliver the Metro Area Express rail line; they promised it when they were last in government and then backtracked just before 2016. The former Premier Hon Colin Barnett said, "No, we are not going to do that anymore." They closed the tier-3 rail network and tried to kill *AvonLink*. It was not just people in the metropolitan area who did not benefit from their policies. People in the bush were also affected by them and faced the wrath of their government. They have always had an issue with public transport. They have always had an issue with train lines. Whether it was the Court, Court or Barnett governments, they have always tried to close train lines and services. They have sold them off.

What makes them frustrated is that we continue to deliver. We continue to build new train lines in this state, provide new services and make it easier for Western Australians to access, use and sit on our trains. We think Western Australians deserve good public transport, and we use public transport to help people not only live in the outer metropolitan area but also live closer to town if they choose to because we are building houses and services around the new train lines and stations.

I do not know what the team on the far side of the chamber has against the people of Ellenbrook, Dawesville, Byford and Butler, but I tell members that it is following a long line of Liberal politicians who hate public transport, particularly trains. We will not live with this. When Hon Tjorn Sibma spoke today, he spoke about core documents; I have given core facts. The Liberal Party and National Party do not like providing trains or public transport to people who live in the suburbs, and that is outrageous. Honourable members, for these reasons, we will not support the motion today.

Amendment to Motion

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: In fact, I am so incensed by the motion before us that I will move an amendment. I move without notice —

To delete paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) and insert —

- (a) notes that public transport is key to the continued growth and prosperity of Western Australia;
- (b) commends the Cook Labor government's investment in Metronet, which is creating employment and educational opportunities for people living in Perth's suburbs;
- (c) condemns the Liberals' and Nationals' records of attacks on rail, which includes —
 - (i) closing the Fremantle line;
 - (ii) decimating regional rail services;
 - (iii) closing the Midland railway workshops;
 - (iv) selling the Westrail freight business;
 - (v) privatising our freight rail network;
 - (vi) failing to deliver the twice-promised Ellenbrook rail line;
 - (vii) failing to deliver the Metro Area Express light rail;
 - (viii) closing the tier-3 rail network; and
 - (ix) trying to kill off the *AvonLink*;
- (d) notes that any moves to significantly reduce public transport subsidisation will —
 - (i) increase the cost of living for families;
 - (ii) lead to more congestion; and
 - (iii) isolate some of the most vulnerable members of our community;
- (e) calls on the Liberal Party to outline its plan to increase public transport fares and privatise services before the next state election.

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [2.23 pm]: I will direct my energies to precisely what the house is now being asked to do. I note that this is the second occasion in a row.

Hon Colin de Grussa: Third!

Hon TJORN SIBMA: It is the third! I have been corrected. It is the third occasion in a row when the government has taken the opportunity not to amend a motion on the notice paper but, effectively, to rewrite one. It does not amend a motion but substitutes a motion.

The contents of this amendment, individually and collectively, are a sham and a disgrace to the orderly processes, procedures and traditions that used to be observed by the government in this house, until 2021. The government has been clever and patient enough until the last few sitting weeks to largely conceal the full gamut and range of its parliamentary treachery. But, now, there are preselection battles within gunsight of those opposite that might leave a number of them feeling slightly aggrieved or disappointed, and so they use this as an opportunity to demonstrate tribal purity and ideological hard lines, because that is all they have left. That is evidence this government has given up on treating the processes, procedures and traditions of this chamber with any respect at all. It is a demonstration that the government's policy cupboard is absolutely bare when it comes to explaining precisely how it intends to make its massive expenditure on Metronet work in the short, medium and long term in such a way as not to compromise the delivery of essential services and much-needed infrastructure that all responsible governments are required to deliver, which was precisely the argument put in my motion with its three limbs. I will identify this: not once did the minister attempt to deal with the issue of opportunity cost, but when confronted with the enormous scope of Metronet, he attempted to have it both ways by congratulating the government on the massive expenditure but at the same time complaining about the increases in cost. The government cannot have it both ways.

There is absolutely no way that any person of integrity can accept the amendment moved by the government—not even when they are put under enormous pressure with any livelihood to give up, any pressure, any inducement. It is shameful, desperate and reveals the government's contempt for process and its disdain for responsibility, and,

frankly speaking, I am utterly disappointed in the Deputy Leader of the House for having the shameful temerity to move a motion like this. I doubt very much that he would have offered this amendment if it were truly up to him, but he has obviously been induced to do so, and I am very disappointed that he has given in to those overtures. Many of those smug, smiling, nodding faces opposite will not be here next year, but this is the kind of legacy they leave. They can have it, but they will not get it with my willing compliance.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [2.28 pm]: I stand to make a few remarks and put some facts on the record about amendments, who does what with amendments and a little bit of history of who has done what with amendments. I listened to debate on the amendment just moved in which members opposite talked about contempt of process. I also heard what the Leader of the Opposition said in his budget reply speech yesterday and previously about amendments moved by members of the government; he said that we are destroying the values of this place. That has led me to do a little bit of research, something that those on the other side might like to do themselves. Far from being a contempt of process, far from destroying the house, we are using a component of the standing orders that refers to amendments. There have never been standing orders denying parties the right to move amendments, but somehow using standing orders to do so is a contempt of the process. In previous debates the Leader of the Opposition said —

... motions on notice give a unique opportunity for individual parties to move a motion ... that is the way it is done. It has always been done that way ...

Those comments suggest—indeed, his comments yesterday also suggested this—that such a contempt of process, to use the term used by Hon Tjorn Sibma, did not happen when he was sitting in the seat that I now hold. I beg to differ! History shows otherwise. Indeed, as Hon Stephen Dawson pointed out previously, that is not correct. He referenced Hon Helen Morton, a former member of this place, and the Leader of the Opposition’s response by interjection—“That’s absolute garbage.” That is surprising because having had a quick look at *Hansard*—I do not have the time that I used to have when I sat on the opposition side to do the kind of research that we used to do—this is what we found. In August 2014, who was the Leader of the Government? It was Hon Peter Collier. Hon Sally Talbot moved a motion calling on the Liberal–National government to take action because women had been sexually assaulted in psychiatric hospitals. Hon Helen Morton moved an amendment noting the positive actions taken by the government and then Hon Nick Goiran got up and moved an amendment to the amendment. In March 2015, Hon Dr Sally Talbot moved a motion condemning the Barnett government for failing to protect rivers, estuaries and inlets. Hon Helen Morton moved an amendment that talked up the actions of the Barnett government. In April 2015, Hon Stephen Dawson moved a motion condemning the Barnett government for the state’s Indigenous suicide rate. Hon Helen Morton moved an amendment acknowledging the good work of the Barnett government. In February 2016, Hon Darren West moved a motion. An amendment was moved by Hon Martin Aldridge to change the words of that motion. In March 2016, Hon Darren West moved a motion that noted the failure of the Barnett government and Hon Paul Brown moved an amendment to change it.

Who was the Leader of the Government in every one of those instances in which an amendment was moved to congratulate the government of the day? It was Hon Peter Collier. The proposition that what we are doing is somehow destroying the values of the Legislative Council is rubbish; it is not true. I am disappointed that members of the crossbench are out of the house on urgent parliamentary business because I am pretty sure that the narrative is directed at them to try to convince those who do not have the long corporate history that some of us have. There is nothing new about this. There is nothing appalling about this. There is nothing in this that will destroy the values of the Legislative Council. We are using the exact same tactics that were used by Hon Peter Collier when he was the Leader of the Government, and it is nonsense and not true—other words could be used but they would be unparliamentary—to suggest that this is in anyway something new and something that devalues, diminishes or destroys the values of the Legislative Council. I support the amendment.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [2.32 pm]: I have obviously struck a nerve with the Leader of the House. I stand by every single comment I made yesterday. If there is —

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Do you mind?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: If there is one person who has destroyed the fabric of this house, it is the Leader of the House—one person. The Leader of the House has on multiple occasions cancelled pairs and moved —

Hon Sue Ellery: Did you or did you not move those amendments?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am going to get to that. I sat in silence, which is one of the phrases the Leader of the House constantly uses.

I remind members that after the last —

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The Leader of the House is very sensitive today after hearing yesterday a few truths that she did not want to hear. This place is a seriously diminished chamber because of the Leader of the House—make no bones about that.

Hon Sue Ellery: Tell the truth!

Hon PETER COLLIER: President, with respect; I cannot hear myself speak.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: I remind members that in the three weeks after we won government, multiple members opposite moved multiple motions condemning our government. This was a month after we won government. It completely destroyed the whole purpose of motions on notice. In those days, it was not government then opposition, government then opposition, it was whoever got the motions in first. For the first three years that we were in government, we had to deal with condemnation motions from the opposition. That is how we operated. Of course we are filthy about that. Yet again, it completely destroyed the whole intent of motions. In those days, we had multiple parties. They got no opportunity to do a motion. Fortunately, that changed. We changed the format so that we would give out a roster and there would only be one motion each week. In those days, it was one motion for two weeks. We had motions condemning the Minister for Education, condemning the minister for this and condemning the minister for that. This all happened within a month of us winning government. That is exactly what happened.

Hon Sue Ellery: You were a pretty bad government.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Let us not embellish the situation, Leader of the House. She was 100 per cent complicit in this.

Hon Sue Ellery: Check *Hansard*!

The PRESIDENT: Order.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We had a situation in which we collectively decided to change the standing orders to give every party an opportunity. That has now been eradicated because of the Leader of the House. We now have a situation in which Hon Dr Brad Pettitt had one motion this year and it was taken from him. You guys took it from him.

Hon Sue Ellery: No we didn't!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, the government did. It moved an amendment.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Sue Ellery: It was amended! Figure out how to debate. Have the capacity to pivot!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Excuse me.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I had actually called order, Leader of the Opposition. I did not need you to do it as well.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will remind members that that is exactly what happened. There is one easy solution if the government does not like a motion: vote against it. That is all the government has to do. That is the purpose of motions. Otherwise, get rid of them. It has got rid of everything else. It controls the orders of the day. It controls everything. We do not have a vote on non-government business. The only time that people on this side get a chance to vote on something they believe in is during motions on notice. The government has removed that. For the last three motions it has taken one from the Nationals, one from us and one from the Greens. That is exactly what the government is doing.

Hon Sue Ellery: So vote against the amendments! Switch your arguments to the other way! Have a little bit of flexibility!

Hon PETER COLLIER: See, the Leader of the House is very vulnerable. She knows she is going to finish shortly and she has destroyed this chamber. Every single convention of this chamber has been destroyed because of her actions. She really has destroyed them. Go back and have a look at her track record on some of the motions that she moved and see whether or not they are appropriate. I am saying that this motion has nothing to do with and does not look anything like the motion that we moved. Where is part (b) about the impact on service industries across the state? It is nowhere. If the government wants to have a motion like this —

Hon Sue Ellery: Where is the standing order that says you can't move amendments? Where is it?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: I suggest that if the government wants to have a motion like this, it still has six or seven opportunities the rest of the year to do so. Do it during private members' business. I want to make one thing perfectly clear: the only reason we changed those motions was because the Labor opposition came in and did 15 motions condemning us and that virtually consumed the entirety of our term of government. This government started with the demise of this place back in the last term of government. That is what it did.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [2.38 pm]: This is an amendment that I absolutely and wholeheartedly support. No-one here will be surprised to hear that. I am absolutely staggered by the response from the Leader of the Opposition to what the Leader of the House had to say post-her excellent research. I listened intently and I heard the Leader of the Opposition say, “Do you know what we had to put up with when we won government?” and he talked about everything that we did as the then opposition. All I heard in that was that we were far more organised one month into opposition than the other side is now, seven years into opposition. That is what I heard. I heard that we did it well, knew what we had to do and that we took the role of opposition extremely seriously. We knew what we had to do and how we needed to work and we worked hard. That is why when the opposition was in government, it had to put up with a number of no-confidence motions in a row. We were all playing by the same rules. We are all subject to the standing orders in the same way. We did that in our opening few weeks, and we did it better than the opposition is managing to do now, after seven years. Maybe that is because we were a united party in opposition and did not have two separate party rooms meeting all over the place, or three, if you want to include the Nationals WA. Maybe that is what it was.

Hon Peter Collier in his contribution just asked about the second limb of the original motion and how we have addressed that. Part of that is about weakening Western Australia’s future capacity. I will talk about those words because they are quite interesting. When I look at the third limb of the amended motion, it talks a lot about weakening future capacity because it talks to the time a former Liberal–National government closed the Fremantle rail line. I was a child when the old orange Westrail engines used to take the train up and down the Fremantle line. A former Liberal–National government closed it. I do not have them in front of me right now, but I have quoted newspaper articles from the time and comments that were made by members of the Liberal–National government at the time the line was closed.

This limb of the motion absolutely addresses Western Australia’s future capacity. The former Liberal–National government decimated regional rail services. That is something else we have put in to the amendment, and that absolutely addresses that as well. I have spoken on numerous occasions in this place about the effect that closing the Midland rail workshops had on—sorry to use your words, Hon Tjorn Sibma—Western Australia’s future capacity. I have spoken at length on that. I have also spoken at length on what we as a government have done to bring back that manufacturing capacity and the jobs that it creates, and everything else along that line.

An opposition member: I don’t know about that.

Hon DAN CADDY: I will run out of time, member, so this cannot be a conversation.

What else have we put in the amendment? It refers to the Liberal–National government failing to deliver on the Ellenbrook line. That would have weakened the state’s capacity, but, luckily, we as a government actually took that seriously. We brought Metronet to the Western Australian community. It has gone through two elections and has been wholeheartedly supported. The former Liberal–National government had MAX light rail. It was a thought bubble. It was not even costed. The former government had no idea what it would do and how it would work. Yesterday, Hon Tjorn Sibma spoke about the need for a parliamentary budget office. Can members imagine what would have happened if that office had been in existence when that former Liberal–National government brought up MAX light rail or when it held that train wreck of a press conference before the last election?

Several members interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: I will be finished shortly, member. Imagine if any of that stuff had been absolutely costed by a PBO.

The former government was unsuccessful, but it tried to kill off *AvonLink*. That would have greatly diminished Western Australia’s future capacity. Closing the tier 3 rail network, in a word, absolutely diminished a whole lot of capacity in the state. I think we have more than addressed that part of the second limb of the original motion from Hon Tjorn Sibma. I will just say that this is an outstanding amendment. It is far more reflective of the facts and what is actually happening.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.43 pm]: I would also like to support the Deputy Leader of the House on this fine amendment to the motion made in accordance with the standing orders of the house. It does not break any conventions and perhaps sets the record straight for all of those people out there in regional Western Australia who are tuned in to Parliament at the moment and who may be thinking that perhaps the opposition is onto something here—it is not. It is with some incredulity—in fact, complete incredulity—that the opposition has come here to talk about rail. Of all the things that the opposition could have talked about today, it came in here with a motion about its biggest Achilles heel. It came here to lead with its chin 100 per cent. What happens when you do that, members?

If amended, the motion will make complete sense to not just the government but also the people of Western Australia, who have overwhelmingly supported this government at two elections now when its signature policy has been Metronet. I will leave it to members opposite to go out to the outer suburbs and say that people out there should

not have a rail line and subsidised rail fares. I will leave it to members opposite to go out and say that the closure of the tier 3 lines in the wheatbelt was a good idea when we have not been able to get grain to port in a timely manner ever since. I will leave it to members opposite to go out and sell their policies, if, indeed, there are any.

I will pick up on a point that I have noticed. The federal Liberal Party seems to have abandoned its leafy harbourside and riverside electorates for electorates in the outer suburbs. That seems to be where the federal Leader of the Opposition is now going for support. That is absolutely contradicted by his state colleagues, who go, “There is no way that the people who live in those electorates should have railway lines and subsidised fares.” It is a bit of a conundrum for the Liberals. At one level, they are getting around the outer suburbs, but on another level, they are abandoning the outer suburbs. I just picked that up.

The Nationals WA are involved in this as well. Nationals members went out and said that closing the tier 3 lines was a good idea. Their vote in the wheatbelt has collapsed ever since. They might one day pick up that that was perhaps not such a good idea. I note that the car park at Parliament House is the only place that I ever see the sticker that has been mocked up by the Nationals that says “Metrodebt” and talks about how bad Metronet is for their constituency. I wonder how the Nationals candidates for Kalamunda, Bateman or whichever other places they can find candidates in the metro area to try to survive in the now democratic environment are going to feel about this aversion to public transport. I have made up my own sticker that will perhaps adorn the bumper of my car. I will show members what it looks like.

Point of Order

Hon TJORN SIBMA: My point of order is one of relevance.

Several members interjected.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I am attempting to deal with the government seriously and hear a contribution that would justify the amendment. I am hearing a lot about bumper stickers and all other kinds of phenomena. As much as this might assist the member with his preselection, I do not think it is enabling debate.

The PRESIDENT: Honourable members, I have been listening intently to the member’s contribution. I think he is attempting to put an argument forward for why the amendment should be supported, but I encourage him to ensure that his focus remains on the question regarding why the amendment should be supported.

Debate Resumed

Hon DARREN WEST: Thank you, President; I will take your very sage advice on board, but as a regional member, I will always stand up for the people of the Agricultural Region and regional Western Australia. I am pointing out the hypocrisy and preaching from certain sections of the opposition that we should not have rail. The opposition has moved a motion that says we should not have rail and now opposes the amendment that we are putting forward. Very briefly, my sticker reads “MetroNats: Preaching to the regions from Perth”. That is what we hear from the Nationals; they tell us how it should be in the regions. Of course, they are all metropolitan residing, public transport using members of Parliament.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Darren West has the call.

Hon DARREN WEST: The former member for Victoria Park referred to the Nationals as the “CAT bus Nats”. He was not far out with that!

This is a great amendment. It is actually a factual amendment. This amendment will give people who read the *Hansard* or listen to the debate an idea of what Parliament should be about. The list of shame in paragraph (c) of the amendment is good reading for anyone, but particularly young people, who believe in the future of public transport and will benefit in the future from public transport, as well as those from the regions and outer suburbs who rely on rail. That list of shame is not something that members opposite should be proud of. Again, I cannot believe that they would bring a motion to this house regarding rail after their failed record in government and now their failed record in opposition.

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan) [2.49 pm]: I do not normally speak on these motions but today I am inclined to. Having been here a long time and listened to these debates about Metronet and other train lines during my 23 years in this place, it is always the Labor side, either in opposition or in government, that has fully supported not just the maintenance and sustenance of train lines, but the creation of new lines. All I have heard during my time from the conservative side, regardless of where they sit at that point in time, has been in opposition to both maintaining and keeping lines. Tier 3 is an excellent example. We had a parliamentary inquiry into that, which I was involved with. The opposition opposed the Perth–Mandurah train line. It wanted to send it in a different direction. That line has been a cracking success. It is oversubscribed and has opened up huge opportunities in the South Metropolitan Region.

I know that the changes and new lines that will occur in my electorate are also equally welcomed. I think the proposal put forward by Hon Tjorn Sibma today reflects the ongoing negativity and total policy deficit that exists

in the Liberal Party. We hear these complaints about the financing—yes, it will cost money to provide this line and these opportunities for our constituents to have better access and proximity to the lines. I live about a street away from where all these changes are happening on the Armadale line. I know that the people I talk to who live nearby throughout those lines are welcoming that change. They look forward to the opportunities that will arise with the new train lines and the capacity to do other things in this space that it now creates.

We have not heard that from the opposition, but I have heard a whole lot of negativity from another member who I do not think has even been out that way or actually spoken to the people who live and work in that space. The amendment put forward today by the Deputy Leader of the House is indeed a much more realistic amendment to the original motion before us. It outlines the historical errors made by those in the Liberal government about how it has prevented public access to train lines. I remember when the Fremantle line was shut down. I was a student in Rockingham and I was going to university. It would take me hours to get from Rockingham to Perth when I had to go home from college on weekends, because there was no train line to take me straight from the city to Fremantle, where I would then catch a bus home. It was duly celebrated when the line came back on.

My colleague has talked about the impacts on the Midland rail workshops and tier 3 in the regional areas. When members come in here to raise these motions, they really need to think about the implications because they are the alternative to the current government. Although the opposition condemns this government for spending money, it has no viable solutions, options or alternatives for what it would do if it were ever fortunate enough to return to this side of the chamber. That is on them. Here we are, nine or 10 months away from an election, and we still do not know what members of the opposition are thinking. Nobody knows what they are thinking. They can whinge and moan, and complain about the way that motions are being done, but we heard from the Leader of the House about how these things have been managed in the past. The opposition has the challenge to get out of its misery, stop complaining, and come up with something positive. I do not think it can actually better the proposal for Western Australia with Metronet.

I am fortunate enough to travel a lot, and the one thing I love doing when I go to major cities all around the world is utilising their amazing public transport systems. Go to Singapore, Paris, London, Milan, Hong Kong, Sydney or Melbourne. All of these places have fantastic public transport systems. They have had to retrofit in a lot of cases, and expend significant amounts of money, but they are welcome. They provide significant change for their communities and businesses. They create generational change in those cities and enable people to access and participate in activities they may not have had the opportunity to otherwise engage in if the public transport had not been in place. I know that the people in my electorate will benefit magnificently from the decisions of this government to put in the new changes to the Metronet project.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West) [2.54 pm]: I was hoping to have 20 minutes to discuss this in great detail. Unfortunately, I am now down to less than five minutes, although I would have had that either way. Members will miss out on a fairly comprehensive contribution. I am intrigued by the sheer hypocrisy of some of the statements made on the motion before the house. I would have loved to address each of the comments made. I made copious note on the Minister for Emergency Services' contribution, some of which is worthy of debate. I like this comment he made on the amendment to the motion that we are debating. He referred to decimating regional rail services and closing the tier 3 rail network. Do members opposite remember closing a rail service? Do they think that the Labor Party has never closed a rail service? No? Stony silence.

Hon Stephen Dawson: We get in trouble when we heckle. Do you want us to heckle or not? Make your comments through the chair. It is unruly.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Let me give members a short history lesson.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Did the Labor Party close a rail service? Members opposite were outraged at the closure of rail services. Guess what? The Labor Party closed the Greenbushes–Bunbury rail service. Do members know who closed it? It was my erstwhile debater on the other side, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, when she was the transport supremo. The Labor Party closed that rail service. Do members know what the Labor Party is doing now?

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The Labor Party is conducting a study to reopen that rail service. The Labor Party conducted a previous study for \$300 million; it is probably \$800 million by now. The government is conducting another study and fudging it. The government is pushing it off to somewhere into the distance. Before government members jump up on their high moral horse about closing rail lines, they should remember that the Labor Party closed rail lines. It is like the government's moral high ground on privatisation. The Labor Party sold wind farms. The high moral ground is astounding. The Labor Party closed rail lines.

The government also messed around for years trying to work out what to do with the tier 3 rail lines. How often have I had to ask where the business case is for that? Every few months I ask where the business case is. The last time was a little bit exciting because the answer from the Minister for Transport through the representative in this chamber was that the business case was done. I raced to the press and said is it not good that the business case is done but was then told by the government, “No, not really; we’ve just done a bit more of a study.” We could not even trust the answer we got from the minister. Time and again I have asked whether the government is going to revamp the tier 3 railway lines. Is the business case completed? Is the government even writing a business case? The government is concerned about the rail network and rail safety. Is the government doing a business case for the tier 3 rail lines or is it not? Will the government reopen the Greenbushes rail line that it closed or will it not? Give us an answer before climbing up on the high moral horse and telling us what a wonderful job the government is doing on the rail system.

It is absolutely true that everybody loves trains. Do members know what? The Labor Party closed them down, too. I campaigned for years on the Greenbushes rail line when the Labor Party said it might not —

Hon Klara Andric interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The Liberal Party proposed the Perth–Mandurah line and government members were arguing over what path it would take.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The Labor Party closed railway lines.

The PRESIDENT: Order, member! Noting the time, I will seek the advice of the mover of the motion and whether he will seek to use his right of reply under standing order 66. If he is seeking that, I intend to put the amendment and then give the mover his right of reply.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I confirm that I will be seeking my right of reply.

The PRESIDENT: In which case, I will put the amendment.

Division

Amendment (deletion of words) put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (18)

Hon Klara Andric	Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Shelley Payne	Hon Darren West
Hon Dan Caddy	Hon Lorna Harper	Hon Stephen Pratt	Hon Pierre Yang
Hon Sandra Carr	Hon Jackie Jarvis	Hon Martin Pritchard	Hon Peter Foster (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Stephen Dawson	Hon Ayor Makur Chuot	Hon Samantha Rowe	
Hon Kate Doust	Hon Kyle McGinn	Hon Matthew Swinbourn	

Noes (9)

Hon Martin Aldridge	Hon Steve Martin	Hon Neil Thomson
Hon Peter Collier	Hon Tjorn Sibma	Hon Dr Brian Walker
Hon Louise Kingston	Hon Dr Steve Thomas	Hon Colin de Grussa (<i>Teller</i>)

Pairs

Hon Dr Sally Talbot	Hon Donna Faragher
Hon Rosie Sahanna	Hon Nick Goiran

Amendment thus passed.

Amendment (insertion of words) put and passed.

Motion, as Amended

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [3.02 pm] — in reply: We potentially may have ended up in some uncertain territory considering the way the clock was counting down in this debate and the very enthusiastic speakers whom we have listened to from both sides of the chamber. I will use this very brief opportunity to reflect upon the contribution made by the Minister for Emergency Services in his reply to my original motion before the amendment decision was made. Reference was made to the claim that the government has brought back railcar manufacturing to Western Australia. That is a mistruth. The Minister for Transport has been given every opportunity to demonstrate exactly how much local content has gone into this so-called claim. She has failed to provide evidence. I have seen photos of shrink-wrapped train carriages being imported directly from India. That does not meet anybody’s definition of “manufacturing”.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS — CONSIDERATION*Committee*

The Deputy Chair of Committees (Hon Sandra Carr) in the chair.

*Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations — Eighty-eighth Report —
Funding of homelessness services in Western Australia — Motion*

Resumed from 15 May on the following motion moved by Hon Peter Collier —

That the report be noted.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: I rise again this Wednesday afternoon to continue my remarks on the eighty-eighth report. On that note, I acknowledge the two outstanding contributions that Hon Dan Caddy made last week. As he said, a great deal of his time as a parliamentarian has been consumed by this fantastic eighty-eighth report. It certainly has great detail and substance. When time permits, I look forward to making further contributions in the future to continue my remarks on the importance of funding homelessness services in Western Australia.

Consideration of report postponed, pursuant to standing orders.

*Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs — Sixty-second Report —
Petition No. 029—Request for an independent review of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and
Attractions prescribed burning practices*

Resumed from 22 June 2023.

Motion

Hon PETER FOSTER: I move —

That the report be noted.

I will start by making some initial comments. I have a lot to say on this report, but we will see how we go. As usual, a number of members want to rise and make comments on the report. This is the sixty-second report by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. It was tabled in this house on 22 June last year. It has been on the notice paper for almost 12 months. I hope that members have had the time to read it. As it says inside the report, it was a result of the committee's investigations into petition 29, which was tabled earlier in this Parliament by Hon Dr Sally Talbot and also Hon Jackie Jarvis on 15 and 16 September 2021. The two petitions contained a total of 2 601 signatures and read as follows —

We the undersigned are concerned that the current practice of broad-scale prescribed burning conducted by DBCA is having severe detrimental impacts on ecosystems. An independent review is needed.

We therefore respectfully request that the Legislative Council recommend that the State Government of Western Australia commission an independent review of DBCA's prescribed burning practices that includes assessment of:

1. environmental objectives,
2. research, monitoring and evaluation of ecological impacts on fauna and flora,
3. application of relevant and recent leading external research,
4. provision and integrity of Fire Exclusion Reference Areas,
5. adaptive management for climate change, disease, drought, and wildfires,
6. transparency, accountability, and public/stakeholder consultation.

The principal petitioner for this petition was Donald Clarke. Some members may know Donald Clarke, who was a former councillor with the Shire of Denmark. As is the usual practice, when the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs receives a petition, it writes to the principal petitioner and the tabling member first to get further detail on the petition and to extrapolate what their concerns are. That gives the committee an idea of what information it should be seeking. Both the principal petitioner and the tabling member responded to our requests and those responses are on the Parliament's website. Following receipt of those responses, we wrote to the then Minister for Environment, Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, to get her views on the petition. That response is also publicly listed on the Parliament's website. The fourth response on the Parliament's website is a submission that we received from Bushfire Front. Some members here may be aware of that group and its view on the petition is also on the website.

Once we received all those submissions, we decided to undertake a number of public hearings that were broadcast live. We spoke to the Departments of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, and Fire and Emergency Services and we spoke to the advocacy groups Fire and Biodiversity WA and the Leeuwin Group. Information on these groups can be found towards the back of the report. Fire and Biodiversity WA is based in Denmark, unsurprisingly,

because that is where the principal petitioner is also located. That group was represented at the hearings by Bart Lebbing, Dr Joanna Young and Melissa Howe. They were very knowledgeable individuals who were also very passionate about the subject matter when they presented at the hearing. One could see that by the responses they gave on the day.

The Leeuwin Group was a more esteemed group consisting of professors including Emeritus Professor John Bailey, Emeritus Professor Sidney Bradshaw, Professor Stephen Hopper, AC, and Professor Kingsley Dixon. Professor Hopper has a Companion of the Order of Australia for his work in conservation biology, so he is a renowned expert in his field and has been awarded for his contribution. I also acknowledge Professor Dixon, who has a long history of advocating in this space. Sadly, earlier this year, his property in Waroona was damaged by bushfire, and there are a number of photos of this online. Cypress Farm and Gardens were put together by him and his partner over a number of years and I understand that they are in the process of rebuilding it. That reinforces just how real bushfires are to our community. As someone who comes from the north west, Tom Price in particular, we have had a number of bushfires over the years that have come close to town and threatened homes. I am very grateful for the work of the emergency services and resource companies there that do a lot of work year in, year out to protect our town. It really reinforces the importance of prescribed burning. When burning some bush, they put up barriers around town or create roadblocks to protect our town. Western Australia is highly prone to bushfires. I think 92 per cent of this state—quite a large percentage—is bushfire-prone, so that really reinforces the need for any actions we can take to save lives and property. For me, personally, that really highlights just how important prescribed burning is.

As I said, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to consideration of this report. It is not a very big report, but all the information that was gathered is obviously very appreciated. I want to give a shout-out to my committee members: Hon Tjorn Sibma, my deputy chair; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Shelley Payne; and Hon Stephen Pratt, who all joined me in putting this report together. I would also like to acknowledge the committee staff: Stephen Brockway, our advisory officer; and Christina Crichton, who at the time was our committee clerk. We have had a number of committee clerks, but she was our committee clerk at the time of putting together this report.

It is clear that the report is to do with prescribed burning, and I think it is really important that we understand what prescribed burning is. Some may know it as prescription or controlled burning, but it is obviously burning that takes place to reduce the amount of fuel and protect lives and properties. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions website actually contains really good information about what prescribed burning is and the steps the department takes when carrying out prescribed burning.

Some petitioners' concerns were around the lack of information or consultation. It is really good to see that there is a lot of information on the DBCA website about future burning programs and where the department is planning to burn over the next 12 months. If anyone in a community is concerned about the burning taking place in their area, they can get on the DBCA website to find out what is happening. I should probably also acknowledge the www.emergency.wa.gov.au website, which is also really useful for finding information, especially with regard to smoke. In Tom Price, whenever there is smoke, people get really concerned about what is happening outside. With websites like this emergency website, people can see that the smoke is actually coming from a prescribed burn, so it will obviously relax them somewhat to know that something controlled is happening, rather than thinking there is a bushfire. Now that we are heading into the cooler months there will be some prescribed burning happening in the north—perhaps not today, because it is a bit wet up there—to prepare for the warmer months.

As part of the inquiry, we conducted a number of field trips. I will not have time to go into those in detail, but we travelled to the Perth hills, in the Mundaring area. We also travelled down to Margaret River. These field trips were really useful because we got to see parts of the bush that had had prescribed burning. Where bushfires had come through, we could clearly see the demarcation of where prescribed burning had taken place and where properties were saved. We also saw areas where there had been no prescribed burning and the scorching and destruction wrought by uncontrolled bushfires was evident.

I will leave my comments there. I commend the report to the house.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I rise to speak to the sixty-second report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. In doing so, I indicate my support for the findings set out in that report. I think it is a quite well-considered report that points out and reminds us that the state's approach to prescribed burning has improved significantly. Certainly, I have observed that over my 25 years of being involved with fire and emergency management. There was a time when that was not necessarily the case—when hazard reduction and mitigation, and burning programs were perhaps more target-driven and in some respects perhaps lacked adequate planning. I think the report bears out the fact that bipartisan support is really important. It is important now and will probably be increasingly important in the future. Also, the report reminds us of the primacy of life. We consider life, property and then the environment when considering the risks and threats that the state will face now and in the future.

I am sure that members can recount their high school science days when they learned about the fire triangle. These days, it is now the fire tetrahedron, but the fire triangle explained that oxygen, heat and fuel were the essential elements for combustion. We cannot do much about mitigating or modifying the heat or oxygen elements of the fire triangle;

the one element we can change is the fuel. It is important that we still keep a focus on and a commitment to risk reduction. In a state as vast as Western Australia—as Hon Peter Foster said, 93 per cent of our landscape is bushfire prone—we will not be able to mitigate all our risks by mulching or using other mechanical mitigation options.

We are continuing to improve, but as I just touched on, mitigation is more than being just fire focused. A really important body of work started under the former government, which was the bushfire risk mitigation planning framework, followed by mitigation activity funding. This government has picked that up, and it is good to see in the state budget an increase in funding to the mitigation activity fund, which largely funds local governments to implement their bushfire risk mitigation plans. The former Liberal–National government boosted the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions’ prescribed burning capacity, and in the lead-up to this year’s state budget, this government made a similar budget announcement to do the same. It is fair to say that there has been a long-term bipartisan commitment to this.

I had the opportunity earlier this year to visit the Shire of Ravensthorpe and the Shire of Jerramungup, and I want to recognise Mal Grant and John Iffla from those local government areas. These two local governments on our south coast have significant risks, but they are also some of the best examples I have seen of using a relatively small amount of funding from the mitigation activity fund to mitigate the risks that their communities face. Although the report and the petition were focused on the activities of the DBCA and the Parks and Wildlife Service, local governments and, indeed, private landowners have a role to play.

I want to quote from the Bushfire Front’s submission to the committee. My experience is that everyone I interacted with from the Bushfire Front has been a former forester, land manager or officer involved with the former Department of Conservation and Land Management or the Parks and Wildlife Service that followed. In my view, land managers are often the best fire managers. Whether they be farmers, foresters, CALM officers or Parks and Wildlife Service officers, they have a significant depth of experience. When executing well-planned prescribed burns, often the length of experience and involvement is very important. The Bushfire Front made a submission to the committee, and it said —

We reject claims by the Leeuwin Group and by some environmentalists that the prescribed burning program is damaging, or threatens to damage, forest biodiversity, human health and air quality. Opponents of prescribed burning are not able to name a single species of native plant or animal that has become extinct, or is realistically threatened with extinction, as a result of a burning programme that now extends back to the 1950s.

We also reject the theory being advanced by the opponents of prescribed burning that it is not needed on the grounds that bushland left long unburnt becomes non-flammable. This nonsensical idea flies in the face of science, history, observation and actual measurement of fuels in long-unburnt forests.

The fundamental principle is this: fuel reduction does not prevent bushfires from occurring; however, it makes potential bushfires easier, safer and cheaper to control, and ensures they do less damage. Bushfires burning in heavy fuels are almost impossible to control even under relatively mild weather conditions.

Members might recall that in April this year we had a series of deliberately lit fires in the Shire of Denmark, and I note the link in this petition to this local government area. That was the Middle Road fire complex. I recall watching the community meeting live. The incident controller was a fellow by the name of Peter Masters. He was the acting district manager for Frankland district, based in Walpole with the Parks and Wildlife Service. Mr Masters has some 46 years’ experience in fire management. Unsurprisingly, he was asked a question at this community meeting in Walpole, in the Shire of Denmark, about the role that prescribed burning has played in managing the complex of fires that were allegedly deliberately lit. He reflected on the way in which the fire was behaving in fuels, and he reported on the low to moderate fire behaviour that was being seen in fuel loads of five years. There was a block of state forest or national park—I cannot remember what the land classification was—that was exhibiting low to moderate fire behaviour in five-year-old fuel loads. He then reflected on the 10 to 15-year-old fuel loads, the extreme fire behaviour that was experienced and the resources that had to be committed to manage this fire with fuel loads as low as just 10 to 15 years. In Western Australia we have fuel loads that are probably 50 to 60 years; they are unknown. Parts of our state have simply not been burnt in probably 100 years. Mr Masters was reflecting on the difficulty of controlling the fire behaviour of an environment with 10 to 15-year-old fuel loads on this day in April. He went on to say he had been doing this for 46 years and had seen this sort of thing during his career. He stressed the value and importance of fuel load in fire management. This is somebody with 46 years of experience.

As I said, there is always more to be done, particularly in terms of our focus on mitigation and the continuing learning reflected in the committee’s report. I reiterate the importance of prevention and preparedness. It costs less with fewer impacts; it impacts the environment less. It is much cheaper and better than simply doing nothing and dealing with the consequences. Of course, the other element outside of local government-owned land, privately owned land and the Parks and Wildlife Service estate is the issue of unallocated crown land and unmanaged reserves. We will have to see an uplift in mitigation focus as we start to address some of the risk on other lands.

I will limit my contribution to 10 minutes because in the interests of bipartisanship it would be great to see this report noted and the Parliament continuing to commit itself to the practice of bush fire risk mitigation, including using the important tool that is prescribed burning.

Hon STEPHEN PRATT: I thank both contributors so far. Having been involved in this body of work, I think it is important I make a contribution to the debate. I note the conciliatory remarks on bipartisanship on this issue from Hon Martin Aldridge. It is worth noting that this report is not the outcome of a formal inquiry. In this circumstance, a petition was submitted to the forty-first Parliament. It was a reiteration of one that had been submitted to the fortieth Parliament, and the committee really wanted to do it justice and make sure we were satisfied before going any further or deciding just to report to the Parliament, so here we have the end result of that body of work.

I would like to highlight that the different associated interested groups and petitioners with whom we met all share the same concerns. The slight difference is that although the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services care for the environment—that was reflected in the report—the priority is human life. At the end of the day, they are tasked with the responsibility of carrying out these burns. From time to time, issues have come up and things could have been done better, but they were able to show us onsite and along the journey that they are constantly learning, adapting and trying to improve the way they do things as they go.

We did some site visits, including one to Mundaring to see a site that is showing regrowth from an uncontrolled fire. We could see that plant life was returning and the impact that has on the landscape in an area that was completely burnt, how it comes back and how slow the process can be. We were taken to a site where there was smoke from burning embers as a result of a recent controlled burn. The canopy is still there, and people were doing activities, such as trail bike riding, not far from where we were. The layer of dangerous flammable material had been removed. If an uncontrolled fire took place there, pretty quickly homes and lives would be in danger.

I did not have a great understanding of what goes on in these circumstances before going into this; it was an educative process. As was pointed out previously, there are challenges across the board in all areas of government responsibility due to the vast length and breadth of Western Australia. In the case of bushfires, it gets hot here and we have high fuel loads. We have to do the best we can in a difficult set of circumstances.

The petition referred to burn targets and trying to cover as much ground as possible in a calendar year. This led us to question how DBCA goes through that process and what a controlled burn entails. One of the most interesting things to me is the number of things that need to go right before a prescribed burn can take place. The conditions need to be perfect. Things can change at the last minute, such as the wind direction, and DBCA has to make the tough decision whether to cancel or go ahead with the prescribed burn. Department staff go to sites where it plans to do these activities and identifies areas of significance for wildlife, such as nesting areas, and areas that could be left smouldering if they are not burnt and managed properly. The department staff explained to us the different scenarios that could take place and how careful they are to ensure that things do not get out of hand. It is a real challenge to get it right. It was certainly a learning experience for me.

The executive summary of the report shows us that if an issue is of importance and significance to people in the community, they will table a petition. When Parliament is prorogued, that petition comes off the notice paper, for want of a better description, but it can be reintroduced and picked up in the following term of government. This is a good example of how a petition can be reintroduced, with a fair level of inquiry taking place.

We had a few hearings with interested parties who came in to give us their take on things and to raise the issues that they really felt were not being covered off properly. We were able to bring in the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services to hear from them and to ask them about those issues that were raised. The conclusion was the resulting finding in this report that we were satisfied that no further investigation was required.

Hon Martin Aldridge touched on the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions order of priorities when undertaking prescribed burns: firefighter safety, lives, assets and then environmental values. That was supported by the committee. That can be taken out of context, considering it is some sort of scale or hierarchy. I think it obviously makes sense that human life would come first, but I did not think the others are too far behind in terms of their importance and the way that they are treated.

DBCA staff aim to make best efforts to limit damage done to fauna and flora whilst undertaking prescribed burns. I mentioned that they do go into a site to try to identify areas of significance to the natural habitat in those areas. Some of the issues that were raised were about how those interested parties are engaged both pre and post-prescribed burn. Those interest groups know where birds nest in certain areas. They want to go in and be assured that they are being looked after and are still there post-burn. I felt that the DBCA took that on board and that it will try to engage in a more proactive way with those groups going forward.

Finding 3 is important because it points to the fact that the committee did not agree with the assertion that the prescribed burning program is merely target driven. What I took away from some of the questions that we asked is that yes, it has some targets that it tries to meet, but now that I know the process for all the perfect burn

conditions, I think everyone can understand why DBCA does not get there sometimes. Just the vast nature of our state makes it quite a challenge to try to cover off all those areas. It does the best it can with the set of circumstances it is provided with.

I highlighted finding 7. It states —

Fire can be unpredictable, and losses of fauna and flora will sadly occur. However, this is at a much lesser scale than if the area subject to an uncontrolled bushfire had been previously burnt through mitigation practices.

That comes back to the point of the far more devastating impact that an uncontrolled bushfire can have on an area when it comes to lives and homes, obviously, but also when it comes to natural animal life and the flora and fauna in the area. A positive is finding out that the department has publicised its commitment to continuous learning and improvement, which is encouraged by the committee.

Hon DAN CADDY: I will take this opportunity as well to speak on the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs' sixty-second report, which deals with the petition that we have been talking about. I recognise the contributions of the members of that committee: Hon Stephen Dawson, Hon Stephen Pratt and Hon Martin Aldridge. I will pick up on something he said later. I acknowledge his long history in fire management and all that entails.

The committee was tasked with evaluating whether there should be a recommendation for an independent review into prescribed burning. Members have spoken about the original petition that came to this place in the previous Parliament. That was a far more prescriptive petition, which really wanted a couple of things changed. I might get to that later. This petition was really asking for an independent review, which results in the committee having to inquire into the current practices, like I said, specifically around prescribed burning. Prescribed burning is one element of overall land management. Prescribed or deliberate burning, if you want, has been part of this landscape for millennia, long before we were here. Anyone with any background in agriculture can speak to the importance of land management, not just burning but how land is cleared and how through the clearing and management of land we can deal not only with bushfire risks but also other risks, be that erosion, salinity or a number of other things that farming or regional families deal with.

There are three paragraphs in the executive summary that I particularly wanted to point to because they outline the history. I will not read it in, but for people who are interested in this, the third paragraph outlines the agency's statutory duties. The fourth paragraph talks about using prescribed bushfires as a mitigation method. That is the crux of this issue. It has always had bipartisan support, as Hon Martin Aldridge said, and that I think this agency does very well. The key bit that I will read in is from paragraph 5 —

It was noted by the Committee that all witnesses agreed that prescribed burning had a role to play in the mitigation of the threat of bushfires ...

When we go through a report, we look for all the findings. Very conveniently, as with all reports, they are listed at the start of this report. There are nine findings. Keeping in mind that the committee was tasked with whether an independent review needed to be conducted, of those nine findings, the ninth says it is not regarded as necessary, which is a conclusion that I absolutely support. Of the other eight, seven noted the good work and the high standard to which the agency is doing the job that it is charged with in this regard. The only other finding, finding 4, encourages further and closer collaboration, recognising as well that the agency is doing exactly what it should be doing and maybe could go a little bit further. That is reassuring for all of us because the committee took the petition at face value and said, "Right, we'll investigate this." The investigation is fairly thorough, as members can tell. Anyone who has read the report would have to say that the committee undertook a fairly thorough investigation and came back saying that the agency is doing a very good job in this regard. I notice members who have spoken before me from both sides of the house agree with this.

I mentioned earlier the difference between this petition and the previous petition. I will just follow up on that. The previous petition really called for a stop to prescribed burning in certain areas. In my opinion, the second petition was better thought out, asking us to go away and have a look at prescribed burning to see what we are doing and whether we are doing it well. I note that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, which is also responsible for burns in some areas on some categories of land, was also one of the agencies that was consulted. I was listening intently to what Hon Martin Aldridge said.

When we talk about bushfire mitigation, individuals and individual landowners have a big role in ensuring that, from a statewide perspective, and certainly a regional perspective, wherever they may be based, they are active in ensuring that they mitigate the risk of bushfire on their property as best as possible. These are not just larger rural properties like our farm but also other properties, especially those in the hills. One of my closest friends, Sam McLennan—he is probably my oldest and dearest lifelong friend—had a property of several acres up in the hills. I remember going up there on an annual basis to help him burn back the undergrowth—basically, prescribed burning on a micro level. Even with an area that small, he would do that across a couple of days to make sure that it was done properly. We need to recognise that a lot of private landowners put a lot of work into making sure that their properties are bushfire ready and mitigated. Sam was a bit of an exception. He is a bit of an expert in safety as he comes from an offshore oil and gas background. He took it to another extreme, with large water tanks,

independent generators and very broad-ranging sprinklers across the top of the house on the property. This was a perfect example of everything that could be done by an individual owner who lived up there to make sure that their property was as bushfire ready as possible. We need only look at some of the fires that we have had in recent times through the hills to know that it takes only a couple of properties to not be in that state for a fire to get away from even professional firefighters, despite the good job that they do. Fires can get away from them very quickly.

I have only a minute left, so I will flick through other things that I was going to say and go to the conclusion of the report to note some of the things that are happening. The report states at paragraph 5.9 —

DBCA recognises that it is not perfect ... it continues to learn and improve.

An additional list of priority actions is set out in that paragraph, including implementing a bushfire risk management framework in which bushfire risk is assessed and managed right across the state. That is about bringing everything together and having a whole-of-state approach and, within that, implementing and developing regional fuel management plans. These are the things that we would expect the agency to do. It is good to see that those things are in that list and that the agency is doing that well.

This is a very good report for people to read to get an idea of what the agency does and an understanding of the multiple reasons for mitigating bushfire risk through prescribed burning, the way it is done, the things that are taken into account and the real scope of it. It is not simply about going out and just burning back whenever and wherever we feel like it. On that note, I will take my seat, but I commend the committee on a thorough report. For someone like me, it was quite an educational report on a burning issue.

Hon LORNA HARPER: I am delighted to stand today to speak on the sixty-second report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs, which is about petition 29. Like my colleague Hon Stephen Pratt, I have been a townie and probably have not been subjected to the realities of bushfires and what happens in a lot of regional areas. Reading this report has been a huge education for somebody like me. Yes, I live on the outskirts of the Perth metropolitan area in Ellenbrook so we have been touched by fires in the past, but, even then, they were still quite a few kilometres from where we were. Although I have watched news about bushfires like everybody else, I do not think I had knowledge about prescribed burns and what the department was trying to do.

Chapter 2 of the report refers to the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions' roles and activities. Under section 33 of the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984, the DBCA has certain functions. These include to manage the land to which the act applies and the associated fauna, flora and forest projects. One of the things I learned when reading this report was that when they do the prescribed burns, they do it so the fire burns low and does not go too far up the trees, whereas a bushfire is uncontrolled and just burns wherever. They try to maintain prescribed burns to a low burn so that some fauna has the opportunity to climb the trees. Obviously, the fauna will be impacted by some smoke, but the department tries to mitigate all these circumstances as best as it can.

I never knew this. I thought that when they did a prescribed burn, it just burnt. I learned that they try their best to preserve as much fauna as possible and keep the burn contained as much as possible. What a huge thing to learn! They also have to take any measures necessary, including planned burning, to prevent, manage or control fire on that land. We have all unfortunately seen the damage that lightning strikes, so-called wild bushfires, and, even more disturbingly, intentionally lit fires can do to the environment, and the danger they put the volunteers and full-time firefighters in. We have seen the damage they can do to people's properties and livelihoods. It is really important that we try to mitigate as much of that as possible.

As Hon Martin Aldridge—himself a former firefighter—said, it is really important that we put people's safety first when we look at this. He talked about the fire triangle. At school, we did not learn about this triangle—I cannot remember as I was not very scientific—but the report stated that the fire triangle related to fuel, weather and topography. Even I understand that fire travels up or down a hill faster or slower depending on the undergrowth, how many trees there are and the wind. I understand that. The fact is that people out there do this for a living. They can predict quite well what the weather will be like, where the fire could potentially go and how they can control it. That is pretty amazing to me. To me, a fire is a living, breathing thing, and the fact that they can put some form of control around it and contain prescribed burns as much as possible is really important. It then protects us from wildfires, which cause damage, destroy properties and have unfortunately claimed lives over the years. It protects not just volunteers and firefighters, but also people who decide to stay and fight when maybe they should not—well, I cannot really say. We should all have a firefighting plan in place to either stay and fight or go. I am a “go”. I do not need to stay and watch things burn.

Going through the report, I read that members of the committee went and physically saw for themselves the impacts of a prescribed burn on what a wildfire can potentially do. It would have been very educational and extremely interesting for them. I would have loved to see the difference myself and learn more about it. I think it would be really good for lots of people in the community to get the opportunity to see more of the benefits of this. Unfortunately, living in the city, when we talk about prescribed burns, it is usually somebody complaining about the smoke getting blown over the city. As much as we can predict weather et cetera, there is not one of us who can change which way the wind blows. As much as some of us think that, as members of Parliament, we can rule the world and are—

what is the word?—wonderful, we cannot control nature and fire to the nth degree. We need experts, and the experts spend a lot of time and energy trying to predict these things to protect not only us, but also the flora and fauna in those areas. I will leave my comments there because I am aware that other members wish to speak on this. I thank the committee for a very educational and informative report.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I rise to make some brief remarks on the sixty-second report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs, *Petition No. 029—Request for an independent review of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions prescribed burning practices*. We heard from several members about the importance of having bipartisan support for prescribed burning in this state as it is a key plank in keeping Western Australians safe. I am glad that the report came down on that side in that regard. That certainly has been the case for decades and it should continue.

Obviously, our state is vulnerable to bushfires and fires of all sorts. A large proportion of the state is vulnerable, which we would expect with our hot and dry summers. The risk is greater today because of the change over the last 50 to 70 years in where Western Australians now live, which includes the Perth hills and the south west of the state. We increasingly like those lifestyle blocks that are very close to large timber blocks, which makes those areas even more vulnerable. Prescribed burning programs are one of the things we can do to best protect those areas. Members who have seen the difference between a mild burn and a wild burn know very clearly that the evidence is stark. In February a couple of years ago, there was a fire in my part of the world where there are a number of reserves amongst the farming land. I am not sure whether those reserves will ever recover. They certainly will not be what they once were. There might be regrowth of some sort, but it will be a very different landscape from before the inferno ripped through that land.

Getting back to the report, I thank the committee for its hard work. We heard from Hon Dan Caddy that the report highlights what the agency does. I take a slightly different view of that. I think it highlights what I think we would like the agency to do and what the agency would like to do. I know that the committee did not get to this in its deliberations, but I think there was a missed opportunity. I am not sure whether the agency does enough in this regard. I will go into that in more detail. The minister's response is at paragraph 2.9 on page 7 of the report. It states —

The Minister went on to explain that, in order to restrict the extent of bushfires impacting less than 1% of the landscape each year, the proportion of the landscape that needs to be fuel reduced is 7–9% per year. Therefore, in the south-west of the State, the annual prescribed burning target is approximately 200,000 hectares, which equates to about 8% of the DBCA-managed estate.

Approximately 200 000 hectares is the target. I note one of the findings that I think Hon Stephen Pratt mentioned, which is that this is not a target-driven program, and that is appropriate. We know that weather and circumstances change and that some years are drier, hotter and windier than others. The minister explained what needs to happen to reduce the fuel load adequately across the state to make the managed estate safe. The report goes on to state —

The burns option program for any given year will identify around 400 burns, though only approximately 130 of those are actually implemented.

Again, we can understand that. Conditions vary and it is difficult to get all the burns done that we might wish. I also wonder whether there is a resourcing issue here, and I will get to that. In budget paper No 2, volume 2, page 700, some targets are outlined in the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions pages. In 2022–23, the “Proportion of planned Priority 1 prescribed burns achieved” was 49 per cent, which is not a particularly good number; in 2023–24, it was 55 per cent in the budget column and 50 per cent in the estimated actual column; and in 2024–25, it has 55 per cent in the budget target column. At an estimates hearing last year—it might have been the year before—I inquired of DBCA what that priority one number meant. Is it the 200 000 hectares that the minister has acknowledged is required to do the task, or is it the 130 burns of the 400 that it anticipates it will be able to do? The answer was very, very unclear. It was very vague. I pressed on and said, “If you had more resources, would you get to the target?” Again, it was not a particularly clear response, but I think it was acknowledged that, yes, we would get to the target. Therefore, I think that there is a resourcing issue to make this task happen. It is a vital task, but do not take my word for it; take the word of the Bushfire Front. I note that when the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs chose to have hearings, it resolved to conduct a number of public hearings and invited the DBCA, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Fire and Biodiversity WA and the Leeuwin Group. These public hearings took place on 19 August 2022. The committee did not invite the Bushfire Front, which was a missed opportunity; however, the Bushfire Front made a submission to the committee, which was received in November 2022.

I will quickly refer to the Bushfire Front. I am sure that many members here have met with various members of the Bushfire Front. I think they do an outstanding job. If members want to turn to a long list of very wonderful curricula vitae, I will just run through some of their owners very quickly. Dr Chris Back is the patron of the Bushfire Front, as most members will know. Dr Chris Back was a federal senator and CEO of the Bush Fires Board in WA. Roger Underwood, AM, has 60 years of experience as a firefighter. He was a district, regional and research manager in WA forests and a general manager in the Department of Conservation and Land Management for nine years. Don Spriggins has over 55 years of experience in bushfire management in WA and Victoria. Kevin White, AFSM,

has 55 years of experience in fire suppression. Noel Ashcroft, AM, has 20 years of experience. John Clarke has 44 years of bushfire management experience, and so on. This is a wonderful group of people who have turned their minds to the task. However, pressure is coming from those people without that experience, quite frankly, and from those who test the bounds of credibility around the science behind this. We see that particularly around population centres.

I have seen the fire maps. I met with John Evans, who is a former DBCA firefighter and now retired. He is very concerned about DBCA's ability to manage its estate, which is growing rapidly, because it does not have the staff or the resources. In the fire maps that John showed me, it is not areas where there has not been a burn for 15 or 20 years; there are areas that have not received a fire suppression burn in 40, 50, 60 or 70 years. Alarmingly, some of those are very close to major population centres. I think that is because of political pressure from people in those areas who do not want to see the smoke come over the hill in autumn. However, I think that is dangerous in the long term. Those areas are being neglected for reasons that do not have much to do with science, unfortunately.

I thank the committee for its work. It was a slightly missed opportunity to not press further. I do not think it needed an independent inquiry. The agency knows where the gaps are and those gaps are significant. With summer coming up, in not too many distant months, I hope the agency will meet those burn targets. Actually, the agency does not even think it is going to meet the 55 per cent target for 2024–25, so we will see how we go. I wish the agency the best of luck.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I know that we have not long left today, but I want to talk about this petition quite briefly and agree with the comments made by the previous speaker, Hon Steve Martin, about the Bushfire Front. Having been the Minister for Emergency Services for the last few years and previously the Minister for Environment for four years, I have had many interactions with the Bushfire Front over the years, particularly with Roger Underwood, whom I first dealt with when I was a staffer to an environment minister about 20 years ago. I have always found the Bushfire Front to be a great organisation with which to engage. Its members are never shy in making their comments known to you. They have been regular writers to me over the years and I value their input. As Minister for Environment, I took the view that it really is important to do strategic burns. We cannot shy away from them. If we are going to keep regional communities or, indeed, peri-urban areas safe, we need to do prescribed burns. The Bushfire Front has advocated for that for a long, long time. I want to acknowledge Roger in the first place because he has been a stalwart in the sector. I also want to acknowledge John Clarke, who took over fairly recently as chair of the Bushfire Front. As Hon Steve Martin said, this is a group of people with immense experience. Whether they are former foresters or firefighters, from the former Department of Conservation and Land Management, the former Forests Department or the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, as the case may be, they have an incredible amount of experience in dealing with bushfires.

It is easy to think that because it has rained for the last 24 hours, we must be out of the woods, but it has certainly been one of the most challenging years that I have experienced and remember in terms of bushfires. It has been an incredibly long fire season. Until this week, it certainly did not feel like there was any end in sight. It is really important that we do our prescribed burns. Our mitigation activity fund that sits under DFES is used to working incredibly closely with various local governments around the state to make sure that they can undertake their prescribed burns. I am not one of those people who say we have to stay away from prescribed burns. If we want to keep people safe, we will have to keep doing them and do more of them.

Consideration of report postponed, pursuant to standing orders.

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

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Consideration of Tabled Papers

Resumed from 28 May on the following motion moved by Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Emergency Services) —

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

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [4.08 pm]: I rise to speak on the noting of the budget papers. We will shortly embark on our budget estimates process, so we do not have the benefit of the wonderful consideration of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, but in preparing for my contribution today, I did what I do every year, which is to reflect on my previous year's contribution. Some significant events occurred last year. I am speaking a little earlier this year than I did last year. Last year I spoke on 14 June, and last year my budget reply speech followed the inaugural speech of Hon Ben Dawkins. It must mean that we are approaching one year of his service to the Council. It is, interestingly, also one year to the day today that Mark McGowan left cabinet and announced his resignation. We are therefore approaching one year of the Cook government.

In my introductory remarks I also reflected in quite a solemn way on the passing of Constable Anthony Woods, who had passed in tragic circumstances just a few days earlier. If I am not mistaken, it was the Sunday prior to my budget reply on the Wednesday. It would be remiss of me not to reflect today on the grieving that is occurring in

much of the Western Australian community following the senseless act of violence perpetrated by one man last Friday that resulted in the loss of two innocent lives, Jenny and Gretl Petelczyc. I am sure that nothing we say can ease the suffering of the families, friends and those involved in the tragic events that unfolded last week. I must say that reading yesterday's statement by Ariel Bombara was compelling. I will not and do not intend to repeat the mistakes of what appears to be a growing conga line of government ministers, including the Premier, in their attempt to politicise this tragedy; initially, it was Minister Whitby on Sunday, followed up by Minister Papalia and Premier Cook on Monday. We have learned that there appears to be some form of rapid review underway. I heard Minister Papalia's public statement that the Premier had charged him and the Commissioner of Police to urgently consider further amendments to the bill before the Council. Obviously, there is a time for reflection and there is a time for action. It is interesting that on one hand the Council is being urged to act, and on the other, we are waiting for the government's response.

Many years ago, when I was a young man, I had recently been inducted into and was participating in the then Fire and Emergency Services Authority fire academy. I went in as a recruit firefighter. Back then, probably as it is today, there were three years—it felt like three years!—sorry, three months of recruit training, and five years of ongoing on-the-job training to become a senior firefighter. There are many things that I would not want to reflect on nor remember from that experience, but one thing was drilled into recruits on day one, and that is that we are given two ears, two eyes and one mouth, and they should always be used in the same proportion: you should listen and you should look before you speak.

I think that would be timely advice for the government to reflect upon when it thinks about the tragedy that occurred last Friday and how it will respond. Today I read many reports in *The West Australian*. One was an article by Josh Zimmerman in which there was a sentence that stood out for me. It states —

On Monday, Cook went so far as to say failure to support the gun reforms equated to “condoning similar events (to the Bombara murders) potentially taking place into the future”.

If there is any doubt amongst anyone in this chamber about whether there is a group in Western Australia that is seeking political advantage and gain from these tragic events, they need look no further than the government. I hope that quote from the article is a misquote, because it is the sort of rubbish that I would expect from the Minister for Police, but not from the Premier of Western Australia. I hold the Premier in higher regard than that; I have respect for the Premier, but if that was not a misquote, it was unbecoming of the Premier.

The state budget was really of no surprise to many in Western Australia. For me—and, indeed, for other members in this chamber—this is a year of lasts, this year being the last in which I will make a speech in response to the budget. I always start budget day with budget paper No 3 because I think that is where we find less spin and more facts. It contains the *Economic and fiscal outlook*. It does not take the reader long this year to realise that we have a situation in Western Australia of a significant escalation in net debt. This is the Treasurer's first budget and we have heard the Premier and others describe the Treasurer as the best in the nation—a description that, as part of the government's new humble approach, she has accepted. She is an extraordinary Treasurer in at least one sense: she will be the first Treasurer to take net debt past \$40 billion.

I have decided to title this speech, “Missed opportunities, wrong priorities”. At 30 June 2017, net debt was \$31.96 billion. Net debt at 30 June 2025 will be \$32.71 billion. What happened to paying down debt slowly, like paying a mortgage? The mortgage is increasing. What happened to windfall gains being attributed to debt reduction, not new spending? We need to look no further than the farcical situation on page 279 of budget paper No 3, where the debt reduction account is listed as one of the state's special purpose accounts. Are there any guesses about what might be so interesting in the debt reduction account? It is a whole table of blanks, year on year—last year, this year, next year, the year after and the year after that. The debt reduction account lists just dashes. The opening balance is nothing, and the closing balance is nothing. Then, a description says, amongst other things, “No additional funds are forecast to pass through the Account in this Budget.” I wonder at what point the government will seek to remove or decommission the debt reduction account because it is embarrassing for a government that said that all windfall gains would be attributed to it.

Also interesting is that the ratio used in budget paper No 3 has changed, and I am not sure why. Interestingly, it changed with the election of the McGowan government. The net-debt ratio used to be the net-debt-to-revenue ratio. Now, we use net debt as a share of gross state product. There may be a reasonable explanation, other than the election of the McGowan government, that shifted the debt ratio found in the 2017–18 key budget aggregates from a net-debt-to-revenue ratio to a net-debt-to-share-of-gross-state-product ratio. Maybe treasuries across the nation have now gone this way and now use this to benchmark against each other. Perhaps there is some rational explanation. Perhaps, when the government was elected, the net-debt-to-revenue ratio was 81.4 per cent and it is taking net debt to revenue to above 90 per cent. Maybe that is the story that the government does not want to tell.

In considering this, it is interesting to contemplate a number of things, including the views of the government when it was in opposition. Members might recall that yesterday, I asked a question about the whereabouts of Labor's “debt monster” and whether the Treasurer was considering reinstating it.

I draw the Acting President's attention to an ABC news article by Andrew O'Connor posted on 28 May 2015. It is entitled "Labor defends use of 'monster' in relation to WA's spiralling debt", and it says —

WA shadow treasurer Ben Wyatt has defended Labor's use of a person dressed as a "debt monster" as a legitimate way of highlighting the state's spiralling debt.

Debt will hit \$31 billion next financial year and was projected to peak at more than \$36 billion in 2018.

Labor has transformed the debt from a number on a budget paper into a blue-suited "debt monster" as a roaming reminder to voters of the legacy of the Barnett Government.

While the Premier has dismissed Labor's "debt monster" as silly, Mr Wyatt said it would draw attention to a real and serious problem that will stalk the West Australian economy and taxpayers for decades.

"Now that he's here, the debt monster's going to take a long time to get rid of," he said.

"The next government elected in 2017 and probably the one in 2021 is going to have to manage the debt monster and that's going to take all sorts of difficult questions by the Barnett Government.

"When you create such levels of debt it takes a long time to pay it off and that's why we've got the debt monster."

Labor first used the debt monster analogy in the days after the state budget was handed down by Treasurer Mike Nahan.

Debt to consume cash for future generations

The budget revealed the state would record three consecutive record deficits, and an increasing level of debt which would not peak for another three years.

Opposition Finance spokeswoman Rita Saffioti told Parliament a financial beast had been created that would consume the state's cash for future generations.

"During the good times, you not only spent every red cent, you borrowed during those good times," she told Parliament.

"You've created a debt monster. It's now out of control and you don't know what to do with it."

Labor plans to send its own "debt monster" to public places and government events in an effort to ram home its message about the long term impact of the state's high borrowings.

"Mr Barnett spent beyond the capacity of the state. That means interest. That means future cuts to public services, that means sale of assets. That's the reality," Mr Wyatt said.

"But hopefully the debt monster might get the chance to have a meeting with the Premier ... and maybe the debt monster and Mr Barnett can have a long conversation around what the debt monster means for Western Australia."

Mr Barnett has dismissed the Labor move.

"I think it's silly," he said.

"And I think if Mark McGowan regards himself as a potential Premier, he should get serious and start behaving like an adult."

It is interesting how many things change and how many remain the same. This was the Labor Party protesting in opposition. The then shadow Minister for Finance, now Treasurer in the Saffioti government, is taking debt to \$41 billion. It is a bit like ambulance ramping: when ambulance ramping is a crisis at 10 000 hours and the government takes it through to 65 000 hours, there is nothing to see! This is as stated by the best Treasurer in the country—humbly accepted by the Treasurer herself!

I remind members that this speech is "Missed opportunities, wrong priorities" because government is all about making priorities. In the 41 minutes I have remaining, I will outline how the government has its priorities wrong and has missed opportunities and will challenge the premise that the state can afford a \$41 billion debt without having an impact on future generations and future governments. This was a government committed to paying down the debt slowly—like a mortgage. This was a government that said windfall gains would go into the debt reduction account. What happens when revenue falls away in the forward estimates, perhaps more quickly than is forecast? What then happens to net debt? What then happens to the government's asset investment program? More importantly, what happens to the prioritisation of investment by this city-centric Labor government?

I asked in question time yesterday—it was a rather futile attempt as most question times are—about whether the Treasurer had considered dusting off the big blue monster or whether she even knew where it was.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2587.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE
VIOLENCE RESTRAINING ORDERS

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

In what circumstances would police officers escort a woman to a residence to collect items without a violence restraining order or a family violence restraining order being in place at the request of the woman?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Police.

Consideration will be given upon request to the Western Australia Police Force depending on individual circumstances.

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN — OVERSEAS TRAVEL

581. Hon PETER COLLIER to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to the ministerial travel reports for the periods 1 October to 31 December 2023 and 1 January to 31 March 2024, which are late for tabling by 148 days and 57 days respectively.

Why have these reports not been tabled and when will they be tabled?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

The quarterly *Report of overseas air travel undertaken by ministers, parliamentary secretaries and government officers on official business* is tabled regularly following the collection and compilation of relevant information from all agencies. Reports for the December 2023 and March 2024 quarters will be tabled shortly. I note that the former Liberal–National government took up to 12 months to table reports of overseas travel or did not table them at all.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Colin de Grussa.

FIREARMS — BUYBACK PROGRAM

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

I refer to the government's buyback of firearms.

- (1) Are firearms surrendered under the scheme rendered unusable and scrapped?
- (2) If no to (1), are these firearms sold?
- (3) If yes to (2), by whom, and who retains the revenue derived from the sale of these firearms?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1) All firearms surrendered as part of the firearms buyback scheme are destroyed.
- (2)–(3) Not applicable.

POLICE — STATE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL — DECISIONS

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

I refer to the remarks of the Commissioner of Police that indicated that the State Administrative Tribunal has overturned decisions made by Western Australia Police Force to seize firearms.

On how many occasions in the last year has SAT overturned a seizure?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

The Minister for Police has 14 questions today. He has not been able to answer all of them today; some will be answered tomorrow. If honourable members want answers to other questions, they are welcome to ask those questions. We will get the answers to these tomorrow.

In this case, the Western Australia Police Force advises that it is not possible to provide an answer in the required timeframe. A response will be provided to the honourable member tomorrow.

EARLY YEARS PARTNERSHIP — PROJECTS

584. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Early Childhood Education:

I refer to the press statement titled “Budget boost to partnership delivering better outcomes for children” dated 3 May 2024, which states —

The combined funding uplift will deliver 24 priority projects under the Early Years Partnership ...

Will the minister provide a list of the 24 priority projects that will receive funding?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Early Childhood Education.

As part of the 2024–25 budget, the state government and Minderoo Foundation committed an additional \$15.6 million and \$19 million respectively, amounting to a combined funding uplift of \$34.6 million, towards implementing 24 priority projects from the community plans across the four Early Years Partnership communities.

The Department of Communities is currently meeting with the Early Years Partnership communities to discuss the proposed projects. Projects will be announced by the government in due course.

PERTH SEAWATER DESALINATION PLANT

585. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Water:

I refer to the minister's answers to my question without notice 457, which admitted that no renewable energy has been used at the Perth seawater desalination plant in the six years from 2017–18 to 2022–23 inclusive.

- (1) Did the Carpenter Labor government publicly commit to having the PSDP run on renewable energy in 2005 despite the 2004 ministerial environmental approval allowing it to run on gas?
- (2) If yes to (1), did the PSDP ever run on renewable energy; and, if so, for which years?
- (3) Why was the commitment to run the PSDP on renewables abandoned?
- (4) Will the PSDP ever run on renewables; and, if so, when?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

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

- (1) The minister cannot advise on previous government commitments.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Read *Hansard*.

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN: If the member already knew the answer, why did he ask?

- (2)–(4) Water Corporation had a contract with Western Power for electricity from the Emu Downs wind farm for 10 years from 2007–16. Water Corporation satisfied its ministerial conditions for the Perth seawater desalination plant from 2017 onwards by purchasing carbon credits. Electricity for the Perth seawater desalination plant will be part of the portfolio of options developed for Water Corporation's plans to achieve its greenhouse gas commitments.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING — AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

586. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Minister for Finance:

I refer to the Auditor General's report *Government Campaign Advertising* on 15 May 2024, noting the Auditor General said \$205 million has been spent on campaign advertising and that "Unlike other jurisdictions ... there is no specific legislation for government advertising and communications in WA."

The minister responded to my question on 7 May 2024 by merely directing me to annual reports. In light of the criticisms of the Auditor General, I ask the following questions.

- (1) How much has been spent by all agencies on advertising in 2022–23?
- (2) How much has been budgeted for 2023–24?
- (3) What are the top five spending agencies?
- (4) For (3), what are the main campaigns?
- (5) In addition to questions already asked, noting we are in an election year and that the government has been found to not be apolitical in its campaign spending, what is the budget for 2024–25 government agencies?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(5) Information on every agency's expenditure on advertising is publicly reported in annual reports in the section on financial and compliance disclosures.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: What about the budgets?

Hon SUE Ellery: Does the member want the answer or not?

Hon Neil Thomson: You are not giving it to me.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon SUE ELLERY: Should I start again? It is the member's time I am wasting when he interrupts me.

Hon Neil Thomson: There is not much point. Just do whatever you like.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you!

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Nick Goiran: It is actually my time.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Even worse!

- (1)–(5) Information on every agency's expenditure on advertising is publicly reported in annual reports in the section on financial and compliance disclosures. Adding up information that is publicly available is something I am confident even Hon Neil Thomson is capable of.

ORAL CONTRACEPTION — TRIAL

587. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the announcement of a new trial that will make the resupply of the oral contraceptive pill available over the counter at participating pharmacies.

- (1) Is the eligibility restricted to women taking it for contraceptive purposes?
- (2) If yes to (1), why are those women and girls taking the contraceptive pill to regulate their periods and reduce pain excluded from this trial?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

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

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Use of the oral contraceptive pill for indications other than the prevention of pregnancy is associated with different medical treatment and safety considerations, which necessitate medical practitioner oversight.

FIREARMS ACT — SEIZURES

588. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer the minister to the ongoing media interest in potential changes to the still-nascent firearms legislation, as hinted at by the Premier over the weekend.

- (1) Since the Cook government was sworn in, notwithstanding weapons voluntarily surrendered under the firearms amnesty, how many firearms has the Western Australia Police Force confiscated under the existing legal provisions available to it?
- (2) In that same period, how many cannabis possession and/or cultivation charges have been laid before the courts?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

The Western Australia Police Force advises that it is not possible to provide an answer within the required timeframes. A response will be provided to the honourable member tomorrow.

FIREARMS BILL 2024

589. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to the following briefing notes supplied to the minister by the Western Australia Police Force, and I ask that they be tabled. They are ministerial briefing note entitled "Firearms act reform project—Efficacy and impact of approved provisions for firearm licensing" with a police reference of fA2368138; and ministerial briefing note entitled "Law reform commission firearms review—Mental health and access to firearms" with a police reference of fA2355715.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Minister for Police advises the following.

It is not possible to table the ministerial briefing notes requested by the honourable member as they contain cabinet deliberations.

FIREARMS BILL 2024

590. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to the Firearms Bill 2024 and the reforms that were announced on 16 October 2023.

- (1) What was the total number of firearms licensed in Western Australia as at October 2023?

- (2) Of those, how many were registered to the following categories as at October 2023 —
- (a) category A;
 - (b) category B;
 - (c) category C;
 - (d) category D;
 - (e) category E; and
 - (f) category H?
- (3) What is the total number of firearms licensed in Western Australia as of today?
- (4) Referring to (3), how many are registered to the following categories —
- (a) category A;
 - (b) category B;
 - (c) category C;
 - (d) category D;
 - (e) category E; and
 - (f) category H?

That was hard to say!

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. Noting how difficult the honourable member said that was to say, I think somebody who lodges the member's questions on her behalf changed the "a" to "1" and the "b" to 2 so that it reads differently.

However, the Western Australia Police Force advises that it is not possible to provide an answer within the required time frames. The response will be provided to the honourable member tomorrow.

DOUGLAS CRABBE — RELEASE

591. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:

I refer to the recent recommendation by the Prisoners Review Board for the release of one of Australia's most notorious mass murderers, Douglas Crabbe, following his completion of a resocialisation program approved by Attorney General Quigley.

- (1) Was the offender originally given a life sentence for the murder of five people in the Northern Territory?
- (2) Which Labor minister approved his transfer to prison in our state in 2005?
- (3) On how many occasions did Liberal Attorney General Mischin reject Crabbe's applications for release?
- (4) Will Attorney General Quigley consult with any of the surviving families of the victims prior to making his decision whether to approve Crabbe's release?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

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

- (1) Yes.
- (2) It was the then Attorney General, Hon Jim McGinty, MLA.
- (3) Then Attorney General Mischin declined a recommendation to parole Mr Crabbe on two occasions.
- (4) In accordance with the Sentence Administration Act 2003, the board, in carrying out its functions, must regard the safety of the community as the paramount consideration and also take into account a range of release considerations, including issues for any victim if a prisoner is released and any matter raised in a victim submission. Victims of Mr Crabbe, as well as those granted special permission to register with the victim notification register, will have been provided information on how to submit to the releasing authorities a victim submission detailing the impact of the offences and their view on the offender's release from custody. The board must incorporate the views of victims in its reports, which are provided to the Attorney General for his consideration.

RENT BIDDING

592. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Minister for Commerce:

I refer to the government's rent bidding changes.

- (1) How many FTE "undercover officers" have been recruited or allocated to respond to rent bidding in WA?

- (2) How many rental property inspections have undercover officers attended to date?
- (3) How many instances of rent bidding have been identified by those officers?
- (4) What, if any, penalties have been attracted to date in relation to rent bidding?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. Despite my offer of my services to the Commissioner for Consumer Protection, she has not taken me up as a secret shopper.

- (1) These activities will be undertaken by existing full-time equivalents.
- (2) Nil. The standard operating procedures are currently being developed. The rent bidding changes came into effect two weeks ago. Consumer Protection is using this time to educate property managers and landlords to ensure that they are aware of and are able to comply with this new legal obligation.
- (3)–(4) Not applicable.

KNIFE CRIME — STOP-AND-SEARCH LAWS

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

I refer the minister to the Labor government's proposed stop-and-search laws to crack down on knife crime.

- (1) Has the proposed legislation been drafted?
- (2) If no to (1), has the drafting commenced; and, if so, when did it begin?
- (3) If no to (1), when will the drafting commence?
- (4) When is it anticipated that the legislation will be introduced into Parliament?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. The following answer is provided on behalf of the Minister for Police.

- (1)–(4) As announced last week, the Cook government will introduce the toughest knife laws in the country, giving the WA Police Force greater powers to locate knives and other concealed weapons to better protect the Western Australian community. The drafting of bills for introduction is a decision of cabinet and is cabinet-in-confidence.

WA ELECTRIC VEHICLE NETWORK — RAVENSTHORPE CHARGER

594. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Climate Action:

I refer to the WA electric vehicle network's 150 kilowatt dual outlet Kempower charger installed in Ravensthorpe and the response to question without notice 280 asked by me on 16 April 2024.

- (1) Was the planned energisation date of 29 April 2024 met?
- (2) Is the site fully operational, including both AC and DC chargers?
- (3) If no to (1) or (2), on what date will the site become fully operational and what is the reason for the further delay?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question and for his interest in the world's longest electric highway. On behalf of the Minister for Climate Action, I provide the following answer.

- (1) Energisation occurred on 16 May 2024.
- (2) The AC charger is operational; the DC charger is commissioned but will not be fully operational until late June.
- (3) The site is expected to be fully operational in late June. Further network testing is required before the site can be made fully operational.

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE — FIREARMS — ARIEL BOMBARA'S COMMENTS

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

I refer to the statement made by Ariel Bombara and the minister's recent public commentary in response to that statement.

- (1) Can the minister please define the "threshold" required for WA police to grant a temporary police order lasting up to 72 hours?
- (2) Is this "threshold" test applied consistently?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following answer is provided on behalf of the Minister for Police.

- (1)–(2) When making an application for a police order, the Western Australia Police Force applies section 30A of the Restraining Orders Act 1997.

VACSWIM

596. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Education:

I refer to the Department of Education's VacSwim program.

Will the minister advise the funding allocated to this program in the following financial years —

- (a) 2022–23;
- (b) 2023–24; and
- (c) 2024–25?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

The total funding allocations for VacSwim and in-term swimming programs are as follows —

- (a) an actual cost of \$20 025 383 for 2022–23;
- (b) a budgeted amount of \$21 082 722 for 2023–24; and
- (c) a budgeted amount of \$21 409 073 for 2024–25.

HARNESS RACING — GLOUCESTER PARK — REDEVELOPMENT

597. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

I refer to the proposed redevelopment of Gloucester Park and the partial sale of the site.

- (1) What is the current government plan for the redevelopment of Gloucester Park?
- (2) What state government funds are available for the redevelopment and where are they located in the budget?
- (3) What area of the current site is planned to be redeveloped?
- (4) What profit is envisaged to be made from the redevelopment?
- (5) Given that Gloucester Park is a harness racing venue, what proportion of the profits will be made available to harness racing in WA?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1)–(5) Gloucester Park is privately owned by the Western Australian Trotting Association and no funds have been allocated by the state government for the redevelopment. The honourable member may wish to make inquiries directly with the Western Australian Trotting Association.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING — AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

598. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Minister for Finance:

I refer to the Auditor General's report on government campaign advertising of 15 May 2024, noting that the Auditor General said that \$205 million had been spent on campaign advertising and that there had been noncompliance with principles and policy concerning the spend.

- (1) As the senior minister responsible for the operation of the common-use agreement for advertising, does the minister take responsibility for the failures identified by the Auditor General?
- (2) Noting that we are in the lead-up to an election, what steps is the minister taking to control the aberrant Department of the Premier and Cabinet, which has been found to have authorised campaigns that were not apolitical?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) The government does not concur with many of the findings of the Auditor General's report, some of which are inaccurate and contradict the independent review of WA's COVID management, led by former Liberal health minister John Day. It found that public communications —

A member interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon SUE ELLERY: It found that public communications were a critical part of the WA government's response, ensuring Western Australians had access to the most up-to-date information and were provided with clarity and confidence, even when the global virus caused mass uncertainty around the world. The independent review recommended that the same model be replicated should a future pandemic occur.

(2) I do not accept the premise of the question. The Department of Finance does not approve advertising campaigns.

SOUTH WEST BUILDING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

599. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the recent 2024 Master Builders Association's South West Building Excellence Awards, where Hemp Homes Australia walked away with six awards for its Indica Hemp House.

(1) Will the minister join me in congratulating Hemp Homes Australia for its success?

(2) What role does the government see hemp houses playing in this country's housing crisis?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

(1)–(2) Our government welcomes any alternative form of construction to deliver housing in an efficient and cost-effective manner to Western Australians. We have an open call for submissions for social housing, inviting submissions from the housing sector to deliver social housing in Perth or regional Western Australia, with a priority on the delivery of apartment or group dwelling developments.

WASTE — 2025 NATIONAL PACKAGING TARGETS

600. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer the minister to Australia's 2025 National Packaging Targets, which I commend the government for signing up to, as well as to the increasing number of medicinal cannabis patients with legal prescriptions here in WA.

(1) Is WA on target to achieve the 2025 National Packaging Targets?

(2) If no to (1), what plans does the Cook government have in place to ramp up recycling?

(3) Will the minister consider—as has been proposed in some Canadian jurisdictions—a container return program for glass and plastic medicinal cannabis packaging and, indeed, other medicinal packaging going forward, so as to further reduce waste; and, if not, why not?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

(1) The effectiveness of Australia's current national co-regulatory framework was independently reviewed in 2021 and found that significant reform is needed. Environment ministers have agreed to reform the current system, and the commonwealth is developing new mandatory requirements for packaging under the federal Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020—the RAWR Act—that will replace the current co-regulatory arrangement by the end of 2025.

(2) The Western Australian government and commonwealth government are partnering to invest a total of \$70 million in WA's recycling projects through the recycling modernisation fund.

The PRESIDENT: Order, member. Your microphone had cut out.

Hon DARREN WEST: Yes. Thank you, President. The answer continues —

This will help build essential waste processing and recycling infrastructure for plastics, tyres, paper and cardboard, and support businesses to respond to the national export bans on certain waste types.

(3) The Western Australian government will continue to work with the Australian government to reform the packaging framework to ensure all packaging available in Australia is designed to be recovered, re-used, recycled and reprocessed safely in line with the circular economy principles.

HEALTH — AEROMEDICAL SERVICES

601. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the Chief Health Officer's inquiry into aeromedical services in Western Australia, which was handed to government almost two years ago, in June 2022.

(1) What funding has been approved in the 2024–25 state budget to advance the recommendations of this inquiry?

(2) Has the implementation group been established; and, if so, on what date was it established?

(3) If yes to (2), who are the members of the implementation group and what is the group's terms of reference?

(4) If no to (2), when will the implementation group be established, noting that recommendation 1 stated that the group develop a 10-year strategy within two years?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of his loud question. The following has been provided by the minister.

- (1) The Western Australian government committed \$47.2 million in the 2023–24 midyear review to establish a State Health Operations Centre—SHOC—that will include an aeromedical coordination function. The establishment of the SHOC will enable WA Health to implement the inquiry’s recommendations, including the development of a 10-year strategy to a dedicated systemwide point of coordination.
- (2)–(4) With the early phases of the SHOC now established and the aeromedical function to commence later this year, WA Health is in the process of transferring the responsibility for implementing the inquiry recommendations to SHOC, which are to be delivered in partnership with key stakeholders, including the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, the Western Australia Police Force, the Mental Health Commission, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and St John WA.

FIREARMS — LICENSED

602. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to the number of new firearms licenced in Western Australia over recent months. How many new firearms were licensed in each of the following months —

- (a) February 2024;
- (b) March 2024;
- (c) April 2024; and
- (d) May 2024 to date?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Western Australia Police Force advise that it is not possible to provide an answer within the required timeframe. A response will be provided to the honourable member tomorrow.

BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION ACT —
CHANGE-OF-NAME APPLICATIONS — RESTRICTED PERSONS**603. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:**

I refer to the requirement under the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1998 that written approval be obtained from the relevant supervisory authority when a restricted person makes a change-of-name application.

- (1) How many change-of-name applications were received from restricted persons in either the last calendar year or reporting period?
- (2) How many of those applications were approved?
- (3) What were the reasons for the rejection of the remaining applications?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

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

- (1) For the period 1 October 2022 to present, 21 applications were received by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages from restricted persons.
- (2) Eleven were approved.
- (3) The remaining applications were refused as the applicants did not have written approval of their supervisory authority.

HOUSING — VACANT PROPERTY RENTAL INCENTIVE SCHEME

604. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Minister for Commerce:

I refer to the vacant property rental incentive scheme.

- (1) How many applications have been submitted to the scheme to date?
- (2) How many applications have been approved?
- (3) How many \$5 000 payments have been made?
- (4) How many applications have been received from persons indicating that they were acting on behalf of —
 - (a) a trust; or
 - (b) a company?
- (5) How many applications referred to in (4) have been approved?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I provide this answer on behalf of the Minister for Commerce, who is away from the chamber on urgent parliamentary business.

- (1) To date, 57 applications have been submitted.
- (2) As none of the applicants have had an opportunity to enter into residential tenancy agreements, no applications have been approved. As soon as these applicants enter into residential tenancy agreements, this figure will likely change.
- (3) Nil.
- (4) (a) Nil.
(b) One.
- (5) Nil.

KNIFE CRIME — STOP-AND-SEARCH LAWS

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

I refer the minister to the Labor government's proposed stop-and-search laws to crack down on knife crimes.

How many knife attacks occurred in each of the five Perth protected entertainment precincts since they came into effect on Christmas Eve in 2022?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question.

The Western Australia Police Force advise that it is not possible to provide an answer in the required timeframe. A response will be provided to the honourable member tomorrow.

COERCIVE CONTROL — LEGISLATION

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

I refer to page 421 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and note the \$585 000 allocated to "Legislative Responses to Coercive Control".

- (1) Considering the absence of legislative responses to coercive control, what will this funding be used for?
- (2) Have these legislative responses been drafted?
- (3) When will they be introduced into Parliament?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

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

- (1)–(3) The *Legislative responses to coercive control in Western Australia: Discussion paper* made 24 recommendations, suggesting a range of legislative and systemic reforms. The allocated funding will be used to appoint suitably qualified legal and policy officers with expertise in family and domestic violence to undertake the necessary policy work to respond to the recommendations. The government has announced that it will take a phased approach to criminalisation, with the first tranche of reform including amendments to the Restraining Orders Act 1997 to be introduced this year.

PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES POLICY

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

I refer to my question without notice 195 on 19 March 2024 on the Cook government's \$2.8 billion increase for its public sector wages policy.

- (1) How was the global provision of \$2.8 billion from 2023–24 to 2026–27 calculated, and what critical financial assumptions were inherent in arriving at this figure?
- (2) Will the Treasurer table in the house the critical financial assumptions and the determining matrix that was applied to the financial assumptions that determined the figure of \$2.8 billion?
- (3) As no financial threshold will be applied to the 48 public sector agreements that are to be negotiated as at 19 May 2024 —

The PRESIDENT: Sorry, member, your microphone cut out.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am being censored as well, President!

The PRESIDENT: No, honourable member, that is not the case. It is probably just a faulty wire. Just go back to the third part of your question.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The Minister for Emergency Services might have a secret foot pedal that he can use.

The PRESIDENT: No, honourable member. But I am tempted!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: As no financial threshold will be applied to the 48 public sector agreements that are to be negotiated as at 19 May 2024, is the figure of \$2.8 billion the maximum financial allocation to facilitate and conclude the Cook government's public sector wages policy?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

(1)–(3) It is not appropriate to disclose the assumptions used to arrive at the global provision, so as not to prejudice the government's good-faith bargaining.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING — AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

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

I refer to the Auditor General's report on government campaign advertising, and note that the Auditor General said — ... campaign advertising can ... erode public confidence if or when perceived to have been used for political purposes ...

I note the Auditor General said —

Directors General and chief executive officers are responsible for ensuring that advertising and communications undertaken by their entities ... comply with the GCA policy and guidelines.

I also note the Auditor General has found the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's director general has not complied with GCA policy and guidelines, and some campaigns were not "apolitical in nature".

- (1) Will senior executives who were responsible for those campaigns be stood down?
- (2) How else will the Premier restore public confidence after such blatant misuse of public funds?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I am very grateful the words are written down in front of me. On behalf of the Leader of the House, this answer is provided on behalf of the Premier.

(1)–(2) Changes relating to the audit's recommendations surrounding governance are already being implemented. Unfortunately, some of the audit's findings contradict the independent review of WA's COVID-19 management and response and seeks to undermine WA's world-leading response to the pandemic. The independent review, led by former Liberal health minister John Day, found that public communications were a critical part of the WA government's pandemic response, recommending the same model be replicated should a future pandemic occur. It is disappointing, yet unsurprising, that the Liberal Party continues to undermine WA's incredibly successful pandemic response.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ORDERS — BREACHES

609. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to my question without notice 568.

How many of the 4 727 breaches of family violence restraining orders were by —

- (a) men; and
- (b) registered gun owners?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

The Western Australia Police Force advises that it is not possible to provide an answer within the required timeframes. A response will be provided to the honourable member tomorrow.

SCHOOL CANTEENS — DIETARY GUIDELINES

610. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the *WA school food and drink criteria*. Can this document be tabled?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

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

The *WA school food and drink criteria*, which contains the "How to Classify Food and Drinks Guide", provides guidance on which foods may be served within school canteens. It does not extend to food and drink that students may bring from home. Parents and guardians should take a commonsense approach, considering dietary requirements and a balanced diet.

On behalf of the minister, I table the document.

[See paper [3186](#).]

FIREARMS — LICENCE HOLDERS*Question without Notice 548 — Answer*

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services) [5.04 pm]: I would like to provide an answer to Hon Peter Collier's question without notice 548 asked yesterday, which I seek leave to have incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

The Western Australia Police Force advise:

(1) 291

(2) 142

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE*Consideration of Tabled Papers*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [5.04 pm]: I return to where I left off before a very informative question time to continue talking about what is driving state debt and where the “debt monster” is. One probably need look no further than at another excellent piece of work by the very fine Auditor General that we have in Caroline Spencer. In October last year, she released the *2023 Transparency report: Major projects*. It is an instructive piece of work. I encourage her and her office to continue to produce transparency reports of this nature that hold one of the most secretive governments in Western Australian history to account on its performance on major project delivery.

We had a question yesterday about the “debt monster”. It would appear that the now Treasurer Saffioti does not share the concerns she had in the lead-up to the election in 2015 around encumbering future generations of Western Australians with debt, because she is not a Treasurer who is paying down debt; she is a Treasurer who is turbocharging debt in Western Australia. The *2023 Transparency report: Major projects* by the Auditor General is rather instructive in that regard. We know that the Metronet project is out of control. How can a \$3 billion or thereabouts election commitment that has escalated to \$12 billion plus, has uncertainty around operating expenditure and will undoubtedly impact future governments be excused, as it was earlier today and as it is every day, by this government? I do not want to hear one more flippant remark from members opposite about the former government's expenditure, in particular of royalties for regions funds, when its record on this one project—Metronet—has blown out from \$3 billion to \$12 billion and climbing. At what point will Treasurer Saffioti call Mr Langoulant from London to say, “Mate, we've got another job.”

Hon Neil Thomson: Yes, it will save us money.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: It will probably save us money to bring him back to Western Australia. I am not quite sure how one measures the key performance of what has to be one of the most, if not the most, highly paid public servants in Western Australia in London, America, Europe and all the other places that his office visits. At some point, the government will have to bring this beast under control.

Let us look at just one example in the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General sampled 20 projects in Western Australia. She created a traffic light system of risk for both cost and time. On page 11 of the report—I am sure members will rush off and get this one, because it is very important—there is a table with a lot of red under “cost”, although there may not be to the same degree for time.. In the media statement from 4 October 2023, when the Auditor General released the report, she said —

‘Out of the 20 projects we reviewed, cost budgets increased by 22.5%, or \$2 billion, since their original approval.

‘Sixteen of the 20 projects reviewed have been or are expected to be delivered later than originally planned. Delays ranged from five to 58 months, with an average delay of 21 months.

...

Furthermore, there has been no progress on our Office's previous recommendations for regular and accessible public reporting on the status, and cost and time performance of major projects.

‘This report includes a recommendation that the Department of Treasury, as custodian of the Asset Investment Program data set, regularly report to Parliament and the public to improve transparency on the cost, time and status of major projects.

‘Pleasingly, —

I would not count your chickens just yet —

Treasury has committed to exploring options to improve transparency of major projects from 2024–25, particularly around cost data which it already collects.’

‘Such reporting would promote high levels of transparency and build community confidence in the management and significant investment of public money in major assets.

I would not hold my breath for too long, based on the record of this government. At the rear of this report is a summary of each of the 20 projects. I will speak on two.

Project 14 is the Metronet Morley–Ellenbrook line. This project had a budget allocation of \$1.12 billion. Keep in mind that this report was released prior to the state budget being handed down, so I do not know whether it has changed since then, but at the time of the Auditor General’s report late last year the budget was \$1.65 billion. That was an escalation of \$528 million, an almost 50 per cent increase in budgeted cost. Interestingly, this project got a green light for being on time. It is well and truly not on budget. I will come back to this issue later in my contribution.

Project 6 is the Geraldton Health Campus redevelopment. It is interesting to look at the budget that the Auditor General has used in her report, which was the original budget of \$73.3 million. Before I go to that, the Labor Party’s commitment at the 2017 election was that the redevelopment of the Geraldton Health Campus would cost \$45 million. When it got to government, it said, “Whoopsie, it’s a bit more than that; it’s \$73.7 million”, and then it escalated to \$122.66 million. In the budget just handed down, it is now budgeted at \$166.1 million, a 269 per cent increase on its original estimate. That is definitely no green traffic light for time, because this was a project that was committed to in 2017 and most certainly will not be delivered until well into the next term of government.

This is interesting, and I will come back to the discrimination that has occurred in the government’s asset investment program priorities. Metropolitan projects or projects that fall within the Treasurer’s portfolio responsibilities seem to experience very little time slippage or issues with accommodating significant cost escalations, whilst it seems that other programs are being put on ice. They are being delayed and deferred, and there is the regular manila folder of excuses for why something is too hard. COVID-19 seems to come up still, time and again—“Oh, it was COVID-19 that stopped that.”

Then, of course, there is another project that was not amongst the 20 projects that were assessed but should have been. Perhaps it could be included in the second in the series of the Auditor General’s transparency reports. It has many different names, but I am just going to call it the Perth CBD cycling bridge. Just recently—in fact, it might have been since the budget was handed down—we heard government members telling the Legislative Council how excited they were and that when opening day arrived, they were going to ride their bicycles over the new Swan River cycling bridge. The Labor Party committed to this project in the lead-up to the last state election in 2021; it was in government and it had the resources of government, and this was to be a \$50 million project to build a cycling bridge across the Swan River, at the Causeway. I am glad the Acting President (Hon Dr Brian Walker) is sitting down, because that project is now north of \$180 million. I have seen the architectural impression of what it is going to look like, and it looks spectacular, but it is \$180 million plus.

I will come back to the issue of government being about priorities. Governments have to prioritise competing demands for finite resources. There are the need-to-haves and there are the nice-to-haves, and in my view this project very much falls within the latter. This is a project that will be nice to have, but it is not something we need to have. There is an opportunity cost when governments deliver projects like this at any cost, and in this case it is an opportunity cost that will encumber future generations of Western Australians, future Parliaments and future governments as a result of this government’s lack of control and mismanagement of the Treasurer’s favourite project, Metronet.

I come bearing gifts today, Hon Kyle McGinn, because in 2017 the National Party —

Hon Kyle McGinn: No thanks!

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: — saw what was happening. I know Hon Darren West will be interested in this, because he beat me to it today.

Hon Kyle McGinn: I’ll swap you with a “Give Rick the Flick” sticker!

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Signed?

The National Party in 2017 produced a bumper sticker that read “Metrodebt”!

Hon Darren West: That one’s not right!

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: This is an original one.

Hon Darren West: This one’s right!

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: No, that has been doctored!

Hon Darren West: It’s a sticker!

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I am a traditionalist, Hon Darren West. The bumper sticker said “Metrodebt: Taking from the regions to fund Perth projects”. Keep in mind that at the same time the government rolled out Metronet, costed at \$3 billion but now costing \$12 billion and climbing, it started the process of undermining and

misappropriating the royalties for regions fund. I have used the analogy of money laundering because it is effectively washing money; a significant proportion of the cost shifting is being washed through the Water Corporation. As I have said in many of my budget reply speeches, the Water Corporation is being used to clean royalties for regions funds so the government can fund “metrodebt”, but it is not enough! That is why state debt is not being paid off slowly like a mortgage. Windfall gains, of which this government has had many, have not been attributed to debt reduction because the government needs more to fund the completion of its “metrodebt” network.

To make things worse, the government has now put the minister who mismanaged this project in charge of Treasury. I think that things will get worse before they get better. I will not be here to deliver a budget reply speech next year. First-term members in particular should keep in mind that we will not have a normal budget next year; we will have a late budget because Parliament will probably not come back until late April, and the budget process will be interrupted by an election campaign. Once we pass this budget through the Legislative Council, it will extend far beyond this financial year and well and truly into the next financial year. The next budget will obviously depend on the government that is formed—hopefully there will be a change—and there will be all the election commitments, promises and policies, some of which this government is still trying to deliver from seven years ago; they will still be on the table. Perhaps the voters of Western Australia will entrust a Liberal–National government to actually deliver Labor’s election commitments from seven years ago, like Geraldton regional hospital.

Hon Darren West: It will be built by then.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: It will be built by then, will it?

Hon Darren West: Half-built.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Will it be half-built? I think Hon Darren West had better get a briefing on the project.

Hon Darren West: We are delivering the projects you only talk about.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I think Hon Darren West should get a briefing on the project from parliamentary secretary number one, who is sitting three seats to his right. I will not call him number two; I think Hon Pierre Yang is the number one parliamentary secretary.

The other opportunity cost is how the state missed an opportunity to partner with the federal government and deliver an oncology service in Geraldton. We have had in the budget papers for some time now a \$9 million commitment from the federal government to deliver a radiation oncology service in the midwest. What better time to do it is there than when the government is redeveloping the Geraldton hospital and its precinct? I would have thought that that would be the time. This has been on the books for at least three budgets; this might be the third budget if it is not the fourth budget. I will go with three budgets. It requires a matching contribution from the state, but the state’s position is that the federal government has put \$9 million on the table, and the state will not pay one red cent more. The federal government has to pay for the whole thing; otherwise, it will not happen.

I remind members that this is an environment in which the state government has just spent a considerable amount of time bleating, gloating and humbly patting itself on the back, with its Treasurer humbly accepting the title of best Treasurer in the country. On my count, we have just had our sixth multibillion dollar operating surplus and there are \$10 billion worth of operating surpluses forecast over the next four years in this budget. There will be an operating surplus this financial year of \$3.2 billion and \$2.6 billion next year. If members think that in an environment like this, in which the state government had no issue with a cycling bridge escalating in cost by \$130 million, the railway line to Ellenbrook escalating in cost by \$528 million, that the government can find \$9 million to \$10 million to partner with the commonwealth in the interests of cancer patients in the midwest of Western Australia, they will be mistaken because this budget does not prioritise cancer patients in the midwest of Western Australia; it prioritises train lines to Ellenbrook and cycling bridges across the Swan River in preference to cancer patients in the midwest.

In a similar vein, I want to talk today, as I have done on a number of occasions, about another issue that I hoped the government would deliver on in the budget, but, again, I did not hold my breath. There is a time when the government can and should address some of the difficult challenges that we face in our communities, especially when delivering operating surpluses year in, year out and forecasting them across the forward estimates. One of those challenges is the patient assisted travel scheme. I remind members that this scheme supports some 35 000 patients in regional Western Australia every year to access essential medical care with some 80 000 journeys. These are not patients with a choice. We often talk about the importance of choice in education and health care and being able to get a second opinion if someone does not like the first one. These patients are not in that position. They have no choice but to access medical care in a place that is not their own in a community that is not their own. We need to support them to do that. There is a tension here because I have always said that if the patient assisted travel scheme were gold plated, it would disincentivise state governments from delivering good health care in the regions where they can. Regional people are pragmatic. They know that if they need the services of, say, an orthopaedic surgeon, a neurosurgeon or some other specialist, they may not be in their small communities—in fact, they may not even be in their region. They are pragmatic people and they understand that. In fact, sometimes that is part of the reason why we live where we live. There are people in my community bemoaning how fast it is growing

and how many things are moving to our area because that undermines the reason they like living where they live. These patients are afforded a number of supports, but the most important ones are the travel, and the fuel and accommodation subsidies that help them access medical care. It might be a one-off trip, but someone having cancer treatment might have to make multiple trips for multiple days at a time, and that is why it is important to deliver services regionally when we can and when we cannot, we support patients to access that care. The issue is that we are simply not keeping pace with the cost of living, the cost of accommodation and the cost of transportation. Western Australia is a large state. I hear from health bureaucrats all the time how difficult it is to deliver health services in the largest health jurisdiction in the world; that line is trotted out a lot. One would think that we would be cognisant of the pressure that that places on patients, not just in the delivery of health services. This is the stingiest government in the nation when it comes to providing a fuel subsidy, yet some of our patients are travelling the greatest distance.

I remind members of the Standing Committee on Public Administration's twenty-fifth report, which made some very important recommendations, many of which remain outstanding. The most important ones are recommendations 1 and 2, which refer to the fuel subsidy being reviewed annually, and recommendations 3 and 4 similarly for the accommodation subsidy. I recognise that the government has increased the accommodation subsidy but we have not seen any movement on the fuel subsidy in the last seven years. It is interesting to make some comparisons here. If we look at one measure, the Australian Taxation Office has a tax determination each year; members would be aware of this because it applies to us as it applies to many other people who travel for employment. It provides what is a reasonable amount for travel. I will use the lowest threshold. The reasonable travel amount for accommodation in Perth—this is not incidentals and meal expenses related to living away from home for potentially days, if not weeks at a time—is \$180 a night. We pay \$106.10 a night for commercial accommodation. I recognise that that amount has increased, but I challenge members. What about a person who lives regionally or in a remote area of Western Australia, who is of limited means and on a fixed income and who has a chronic health decision that might take their life. It might interrupt their employment. I implore members to consider how they would be able to find accommodation in Perth for \$106 a night in an environment in which housing affordability is very difficult and accommodation options are limited, particularly in the southern corridor. I made this point recently when I was talking about the government's decision to shift the women's and babies' hospital to the southern corridor and the Murdoch health and knowledge precinct. There is not a lot of accommodation around that area. We have seen this with the cancer centre shifting to Fiona Stanley Hospital and we will see it with the women's and babies' hospital. Parents, mothers, fathers and other carers will need to be accommodated close to these hospitals. Compared with other places, there are not many accommodation options in the southern corridor. These are things I hope government will turn its mind to when considering the benefits of building and developing its business case. Remember, it has no business case. It has made a decision to greenlight the Murdoch women's and babies' hospital with no business case. I do not want to hear one more person talk about business cases, especially Hon Dan Caddy. We can make a multibillion-dollar investment in infrastructure that will probably serve Western Australians for the next 50 years with no business case. Anyway, he is distracting me.

I will now talk about the fuel subsidy. It is 16¢ per kilometre. I have done some numbers on this. I looked at the average fuel price. Again, I am going to take a very charitable approach. I am going to use the metro petrol price, which is probably the most charitable outcome because we know that diesel is more expensive and is certainly more expensive in our regions and outer regions. I am going to take the very charitable approach of using the metro petrol price. In April 2017, the petrol price on average was \$1.26. If someone had a motor vehicle that was consuming 10 litres per 100 kilometres, their cost per kilometre of fuel was 12.6¢. We were paying 16¢.

People were arguably getting paid a little bit more than the fuel was costing them if they bought it in Perth. Obviously, if someone was in the regions they probably were not. They might have been breaking even or been a little bit behind. Fuel prices have gone from an average of \$1.26 in April 2017 to \$1.92 in April 2024. If we just use those metro assumptions, we are now at 19.2¢ per kilometre for fuel. The state, with all its prosperity and billions, has said in this budget "We are still only going to give you 16¢. Take it or leave it."

This obviously does not factor in other travel costs such as wear and tear, servicing and tyres, and it was never meant to. It is a fuel subsidy, not a travel allowance. It is interesting. This is not a fair comparison, but I had one of these put in front of me this week, which reminded me. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet provides a form to my staff that says if they are required to travel for work, they can fill it in and give it to their member. It offers up to 89.5¢ per kilometre of travel cost or 31¢ per kilometre if they are on a motorcycle. Even on a motorcycle, that is still twice the amount that we are prepared to give patients who have to travel for essential medical care in regional Western Australia as a fuel subsidy.

As I said, this will affect the most vulnerable people in our community. There will be some people who simply do not claim it because they have the means to actually do this themselves, but the most vulnerable people in our community will be affected. The government likes to gloat about how we are leading the nation and have the best Treasurer, but when it comes to regional patients accessing essential medical health care and being supported by the fuel subsidy, we are the worst in the nation. The Northern Territory provides 20¢ per kilometre, South Australia

provides 32¢ per kilometre, Tasmania provides 21¢ per kilometre, New South Wales provides 40¢ per kilometre, Queensland provides 30¢ per kilometre and Victoria provides 20¢ per kilometre. We are the largest and most remote state and are the worst in the country at supporting patients to access essential medical care.

It would not cost a lot of money. It would be a rounding error on one of the Metronet railway lines. That is how much it would cost. However, not one of the ministers sitting around the cabinet table prioritising expenditure in the 2024–25 state budget would find their way to throw a few crumbs towards regional patients in Western Australia. We have well and truly run out of time. That is all right, we have the appropriations bills coming.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about and that I started talking about with respect to the management of the asset investment program is the opportunity cost. There are just too many projects. I threw this out there the week before when I challenged the government to please name one hospital that it has built in its seven years. There might be one —

Hon Peter Foster: Newman Hospital.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Was it started by your government?

Hon Peter Foster: Correct.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Okay. There is a long list. Newman Hospital is obviously not one of them. Well done. Hon Peter Foster has claimed that the Labor government started and completed it.

Hon Stephen Dawson: He did not claim that. He has actually said that.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: That is good. I will get Hon Peter Foster onto Geraldton because clearly there are some people in Geraldton who need a shake-up! What about Tom Price? What about Mullewa? What about Laverton? What about Meekatharra? What about Wyndam? What about Carnarvon? What about Geraldton oncology? What about all these hospitals? Some of these hospitals were actually in the budget when this government took office. Remember Laverton? The then Minister for Regional Development said, “Oh, those— cut, cut, cut, cut”, and told the mining industry to fund Laverton.

Hon Darren West interjected.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: This would be defensible, Hon Darren West, if the member could explain to me how the cost of a cycling bridge can go from \$50 million to more than \$180 million. Can someone explain that to me? Now they have split it. Now they have the bridge works and then the related works around the bridge. They are being a bit shifty with their calculations on this bridge. The cost escalation of this bridge probably would have near on funded all of those things that I just said.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Which bridge?

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I refer to the Causeway cycling bridge.

I asked a question in question time today about the emergency rescue helicopter service. This is one of those moments, those opportunities in time when the state’s finances are in a position in which government can prioritise the expansion of the rescue helicopter network, particularly off the back of it being recommended by the Deputy State Coroner, particularly off the back of Western Australian academic research recommending it, particularly off the back of its own aeromedical inquiry recommending it and especially off the back of evidence to the Deputy Coroner that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services has put up three submissions for funding for a midwest rescue helicopter—yet there is nothing in the budget.

We know that you are twice as likely to survive a major trauma event if you have access to an emergency rescue helicopter. The two helicopters have flown more than 10 000 missions in Western Australia. The last expansion, which was our first regional rescue helicopter, was under the last Liberal–National government. I believe it was in the first term of the Liberal–National government. The time has come for a wealthy state to say that all of this evidence supports investment. Someone needs to stand up to Treasurer Saffioti and say it may well be the case that her Ellenbrook railway line is worth another \$500-odd million, but you know what? We need another rescue helicopter in our regions. We need an oncology service in the midwest. We need 50-year-old hospitals to be rebuilt. We need greater focus on attracting health professionals to our regions, and we need to house them properly when they get there. It is farcical that this minister announces a hospital blitz and then does not deliver it. The Minister for Health cut \$1 million from redeveloping nurses quarters in Collie, and instead just put them all up in a motel, with 17 healthcare professionals in Collie in a motel. Apparently, the government spin is this is a good outcome in a housing crisis because it is supporting a local business! This government is out of ideas. It is a city-centric government that is more interested in expanding the Perth rail network and cycling bridges at any cost than in investing in regional health and patient outcomes in Western Australia. It has had seven years to prove otherwise. We even have a new Treasurer and a new Premier in the Saffioti government and they still have not demonstrated a commitment to regional Western Australia in this budget.

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

FIREARMS BILL 2024*Second Reading*

Resumed from 28 May.

HON NICK GOIRAN (South Metropolitan) [5.45 pm]: Yesterday, when we recommenced the consideration of the Firearms Bill 2024, I had just made some introductory remarks. In those introductory remarks I encouraged members to recall that Western Australia has a singular statute book that could be considered to be the library of Western Australia's laws. The Cook Labor government is asking us to insert this gigantic new book, the Firearms Bill 2024, into that statute book—that is, into the library of laws in Western Australia. I also made the observation yesterday that every prospective book to be inserted into that library warrants scrutiny, but some proposed laws warrant special scrutiny. I suggested a couple of criteria that we as lawmakers might use to determine which bills require scrutiny and which ones require special scrutiny.

The first of those criteria is the voices of Western Australian voters and residents. With respect to that first criterion, I had set out the sequence of historical facts that began on 7 May this year when I tabled a record-breaking e-petition on behalf of more than 32 000 Western Australians expressly calling for this gigantic bill to be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I also recited the historical facts that led to the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Peter Collier, moving a motion to give effect to the desire of those petitioners. I recounted the reply given by Hon Stephen Dawson on behalf of the government on 14 May this year, when he said —

I rise to indicate that the government will not be supporting the referral motion.

I also made the observation that we are considering the second reading of this gigantic new law because of the very fact that the bill has not been referred to the standing committee. As a result of that, I suggested to members that there still falls upon us as lawmakers some duty to perform, to the extent that we can, a portion of that special scrutiny. We cannot provide the same special scrutiny that a parliamentary committee can provide. Parliamentary committees can call for public submissions, have public hearings and examine evidence. We will not have the opportunity to do those things, but we will have the opportunity to consider each individual clause of this gigantic bill and ask the minister representing the government a series of questions on those clauses. We can perform some partial special scrutiny. My submission to members yesterday was that we ought to do that out of respect for that record-breaking number of Western Australian petitioners.

The second criteria that I touched on yesterday was what I have referred to as the hazard rating level of a particular bill. The subject matter of some laws will be inherently more dangerous than others. On this occasion, I have encouraged members to refamiliarise themselves with the work of the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's 105th project. Page 14 of the October 2016 report states, amongst other things —

The Commission takes the view that the primary aim of firearms regulation is to prevent the harm that firearms may cause as dangerous items.

Again, my submission yesterday was that there should be some political bipartisanship. Together we can concur with the points implicitly made by the Law Reform Commission that firearms are dangerous items, that the role of lawmakers is to reasonably prevent harm that dangerous items may cause, and that a form of regulation is indeed necessary as a consequence of those two points.

As a consequence of that, it remains my submission that this gigantic bill warrants a high hazard rating worthy of special scrutiny. The special scrutiny that we ought to take in this restrictive form available to us would be to consider the Law Reform Commission recommendations, the government's contribution or the way in which it has characterised the reporting of national and local incidents, and the level of stated consultation. Yesterday, before we adjourned for members' statements, I had begun consideration of the Law Reform Commission's recommendations. I mentioned to members—I imagine that they would agree—that the most prevalent concern that we have all heard from constituents has been the government's response to the Law Reform Commission recommendations. That certainly is a theme that we have heard in the previous contributions to the debate on the second reading. In my view, nothing could be more apparent on this point than if one were to compare and contrast the comments made by the chairman of the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia at the time of this 105th project with the comments made by the Minister for Police and his representative in this house. The Law Reform Commission's chairman at the time the report was tabled was Dr David Cox. On page 9 of the foreword in that final report, he states —

Notwithstanding the tragic events highlighted in the media, the Commission has taken great care not to overreact. An often repeated theme of the submissions made to the Commission was that the Firearms Legislation is for the administration and regulation of the lawfully held firearms whereas many of the news reports concern unlawfully held firearms. The Commission agrees; the vast majority of firearms users in Western Australia are law-abiding and the Commission certainly has no intention of recommending legislative change that could make it more difficult for firearms users to abide by the law while having no practical purpose to meet the objects of the Firearms Act.

Compare and contrast those comments by the chair of the Law Reform Commission with those of the Minister for Police and his representative in this chamber in their second reading speech. Making reference to this gigantic bill, they state, amongst other things —

It will also implement or exceed the majority of recommendations arising from the Law Reform Commission's report.

In this context, the use of the word “exceed” by the police minister and his representative in this chamber is indicative that the Minister for Police is not across the detail in the Law Reform Commission's report. It is telling that the minister boastfully says he is exceeding the recommendations from the Law Reform Commission when the underlying recommendation from the commission is that legislative change should not make it more difficult for firearms users to abide by the law while having no practical purpose to meet the objects of the act. Since the Minister for Police is evidently not across the detail of the bill, it falls to us, as the lawmakers in this chamber, to fill that void. For my part, the lens that I will apply to the limited special scrutiny that we will undertake on this bill will be to consistently ask this question: will the proposed provision have a practical purpose to meet the objects of the bill? The debate on the second reading of the bill is not the mechanism to unpack this gigantic bill, but there are certain questions that the government can answer in reply to this debate. Whether it chooses to answer these questions remains to be seen. We have seen a pattern of arrogant behaviour by the Cook Labor government and, disappointingly, the Minister for Police in particular has demonstrated that type of behaviour.

My request is for the Minister for Police, without resorting to arrogance or vilification, through his representative in this chamber, to answer some of these preliminary questions. First, why has he chosen to ignore the Law Reform Commission's underlying recommendation by making the law more difficult for firearms users to abide by? Let me hasten to add that as lawmakers we should not be slaves to the Law Reform Commission. It is incumbent upon lawmakers to first of all read the Law Reform Commission's report and then weigh up that report in their contemplation of the prospective law whilst consulting with the affected Western Australians who will be impacted by the law. We do not just simply agree with the Law Reform Commission because it says so. We would be abrogating our responsibility if we did that. However, if the government chooses to do something contrary to the Law Reform Commission's recommendations, it is equally incumbent on the government to articulate the reasons that it is doing so. I put it to members that that has not been done on this occasion. If I am wrong about that, the Minister for Police, through his representative in this chamber, will have no problem answering the first preliminary question: why has the minister chosen to ignore the Law Reform Commission's underlying recommendation by making the law more difficult for firearms users to abide by?

Second, what is the gain that the government says will be achieved by this? Third, which provisions in this bill will make it safer for the public? Fourth, what is the expected one-off budgeted cost to the WA taxpayer associated with implementing this law? Fifth, what will be the recurring budgeted cost to enforce this new law? Sixth, noting in particular that it is the government's intention to have all firearms owners undergo a mental health check within five years, what resources will be provided to ensure that this will actually occur? Seventh, also noting the minister's boast that the bill will implement the majority of the Law Reform Commission's recommendations, which provisions in this gigantic bill will implement which recommendations? Furthermore, which recommendations have been abandoned and what is the reason for their rejection? In addition, as for those recommendations that have been exceeded, which provisions in the bill are being referred to as the basis for the that boast? Lastly, having joined with the other states and territories in agreeing to the 2017 National Firearms Agreement, which provisions of the bill differ from the other states and territories, and why?

As I said earlier, one of the most prevalent concerns about this bill that was voiced by Western Australians—a record-breaking number—is the government's response to the Law Reform Commission's recommendations. The police minister's reply, through his representative in this chamber, is an opportunity to either address those concerns accountably and transparently or, alternatively, with contempt and disdain. We will see. As I also said earlier, although this second reading debate does not afford us the opportunity to provide special scrutiny on individual provisions, the opportunity should not be lost to provide special scrutiny to what the WA Labor government has said about these so-called reforms and what it is actually going to achieve with this gigantic bill. Having addressed the minister's inconsistency with the Law Reform Commission's recommendations, I turn now to how he has addressed the reporting of national and local incidents.

In citing the firearm incident in Queensland, alongside three in Western Australia, the minister should be well placed to answer these two questions. Firstly, if this bill had been enacted prior to the incidents described in the second reading speech, how would it have made a difference to those outcomes? Secondly, what are the provisions in this bill that would have ensured improved public safety in our state when considering those incidents referred to in the second reading speech?

To be clear, there is no argument from me that firearms are anything other than dangerous weapons. The Law Reform Commission of Western Australia has said so and I concur. It should also be abundantly clear now, if it were not already, that these dangerous items pose a risk to public safety if their use is not regulated and policed. It might be tedious to point out that there is nothing to police if there is no regulation in place; however, the less

tedious and more compelling point is that there is little point if a regulation is not policed. The very serious question that should be asked and reflected on by every single lawmaker in this chamber is: is the problem in Western Australia the law or is the problem law enforcement?

It is not readily apparent how the reforms contained in this gigantic bill would have impacted and made a difference to the cases cited by the minister in his second reading speech. From my understanding, the offender in the Osmington case did not reveal his mental health issues and was a licensed gun holder operating a farm. Unless he self-reported or his family reported him having issues, he would not have been a person of interest. The offender in the Kellerberrin case had shown no prior issues, and the Two Rocks case involved a 15-year-old boy. As for the Queensland incident, it was said to have been a religiously motivated terrorist attack.

It is one thing to say that we have improved firearms legislation in accordance with the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission, but it is another thing entirely to say that as a result of the improved legislation, the risk to public safety is minimised. Take the Osmington case as an example. I would submit that the offender may well have been affected by his personal circumstances, but would this reform legislation have done anything to reveal his issues? I suspect not. What we do know is he had a son who had suicided, shooting himself with his grandfather's gun; he had another son dying of kidney issues; he had funded \$100 000 of Family Court of Western Australia legal fees for his daughter in an ongoing custody dispute; his four grandchildren were on the autism spectrum and homeschooled, and the mother and children were living in a converted shed on his farm.

The son-in-law believed that the killings were planned with the offender intending to take his own life but did not want the family to then suffer in his absence, so he took them, too. The son-in-law laid the blame squarely at the door of the Family Court. In the absence of a coronial inquest or a report from the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, which was flagged by the Attorney General, we are none the wiser.

As for the events that have been much publicised this week, I might say this: it is far too soon to conclude too much in respect of the recent Floreat shooting, but we do know a few things. I take this opportunity to quote from an article published in yesterday's WAtoday that states —

Ariel Bombara ... has released a statement claiming she and her mother raised concerns with WA Police about her father and his guns for months ...

"My mother and I fled our family home on March 28 in fear of our lives and to remove ourselves from an abusive situation," she wrote.

"Between March 30 and April 2, I spoke with police on three separate occasions to raise the alarm about my father.

"On each occasion I alerted officers to my father's guns, and told them my mother and I felt there was a real and imminent threat to our lives."

Bombara said she specifically mentioned a Glock handgun that was unaccounted for, which police said was found at the scene where the two women were murdered.

"I also asked the police if we would be able to take out a 72-hour temporary protective order," she said.

"We were told no, and that there was nothing police could do about the situation at that time."

Bombara outlined a specific incident in April when she and her mother were given a police escort to their home to collect some belongings.

"This was the third occasion we warned police about my father's guns," she said.

"One officer said, 'Oh don't worry, we know all about the guns', and when he called for backup, he warned his fellow officers to wear bulletproof vests."

Bombara claims she and her mother were "ignored by five different male officers across three occasions of reporting".

"By that point we felt completely helpless and I had to focus on getting mum to safety," she said.

"I did everything I could to protect my mother, and when my father couldn't find us he murdered her best friend and her best friend's daughter."

...

"My mother and I made clear that lives were at risk, and we were repeatedly ignored. Repeatedly failed. Those failures have cost the lives of two incredible women.

"My father should always be considered accountable for his actions. They were his and his alone; however, there are authorities who should have helped us to stop him, and they failed.

"I want answers."

At a press conference on Tuesday, WA Premier Roger Cook said the details Ariel shared about the “sickening crime” were distressing, but he declined to comment on the allegations that she and her mother had repeatedly tried to warn police about her father.

“We will be seeking clarification from police in relation to operational matters,” he said.

I pause there to ask the question: when will Mr Cook seek clarification? It is all well and good at a press conference to say, “We will be seeking clarification from police”, but when will this clarification be sought? Has the clarification now been sought; and, if so, when will the clarification be provided? The article goes on —

Yesterday, WA Police Minister Paul Papalia said Bombara had no criminal record, and that he had only come to the police’s attention recently when his wife requested an escort to collect her belongings from the marital home two months ago, fearing for her safety.

“There had been no reports to police prior to her going on the 31st of March,” he said.

“She did not report an offence, or seek a response at that time in relation to anything that had happened historically.”

Well, Acting President, who is telling the truth here? Is the police minister telling the truth? Is Ariel Bombara telling the truth, or are Western Australia police, who are briefing the Minister for Police, telling the truth? Is this the type of clarification that Premier Cook is seeking at the present time? We do not know. Why is that? Understandably, Ariel Bombara says that she wants answers. I am sure that many Western Australians, including a record-breaking number who signed a recent petition, also want answers.

All this begs even more questions about the gigantic bill presently before us. Would this Firearms Bill 2024 have made a difference in the Floreat case; and, if so, how? Can the minister representing the Minister for Police in this chamber in reply inform us what is it in this gigantic bill that would have made a difference? Meanwhile, are more amendments needed? I note that there has been some commentary in the media, I believe from Mr Cook and Mr Papalia, that amendments are being considered. Is that the case? Perhaps when the minister representing in this chamber makes his reply, he will be able to inform the other lawmakers in this place whether we will be considering other amendments. Is it the intention of the Cook Labor government for those amendments to be considered now, during the course of the passage of this gigantic bill, or at some later stage? Would it be too much to be told what amendments are currently being considered? When will we see them? Who has had input into them? Who has been consulted? Or are we once again, in the truly typical Cook Labor government way, going to hide behind the shield of cabinet confidentiality? We could not possibly tell the people of Western Australia that we are proceeding with amendments and consulting with particular people! We could not possibly tell them when we could expect those amendments! We know that when this government wants to be transparent about those types of things, when it is politically convenient for it to do so, it does not hesitate. It does not muck around with these cabinet confidentiality shields. But when it is politically inconvenient, suddenly the shields come up. We will see what happens in the reply to this debate.

Of course, what ought to be asked by lawmakers is whether the gigantic bill presently before us or an amended version that the government is secretly working on at the moment will truly make a difference. If all of this would truly make a difference, is the government ready to implement the new laws immediately? We have been told incidentally in briefings that it is not the government’s intention for this bill to be passed today or this month; in fact, we have been told it is August. But be that as it may, is the government ready to implement the new laws, whether that be in August or not? Clause 2 of the bill seems to suggest that a massive portion of this gigantic bill will only commence on a date to be fixed by proclamation. The translation, for those at home watching, is that this gigantic bill will become law when Mr Cook and Mr Papalia feel like it, when they decide at some later stage that that is when it will begin. The reason they want that provision in place is that they are not ready. A massive amount of work is supposedly to be done by way of regulations.

I would say to the Minister for Police to please spare us the absolute garbage that is being spewed in the media on a daily basis that somehow the opposition has had heaps of time with this bill and somehow the opposition is holding up this bill. It is a patent lie by the Minister for Police to propagate that in the public domain. He knows full well that ordinary Western Australians are not aware of normal parliamentary procedure, so he deliberately manipulates that lack of information. The truth of the matter is that in parliamentary terms, this bill has been here for five minutes. Yes, this is the second week that we have had the opportunity to debate this bill, but the truth, as the Minister for Police knows full well, is that most of this time has been taken up dealing with the government’s budget. We do not have a choice about that. We are the opposition; the government controls the agenda here. Please spare us the absolute garbage that has been pushed out by the Minister for Police in the media on a daily basis that somehow it is us who have held up this bill. It has been here for five minutes. I note that when it was convenient for the Minister for Police to say so in the public domain, he said, “No, there’ll be no rush. It’ll be provided with full scrutiny.” Well, the Minister for Police should put his seatbelt on, because that is what is going to happen: he is going to get full scrutiny on this gigantic bill. Every time he tells another lie in the public domain, telling people blatant untruths about what is happening in Parliament, he can expect it to be exposed.

Having addressed the minister's inconsistency with the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's recommendations, and the way in which he has misleadingly relied on the reporting of national and local incidents, I now turn to what he has said about consultation on the bill. The WA Labor government has a history of paying lip service to stakeholder consultation being of paramount importance, and the Firearms Bill 2024 is yet another example. If one were to read the minister's second reading speech in isolation from any other information, one could be forgiven for concluding that the government has carried out comprehensive consultation on this bill. However, there has been very little consultation. The truth is that it was mainly done by the Law Reform Commission, not the government. The Law Reform Commission consulted. Its 105th report was finalised in 2016, and here we are, nearly eight years on. What is notable about the stakeholder response to the Law Reform Commission's consultation is how significant it was. The commission itself has said that the response included 1 244 written submissions and was one of the largest, if not the largest, response that the commission had ever received on one of its referrals.

That level of response should be an alert to this government that the stakeholders—the people affected by this legislation—have voiced their concerns to the Law Reform Commission. If the government had truly consulted well on this bill, why is it that members of this chamber continue to receive countless pieces of correspondence from constituents? When considering some of the specific issues raised by constituents, I note that concerns have been expressed about the capacity for a WA police officer to enter a person's premises without a warrant; about the Commissioner of Police being able to implement policies and procedures at his or her discretion; about the infringement of people's legal rights when being asked any question by a police officer under the legislation; about the infringements of people's private property rights; about the broad scope of the powers of the commissioner; and about the State Administrative Tribunal being prevented from requesting reasons for decision when reviewing a firearms prohibition order, impacting the State Administrative Tribunal's ability to determine whether a decision is appropriate and made in accordance with the legislation.

Meanwhile, one constituent said that the bill will cause him to have to cease his business, but the Minister for Police does not seem to care. Another constituent questioned why the Aboriginal community had been largely ignored, particularly those in remote communities and areas of the state where, I am told, there has been no stakeholder consultation. If that constituent has been misinformed, the minister in this place should have no difficulties, in his reply to this second reading debate, in listing the occasions on which such consultation has occurred with remote Aboriginal communities.

An additional line from the minister about consultation warrants further special scrutiny at this time. In his second reading speech, the minister said —

The bill and its concepts have been developed in close consultation with key stakeholders within the firearm industry, including the Western Australian Firearms Community Alliance, the Primary Producers Firearms Advisory Board, and other firearm clubs and associations.

Perhaps the minister might like to advise us of the extent to which there has been consultation with the Western Australia Arms and Armour Society, and whether there has been any authentic purpose in that consultation process. It is my hope that one of the other members who have more time than I have, as my time is rapidly expiring, will have an opportunity to read into the record correspondence from the president of that stakeholder group, Mr Peter Collins.

I note that tomorrow I will be away from the chamber on urgent parliamentary business. As I have only a minute of time remaining, I regret that I will not be able to conclude everything I wanted to say in respect of this bill, but I will reiterate that there will be an opportunity during Committee of the Whole House for us to provide some form of special scrutiny to this gigantic bill.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP — MIDLAND

Statement

HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan) [6.19 pm]: I stand this evening to speak about an event I was invited to a few weeks ago at St John of God Midland Public Hospital for the launch of the Midland health justice partnership. This is a partnership between St John of God Midland and Midland Information Debt and Legal Advocacy Services, also known as Midlas. I was joined there by Simon Millman—I am not sure whether he is honourable—the member for Mount Lawley, who is also the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health; Mental Health.

The service commenced in February 2024 and was officially launched on 16 May, during Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month. Supported by an Impact100 WA grant, the health justice partnership is a groundbreaking initiative and early intervention response in Western Australia. It has been launched in a region that has one of the highest family and domestic violence rates in WA, the second-highest rate of reported physical and sexual violence against women in Australia, and increasing demands on services and supports from vulnerable individuals and families. Recent figures and violent deaths in our community are grim reminders that we have reached a crisis point for family and domestic violence, which is the leading contributor to the preventable deaths of women in Western Australia.

The Midland health justice partnership was established based on a shared vision and mutual goal to provide an early intervention response to family and domestic violence in Western Australia. The initiative aims to support victim-survivors, decrease the incidence rate, prevent escalation and mitigate further harm. Supported by a primary grant that was awarded by the philanthropic group Impact100 WA, the funding has enabled earlier access to legal support by providing co-located specialist family legal services within the hospital and providing victim-survivors greater access to legal options while they seek safety. The partnership represents a critical response to support communities through evidence-based early intervention and prevention measures that support the safety and health of vulnerable individuals. It has been constantly identified that people who experience family and domestic violence are more likely to disclose abuse to healthcare providers.

The partnership provides critical support through a holistic service model that links the hospital, Midland Magistrates Court, the Western Australia Police Force and the partners. The partnership will allow people to access an early intervention prevention response to family and domestic violence crises in WA and has an evidence-based initiative service model. It will protect older people's rights and prevent elder abuse, in line with the WA strategy to respond to the abuse of older people. It will offer onsite legal support and lawyers who are available to support patients prior to their discharge; specialised staff who offer immediate support with legal issues, in partnership with clinical and allied health professionals; assistance and access to safety and social justice for the most disadvantaged in our communities; early detection and intervention by clinical staff, supported by Midlas legal services; support and early intervention and prevention measures that complement family and domestic violence screening by clinicians; pathways to access information and assistance through Midlas wraparound services, including disability advocacy services and financial counselling; and community and workforce education and awareness initiatives.

It was great to be there on the day that this initiative was launched. It was very special. As it is funded by a grant, it runs for just two days a week at the moment. Obviously, Midlas and St John of God Midland would really like to be able to run it five days a week. They are also looking to see whether it is possible to recreate this model in other areas of need. As some people may know, Midland is in one of the lowest socio-economic regions—apparently—so there are a lot of services there, and a lot of family and domestic violence victim-survivors come through.

The work that Midlas does is immensely important. The fact that it is there in the hospital or at the court to support the victim-survivors is really important, especially in this day and age when, unfortunately, every time we turn around there appears to be another woman killed by their partner or a close family member. Are we up to 38 women killed so far this year? No, the number is 40 women this year, and we are not even at the end of May, which is a disgrace. Any intervention we can possibly have to prevent any future family and domestic violence is highly important. We should all look at Midlas and the work it does. We should advocate to make sure that we are pushing forward to ensure that 40 is as high as the number goes this year. Sorry, I got a bit distracted by some giggling in the chamber by some honourable members and I lost my train of thought. Again, I will just say that 40 women have been killed so far this year in family and domestic violence situations. I think we should take it very seriously and hope that more intervention can be brought forward to ensure it does not happen again.

PERTH SEAWATER DESALINATION PLANT

Statement

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West) [6.26 pm]: I am grateful for the presence of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Water because it is easier to raise an issue about the answers to a couple of questions than ask the President for a ruling or ask the question six different times in six different ways. I will give the parliamentary secretary a copy of the answers he has given me over a couple of weeks just to let him know. On 14 May, I asked a question about the Perth seawater desalination plant located in Kwinana. I asked —

For each of the financial years 2017–18 to 2022–23 inclusive —

- (1) What percentage of power purchased by the PSDP for plant operation was purchased from renewable resources?

The answer the parliamentary secretary gave was, “nil”. The second question was —

- (2) Were carbon offset credits from accredited third parties required to be purchased to meet any shortfall; and, if so, for each year, how many credits were purchased?

The answer was, “Not applicable”, which is a little confusing when compared with the answer the parliamentary secretary gave me today, especially to parts (2) to (4). The questions were —

- (2) ... did the PSDP ever run on renewable energy; and, if so, for which years?
- (3) Why was the commitment to run the PSDP on renewables abandoned?
- (4) Will the PSDP ever run on renewables ...

The answer was —

- (2)–(4) Water Corporation had a contract with Western Power for electricity from the Emu Downs wind farm for 10 years from 2007–16.

I think that is true, but early on, the government of the day initially tried to double-claim the credit for it. But there was this line —

Water Corporation satisfied its ministerial conditions for the Perth seawater desalination plant from 2017 onwards by purchasing carbon credits.

I will give the member a copy.

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: I have copies of my own.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am happy to give them to the parliamentary secretary because I have copies.

The question asked on 14 May was: were carbon offset credits required to be purchased, and how many were purchased? And the answer was, “Not applicable”. But the answer today included the line —

Water Corporation satisfied its ministerial conditions for the Perth seawater desalination plant from 2017 onwards by purchasing carbon credits.

Either Water Corporation purchased carbon credits as per the answer today or it did not as per the answer of 14 May. Can the parliamentary secretary endeavour to find out the actual answer? I have lodged a third question trying to get the answer out of the government, and I could do a song and dance about the obfuscation that the government comes up with, but I know Hon Matthew Swinbourn is a very good parliamentary secretary and member who tries to deliver accurate and reasonable answers. I ask the parliamentary secretary to try to find out the answer and deliver it when he gets the opportunity. I know this is not his fault. He takes the information given to him by the Minister for Water, and someone in that office has obviously been drinking from the wrong glass because the answer does not make any sense. I will bring the questions to the parliamentary secretary in a minute. Could the parliamentary secretary ask the office to look at the answers and work out which answers are correct and which are not? I can then grandstand at some other point about not getting the accurate answer, which I know is not the parliamentary secretary’s fault.

House adjourned at 6.29 pm
