



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2021

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday, 14 September 2021

Legislative Council

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THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) took the chair at 2.00 pm, read prayers and acknowledged country.

JOINT SITTING

Statement by President

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) [2.03 pm]: Members, I have the honour to inform you that at a joint sitting of the houses of Parliament of the state of Western Australia held in Perth on 14 September 2021, the members of such houses, sitting and voting together in pursuance of section 15 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, did choose Dorinda Cox of 14 Harwood Close, Canning Vale, Western Australia, to hold the place vacated by former Senator Rachel Siewert.

STANDING ORDERS BIRTHDAY WISHES

Statement by President

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) [2.04 pm]: Members, last Thursday the Council agreed to amend a number of the Council's standing orders, with many of the changes to come into effect from today. The Council's staff have reprinted the standing orders and have updated your binder in the chamber. If you have removed your copy of the standing orders from the chamber, please see the staff from the administration office to update your binder. The new standing orders are also available on the Parliament's website and POWAnet. I thank the Legislative Council staff for the quick turnaround on the new standing orders.

Members are reminded that the dinner suspension will be for one hour on Tuesday evenings going forward. The bells will ring at 6.55 pm to reflect these new arrangements. Afternoon tea will be provided on a Wednesday and Thursday, as it is on a Tuesday; however, no formal afternoon tea suspension will occur on those days.

We also have another important occasion today—that is, the birthdays of Hon Jackie Jarvis and Hon Sophia Moermond. On behalf of your colleagues, we wish you many happy returns.

Members: Hear, hear!

BILLS

Assent

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following bills —

1. Arts and Culture Trust Bill 2021.
2. Family Court Amendment Bill 2021.
3. Ticket Scalping Bill 2021.

PAPERS TABLED

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

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Consideration of Tabled Papers

Resumed from 9 September on the following motion moved by Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Mental Health) —

That pursuant to standing order 69(1), the Legislative Council take note of tabled papers 534A–D (2021–22 budget papers) laid upon the table of the house on Thursday, 9 September 2021.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan) [2.10 pm]: I am delighted to comment on the tabled papers and make some comments in particular on two of my areas of responsibility—that is, corrective services and police. I say at the outset that there was great anticipation of this budget, particularly the anticipated surplus, and the \$5.6 billion surplus did not disappoint, because it was not fictional; it was fact. The \$5.6 billion operating surplus was fundamentally generated through two premises. The first was the change to the floor of the GST to 70¢ in the dollar, which is a long way from the 25¢ to 28¢ floor in the dollar that we received as a government all those years ago. The second thing is the iron ore price. To put that in perspective, over the last four years, the Labor government has received \$14.4 billion in GST; that compares with the \$8.6 billion in the last four years of the Liberal government. As I said, that is based on 70¢ in the dollar floor. Iron ore revenue was \$7.9 billion above forecast, compared with the previous government's last four years, so in total the Labor government has received \$22.3 billion over the last

four years from GST and iron ore, compared with \$2.4 billion received by the Liberal–National government in its last four years. I repeat: that is \$22.3 billion in the last four years from the GST and iron ore compared with the \$2.4 billion received in the last four years of the Liberal–National government.

I say at the outset that I will leave the forensic assessment of the budget figures to Hon Dr Steve Thomas. The reason that I am speaking first today is that a group of people will be watching this afternoon, and they will be listening very sensitively to what I have to say about the mental health of police officers. We have changed the format somewhat to ensure that people who are watching the stream will get the opportunity to hear their words in the Parliament.

Corrective services is one of those no-win portfolios that anyone can have, because people do not mind people going to jail if they have done the wrong thing. It is as simple as that. I thank the minister for the very comprehensive briefing I received from the department and the union, which I had a very constructive meeting with, to get a bit of an understanding of the background of the overall portfolio. In a nutshell, we have 16 public prisons, one private prison and five work camps. Collectively, we have on average 7 000 prisoners at those institutions, including an average of 79 prisoners a day in minimum-security work camps. As a breakdown, the overall average is around 7 000 prisoners, with 5 000 in the metropolitan region and 2 000 in the regions. There are around 6 200 males and 800 females. There are 2 707 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners—I repeat: 2 707 of the 7 000 are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. To put it into perspective, that is not nearly as bad as the proportion of prisoners in juvenile detention, which is a much higher percentage, and it is something we simply must deal with. To have such a high proportion of First Nations people in detention, particularly juveniles, is a problem for all parties. I turn to security. There are around 1 800 to 2 000 prisoners in maximum security, 3 400 in medium security and around 1 600 in minimum security.

One of the biggest issues we have, of course, is with rehabilitation to try to stop the constant churn of prisoners—that is, those that go to prison, come out of prison and go back to prison. Interestingly enough, I formatted my presentation today prior to the revelations that have come out in the last few days from the coroner’s report about the number of prisoners who have taken their lives since leaving jail. From 2015 to 2019, 139 prisoners who left prison lost their lives. The compelling component of that is that 37.7 per cent of those prisoners suicided—they took their own lives. We have to wonder whether we have sufficient rehabilitation facilities, both in our prisons and in the transition point back into the community, to ensure that does not happen. Even more compelling is the fact that 20 per cent of that 37.7 per cent are Aboriginal—yet again.

In the media over the last few days we have seen some compelling testimonies from prisoners, former prisoners and families of prisoners and former prisoners that show we have a real problem. Are we doing enough for our prisoners, both in prison and then in the transition back into the community, to ensure that they are not repeat offenders—to get them out of that never-ending cycle of repeat offending and to provide them with skills, resilience and support mechanisms to assist them in the process? I have to say that the answer to that is an emphatic no. The fact that we have such a high rate of prisoners who are repeat offenders stands as stark evidence to that. I remember when I was training minister in 2010–11 and I introduced a number of programs with our TAFE colleges, in particular C.Y. O’Connor College of TAFE, at Acacia Prison, which provided certificates I, II and III in business management and a whole raft of other qualifications to assist those who were incarcerated to develop a skill set and provide a qualification and to assist them mentally—to assist their self-esteem and resilience. I went to a couple of those graduations at the prisons and they were extraordinarily positive occasions. Each and every occasion I went, I found that the fact that the prisoners had achieved something, whether a certificate I in business, a certificate II in hospitality or whatever it might be, was in a lot of instances the single most positive thing that had happened to them in their adult lives. It was extraordinary. It was very therapeutic for these people who were very down and out. Their families were with them, and it was a wonderful occasion.

I have asked a number of questions about this, and I understand there are still some programs going throughout our prisons with our TAFE colleges and educational institutions. Whether we are doing enough is open for debate. Evidently, from the figures of late we have from the coroner’s report, we are not. When 139 people have left prison over the last three to four years and over one-third, around 37 per cent, have taken their own lives, it shows that perhaps we are not doing enough. If we are pushing them out of our jails and back onto the streets of homelessness, unemployment and helplessness, the inevitable consequence is that they will either end up back in jail or, more than likely, as we are seeing, they will take their own lives. We need to do whatever we can, particularly with rehabilitation. It does not matter which side of the political spectrum we are on, everyone would agree that if we can do something to assist those in jail and not treat them as devoid of care or reason in our community, to have a meaningful life post-incarceration, that is a positive thing, not only for those individuals, but also for the community. One of the best ways to do that is to get in early. Early intervention is vital, both in schools and into adulthood. Any transition point in a person’s life is vital, and it is vital that we get it right. The early intervention years are vital, whether they be from kindergarten to pre-primary, primary school et cetera, the transition point from primary school to secondary school or from adulthood to employment.

A large number of students fall by the wayside. They are widely referred to as disengaged. What we did as a government, and what I did personally as education minister and also training minister, was try to assist those

students as best we could. In its lack of wisdom, from 2007 to 2009, the federal government reduced funding to the curriculum and re-engagement in education schools. We filled that gap. At that stage, there were five CARE schools. When we left office, we had expanded that number to 13. I am not sure of the exact number now.

Hon Sue Ellery: There's more. I can't remember what the number is.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is right. They branched out. I know for a fact that a number of them developed hubs within their schools.

Hon Sue Ellery: Different campuses.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is right; there are various campuses. There is one in Geraldton. The community schools expanded. I am not sure whether Corridors College is still going, which is a shame. That school in Midland had a very good program. These schools deal with disengaged students by providing them with meaningful education and training opportunities. More often than not, these students are incarcerated in juvenile detention in one form or another. A significant number of the students are Aboriginal. I would like to think that we are still doing that and that we can expand on that as a community, whichever government is in power.

In addition to those CARE schools, it is absolutely vital that we provide students with a transition out of juvenile detention. Unfortunately, that is not happening to the degree it is needed. With the \$5.6 billion, I would like to think that the government will be looking at that transition. I will continue to ask questions about juvenile detention and also the transition back into meaningful employment. If we do not do that, inevitably, a significant cohort of those people who go into juvenile detention will move to higher order crimes as opposed to getting qualifications and ideally making a meaningful contribution to society while at the same time developing resilience and self-esteem so they can live a quality life. It would be such a shame if those people, whose negative energy commenced at a very early age, with dysfunctional families, are never given a leg up. They move from home to home, from uncle to aunty, from father to brother or from sister to mother, whatever it might be, and, quite frankly, they do not have the coping skills to deal with life outside jail.

I will conclude on corrective services from that perspective. As I said, I have asked a number of questions and I will continue to ask questions and pursue the issue over the next four years to see whether there are ways in which we can provide meaningful training and employment while at the same time provide constructive and comprehensive assistance from incarceration back into the real world. If we can do that, we can stop that never-ending cycle of recurrence for repeat offenders and they can move back into the community and live a wholesome life.

I turn to the police. Again, I thank the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police for the comprehensive briefing I received. I also thank the WA Police Union and the multitude of police, who have been extraordinarily supportive. Our police force is such a professional unit. It is a portfolio that I absolutely relish; I love it. I would like to commend the police for the wonderful work and job that they do. I will identify some issues in the force. A sleeper that I talked about on numerous occasions is mental health pressures that a number of officers in our police force are suffering from. It is massive. Every single day, I find out that it is much bigger than I ever imagined. The budget papers are cause for concern, to be perfectly honest. In 2020–21, recurrent expenditure for WAPOL was \$1.47 billion. That increased this year to \$1.48 billion, or 0.8 per cent. Inflation is 1.75 per cent, so effectively that is a cut in the police budget. We are not even treading water with the police budget. In addition, it is of concern that the minister's media release claims that there is a \$56.9 million increase in funding to boost policing community safety. However, of that \$56.9 million, COVID spending is around \$35 million. In effect, it is a real increase of only \$20.8 million for the police force. That is recurrent spending. I will put that in perspective. The increase in the police budget is \$20.8 million. If we take out COVID costings, that amount is about 0.4 per cent of one per cent of a \$5.6 billion surplus. I will come back to that. We have a parlous need for mental health support for our police. As set out in the budget papers—it is true; members can look for themselves—we have a \$20 million increase in the budget, which is a cause for concern.

I wish to highlight a couple of issues in the policing portfolio. One of the biggest issues that we face as a society is illicit drug use, in particular, methamphetamine, not cannabis. I think everyone would agree that methamphetamine use, the scourge of meth, is having dire consequences in our community. Members should not just take my word for it; they should go and talk to any police officer on the beat, and they will tell them exactly the same thing—the meth issue is massive in our community. It is responsible for the destruction of families, relationships, crime, underachievement in our children and adolescents and across the community. It is a scourge on our community. We have cause for concern. If we look at the seizures of meth in Western Australia, in 2017, it was 84.34 kilos; in 2018, it was 188.1 kilos; and in 2019, it was 454 kilos. It plummeted in 2020 because we closed the borders; it went down to 121.7 kilos, back to around below the 2018 figure. A cause of concern is that on 18 August, less than a month ago, 365.2 kilos of methamphetamine was seized in Western Australia. That is just seized. That is not the total. That is the amount that was seized. So far this year, we are almost back up to the dizzying heights of 2019, because we still have three months of this year to go and we are sitting on 365.2 kilos of methamphetamine having been seized in Western Australia. That is a major concern. I have asked a plethora of questions on the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce, and I will continue to do so. Whether we are identifying the issue in a targeted fashion is open for debate, and from what I have heard, there are areas of concern.

In particular, let us look at the crime rate throughout Western Australia, because the Minister for Police and the Premier have been out there saying how the crime rate has been in terminal decline since COVID. They are technically correct. In a generic sense, crime has declined. That is because robberies are at an all-time low because everyone has been staying at home. However, the devil is in the detail. If members go back and look at the crime figures that are readily available and updated regularly on the Western Australia Police Force website, they will see that crimes against a person and domestic crime have absolutely skyrocketed. That is of real concern.

In particular, the response times of police are a concern. I got this information through some questions that were asked in the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. Priority 1 tasks need a response time of 12 minutes or less. I remind members that a priority 1 task is when there is an imminent threat to life, a serious incident in process and urgent attendance required. Priority 1 tasks, according to WAPOL's own standards, need to be responded to within 12 minutes or less. The number of priority 1s responded to in the required time across the metropolitan area has significantly decreased between 2016–17 and the current year. Throughout the metropolitan area, the priority 1 response time success rate declined from 94.7 per cent to 87.1 per cent. In Armadale, the success rate declined from 100 per cent in 2016–17 to 81.1 per cent this year. In Mandurah, it went from 100 per cent to 84.6 per cent. In Midland, the success rate went from 100 per cent to 80 per cent. In the Perth CBD, the success rate declined from 100 per cent to 83.3 per cent. That is a massive decline.

I am saying that if someone were in the CBD, for example, where we have chronic homelessness issues, chronic social dislocation issues and crime issues—all we have to do is walk through some of the city streets late at night or in Northbridge to see the problem, and we see it reported in the daily media coverage—they had better hope they do not get bashed, because the response time in the CBD has increased from 2.9 minutes to 13.6 minutes. There is a likelihood that if someone is a priority 1 case, the response time will be 13.6 minutes. They had better hope that they do not have a serious injury, because the response time has blown out that much. The police have provided those figures.

I do not deny that there has been an increase in the number of police officers, but I question whether we have prioritised the right areas. For example, in 2016–17, there were 6 228 police officers of authorised strength. In 2020–21, there were 6 741. That is an increase of 520 over that time. However, 460 of those officers are now on Operation Tide, which means they have been taken out of frontline services, and 100 are on the meth task force, which brings it up to 560. In fact, we are trading water. We are dealing with the same number of officers as we were about four years ago.

The issue is not with the police themselves. They can operate only with the hand they are dealt, and they do a magnificent job. But when we find that the percentage of required response times has plummeted in those areas within which there are some evident social issues, that is a cause for concern, particularly when the government is sitting on a \$5.6 billion surplus. It is all well and good to talk about the fact that we have these extra police officers, but it is not all well and good when, by stealth of hand, the government has 460 officers on Operation Tide, when apparently we do not have COVID in Western Australia, and another 100 officers on the meth task force. We are dealing with exactly the same number of officers. That is what I have found.

That is a perfect segue into the area that I want to deal with for the remainder of my contribution—that is, the pressure that police are finding themselves under. I did not understand how serious this was until a lady by the name of Danielle Baldock came and saw me. She operated a program called Soldiers and Sirens. Members in this chamber will know I have spoken about this on numerous occasions, and I will talk about it in a moment, specific to Soldiers and Sirens. That meeting with Danielle was poignant because it identified to me a massive sleeping issue not for the Labor government, not for the Liberal–National alliance, not for the crossbench, not for society, but for police officers themselves. We have a dire issue in our police force at the moment. Dozens upon dozens of police officers are suffering in silence and having to deal with stress and pressure like never before, as a direct result of the meth scourge, reduced resources and the fact that insufficient priority is provided to mental health support for police officers and, I have to say, first responders.

As a result of my entry into the Soldiers and Sirens issue, I asked a number of questions of the minister to find out whether he could get some funding for it. This is when the issue expanded further. I asked —

- (1) Will the minister commit to funding Soldiers and Sirens in order for this essential service provider to continue to support many Western Australian police, veterans and other first responders?

I will not read the whole lot because he says a lot, but he says in his response, in part —

Members of WA Police also have access to other mental health services, including 24/7 access to an on-call clinical psychologist and chaplain and in-house and external psychological services. Regionally, mental health practitioners visit the districts multiple times a year and officers are provided access to telehealth services and local mental health services are referred to when available.

He goes on to talk about other things. The next day, I asked how many psychologists and psychiatrists are employed for the police and how much is allocated for contract services et cetera. The princely sum for contract services of

psychiatrists and psychologists is \$260 000 per annum for the entire police force for all 7 000 officers. I asked how many chaplains are employed by WAPOL. The minister said that there are four. I asked what other mental health services are provided, and he went through a range of other options. He said —

- (4) There is the peer support program; employee assistance program, external counselling service; pre-deployment assessments; wellbeing reviews; critical incident response crisis support service; welfare checks; fully funded external treatment for police officers' work-related psychological conditions, with no cap; reimbursement for police officers for non-work-related psychology and psychiatry services, with no cap; visiting regional psychologist program, designated locations; reassimilation program; and Police Family website.

That went down like a lead balloon with police officers, because police officers are unaware of these facilities and support services. Not only that, it appears that the police do not seem to know what services are being provided. I have been through the services that were indicated in answer to my question of 1 September, and have asked specific questions on each of them. It appears that the minister does not understand anything about the answers that were provided, given the responses I have received. At the outset, I asked how much of the \$260 000 was used for contract services. An amount of \$240 000 is allocated to contract services for psychologists and psychiatrists for 7 000 police. But it gets worse. I asked how much of the \$240 000 was spent in 2018–19, 2019–20 and 2020–21. In 2018–19, it was \$129 000; in 2019–20, it was \$155 000; and the only time it came close was in 2020–21, when \$243 000 was spent. The government was not even using the \$260 000 allocated for contract services. That, to me, sets off many alarm bells. There is not even a quarter of a million dollars for contract services for psychologists and psychiatrists.

I also asked how many psychologists and psychiatrists there were. The answer was 10 psychologists and one psychiatrist—for the entire police force. I then asked how many of them were full-time; I thought it would be good to look at the devil in the detail. The answer to that was even more staggering. I asked where the 10 psychologists and one psychiatrist were located, and whether they were full-time employees of the Western Australia Police Force. The answer was four full-time psychologists, two part-time psychologists and one contracted part-time psychiatrist in the metropolitan area; a further four full-time psychologist positions were being recruited. That means that the previous day's answer was wrong; there are not 10 psychologists at all—there are six: four full-time psychologists, two part-time psychologists, and one contracted part-time psychiatrist. That is, effectively, five and a half full-time psychologists and one part-time psychiatrist—not even a full-time psychiatrist. The four full-time psychologist positions that were being recruited was not mentioned in answer to the previous day's question.

The minister was trying to be too clever by half. The Western Australia Police Force can only play the hand it is dealt. Do we honestly think only five and a half psychologists and one part-time psychiatrist for 7 000 police officers is adequate? Evidently, it is not. Members need only look at my email inbox to see why it is not. There are also four full-time chaplains located in the Perth metropolitan area, so police officers would not want to have an issue in country areas of Western Australia that required the services of a chaplain, because there is none in regional Western Australia.

Yet again, I point to the fact that the reality of the situation is vastly different from the responses I received initially. If the minister expected me to just accept that answer—“Oh, there's all these services; what are they complaining about?”—then he has another think coming. As I said, I have asked subsequent questions on every single one of the areas he referred to on 1 September, and I have been disappointed with every single response. One answer, in particular, should surely have taken only the push of a button. I asked —

- (1) How many officers accessed the employee assistance program's external counselling service in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 to date?

Surely the minister would know the answer to that, because he told me how much the government had spent on it. The fact is, he knows how much was spent on it, but he does not know how many officers accessed those services, because he asked me to place that question on notice. The government knows how much it spent on external services, but it does not know how many people accessed them. I can tell members that, out of 7 000 police officers, we can safely assume that not too many accessed those services. What an insult, to ask me to place the question on notice. He must have known the answer, but because the number was so low, it was embarrassing. I have asked many questions on this issue. I know I get a rolling of the eyes from the minister et cetera; why am I bothering? I can tell members why I am bothering: it is because I genuinely care about this. I think this is a massive issue. I really, desperately want to help these officers. I want, ideally, to assist the government in a bipartisan fashion to ensure that our police officers feel supported and do not feel that they are in such a dark, dim space in their lives that they will take their own lives. Unfortunately, we have lost two officers like that over the last three months. That is my biggest motivation. I will come back to Soldiers and Sirens in a moment.

Another issue is the mental health co-response program, which was established by the former Liberal–National government in 2015. That has been reduced from 36 officers to 26. Again, I have asked a multitude of questions on this and have been pushed from pillar to post. I know what the situation is. It has been reduced from 36 officers

to 26. These are officers who deal with mental health issues in the community. Now, as a direct result of 10 of those officers being redeployed elsewhere, we do not have any of these officers in the Armadale or Cannington districts; those districts are completely unsupported. We now have general duties police officers dealing with specific mental health issues at a time when we are living in such a complex society and when so many people require support. Domestic violence is at the highest level it has ever been in the history of the state, yet this mental health co-response program has been reduced. Yes, it was established by a Liberal government and, I am pleased to say, supported by the current Labor government, but it has now been gutted. That is unacceptable. We have a surplus of \$5.6 billion: there are massive mental health issues in the community, domestic violence is at an all-time high, and there is out-of-control crime in the central business district, yet we cannot afford sufficient funds to support the one program that deals specifically with mental health.

I will continue to pursue the issue of Soldiers and Sirens, although I am becoming very, very dismayed with the government's response. This may seem minuscule, but it is massive. Soldiers and Sirens has gone beyond Danielle and her wonderful group; it is actually symbolic of a systemic lack of compassion from the government for police officers with mental health issues and post-traumatic stress disorder. It is a massive issue. When Danielle came to speak to me she told me that the funds for Soldiers and Sirens—I have said this over and over again—originally came from a federal government grant. I will not go through this issue in its entirety again, because I have been through it on numerous occasions. I remind members that I tabled the Soldiers and Sirens capability statement in this chamber about six weeks ago. If members are interested, I strongly recommend they go and access that document. It goes through what Soldiers and Sirens did. Soldiers and Sirens was an organisation that provided extraordinary support to serving and past police officers, first responders and veterans. The big difference between Soldiers and Sirens and most other support groups was that it was organised and run by qualified former serving officers. They understood their clients; they had been where the officers who were suffering from PTSD and trauma had been. They intimately understood it. That is why dozens upon dozens of police officers and first responders accessed the services of Soldiers and Sirens.

When Danielle came to speak to me, she explained about the funding but she also said that the vast majority of officers and individuals who came to see her were police and first responders, who come under the jurisdiction of the state government. To me, it is a no-brainer. I asked the Commissioner of Police in an estimates committee hearing whether he supported Soldiers and Sirens and he said that it was a good provider. The Minister for Police has said that it was a preferred provider. Yet, out of \$5.6 billion, the government does not think that those dozens upon dozens of people who previously accessed Soldiers and Sirens are worth anything. I am telling members: they do mean something.

I received a haunting email from the wife of a serving police officer yesterday. I feel out of my depth with this, much the same as when I was a house head at Scotch College and a young boy in year 9 came to see me and told me that he was going to take his life. I had done the training for that and I knew what to do. I honestly do not know what to do in this situation. I do not want the death of a police officer on my hands. I have communicated with the wife over the last 24 hours, and I will continue to do so. Her husband does not know that she has communicated with me. I feel helpless; I genuinely feel helpless. The story she told of what her husband is enduring is compelling. Having read in a number of such cases over the last three months, I know that his is not an isolated case. This is a massive issue. How on earth can we not fund this program?

It is evident from the responses I have received from the minister over the last month that the services provided by the Western Australia Police Force are sporadic at best and lacking in a lot of instances. I am not criticising the commissioner or WAPOL; they are doing their best. I am asking the government to please fund Soldiers and Sirens. As I said, I am not talking about this organisation in isolation; a raft of organisations and support mechanisms need attention. A constant trickle of cases are coming to me, but they are just the ones from people who have put up their hands. They are crying out for help. As I said, many officers must be suffering in silence. I refuse to believe that the only officers who are suffering from PTSD and trauma and who feel unloved and uncared for are those who have been in touch with me. That is not the case.

I will continue to pursue this matter. Ideally, I want to do this in a proactive fashion with the minister and the government. I am calling out for help at the moment because I know for a fact that there is an officer out there who is seriously considering taking his own life. I do not know how I am going to handle it—I am going to get some professional advice over the next 24 hours—but I can tell members that from the three emails I have received from his wife, he is at risk. This is not some bland political stunt; this is fact. It is not like this is the first time I have mentioned it.

To conclude, I met a wonderful woman about six weeks ago or a little longer. Her name is Janean Moulden. Janean and her husband, Randall, were accessing the services of Soldiers and Sirens. Randall had suffered from PTSD and trauma for a number of years. He felt completely alienated. He suffered from enormous demons that absolutely no-one could imagine. Janean had to deal with that as well. She supported Randall as best she could. When I first spoke to Janean, I told her that I did not want to make this a political issue; I said that I wanted to try to get an outcome. She understood that. When I explained to her that I could talk about it in the Parliament, she urged me to do so. When I said that we could try to get some profile in the media when the government did not respond, she urged me to do so. In fact, she has spoken to the media herself. She told me unambiguously that she wanted to tell her story.

Never did I say to Janean that she should do it or strongly encourage her to do so; I always told her that it must be her decision. I said that if she wanted to be a voice for this situation, by all means she should do it. She is an extraordinarily brave woman. What she has had to endure over the last three months is devastating. But Janean has made the decision to go public; she has made the decision to be a voice for her husband, Randall. I want to make perfectly clear that she made the decision. As I read in various accounts from other officers and former officers, it became abundantly clear to Janean that her story needed to be told. I explained to her that I would be making this speech today and that I would be more than willing to tell her story. She was desperate for me to do so. As I said, I do not do this lightly; I do it because I genuinely believe in Soldiers and Sirens. Janean genuinely believes in Soldiers and Sirens. She genuinely believes that if Soldiers and Sirens had still been operating, Randall would be alive today.

This is a compelling area for everyone, and particularly for police officers and first responders who are suffering. I will continue to tell their story. I will continue to be an advocate on their behalf. Wherever possible, I will not make it a political issue. But this is an issue, and, as a society, we can do better than we are doing at the moment. If we are sitting on a \$5.6 billion surplus, a couple of million dollars over four years to help support dozens upon dozens of officers through Soldiers and Sirens, in addition to other support services, is well worth every cent.

Having said that, I am going to read in Janean's story. I know that Janean is watching today. Can I just say to you, Janean: you are a wonderful woman; I admire you so much. Stay strong, mate. This is your story. Her story reads —

Sergeant Randall Moulden always lived by the mantra of “The day I stop seeing a deceased person as a human, is the day I hang up my uniform”.

On June 29th, 2021, Sgt Randall Moulden, a dedicated police officer of 31yrs took his own life. That's the day he **HUNG** his uniform up for good.

A police officer, that everyday woke up, put on his uniform, and wore it with pride, dignity, grace and respect.

A police officer to his very core, dedicated to helping people, right to the end.

His last call-out to a job, was 2hrs before he took his life.

A tragedy that should never had happened.

A department left scarred and grieving.

It is my understanding that 100s of WA police officers rang the department in distress over what Randall did, “People like Randall don't do that”, but he did.

Our children's father, my husband of 25yrs, my life partner of 30yrs. My best friend, my soulmate gone.

Our daughter will never know the honour of her farther walking her down the aisle on her wedding day.

Randall will never get to hold his grandchildren, watch them grow, tell them stories, teach them to drive, to simply love them.

A loving wife and son, who will be forever haunted by seeing him, in the shed with a rope around his neck.

Haunted by the look on his face, a look of anguish, torment, scarred, fear, sadness, helplessness, exhaustion, the guilt. He had given up.

He just wanted the pain to stop.

A loving wife, that held him up as she unwrapped the rope from his neck, as she lay him on the ground and held him. As she kissed him, as she begged him not to give up on us, because she loves him so much.

Watching her whole life, disappear in front of her.

Loosing her past, her present and her future.

The only person that made her complete on every level. The person she got up every morning and breathed for, gone.

Our 24 year old son, so traumatised by what he saw, that he had to break the law, by having to drive to find an officer to help us.

The agony of having to ring his daughter, his brother, his mates.

Watching 6 polices officers, having to see a respected colleague, a mate of theirs deal with that situation.

3 paramedics, again having to witness someone they respected both in and out of the uniform work on him, trying to save his life.

Knowing that, that pain they suffered that night, will affect their families as they try to deal with it. Trying to help, but knowing they can't.

All of us innocent in this, left scarred and haunted, with no answers, just a world of pain.

Our lives will never be the same, both personally and professionally.

Randall had been suffering from PTSD for 7yrs, he was finally getting on top of it, when funding, to Soldiers and Sirens was cut. Leaving him nowhere to go.

A service that our boys/girls in blue rely on, not only them but also their families.

As families, it's us, that have, to deal with these tormented officers.

We have, to watch them struggle with what they deal with daily, you don't.

Watching someone you love battle demons, that you have no clue about.

That was me for 7yrs. For 7yrs I watched the man I love, admire and respect fall apart.

Watching him deal, with the constant night terrors, night sweats, the physical torment, the emotional torment. The hallucinations, the smell of death. Hearing victims screaming. Seeing dead people, so much so that he had to sleep with a TV on at night to try and drown out the noises.

Having no appetite, not being able to sleep out of fear.

The constant guilt he felt at not being able to help the very people he was trying to protect. us, society.

Watching him sit outside wondering why he could see and hear all the dead people he, had, had to deal with. The screams of innocent children.

Laying with his head in my lap, comforting him as he cried, wiping away his tears because he couldn't understand why he was so tormented.

Not being able to do anything to make the pain go away for him. Leaving me with a feeling of helplessness because I couldn't, protect the one person that means the whole world to me.

I thought I understood Randall's pain, I did.

My reality is, I didn't have a clue, how could I?

I do now, I feel it every second of every day.

I can't say from the minute I wake up, to the minute I fall asleep, because I don't sleep.

I don't sleep out of constant fear, fear that I will wake up screaming, causing more terror for our son.

Not being able to eat, something I always had a go at Randall for.

You don't eat because you can't eat, ive lost almost 13kilos since Randall died.

The physical pain in my back that I live with, from 4pm when he would get home from work, to 4am when he was pronounced dead.

I understand the need for that pain to stop, I understand it and feel it.

The constant fear that grips my entire body 24 hours a day.

The images, of his lifeless body hanging in the shed, the horrific, vivid flashbacks that are so realistic I almost pass out.

The paranoia I now live with.

The hypervigilance.

The feeling of complete helplessness.

Everything has changed for me now, my sense of smell, taste, sight, hearing.

The guilt that grips constantly grips me, because I couldn't help him, that hurts me to my very core.

The distorted images of the life that I now live with.

Every single person in this room, should consider themselves extremely lucky, that you will never see, experience, or even understand the pain associated with not only suicide, but trauma.

Nor will you ever experience the pain associated with seeing death and destruction.

I have experienced 1 trauma, Randall experienced 31yrs of it.

Since January this year, I was also under the care of a psychologist with Soldiers and Sirens.

Both Randall and I were working hard on ourselves.

There were significant changes in both of us.

Then the funding was cut, I can not stress this enough, Randall felt abandoned, completely alone.

The bottom line is, why should he have had to find another psychologist?

He had built a rapport with Danielle, he had been seeing her for 4 years. He trusted her, because she understood the fundamentals of trauma, having been a WA police officer herself.

He felt safe, to be able to talk to her, talk to her without fear or judgement.

That's the key for a lot of front-line workers, the understanding they offer.

The safety of being able to open up, in a setting that is comfortable to them.

Opening up to someone about the horrors of trauma, means having to allow yourself to be vulnerable, for Police officers that's not an easy thing to do.

Soldiers and Sirens offer that warmth, comfort, and safety. Its like talking to a friend, because you know they understand trauma as they have experienced it firsthand, they understand.

I speak for myself also, I had been seeing Dylan since January, where do I go now? Where do I go, I go to get the help that I need to deal with my own PTSD?

The last 3 images of my husband are 1, seeing him hanging in the shed, 2 seeing him in a body bag with a breathing tube in his mouth, the bright purple bruise around his neck from the rope, 3 the image of Randall's distorted face that comes flying at me from nowhere.

Being told that, in those final moments that he was here, I couldn't touch him, kiss him, stroke his hair the way he liked. Because my husband was a crime scene.

So, I ask you where do I go for help?

Who helps me, a stranger? Having to open up to someone I don't know, having to re live not only the last 51 yrs of my life, but having to talk about the most horrific and traumatic night of my life. What I experienced that night was incredibly intimate and deeply personal, I don't want to speak to a stranger, I want and deserve the safety of those people that have got me this far. The people that make me feel safe and secure. Soldiers and Sirens were my godsend, up until the 1st August, when their doors closed, so now, I'm in the same boat as Randall, trapped, scared, abandoned, alone, frightened. Because the only people that can get me through this can't. That's not right, its cruel on every single level.

Our Police work for the government, that's a basic fact.

As our government, its up to you to ensure the safety of every single police officer, whether they be serving or retired.

Taking funding from a vitally important organisation like Soldiers and Sirens, is unfathomable and reckless, you the government have neglected your duty of care to the very essence of our society, the people that protect us.

These officers put their lives on the line every day to protect you and your society.

They make sacrifices every day, their families make sacrifices.

They do it, because they love it, no questions asked.

They deal with the very worst of society on a daily basis and they never complain.

They go to work knowing that they are probably going to be abused, spat on, disrespected, punched, kicked, their families' lives threatened.

Do you have any idea the mental anguish that this causes them?'

They are expected to put their lives on the line every day, yet backs are turned on them when they need help.

It's a sad state of affairs, when the criminals are justified, and the Police are vilified.

Where is the respect from you the government to them?

Respect from the government comes from you allowing every officer to seek help where they want to seek help, not where you think they should go. That system doesn't work.

Where is your compassion, empathy and respect to our serving police officers?

Are we going to have to wait for more officers to take their lives before you learn the basic fundamentals of how important places like Soldiers and Sirens are?

More families left suffering their worlds turned upside down?

This is down to you Mr McGowan, this is your call, its now on your shoulders.

I find the "There is no money to give them" attitude, Insulting and disrespectful.

Not only to the officers, but to the families of officers that also suffer.

What would you do if it was one of your children suffering from trauma? Would you force them to see someone they weren't comfortable with, or would you want them to seek help from someone they felt comfortable with? You know the answer that to that, so be a real premier, lead by example.

It's not that hard to work out a solution to enable Soldiers and Sirens to continue the brilliant work that they do.

Allow officers to continue seeing them, allow them to put the claim through the department.

Offer them office space, that they don't have to pay for.

These small gestures, allow big steps for the system to change.

"You live in a constant world of ignorant bliss

When our Police officers live in a constant world of reality".

If soldiers and Sirens hadn't been forced to close their doors, then Randall would still be here, and none of us would be going through this torment.

You, the people of parliament, that are listening to mine and Randall's story, you are where I was 4 months ago, me, I'm where Randall was 4 months ago.

You think you understand my pain, just like I thought I understood Randall's pain, I now live Randall's pain.

Soldiers and Sirens, Danielle, Dylan, and Terance, they understand my pain.

All I've got is a haunted photograph of a bridge to try and bring me some peace.

From the distraught, tormented, broken wife of Sergeant Randall Moulden. A woman left in pieces; her whole life turned upside down.

The proud wife of Sergeant Randall Moulden

Janean Moulden.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [3.10 pm]: Hon Peter Collier put forward a very sombre position that is worthy of serious consideration. I, on the other hand, am likely to be a bit more direct in my comments about the state's finances. I am not going to waste too much time; I will move to some of the Premier's statements and the financial position in which this state finds itself. I did note during the budget speech, particularly the budget speech of the other place, that the Premier is very keen to claim that good financial management has resulted in the financial position in which the state finds itself, which is a \$5.6 billion surplus in the 2020–21 financial year and total surpluses of \$15 billion over a five-year period, a position in which this state has never found itself before and a position in which I do not think any state in Australia has found itself before.

I did go looking to see whether that is the largest surplus in the history of all Australian states. It would appear that it was bested by one; we have the second-best and second highest budget surplus recorded in the history of Australia's states. The biggest was \$5.7 billion, so \$100 million more, which was not the original prediction of the New South Wales government that eventually announced it. Its year turned out to be better than expected and, therefore, when it got to the end of financial year statement—the annual report on state finances—it had a budget surplus of \$5.7 billion. Of course, we found out about ours only at the end of the financial year to which it applied. Members need to remember that the \$5.6 billion surplus applies to the 2020–21 financial year, which finished a couple of months ago. This money has been rolling into the coffers—it is already, as it were, in the money bin—and more money continues to roll in.

Members who were around in the previous Parliament might remember question without notice 13 of 12 February 2019, in which I asked —

In light of the globally significant and ongoing problems experienced by Vale, Brazil, in the production of its iron ore, which has resulted in a local price of \$US90 a tonne for iron ore being realised, what would be the predicted impact on the state's iron ore royalty income over the next four years should the average iron ore price remain at \$US90 a tonne?

The answer in February 2019 when we hit \$US90 a tonne was this —

(1)–(2) A scenario where the average price of iron ore remains at \$90 a tonne has not been modelled, as this assumption is highly unrealistic.

Highly unrealistic; I will let that settle in for a while and come back to it in the story about whether it was good financial management or a nice piece of luck that led the government to find itself in this fairly amazing fiscal position. Let us look at the price of iron ore. In an average year, iron ore royalties have traditionally sat, with some expansion throughout the 2000s, between \$5 billion and \$5.5 billion. In a budget of between \$35 billion and \$40 billion, it sat at a bit over 10 per cent, around 12 per cent on average, but that has changed. Members might remember there was a \$12 billion royalty income for 2020–21 in a \$40 billion budget, which is a higher than 25 per cent share of revenue, which is an immensely unusual situation. That is not to say that the 2019–20 financial year did not have high iron ore royalty revenues and that the 2021–22 financial year will not experience high iron

ore royalty revenues. I note the budget papers maintain a significant level of iron ore royalty revenue over that period. What has been the reality of iron ore prices? Unfortunately, there are a couple of people who are not in the chamber these days whose budget presentations I will miss. One is former member Aaron Stonehouse. I do not know whether to refer to him as “honourable”. I am canvassing that. No, he is private citizen Aaron Stonehouse these days. He is a good fellow. I will miss his contribution to the economic debates because they were fun, joyous and interesting. I will also miss the contribution of Hon Alison Xamon to budget debates. She truly appreciated a budget chart or two during a presentation. In honour of the fact that she is no longer here—she was here today and she is here with us in principle and at heart—I intend to leave members with additional information that they might like to use for a comparative analysis of the budget.

The answer to what happens if the government gets \$US90 a tonne for an extended period is that it will be fairly well-off. The government’s answer was that \$US90 a tonne was highly unrealistic. I wonder what the former Treasurer thought when the price of iron ore hit \$US235 a tonne briefly somewhere around May this year. I think he might like to go back and have another look at that answer. For the interest of members, I will be seeking to table a chart of iron ore prices since that period. The chart I will be seeking to table goes from October 2018 to the current date. For the interest of members, I have drawn in the \$US90 a tonne mark so that they can see what period of time since then the price of iron ore has been under or over \$US90 a tonne. Since it started in February 2019, the price was in the high \$US80 a tonne region for a few months and in the month of December 2019 and for a couple of months in early 2020 the price slipped under \$US90 a tonne. I encourage members to look at this document because it is very interesting. It shows a mountain in recent times—an absolute mountain—in the iron ore price, which, as I say, reached \$US235 a tonne. When I designed this document yesterday, the current price was \$US129 a tonne. It was interesting to learn during the briefing that the Public Accounts Committee of the other place said that today it is \$US122 a tonne but had dropped \$US7 overnight, but it was still in the 120s. It is \$US120 a tonne at a time during the biggest boom in the history of this country with a government that suspected that a price over \$US90 a tonne was highly unrealistic. I seek leave to table the iron ore price chart from October 2018 to date.

[Leave granted. See paper [567](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Members should look at that, because it is important to note precisely where the wealth of Western Australia is coming from.

I think this chart, which is of my own making, is probably even more telling. Instead of simply charting the price of iron ore and looking at the mountain of the price that the current government has climbed, let us look at the dollars rolling in, because I think the dollars rolling in are even more telling than the actual price. I take this chart all the way back to roughly the turn of the millennium, so around 1998–99, when iron ore royalties were still at a modest growth rate. I have taken it all the way through to the 2021 financial year. We have had some debate about comparisons of various governments and levels of income they had, and it is very hard to measure or compare unless we can see something sitting in front of us. When members get a chance, I ask them to look at this chart, which demonstrates where iron ore royalties have been pouring in. I start at the left-hand side in 1998–99. This is the era of Eric Ripper as Treasurer. I have always thought of Eric Ripper as a friend, but he did quite well out of the small growth. The next part of the chart shows the previous Liberal–National government. Just in case there is any confusion about the amount of money that the current government is receiving, I am pointing to the current mining boom royalties, in graphic, charted form, that the government has the benefit of. I urge members to look at this before they frame their debates. This will be my final chart. I seek leave to table the chart showing royalty income for the Western Australian state government from 1998 to date.

[Leave granted. See paper [568](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Those documents are important for a couple of reasons. The first, and probably most important reason, is that we need to test the assumption of the Premier, who is now the Treasurer, that good financial management has resulted in the financial position we find ourselves in today. He is claiming good financial management, but he has had a greater income than any government that preceded it, and not by a small amount. He has been sitting on the wealth generated from iron ore, and has not been using that wealth to date to deliver the services required to the people of Western Australia. I have said this in a number of circles: he reminds me of those old cartoons of Scrooge McDuck rolling around in his Money Bin. I have said that in a number of places and I have found to my chagrin a generation gap, because it seems to me that not too many people in the younger generation have the slightest idea of who Scrooge McDuck is. I am sure members of a certain vintage would remember the cartoon character Scrooge McDuck. I had to explain to my children who Scrooge McDuck was, which was a sad but humorous event, and they looked him up on the internet just to find some pictures of him. I have used a number of times this image of Scrooge McDuck rolling around in his Money Bin. I keep waiting for Alston to draw that one day. I have my fingers crossed. I have to say that one of the cartoons from Friday last week after budget day looked enormously close to Scrooge McDuck rolling around in his Money Bin. The Premier was just missing a beak! If a beak had been put on the Premier in that cartoon, we would have had Scrooge McDuck! He has been sitting on this money, rolling around in it and enjoying the feel of that wealth, and he has been doing so for quite a period of time.

The Premier's claim of good financial management is interesting. I do not know how he is taking responsibility for the iron ore price, because it is related to two major things: the first is a massive increase in usage as countries around the world engage in stimulus on the back of the COVID-19 crisis; the second is a shortfall of supply, particularly after Vale had a dam burst in Brazil nearly three years ago and was unable to meet its original contracts. That is still the case. It is hilarious to me that the Premier, who is also the Treasurer, takes responsibility and claims credit for the financial position in which the state finds itself, because the first thing that contributes to it is the iron ore price. Unless the Premier was at the bottom of the dam wall in Brazil with a shovel taking a few of those layers off to try to weaken it, or unless his influence in China is so strong that China would not have had a stimulus package following COVID-19 and was only doing so at the behest of the Premier of Western Australia—unless those things are true—the Premier who is the Treasurer is not responsible for any of the biggest component of the financial management. He has reaped the reward of it, he is the beneficiary of it, but he has not generated it.

It has to be said that it is not only in the current year that this Premier who is now the Treasurer has been receiving this benefit. I asked a question on 3 November 2020, so not quite a year ago now, because I was interested in the rate at which iron ore royalties were flowing into the state coffers. Part of this question, question 1196 asked on Tuesday, 3 November 2020, was about how much additional iron ore royalty revenue the government had received above budget expectations in each of the financial years from 2018–19, 2019–20 and 2020–21. The answer to part (4) of the question was that in 2018–19, iron ore royalties were \$1.722 billion higher than the budget estimates. That is free revenue; it is revenue that the government got that it did not expect to get. That is winning the lotto stuff. In November 2020 there was a different Treasurer. The previous Treasurer went, came back and went again, which I suspect related to his commitment to get the Westport project up and going before he left Parliament. I am sure he made sure that everybody was aware that he so believed in that promise that he quit twice just to keep our attention upon it.

[Interruption.]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Bless you!

In 2018–19, the revenue was \$1.722 billion higher and in 2019–20 it was \$2.199 billion higher. Over two financial years this government received \$3.921 billion above its budget expectation—that is, in the years 2018–19 and 2019–20. In 2021, it received \$12 billion worth of iron ore royalties, which, if we go back to those original budgets, is probably close to \$6.5 billion above those original budget expectations and several billion dollars above the previous budget expectations. The government had effectively \$4 billion above expectations in the lead-up to last financial year and \$6 billion above expectations last financial year, so much so that it has a \$5.6 billion surplus for the 2021–22 financial year. What does that mean? It means that the government's entire budget dedicated to its response to COVID was paid for in advance. The government had the money in the money bin, and was rolling around in it, before it was required to expend it on the COVID response. Guess what, members: the COVID response includes a significant amount of infrastructure spend, which is still coming. There is plenty of the \$9 billion COVID response left, which is still part of expenditure into the future. The government has nearly \$9 billion to spend. It was paid for in advance, but some of it has not been spent.

Beyond that, the government is expecting budget surpluses throughout the forward estimates. The government did not just have a short-term windfall of \$10 billion above its expected budget; it is expecting operating balances of \$2.8 billion for the current financial year and then \$1.99 billion, \$2.871 billion and \$1.576 billion for the three forward estimates. In the financial year just gone—the big one, that enormous financial income year; I do not know what the right term for it is, maybe the Lollapalooza or one of those good American expressions—we saw \$12 billion worth of iron royalties, plus the four years of the budget, and a \$15 billion surplus. The government could possibly have argued that it had to wait for the money to come in to expend on the various COVID parts before it got serious about looking after the issues in Western Australia. As we have already seen, thanks to the answers provided by the Minister for Mental Health representing the Treasurer—he works very hard to get proper, fulsome and truthful answers, and I appreciate that—we know that this government had the money in the bank before it started. The iron ore price was \$US90 a tonne in February 2019. I recall that COVID-19 is called COVID-19 because the major outbreak in China started right at the end of 2019, but the impacts in Western Australia were not really felt until early 2020. The government had a year of massive income—a year of fiscal fun, a revenue party—and it sat on that money.

I turn to the question that we all have to ask. I am at the beginning of my contribution but I will be asking this question several times during my contribution. The first and most important question that we have to face in this budget is: how does this government have its entire COVID response funded in advance? How does it have billions of dollars sitting in the bank, rolling around in it like Scrooge McDuck? How does it get to this point, with all that money—more money than any boom in the history of Australia, bigger than the gold booms in Bendigo and Kalgoorlie, the biggest income boom of any state in the history of this country—and have a health crisis, a housing crisis, a skills shortage crisis and a mental health crisis? How did we get to this stage? That is the question that every member who stands and talks about this budget needs to either ask or attempt to answer. How did we get to the stage of having so much money, more money than the government can seem to spend, and yet service delivery in this state

is in crisis? How did that happen? There has never been a better time for the people of Western Australia. We will probably never see this level of income again. Why do we have a crisis at a point when we are immensely wealthy, more wealthy than any people who have come before us? We should be saying that we are the luckiest state in the luckiest country in the world. We are the wealthiest country, not just in terms of average incomes et cetera but our government is the wealthiest by far. We will get to a point in which we will start discussing Keynesian economics versus freedom. It is almost ambivalent in Western Australia. It is the only jurisdiction that I am aware of in which that economic debate, which occupies the mind of economists around the world, is almost irrelevant. Because we have so much money, it does not seem to matter. We have all this money. We have the money partly of the last generation but we are probably getting most of the financial wealth of the next generation as well; it is all pouring into the coffers right now. Is it good financial management or have we ridden the best of luck in a crisis that impacted the rest of the world?

The budget papers demonstrate quite clearly, as does the briefing that the Public Accounts Committee made available, that every other jurisdiction in Australia has struggled to deal with the economic costs. They do not have massive iron ore resources. Their budget deficits are immense. Their debt is heading through the roof, no more so than the commonwealth government, which is heading for a debt of \$1 trillion. I was interested to read the *2021 intergenerational report*, which suggested that at some point that would head towards \$1.7 trillion to \$1.8 trillion worth of debt over the next 40 years. I would have thought that was a fairly grim prospect, unless one is a Keynesian economist and believes that debt does not matter and when we have too much, we simply start printing more money. I will go into a bit more detail shortly.

What do we know? We know that much of our wealth is generated by iron ore. We know that much of that wealth was given to this government in advance. We know that despite the fact that it was rich in advance, there is a significant crisis across a number of public sector service areas, probably none more so than health, but certainly there are a number of others.

As generally happens, the government is very conservative when it starts to make iron ore estimates. If we look at the key budget assumptions on page 3 of budget paper No 3, which are always interesting, we see that the government has been less conservative in the 2021–22 financial year, with an iron ore estimate of \$US121.3 a tonne. Quite rightly, it goes back to a very conservative estimate after that—\$US66 a tonne in all of the out years. The forward estimates are based on a far more modest set of revenue figures. That is reflected in the overall surplus but they do go back to being very conservative. If the iron ore price stays anywhere near its current long-term run, \$US66 a tonne will not be too far off. I would have said it would probably be in the early 70s. In modern terms, that is probably the long-term figure for iron ore. The government has been very conservative. Interestingly, it has taken \$US121.3 as an average for the current financial year. Given the papers that I tabled earlier, which show the price of iron ore was \$US122 a tonne today, the government might find that it needs to recalculate that figure in the *Government mid-year financial projections statement*, which will be out in a paltry two to three months.

That is one part of where this government is getting its money from. Where else do the additional funds come from? There are additional taxes, along with higher taxation revenue, and payroll tax is up, land taxes are up and transfer duties are up. The budget demonstrates that payroll tax is up by \$314 million in the current year, according to the budget papers, or 8.4 per cent. Transfer duty, which we know is stamp duty, is up 58 per cent, or \$770 million. Those are significant increases in taxation as well. The third plank of this government's wealth rolling into the bin is, of course, the commonwealth government's floor inserted into the GST arrangements, which was worth \$1.5 billion last financial year and \$1.85 billion this financial year. That is not the baseline GST. That is the GST that is additional as it ramps up to the 70 per cent floor instigated by the Morrison government. The additional revenue is coming from those areas. It is a massive amount of money. The question that has to be asked is whether this government is spending it in the right places, and we need to keep coming back to this question. Are the priorities of the McGowan government correct? Is the McGowan government interested in maximising the services and the rewards, the dividend, for the people of Western Australia, or is it intent on maximising its election chances in 2025? We need to keep coming back to that question repeatedly.

Amongst some of those key assumptions, of course, are assumptions around gross state product and state final demand. The difference is gross state product includes exports, so it obviously includes iron ore, and state final demand is the domestic economy. During the COVID period we have had some pretty significant growth. Gross state product in 2021 went up 3.5 per cent. The budget for this financial year is 3.5 per cent. State final demand last financial year was 4.5 per cent, and is going even higher at five per cent. Then Treasury and the government have gone back to their very conservative long-term statistics. In the forward years, gross state product growth is estimated to be one per cent, 1.25 per cent, then 1.5 per cent. That would make sense, honourable members. If we think that a correction will occur in the iron ore marketplace, it absolutely makes sense, and we would think there has to be. The high iron ore prices cannot continue at the current level of \$US120 a tonne in the longer term.

When I go as the shadow Treasurer and discuss economics with banks, interest groups and lobby groups, I always try to instigate a conversation around two areas. The first is, obviously, the iron ore price and what their predictions are, and the second is whether the government accounting has changed significantly and Keynesian economics has

taken over. I think iron ore prices have been very interesting. I had been thinking that the iron ore price would stay for the next financial year somewhere around where the government had put it. I would have said it would be \$US120 or \$US130 a tonne for most of this financial year. It is dropping faster than expected. I met with a couple of banks that suggested it will be under \$US110 a tonne by the end of this year—bear in mind that the end of this year is only three months away—in which case, it will go under \$US100 a tonne in the early part of next year. Plenty of others have suggested that the decline will be somewhat slower and more moderate, but nobody anywhere is suggesting that the iron ore price will increase over that time. Some optimists within the industry say it will stay higher than the banking sector says it will, for example, but there will be, hopefully, a long and slow decline taking us back towards that \$US65 a tonne rate.

The speed at which that happens will be a pretty big determinate on the budget going forward, so it is appropriate for the government to be incredibly conservative around the predictions for gross domestic product. Working that into state final demand is a bit more complex because we take out what we know probably the most about, and that is what the export market is going to look like. Then we rely on the domestic economy. The expectation around the domestic economy is still slow growth, but it is better than gross state product. The budget says that the final demand will grow by 1.25 per cent, rising to 2.25 per cent growth over 2023–24 and 2024–25. All of that will depend on how the economy deals with whatever comes next with COVID. If the borders are not opened up and we are restricted to a purely domestic economy for the greatest part, there will obviously be swings and roundabouts and winners and losers.

It is interesting to note that some areas of tourism do very well when the borders are locked up. In those areas that are providing a reasonably priced experience for Western Australians, particularly in areas such as the south west—where those people who want to get out of Perth for the weekend go—plenty of businesses have done extremely well in the COVID period. The shutdowns do impact on them, but overall plenty of businesses down in my patch have made more money than in previous years. The other end of the argument is those very high cost adventure-style tourism experiences that tend to rely on the international marketplace. They are probably unlikely to see a massive increase in activity until the borders are opened up. The Tourism Council Western Australia did some very interesting work a couple of years ago. I am going to work from memory, but I think the numbers it provided were that the amount of money that Western Australians spent interstate and overseas on travel and recreation was approximately \$7.2 billion, and the amount of money international and interstate tourists brought to Western Australia was \$2.2 billion. There is a \$5 billion net loss in the tourism industry for all of us who remain here. I do not know how much of that \$5 billion differential is picked up by Bali, but I would say it would be a pretty big contributor to that.

It is absolutely the case that people have more money in their pocket because they cannot go many places, to the point at which a couple of the banks I have been talking to have been talking about the amount of savings that are in place. There are hundreds of millions of dollars and in some cases billions of dollars in additional savings. At best guess, across Australia people have a couple of hundred billion dollars of additional savings across all the banks because they cannot go out and spend that money. It is a phenomenal amount of money. People are looking for places to expend it, and obviously I think the south west is a good place to do that, but certainly there is some money floating around.

I want to deal with the debt situation, which can be seen in a couple of places in the budget papers. In the first case, on page 3 of budget paper No 3, we see the total public sector net debt. In 2019–20, it stood at \$35.5 billion. The estimated outcome at the end of the 2020–21 financial year is \$33.5 billion, so that is down \$2 billion. The estimated outcome at the current budget estimate for the 2021–22 financial year is \$32 billion, so that is down another \$1.5 billion. Interestingly, it starts to sneak back up again to \$34.4 billion, \$35 billion in 2023–24 and \$36 billion in 2024–25. I am reminded of the comments made in 2017 by the former shadow Treasurer, who was endorsed by the then Leader of the Opposition, who is now both the Premier and the Treasurer. The then shadow Treasurer said that debt was an issue and they were very concerned about it. When asked how the Labor Party would deal with it, he said that it would pay it down like a housing mortgage; it would pay it down slowly, over time. I guess we should take the Labor Party at its word that indeed its plan was that it would pay it down in a housing mortgage style. What was it paying down? In the previous budget, the 2016–17 state total public sector net debt was \$32 billion. In 2017–18, it got to \$34.6 billion. By the time we got to 2019–20, it had gone from \$34.6 billion to \$35.5 billion, so it was up \$1 billion. It then went down to \$32 billion, which is probably just slightly below the debt level inherited by the McGowan government. It is hard to tell precisely where the turnover occurred; it was somewhere around the \$33 billion mark, but we do not have day-by-day records to work out precisely where it was on election day. Let us make the assumption that it was \$33 billion, give or take some. I think that is probably pretty reasonable. I suspect that if Treasury officials gave the Minister for Mental Health the actual exact debt level for whatever date it was in March 2017, he could come back and tell us what it was, but let us go with \$33 billion.

By the end of the 2022–23 financial year, debt will be higher than the debt inherited by the McGowan government. It will then go to \$35 billion, and then to \$36 billion. Those are not massive increases—I get that—but let us compare it with how the then shadow Treasurer said, prior to the 2017 election, a future McGowan government would operate: it would pay down debt like a housing loan. In fact, debt has gone up and is going up, so the government's high moral ground on the debt argument is sinking; it is like when too much groundwater is taken out of an area and the

soil sinks down. There is a sinkhole in the Labor Party's credibility on debt, because debt is not going down, it is going up. Fair enough, it is not going up dramatically, but we have to bear in mind that it is going up at a time when the government has a surplus of \$15 billion. It is going up at a time when this government has more money than any WA government in history has had to spend.

Despite the COVID crisis, the government has money in the money bin, waiting to go. If ever there was an opportunity to do something about debt, this would probably be such an opportunity. We have a 70¢ floor in GST payments, which is worth close to an additional \$3 billion over a couple of years. It will certainly be worth more over the next few years, when the new system falls into place. Just checking those numbers, \$1.5 billion and \$1.85 billion means \$3.35 billion in additional GST, along with the surplus of \$15 billion. That would probably not be a bad time to pay down debt; there might be other arguments, but this is a government that said it would pay down debt like paying a mortgage. The government has won lotto—the dam burst in Brazil and there was a massive Chinese construction response—but debt is going up. If a bank manager was looking at that as a financial strategy, they would probably call the home owner in to ask a few questions. There will never be a better opportunity to do something about debt, if that is the government's intent.

I absolutely get the argument that there are, generally speaking, two ways of dealing with debt. If you have cash in hand, you can pay down debt or you can invest in such a way that you have greater capacity to pay down debt in the future. I am sure that at some point, someone in the government will stand up and say, "Okay, we're not paying down debt", and if we get that admission, that would be good. "Yes, debt's going up; it's not going up a huge amount, but it's going up and it'll be about \$3 billion higher than the debt we inherited. It's going up at a time of massive revenues, so we understand that, but this is the alternative vision we are putting forward. We're investing in the future so that we can get more revenue back over time."

There are a few disappointments in this budget, but there is probably nothing more disappointing than the fact that the economic reform component is all but non-existent. There is a tiny chapter on economic reform—a couple of paragraphs that say almost nothing. I could understand it if the government said, "No, we're not paying down debt because here's the economic reform we're going to go through. Here are the sorts of things you might do to put economic reform front and centre." That would be a reasonable argument, except the government did not do that.

At the same time, when there is a \$15 billion surplus over a few years, there will never be a better time to pay down debt. Alternatively, there will never be a better time to engage in economic reform. There will never be greater capacity to change the structure of the economy to get better outcomes for Western Australia. What might that look like? There are a few obvious and easy examples. Taxation reform is something that industry is always talking about. I think payroll tax reform is overdue; we would love to do more payroll tax reform. Payroll tax is a tax on employment; the more people you employ, the more tax you pay. What do governments generally tax? We tax land and jobs, because they are the hardest to hide and the easiest to see; that is why we apply those taxes. They are the hardest to cheat and the easiest to grab. As I said before, payroll tax is up \$300 million, so we are getting more payroll tax.

Industry is crying out for some vision on taxation, and I would have said that that should probably be the first cab off the rank. I would have thought a tax on employment would be the first place for the government to go. I note that both the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA took different payroll tax policies to the last election; there was no payroll tax vision from the Labor Party. Unfortunately, not too many people know that the Liberal Party took a payroll tax policy to the last election, because it did not seem to be central to debate—an issue that I found incredibly frustrating, if for no other reason than I wrote the damn thing, and it seemed like such a wasted effort, given that it did not get talked about very much. But it was a good policy. Reform of payroll tax is a good issue to play with, because it takes some of the pressure off business. That is the sort of vision that a government might put into a budget when it has a \$15 billion surplus and more money than anyone except Scrooge McDuck and maybe the Rockefellers and some of the US oil barons in the past. When a government has that sort of money, it is a good time to engage in some form of economic reform. It was immensely disappointing to see next to no economic reform.

The one thing that was quite interesting in that tiny chapter on economic reform in the budget was the \$120 million for 150 public servants to try to streamline approvals. I will give the government a bit of credit here: if the genuine intent is to streamline the approvals process, I think that is a good thing. Not every approvals change made by the government has been bad; there have been some that I have agreed with, and some that Hon Tjorn Sibma, when he was shadow Minister for Planning, also agreed with. Not everything the government does is bad or wrong. I am not much interested in debates that consist of rocks being thrown from either side; there were some positive outcomes from that, but economic reform in this budget was minimal. Basically, there was the re-announcement of \$120 million to employ 150 more public servants. Call me a cynic, perhaps—thank you!—but I am not convinced that putting more public servants on is a way of reducing red tape. I have not noticed that being the case. As the public service has risen in number over the last few years, I have not noticed a massive drop in the time frame for approvals generally. That is not to say that the approvals process is unnecessary and that there should be development at all costs—that is not what I am saying—but I am not of the view that just adding another 150 public servants will do the job on approvals.

The government could have taken some of its enormous budget wealth and invested in genuine reform. To me, payroll tax is the obvious one. In my view, simply raising the threshold for payroll tax will benefit businesses at the bottom end of the scale, but it will also give an equal, and sometimes bigger, benefit to the very big companies that are making an absolute fortune. Right now, of course, it is hard not to recognise that the mining companies are making a lot of money out of the iron ore industry, as is the government. They are doing equally well with the price at \$US120 a tonne, and it has been as high as \$US235 a tonne. The biggest contributor to payroll tax, of course, is the mining sector. The information provided by Treasury officials during the briefing on the budget today, but also on other days, outlines that about 40 per cent of payroll tax comes from the mining sector. I would not necessarily propose that that group, which at this point is making very good money, should not continue to make a significant contribution to the coffers. Simply raising the threshold will not do anything except give everybody, equally, additional cash.

In a policy that the Liberal Party took to the election, I included a rebate system for genuinely small businesses. Under my scheme, small businesses were those with a payroll of up to \$3 million. The government did extend payroll tax relief as part of its COVID-19 measures, which was welcome. I have to say that it was a sheer joy to stand here and debate a bill to reduce payroll tax, even if it was a COVID measure. I am sure all industry viewed that debate with pleasure; it was wonderful. However, it effectively meant that the thresholds were put up. Depending on how much employees are paid, businesses would need between 10 and 12 employees, and maybe up to 15, to start to hit the threshold. I would have taken that to a rebate system that gave a benefit to businesses with a payroll of up to \$3 million. That would be businesses with around 30 employees. Would they be genuinely small businesses? I would say that having 30 employees would probably still qualify as a small business. I know that various options have been modelled. I have seen models of a payroll of up to \$10 million, which is approximately 100 employees. I struggle to call a business with 100 employees a small business. I will make this comment: that was the level on which the John Howard WorkChoices legislation was modelled—a business with 100 employees was still considered a small business. Many of us in the Liberal Party at that point were concerned with that definition of a business with 100 employees being a small business. We generally think of small businesses as having a handful of employees. Providing some payroll tax benefits to somebody with around 20 employees is an eminently sensible and suitable suggestion.

Where was the vision in this budget for economic reform? It certainly was not around taxation. There is no vision around payroll tax or land tax. I think the modelling around stamp duty is even more difficult than payroll tax. Payroll tax is anathema because it is a tax on employment. It is hard not to tax land. I have probably read more than anybody else in the Parliament at the moment about the various models to shift stamp duty on the purchase of a property to an annual land tax. It is a fairly problematic model. It is not impossible, but it would come at a significant cost. The modelling in Victoria was that there would be an \$8 billion cost to the state's coffers. If we were going to do that sort of thing here, now would be the time to do it. Victoria's economy is twice the size that of Western Australia, so the cost might be more like \$4 billion here. I am not even advocating for that. What I am saying is that this government has no agenda on economic and strategic modelling. It does not seem to be in the sphere of economic reform in the slightest. Again, as I have said with all other things, if the government is ever going to look at these things, the time to look at them is when it has wealth coming out of its pockets. The time to do it, if ever, is surely now, but it did not. So we are not paying down debt. The government has not shown vision or courage in economic reform.

Where else might the dollars go? I will give the government some credit for its pretty significant infrastructure spend in the budget. Like most governments, it is very keen to advertise the fact that its infrastructure spend is remarkably big. It is in the budget papers, it was in the budget speech and it was in the briefing. According to Treasury officials, there will be a \$30.7 billion investment in infrastructure over four years. That sounds pretty good, but it is always hard to compare. This is a criticism that I make of every government, whether on the left or right of politics: they are very good at spruiking their infrastructure spend but they do not tell people what is the normal infrastructure spend. All the stuff that is put out is designed to sell. Media statements come out with every budget. They all do it now. Every budget, state or federal, is a bit the same. There is now a two-week budget-drop period when all the exciting stuff comes out and there is almost nothing left to announce on budget day. Obviously, the reason for that is that the government will potentially get half a dozen budget stories instead of a one-day analysis that overwhelms everybody. Governments certainly do that. They put out information on how many billions of dollars will be spent in the regions. Everything is repeated multiple times. Every infrastructure stream is discussed. Governments say, "Across the state, we are spending this much." The headline numbers are given for every region. But we have to try to break this down. I will be interested in breaking down these figures as much as possible during the estimates process in particular.

Forty-two per cent of the infrastructure program—nearly half—is allocated to road, rail and public transport infrastructure. Those areas will get \$13 billion of the \$30 billion spend. According to the budget papers from Treasury, it will be spent on roads, rail and transport. One thing that is not found in the budget papers and we actually have to ask for is how much of the \$13 billion to be spent on road and rail infrastructure is funded by the federal government. It is 35 to 40 per cent. That is straight-through funding. When the state says that it is spending \$30 billion on infrastructure, with \$13 billion of that on roads and rail, nowhere in the budget papers does it state, unless one

knows where to look for it, that of that \$13 billion, \$4.5 billion is funding from the federal government. The biggest part of federal government infrastructure funding goes into roads, rail and transport. That infrastructure program is getting \$13 billion out of the \$30 billion. It is 40 per cent of the budget. But 35 to 40 per cent of that amount is federally funded. It is pretty hard to give this government all the credit for that, even though it would claim it.

The other interesting thing that came out of the briefing from Treasury officials at the lunchtime event today is how much of that money has actually already been spent and claimed as COVID recovery. As we are well aware, the government is claiming nearly \$9 billion of expenditure for COVID recovery, and, in fact, the Minister for Mental Health has been very helpful in the past by providing breakdowns of that. Hopefully, the minister has an answer to a question on notice that has been given today asking for a subsequent breakdown of some of these things, but we may have to get to that over the next little while and into the budget estimates. But I did get the opportunity to ask Treasury officials today how much of the COVID recovery money is included in this asset investment program, and they told me that it is \$1.5 billion of the nearly \$9 billion, so the actual expenditure on COVID in other ways is \$7.5 billion. It will be interesting to see where some of this COVID expenditure will go.

Members, this is a document that the Minister for Mental Health provided and tabled some time ago, I think early to the middle of last year. I cannot give members the tabled paper number, but there is no point in tabling it again. This document gives a breakdown of the first \$2.5 billion of COVID response, which was up until the middle of or late April 2020, so it is now a year and five months—nearly a year and a half—later. Some of these things are in train and some have probably already been delivered. That \$2.5 billion includes \$200 million in school maintenance and \$81 million in hospital maintenance. These are significant infrastructure components, too. I was interested to find that out. Maybe the minister could give us a bit more of a breakdown of the asset investment project, because in the original stuff that the minister gave us —

Hon Stephen Dawson: Honourable member, because this is a budget speech, I don't reply.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: True. I will get it out of the minister eventually some other way; I am just giving him lots of advance warning.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Thank you.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: This includes a lot of things that are not infrastructure or asset based. I am pleased that the payroll tax threshold increase is in here at a cost of \$170 million, which, as I said before, we are all very thankful for and we agree with. The freeze to household fees and charges was \$402 million; energy assistance was \$91 million; a second payroll tax grant was \$107 million, bringing the threshold forward, because the million-dollar threshold was brought forward quickly, so that is \$7 million. All those things were welcomed by the opposition at the time. Payroll tax liability was waived for four months at a cost of \$165 million. There is some reasonable expenditure, but this is the number that I want to chase going forward. According to the number given to us today by Treasury officials, the infrastructure investment of \$30.7 billion contains \$1.5 billion of asset investment. This is where we get to this issue of somewhat double accounting. The government is claiming this as COVID response, while claiming it as infrastructure funding as well. I am interested in where all of that goes. It is obviously reasonably necessary to have the maintenance program for hospitals and schools—lots of the money has gone into that and some of it may be going into road infrastructure—but the question we have to ask is whether that is normal expenditure that the government is claiming as COVID expenditure or a genuine need and benefit that can be explained as COVID response.

Some of the impetus for this was the government's concern that the construction industry would fall off a cliff during the COVID pandemic because people could not move about, but that has not been the case. In fact, we now have an overheated infrastructure and construction sector for which we cannot find workers and materials are in short supply, so the reverse has been the case. I would be really interested to know how Treasury has modelled this to say that we have an overburdened infrastructure sector, whereby we cannot get all these supplies. I am not sure that, as per some media reports, people are waiting three years for houses to be constructed, but, without doubt, even simple household construction time frames have blown out. Instead of one year, it is now two years. Perhaps three years might be considered a significant exaggeration, but time frames have blown out because people cannot get the building materials, the bricks, the brickies or the workers, and they are in competition with all these other sectors. How much of the infrastructure spend, which is apparently a part of the COVID response, is genuinely needed? That will be an interesting question to chase down over the next few months and couple of years. I would be very interested to know how much of that \$1.5 billion that is put down as infrastructure spend is genuinely required as COVID response. That \$1.5 billion figure was given to us today.

In fact, the construction marketplace is so overheated that some of the Metronet projects have had to be—I believe this is the expression that the government is using—"smoothed out". What does "smoothed out" mean? It means that the government is pretty much unable to deliver those projects within the current time frames. As much as it would be fun to jump up and down and accuse the government of blowouts of time et cetera, in fact, the extension of some of these projects is probably not a bad idea, economically speaking. It is probably quite reasonable of the government to extend the time frame on some of its Metronet projects so that it is a bit less in competition with the private sector trying to construct all the things that the private sector builds, with none being more important

than the houses of another generation. Those blowouts—if we call them blowouts; I do not mind calling them blowouts—are potentially quite reasonable, and it would be quite reasonable for them to occur. The government should acknowledge that it has the cash for that infrastructure spend. The Premier and Treasurer is rolling around in that cash metaphorically as we speak. But the government cannot deliver those projects because of constraints around construction and the delivery of those things, which, again, lends itself to this question: how required was that infrastructure spend for that COVID response? As I said, those blowouts might be quite reasonable, and I do not think that we want the public sector dominating the private sector in terms of construction. I am not too concerned about the total of those projects and the time frames. In the long-term, I will be interested in the final cost, because I think that the government originally took Metronet to the 2017 election with a commitment of around \$3 billion. I understand that there have been some alterations of scope, and that is reasonable, but my calculation of the budget as presented is that Metronet is now hitting total expenditure in the region of \$7 billion, and I suspect that that does not include some of the expenditure that has already happened in previous financial years. As currently proposed, to its final stages, will the total expenditure of Metronet be \$7 billion, \$8 billion or \$9 billion?

To be honest, I am not going to panic if the government tells me that it is a significantly high number, but we would like to know some of the details about how it will get to that number. Bear in mind that we will still be constructing with a highly constrained construction and industrial sector that is still trying to compete everywhere else.

I guess in an ideal world—this might be the government’s strategy—if the government sits on the money in the money bin until the heat comes out of the economy, and we get to the inevitable correction in 2023 or 2024 and suddenly everybody is looking for work, it will get a lot more value because it will not be in competition with the private sector so much. Perhaps that is the government’s strategy.

It would appear at one level that the government is going down that path and that that is its strategy because a plethora of new special purpose accounts have landed in the budget papers. The government has parked a few hundred million dollars here and a billion dollars there; suddenly, it is squirreling all this money aside in these various special purpose accounts. I note that when we debated the Financial Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 not that long ago, we enabled the Treasurer to have a strong look at some of these special purpose accounts to potentially grab unnecessary cash. I expect the current Treasurer to do exactly that. I will be interested to see how many of these holding accounts are sitting there simply to store cash. Have I got this wrong? Is it not one giant money bin with all this cash rolling around? Is it instead a honeycomb of smaller money bins that are special purpose accounts? Is it a bigger number of smaller money bins whereby the Treasurer goes from one to the next and throws the cash up in the air? I might be wrong. This might be a better analogy potentially than the one big money bin analogy because a lot of special purpose accounts have been developed. There are plenty of disturbing trends, but one of them is the manipulation somewhat of the economic system.

Suddenly we find that every area has a special purpose account, including, I might add, one for debt reduction, which is one of the funniest things in the budget papers every year. Every year I look at the debt reduction account. Every year the government puts in a few dividends from the Insurance Commission of Western Australia and the occasional one-off large stamp duty receipt. It throws a few dollars in there and effectively treats it like the consolidated account. A couple of times during budget estimates, Treasury has come in and said, “We didn’t actually pay off debt with it even though it is called the debt reduction account. We used that money and the rationale is that because we spent the money, we didn’t have to go into debt for it.” It really should not be called a debt reduction account despite the fact that it was a 2017 election commitment. It is not really a debt reduction account. It is another one of these little sideways purpose accounts from which the government pulls money when it is useful to do so. I hesitate to use the term “slush fund” for this procedure because it is probably cleverer than that. It is probably a bit smarter than a slush fund in that it is clever accounting. In this case, over a lot of years, the government has parked \$200 million, \$300 million or \$400 million in this special purpose account knowing full well that it is going to spend it effectively as consolidated revenue on whatever it decides to spend it on, but it looks like it is doing something about debt reduction. It is one of those smoke and mirrors things. It would be far more honest if the government said that it is not going to pay off debt: “We’re spending this money. We’ve got it in the bank. The alternative was to go into debt.” Guess what? It is effectively just part of the government’s revenue. It is part of its weekly wage: “We’ve put it into a holding account. We’re not paying off debt with it though. We’re still spending it on a holiday.” It is not the most honest way to proceed as economic managers. It is, in my view, one of the more embarrassing but hilarious examples of smoke and mirrors in the budget, but it is not new because it has been going on since 2018.

I am going to run out of time in a minute. I will have to come back to this after question time. I want to make one comment about general accounting themes before I get into some of the more detailed areas of the budget. Mr Acting President (Hon Peter Foster), you will be pleased to know that I am coming to the end of my introductory remarks! In the limited time before we take a break, I want to introduce a small discussion around what economics looks like at the government level because it has absolutely changed dramatically. The question is whether COVID changed it or whether it was simply the trigger for what was coming anyway.

As I said earlier, Western Australia finds itself in a lucky situation in that its debt has gone up only modestly. If we stick to the budget trajectory that we were presented with last Thursday, it will go up \$3 billion on the debt that

the government inherited when it came to power in 2017. That is not the case for most other jurisdictions, so the question we have to ask ourselves at some point is this: is the old-fashioned monetary policy and the debt and deficit argument dead and are we all Keynesians now? Is it the case that the debt level of jurisdictions no longer matters? The federal government has paid for the bulk of the impacts of COVID across Australia. It paid the JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments and its net debt level is heading towards \$1 trillion. According to estimates, it will be \$1.8 trillion going forward, which is a massive debt. Given that the interest rate that the federal government pays is less than one per cent, it is probably not the end of the world, but on the assumption that interest rates will rise at some point, that is a fairly significant impost. Are state and country jurisdictions still too big to fail? Has Keynes been proven right?

If he has been proven right, is it not necessarily because he was correct in his economic theories but simply because it is easier for politicians and governments to believe them because that is the simple solution? Ultimately, if the government believes Keynes' economic theories, it never has to balance the budget again. John Maynard Keynes never said, "Print the money and spend it", because that is where governments went horribly wrong. That was where Germany went horribly wrong and had massive hyperinflation and it is where Zimbabwe went horribly wrong. Keynes' modelling has always said, "Borrow the money and print money to repay it. Borrow the money now and then sometime in the future, because money doesn't matter, print as much as you want to repay it." That is not quite as immediate, and the impact is not quite as affronting as if the government just printed off money to buy the next warship, pay the Army or whatever. The question is: is that true? I did an opinion piece on this and it actually got a run. It has been a very frustrating exercise. Minister, I am still trying work out why Bill Shorten is doing a weekly opinion piece in *The West Australian*. I find that quite bizarre, but, anyway, that is one of those things. Is it the case that it does not matter anymore? Is it the case that the government can simply borrow money and at no point does it have to repay it? The debt level of the American government is now, from memory, in the region of \$US28 trillion.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Modern monetary theory.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The Minister for Regional Development has come into the chamber at the right time. I know that she is a passionate supporter of Keynes, but I am not so sure whether she is a supporter of modern monetary theory. We will have to find out after question time. That is the point that we have come to in the debate: is it the case that debt and deficit budgets do not matter anymore?

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: There is a difference between federal and state. There is a fundamental, and anyone who talks about modern monetary theory talks about it exclusively in terms of the federal government.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: They should, but the theory extends. The minister is right about the manufacture of money, because, of course, only the commonwealth government can print another trillion dollars if it wants to and it can spend it. States and other jurisdictions are ultimately going down a path that, in my view, is similar to a very left-wing philosophy that ultimately debt does not matter.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You would be a strong supporter of the McGowan government, which is concerned about managing debt.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Unfortunately, the minister was away on urgent parliamentary business and she missed the entirety of the debate.

Hon Peter Collier: Start again!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Perhaps I will start over after question time! Minister, we might have to start that debate after question time!

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: I will read *Hansard*.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes.

The PRESIDENT: Question time is looming, so I encourage the honourable member to continue his remarks later.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you, President. I apologise; I get a little distracted!

The question will be whether debt and deficit really matter. I have to say, honourable members, that when I meet with economists, banks and anybody with an interest in fiscal debate, the other question I put, apart from the one about the iron ore price, is: is the old debt and deficit argument dead? Are we all Keynesians now? It is interesting that no-one has given me an answer, including the chief economists of three of the four major banks, who say that it is a really interesting and good question, but no-one is really sure what the answer is. Is it the case that it does not matter anymore? I would think there are some very nervous people in the banking system who are not convinced that their money is completely safe.

The PRESIDENT: Order! That might be an appropriate time to interrupt debate for the taking of questions.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 3811.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

RECOVERY PLAN — 2021–22 STATE BUDGET

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

I refer to the budget speech in which the Treasurer referred to “almost \$9 billion announced to date as part of the WA Recovery Plan and additional measures”.

- (1) Will the minister please provide a breakdown of that \$9 billion by program or project?
- (2) Will the minister please provide a breakdown of that \$9 billion by department or agency?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. The question I have refers to the 2021 budget speech, which the member omitted from his question, but I have answered accordingly.

- (1)–(2) The state government’s strong financial management prior to the COVID-19 pandemic ensured Western Australia was better placed than any other state to respond to the economic impacts of the pandemic. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state government has provided almost \$9 billion in recovery initiatives. In the 2021–22 state budget, a further \$1 billion has been committed to our COVID-19 response. I now table a breakdown of COVID-19 recovery initiatives by type and agency.

[See paper [569](#).]

ROYALTIES FOR REGIONS — 2021–22 STATE BUDGET

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

I refer to the 2021 budget papers, which identify that the trans-subsidisation of royalties for regions money back into the consolidated fund through the country water pricing subsidy is to be reduced from \$250 million in 2020–21 to \$127 million this financial year, \$83 million in 2022–23, \$43 million in 2023–24 and back up to \$118 million in 2024–25.

- (1) Will the country water pricing subsidy cost the government \$250 million per annum throughout those years?
- (2) If no to (1), what will the cost be for each year from 2021–22 to 2024–25?
- (3) Will the consolidated fund provide the difference between total cost of the program each year and the amount funded by royalties for regions?
- (4) Noting the budget papers say —

RfR funding for the Country Water Pricing Subsidy has been reduced to reflect increased RfR funding for regional election commitments and other initiatives ...

 - (a) please provide a list of the “other initiatives” with costs; and
 - (b) what is the total cost of 2021 election commitments now funded by royalties for regions?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1) No.
- (2) I refer the member to page 157 of budget paper No 3 that provides the total cost for the country water pricing subsidy of \$1.3 billion over 2021–22 to 2024–25. If the member wants a breakdown by year, I suggest he ask the Minister for Water.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) (a) This information is in tabular form and I seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

Other Initiatives	Cost (\$ million)
Albany (Emu Point) Maritime Facility – Jetty B Remediation	1.038
Carnarvon One Mile Jetty	4.200
Great Eastern Highway – Walgoolan to Southern Cross and Coates Gully	3.600
Great Eastern Highway Upgrades – Ghooli to Benari	12.600
Great Northern Highway – Broome to Kununurra - Nellie Springs to Sally Downs Well and Arthur Creek	4.000
Indian Ocean Drive – Jurien Bay to Brand Highway	6.600
Koojan Downs Road Upgrade	1.000
Mid West Ports – Land Acquisition and Road Improvements	8.000

Marble Bar Road Upgrade	12.000
Mental Health Anti-Ligature works at Regional Hospitals	1.700
Murujuga Joint Management	4.060
Regional Renal Support Teams	1.958
Regional Renewal Program	20.000
Regional Road Safety Improvement Program	4.000
Regional Youth Justice Service	17.116
Royal Flying Doctors Service Asset Replacement	10.892
Rural Water Planning	10.470
Toodyay Road Upgrade – Dryandra to Toodyay	5.000
WA Agricultural Supply Chain Improvements	18.000
Yawuru Joint Management	4.480

- (b) The total cost is \$496.119 million.

SOUTH COAST MARINE PARK

695. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the proposed south coast marine park.

- (1) Is it the government's intention to set aside areas within the SCMP for Aboriginal cultural reasons?
- (2) If yes to (1), can the minister —
 - (a) outline the process through which these areas will be determined; and
 - (b) advise whether any such arrangements will be consistent with those being applied for the Buccaneer Archipelago marine park?

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 Environment.

- (1) The zoning scheme for the proposed south coast marine park will be determined through the planning process, in consultation with traditional owner joint management partners, the community reference committee, sector advisory groups and key stakeholders.
- (2) Not applicable.

CORONAVIRUS — VACCINATIONS — SCHOOL STAFF

696. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the Minister for Education and Training:

I note the minister's earlier advice that school principals have been advised to assist staff access COVID-19 vaccinations "using a planned approach".

- (1) Is there an overarching plan that guides principals in this respect, or are they provided with absolute discretion in their approach?
- (2) Are there currently, or are there likely to be soon, any targets established for the proportion of school staff, including teachers, education assistants and ancillary staff, to be vaccinated either completely or partially by the commencement of term 4 in October and the commencement of term 1 in February 2022?
- (3) If yes to (2), what are these targets, and who is responsible for reaching those targets?
- (4) Presently, what proportion of staff throughout Western Australia's public school system are either partially or fully vaccinated?

The PRESIDENT: That is a long question indeed.

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) Although all principals have been advised to assist staff in schools to access vaccinations, they determine how best to do this within their school and local context. They have been given entitlements, such as people can leave during work et cetera, but there is not one single planned approach.
- (2) No. In line with advice from the Chief Health Officer, school staff are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) The Department of Education does not hold this information.

CHILDREN IN CARE — WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

697. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the minister's answer to my question without notice on 9 September 2021 in which she informed the house that as at 31 August 2021 there were 11 children in the care of the CEO of the department whose whereabouts and/or living arrangements were recorded as unknown, and that two of those young people are not in regular contact with their case worker.

- (1) For what period of time have each of those two children been recorded with an unknown status pertaining to their whereabouts?
- (2) What is the age range of the 11 children?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. I provide the following answer on behalf of the Minister for Child Protection.

- (1) As at 31 August 2021, one child's whereabouts and/or living arrangements has been recorded as unknown for 40 days and the other for 84 days. The Department of Communities is assisting the WA Police Force to locate the two young people and are in regular contact with their family and social networks for assistance.
- (2) As at 31 August 2021, they were 13 to 17 years of age.

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS REMEMBRANCE DAY —
HARVEY HOUSE AND MEMORIAL GARDEN**698. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the minister's response to my question asked on 2 June 2021 regarding the licence agreement for Harvey House and the memorial garden located at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women.

- (1) What is the current status of the licence agreement and when is it expected to be finalised?
- (2) Does the draft licence agreement provide for the permanent protection of the memorial garden?
- (3) If no to (2), why not; and what is being provided for in the draft agreement with regard to the garden's protection?

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 Health.

- (1) The WA Medical Museum Board continues to pursue incorporation of its board so as to enable it to become a legal entity and therefore be able to become party to the licence. The memorial garden committee is in liaison with the WA Medical Museum Board to collaborate on a way forward to reach a timely conclusion of this. The MGC has been provided with a draft copy of the licence and have provided some proposed amendments back to the North Metropolitan Health Service and Department of Health. These amendments have been reviewed by NMHS and DOH and a response was returned to the MGC early August 2021. Depending upon the further response from the MGC to the NMHS and the department, all parties will progress towards conclusion of the licence drafting. Signing of the licence will then be subject to completion of the aforementioned.
- (2) No.
- (3) It is not possible to provide for the permanent protection of the memorial garden in a licence agreement that does not, and cannot, operate in perpetuity. However, the draft licence does provide for the parties to work together to ensure the protection of the garden and Harvey House and to make arrangements for the long-term tenure of the licence area, which includes the garden, by the WA Medical Museum Board. Harvey House has been entered into the state Register of Heritage Places.

POLICE — MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES

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

I refer the minister to his response to question without notice 692 in relation to the critical incident response crisis support service asked on Thursday, 9 September. In particular, I refer to the fact that over \$700 000 was spent in 2018, \$1.3 million in 2019 and \$1.4 million in 2020. Given that the total composition of staff for the critical incident response crisis support service is an on-call psychologist and an on-call chaplain, what else is included in the funds allocated for this service?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

The Western Australia Police Force advises that the costs referred to in question without notice 692 are those associated with the provision of psychologists and chaplaincy support services, which are rostered to provide ongoing coverage. The costs include all salaries, overtime, on-call, travel expenses, annual leave or long service leave, superannuation and higher duties allowances associated with coverage of the services.

SOCIAL HOUSING ECONOMIC RECOVERY PACKAGE

700. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the social housing economic recovery package.

- (1) How many home builds have been completed as part of this package to date?
- (2) How many of the completed homes are currently tenanted?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(2) The McGowan government is investing \$2.1 billion into social housing over the next four years, which includes the recently announced record investment of \$875 million as part of the 2021–22 state budget. This is the single largest one-off investment into social housing in the state’s history and will provide an immediate boost to social housing.

The social housing economic recovery package is substantially a refurbishment and maintenance package to enable these homes to remain part of our state’s social housing stock for many years to come. A total of 1 238 maintenance works or refurbishments have been completed under the package to date, including in regional Western Australia. Significant planning work has been undertaken to facilitate delivery of SHERP. The first two properties, as part of the first tranche of builds, were completed at the end of July 2021 and are now tenanted. Across all funding streams, including business-as-usual funding, a further 653 social housing properties are currently under construction. Existing funding streams have been recalibrated to deliver more social housing immediately in response to the challenges currently faced from the heated construction market. The use of spot purchasing and modular and prefabricated construction will deliver quicker to market social housing.

CORONAVIRUS — VACCINATIONS — HESITANCY

701. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to my question without notice 636 asked on 7 September regarding the government’s target COVID-19 vaccination rate of 80 to 90 per cent. I ask again: what is the alternative plan if a 90 per cent vaccination rate target cannot be achieved?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

The Western Australian vaccination program, led by the Vaccine Commander, is focused on vaccinating as many Western Australians as possible. A higher vaccination rate means lower transmission potential and health impacts.

MANDURAH RAIL LINE — CLOSURE

702. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer the minister to the Treasurer’s budget announcement last week in which he indicated that there would be a 12-month delay in the delivery of various Metronet promises, including the activation of the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. Can the minister please confirm whether this means that the proposed month-long closure of the Mandurah line will be rescheduled or will it go ahead as planned, with commuters being asked to bear the pain without any immediate gain?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

The Mandurah line shutdown will commence on 26 December 2021 and will deliver critical enabling works on the Metronet Thornlie–Cockburn Link. We will continue to engage with the local community on minimising impacts on travel over this period.

NATIVE FOREST — LOGGING

703. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the minister representing the Minister for Forestry:

I refer to the minister’s announcement on 8 September 2021 to end logging of native forests by 2024.

- (1) What assessment and analysis has been undertaken to substantiate the \$350 million investment in new softwood plantations over 10 years?
- (2) What is the minimum rainfall requirement required to support viable and sustainable softwood plantations?
- (3) Will prime agricultural land be displaced to make way for this new 33 000-hectare plantation?

- (4) What advice has the minister sought from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, the Parks and Wildlife service or other relevant bodies about the potential fire impact of ending logging, as well as the planting of 50 million pine trees in the south west?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. The following information has been provided by the Minister for Forestry.

- (1) To substantiate the \$350 million investment in new softwood plantations, the Forest Products Commission has undertaken an analysis of: the future demand for softwood timber products in Western Australia; the projected supply of softwood timber from plantations within the state; the processing scale required for the state's softwood industry to be economically viable; impediments to private sector investment in softwood plantations; opportunities to either purchase land or work collaboratively with landowners through sharefarming agreements or support for farm forestry projects; and opportunities for complementary benefits, such as roosting habitat for Carnaby's black-cockatoo or improvements in water quality.
- (2) It is approximately 600 millimetres, but is dependent on the species of pine used and site-specific conditions.
- (3) The plantings will take place throughout the south west on suitable available government land and private property. Plantations do not require prime agricultural land and can often be used on areas that are less productive.
- (4) The Forest Products Commission produces fire management plans for every plantation that address the risks and establish appropriate controls and mitigation, such as firebreaks, access tracks and water points. These plans are produced in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

NATIVE FOREST — LOGGING

704. Hon JAMES HAYWARD to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the announcement to end all native forest forestry.

- (1) Which scientific reports were referenced in the decision to stop native forest logging?
- (2) Will the minister be happy to table any reports that informed the decision that WA's native forestry industry was no longer sustainable?
- (3) Does the minister consider an opinion survey to be a scientific report?
- (4) Will the minister visit timber communities in the south west to meet face to face with forestry workers and explain in detail the science behind the decision?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1)–(2) The McGowan government recognises the overwhelming body of scientific evidence on the realities and impacts of climate change. I refer the honourable member to the following publicly available documents: the Bureau of Meteorology's *State of the climate 2020* report; the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2019 *Special report: Climate change and land*; and the IPCC's 2021 *Sixth assessment report*.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) I ask that this question be referred to the Minister for Forestry.

HEDLAND HEALTH CAMPUS — STAFF

705. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the minister representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the recent staff protest over unsafe working conditions at the Hedland Health Campus and the Minister for Health's response in the Legislative Assembly last month, which I quote —

This is an issue for the WA Country Health Service to sort out and I understand it is on top of it.

- (1) Have there been any meetings with the staff and the WA Country Health Service in response to the protests and —
 - (a) if yes, have these meetings included all staff, including contract staff, clinical and non-clinical staff; and
 - (b) on what dates did those meetings occur?
- (2) How many vacancies exist in the Port Hedland hospital, separately, clinical and non-clinical vacancies?
- (3) Is there a problem with high rates of personal leave due to stress at the Port Hedland hospital?

- (4) Have any additional staff been employed since the protest to address concerns of the staff shortages and —
 - (a) if yes, how many FTEs, clinical and non-clinical?
- (5) Is WorkSafe Western Australia inquiring into or investigating workplace practices at the health campus and —
 - (a) if yes, what is the nature of that inquiry or investigation?
- (6) Have any personnel at the hospital been redeployed away from the hospital or disciplined as a result of any inquiries or investigations?

The PRESIDENT: Honourable member, that was a significantly long question. I will invite the minister to attempt to reply and hope that his reply is brief.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

Thank you, President, and I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. You are correct. This is a 10-part question, so it is not possible to provide the information in the time required and, therefore, on behalf of the Minister for Health, I ask the honourable member to place the question on notice.

NATIVE FOREST — LOGGING — TRANSITION PACKAGE

706. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the minister representing the Minister for Forestry:

I refer to the government's announcement of a \$50 million transition package for the native hardwood timber industry following last week's announcement to close the industry.

- (1) Did the government undertake any consultation or modelling to determine whether \$50 million was the appropriate amount for the transition package?
- (2) If yes to (1), will the government table that document; and, if no to (1), why not?
- (3) How many businesses and jobs does the government expect to support with this package?
- (4) For how long will the \$50 million allocation of funds be provided to the sector?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question and the following information has been provided by the Minister for Forestry.

- (1)–(4) The McGowan government set aside \$50 million to support workers, businesses and communities through a Just Transition plan. A native forestry transition group will be formed to create that plan and will comprise local industry, union, government and traditional owner stakeholders. The government has made a conscious decision not to dictate a plan but to allow those in industry and the community most affected to create the plan that will assist them transition over the next two years in the most practical and useful way. There are 6 000 jobs in the entire forestry industry in WA, which includes the plantation industry. However, only 500 direct jobs are linked to native forestry. The \$50 million transition plan is designed to support those affected workers, diversify local economies and identify and secure sustainable job-creation opportunities. The funds will be distributed in consultation with the native forestry transition group.

ELECTRICITY — RENEWABLE ENERGY

707. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the financial years 2016–17, 2017–18, 2018–19, 2019–20 and 2020–21.

- (1) What percentage does renewable energy contribute to the totality of electricity generated in the south west interconnected system in the non-contestable marketplace?
- (2) What percentage does renewable energy contribute to the totality of electricity generated in the SWIS in the contestable marketplace?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I have not seen it. There was a variant of that question the member asked the other day. I will ask my office now. Hopefully, they are listening and they will bring it in.

NGARI CAPES MARINE PARK — FISHERS — COMPENSATION

708. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the establishment of the Ngari Capes Marine Park and the provision of compensation to professional fishing licence holders.

- (1) When did negotiations commence with licence holders about financial compensation as a consequence of the establishment of the NCMP?
- (2) Has agreement been reached between the state and the fishers on the level of compensation to be provided?
- (3) If no to (2), why not?

Hon KYLE McGINN replied:

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

- (1) Negotiations with applicants who were deemed eligible for compensation commenced in November 2020.
- (2) The compensation process has not yet been concluded.
- (3) Applicants have the right to seek a review of compensation decisions by the State Administrative Tribunal. To date, applicants in two fisheries have sought such a review. Some applicants in other fisheries have indicated their intention to accept the compensation that has been offered and the process to finalise payments is underway.

WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION — STAFF

709. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's resourcing of service 4, "Environmental Regulation", as it appears in the budget.

- (1) What will happen to the additional temporary staff recruited within the 2020–21 financial year; will they remain in their current position or go elsewhere?
- (2) What is the breakdown by job description and level of the 50.5 FTEs who will be recruited to manage the significant volume of new and existing applications for industry regulation and environmental approvals?
- (3) From where will these people be recruited and by when?
- (4) What will be the impact if recruitment efforts are unsuccessful?

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 Environment.

- (1) Any fixed term contract staff who are available and suitable for current and future employment will be considered for appointment in accordance with public sector recruitment standards.
- (2) The breakdown for the FTE relating to service 4, "Environmental Regulation", are detailed in the attached paper, which I will table shortly. The 50.5 FTEs includes other service areas and these have not been included.

[See paper [570](#).]

- (3) Recruitment is undertaken through a range of local and social media recruitment channels and networks, including Jobs WA and the Aboriginal Service Board. The recruitment processes are underway.
- (4) These are permanent public sector positions and recruitment will result in hire. Available staffing resources are continually reviewed for effective allocation to workload.

BAIL ACT — AMENDMENTS

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

I refer to comments from the Attorney General reported by ABC news on 11 December 2020 that indicate that, following the death of Annaliese Ugle, proposed amendments to the Bail Act 1982 were prepared to ensure that, when a person has been convicted of an offence, by either a plea of guilty or a verdict of a jury, the presumption will be that the offender will be remanded in custody awaiting sentence, and that the protection of vulnerable children would be given the utmost priority.

- (1) On what date on or before 11 December 2020 were instructions given to prepare the proposed amendments?
- (2) Have any revised drafts been prepared on or after 11 December 2020?
- (3) What is the date of the most recent draft?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I provide the following response on behalf of the Attorney General.

- (1) The Department of Justice provided drafting instructions for proposed amendments to the Bail Act 1982 to parliamentary counsel on 17 December 2020.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) The Department of Justice received the most recent draft on 3 September 2021.

TAFE — AGED CARE — CERTIFICATE COURSES

711. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the Minister for Education and Training:

For the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, what was the total number of students who completed —

- (a) certificate III in individual support (ageing);
- (b) certificate III in individual support (ageing, home and community);
- (c) certificate III in individual support (home and community); and
- (d) certificate II in introduction to aged care?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (a) The number of students who completed a certificate III in individual support (ageing) in 2017 was 215; 2018, 205; 2019, 537; and 2020, 503.
- (b) The number of students who completed a certificate III in individual support (ageing, home and community) in 2017 was zero; 2018, zero; 2019, 16; and 2020, 130.
- (c) The number of students who completed a certificate III in individual support (home and community) in 2017 was 35; 2018, 22; 2019, 75; and 2020, 83.
- (d) The number of students who completed a certificate II in introduction to aged care in 2017 was zero; 2018, zero; 2019, zero; and 2020, 23.

I note that fees for these courses have been reduced under the lower fees, local skills initiative by 50 per cent for the certificate III in individual support from January 2020, and 50 per cent for the certificate II in introduction to aged care from January 2020.

METHAMPHETAMINE — WASTEWATER TESTING

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

- (1) Will the minister confirm that the methamphetamine consumption rate in Western Australia is determined through wastewater testing?
- (2) If no to (1), how is it determined?
- (3) If yes to (1), what was the percentage of meth consumption in Western Australia in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Police.

The Western Australia Police Force advises —

- (1) The WA Police Force confirms this methodology is used to determine methamphetamine consumption through wastewater testing.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) The Western Australia Police Force does not report on the percentage of meth consumed in Western Australia. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission oversees the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program and produces a series of public reports that provide datasets of drug use and distribution patterns across capital cities and regional Australia.

METRONET — SOCIAL HOUSING AND JOBS PACKAGE

713. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the Metronet social housing and jobs package.

- (1) How many home builds have been completed as part of this package to date?
- (2) How many of the completed homes are currently tenanted?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I trust that Hansard will get this right.

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

- (1)–(2) The McGowan government is investing \$2.1 billion into social housing over the next four years, which includes the recently announced record investment of \$875 million as part of the 2021–22 state budget. This is the single largest one-off investment in social housing in the state's history, and will provide an immediate boost to social housing. To date, through the Metronet social and affordable housing and jobs

package, 287 properties have been completed, with a further 401 properties currently under construction. All properties that have been allocated for social housing are currently or are in the process of being tenanted. Existing funding streams have been re-calibrated to deliver more social housing immediately in response to the challenges currently faced from the heated construction market. The use of spot purchasing and modular and prefabricated construction will deliver quicker-to-market social housing

CORONAVIRUS — TOURISM — COMMONWEALTH–STATE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM

714. **Hon WILSON TUCKER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Tourism:**

I refer to the media statement issued on 22 August announcing a joint commonwealth–state assistance grant program for tourism businesses impacted by COVID-19.

- (1) How many grants have been approved for each of the grant categories?
- (2) Will the minister please table a breakdown of grant applications and approvals by region?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I have the question representing the Minister for Tourism. I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

The Western Australian tourism and travel agent support fund 2021, announced on 22 August 2021, opened for applications online on Monday, 6 September 2021, and will run through to Thursday, 30 September 2021. Details regarding the number of grant applications and final funding distributions will be provided post-program closure.

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING

715. **Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the minister representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia.

- (1) By region, how many medical practitioners and nurse practitioners are registered and trained to act as coordinating or consulting practitioners?
- (2) How many notifications have been made to the VAD board that relate to the —
 - (a) first request;
 - (b) first assessment;
 - (c) consulting assessment;
 - (d) final request; and
 - (e) prescription of substance and administration decision?
- (3) Has the VAD board provided any information to the minister under section 118(b) of the act; and, if yes, will the minister please table that information?
- (4) Has the VAD board made any referral under section 118(c) of the act; and, if yes, will the minister please provide details?

The PRESIDENT: I note that that is also a long question. I invite the minister to attempt to answer it, if possible.

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 Health.

I have been advised that further time is required to answer this question. The information will be provided to the honourable member by 16 September 2021.

CORONAVIRUS — VENTILATORS

Question without Notice 670 — Answer Advice

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Mental Health) [5.03 pm]: I would like to provide an answer to Hon Steve Martin's question without notice 670, asked on 8 September 2021.

I seek leave to have the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

I thank the Honourable Member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Yes, 363 ventilators were purchased as part of COVID-19 preparations.
- (2) Please refer to table for the cost of each ventilator and the purchase date. The equipment is centrally stored with a commissioning program to ensure equipment is ready for deployment to Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Departments at WA hospitals in the event of a ventilated bed space surge. I seek leave to have the table incorporated into *Hansard*.

Ventilator Model	Unit Cost (excl. GST)	Purchase Date
Hamilton T1	\$32,269.00	March 2020
Puritan Bennett [PB] 840	\$42,000.00	April 2020
Mindray SV800	\$63,050.00	March 2020
Hamilton C1	\$74,744.50	April 2020
BD Carefusion VELA RC1023	\$59,143.00	April 2020
Mindray SynoVent E3	\$41,684.00	April 2020
Mindray SynoVent E5	\$51,028.00	April 2020
Vyaire BellaVista 1000	\$73,077.00	April 2020
GE R860	\$86,651.00	April 2020
Getinge Maquet (Servo-s)	\$68,979.00	April 2020
Getinge Maquet (Servo-i)	\$88,651.00	April 2020

(3) 271 ventilators

(4) 219 ventilators located at metropolitan locations, 52 located at country locations

MUJA POWER STATION — STAFF

Question without Notice 662 — Answer Advice

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development) [5.04 pm]: I now have the answer to question without notice 662, asked by Hon Dr Steve Thomas to me, representing the Minister for Energy, on 8 September 2021. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Energy.

This question cannot be answered. The metrics requested do not exist and the intent of the question is unclear. The member is welcome to contact the Minister for Energy's office directly to request a briefing on how the electricity system operates, and the increasing levels of renewable generation on the south west interconnected grid.

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Consideration of Tabled Papers

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [5.05 pm]: I am resisting the urge to do a recap for the benefit of the Minister for Regional Development. As tempting as it is, we might progress onto a few other issues.

The PRESIDENT: Please do, honourable member.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you, President.

I will note a couple of things I was talking about before the question time interruption. At one point I was discussing the government putting money aside in separate little blocks of cash into special purpose accounts and other sorts of holding accounts. It is pertinent to note that on page 6 of budget paper No 3, the government has left itself a little breathing space in relation to the COVID response—the nearly \$9 billion we talked about before. There is a section in which, with regard to the COVID-19 response, the government has set aside \$800 million as a general government spending provision. Of that, \$240 million is set aside for the public hospital system. I guess that is what a government does when it has an awful lot of money, but that is just one more account along the lines of the accounts we were talking about previously. The government has set aside a huge amount of money that it can call upon at a later date.

Similarly, there is another interesting one on page 99 of budget paper No 3. With regard to “Election Commitments” under “Primary Industries and Regional Development”, there is a line “Small Commitments” of \$13.4 million. I am always nervous when such things are run together and called “Small Commitments”. Hopefully during the estimates process we might get a total breakdown of those small commitments for primary industries and regional development. That might be interesting.

There are a couple of other issues before we get onto some specifics. One is in relation to expenditure. The government trading enterprises have not been asked for significant dividends. Again, that is not necessarily a bad move, as it is simply a matter of accounting practice; that is, \$2.4 billion that would otherwise have come to the government coffers have been held over in those GTEs. The biggest GTE, the one that makes the biggest dollars, is the Water Corporation. It is setting aside \$1.4 billion for the next desalination plant. That is an issue that the opposition has chased for some years. The question is: at what point will the state need an alternative water source that is not rainfall-dependent or an underground source? It was always the case, from those early rounds of questions two, three or four years ago, that the middle of the 2020s was likely to be the time that we would go forward with that. I suspect that the \$1.4 billion

will sit in another Water Corporation holding account for that period. We will have to watch that fairly carefully, because if it turns out that the government does not require an additional desalination plant for some reason, there will be \$1.4 billion sitting there.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: That is probably highly unlikely, member.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Probably. I suspect that it will be necessary, although we have not seen the business case for it. It was always likely that the next water source would be a desalination plant as the underground supply is probably coming to the end of its easy run. But it should be noted that a total of \$2.4 billion has been set aside from dividends. Again, it is an example of the massive income of the government of Western Australia at the moment.

In terms of setting aside \$800 million as a general government spending provision for COVID-19, it might be useful for the government to have a bit of a look at its COVID-19 compensation package. It is absolutely the case that small businesses have suffered when there have been lockdowns, and probably more so from the uncertainty about what is appropriate when the government inflicts a rapid shutdown. Sometimes shutdowns are rapid. I remember driving from here to Albany for an Anzac Day event and not realising that the rules had changed. I arrived late, went to bed and, funnily enough, got up for a dawn service. Not everybody is aware of the shutdowns all of the time. Some of the shutdowns are remarkably quick.

The impact on business is not insignificant. Businesses in Western Australia deserve a standardised set of rules, especially given the amount of money the government has available to it. Members might remember that we started the process of examining this budget by saying that this government has more money than any government that has preceded it. It has a \$5.6 billion surplus for 2020–21 and a \$15 billion surplus over five years. One of the most astounding things has been the comments of the Minister for Small Business about why some small businesses were in and some were out in terms of getting compensation as a result of COVID lockdowns. Some businesses got no compensation while others did. The amount of compensation paid is nowhere near the level of losses incurred by businesses. I would hate governments to underwrite all losses all the time—that would be a very unhealthy place to be—but problems occur when the government starts to pick winners and losers. Governments have traditionally been very poor at doing that. That is what this government has done; it picked winners and losers.

In the first set of lockdowns, the government decided that even if a business in a regional area could demonstrate losses, it was not eligible because the lockdown applied only to the Perth and Peel regions. Notwithstanding the fact that many people from Perth and Peel would normally have driven to the south west, the wheatbelt or the midwest to escape the city and expend their holiday dollars, businesses in those regions were excluded from compensation. In the second lockdown, plenty of groups were still excluded. Interestingly, this time the compensation was not based on a geographical area. I suspect that the poor old Minister for Small Business had been severely berated for putting on the compensation package a geographic restriction that did not make any sense, so he then put an industry by industry restriction on compensation. This did not make any more sense than the geographical one, but it gave him an alternative to play with. Plenty of businesses missed out on compensation following the second lockdown. Some businesses were in and some were out. People struggled to understand the rules on who could apply. Businesses across the board could not understand why, if both they and their neighbour could demonstrate a significant loss, they would miss out on the compensation package but their neighbour would get it. It was \$3 000; it was not going to make anybody rich, but it was a contribution to their turnover in recognition of the financial pain that the government had inflicted on businesses. The government was sharing a little of that pain. It did not share all of it or most of it; it was just a small proportion of it.

Why would one business be eligible and the business next door not be eligible? That is the problem when governments pick winners and losers. The reason put forward by the Minister for Small Business was that it was taxpayer dollars and the government needed to be very careful with them. As if the government was short of taxpayer dollars! As if the Premier, who is also the Treasurer, who was rolling in that money bin, needed to demonstrate restraint to the point at which people missed out because he did not have enough dollars in his pocket to hand out! The government will have a \$15 billion surplus over five years. That must rankle every person who was treated so disrespectfully and shamefully during that compensation process.

Surely the government could come up with a set of standardised rules. If the government urgently and rapidly applies a COVID shutdown, with which I think everybody in the house agrees when it is required, it will have a significant impact on businesses. It could be a caterer who has purchased a significant amount of food for an event that is then cancelled overnight. It could be even more simple than that. What about businesses whose clients can no longer get to them? I know that this was a sore point for allied health providers who were unable to provide their services during the last lockdown. I am referring to physios, occupational therapists and those who provide support services; they were not compensated. They were not eligible for compensation, despite the fact that they could demonstrate significant losses in their businesses. They were excluded by the government on the basis that it did not have the money to pay them compensation, when it has more money than it can shake a stick at. How outrageously galling it must be for those businesses that were so egregiously slighted and ignored.

I think there is an opportunity to take a much better approach to this. The government should take this on board. It should look at what industries and businesses have to suffer through when a lockdown is enforced. The compensation

is a token payment—\$3 000 will not save a business that is on its knees—but it is made in recognition of the impact of the decisions made by government. But why treat people differently? Why pick winners and losers? Hairdressers were in but physios were out. What on earth makes the government think that it is a good decision-maker in terms of picking winners and losers in business? Surely there is a better way to do this. If a government was ever going to do it better, surely now would be the time, when it has \$15 billion of surpluses to play with. This is an outrageous situation.

I come back to the theme that I keep returning to—that is, in an era of a \$5.6 billion surplus in one financial year and \$15 billion in surpluses over five years, we find ourselves in the middle of crises in health, housing, skills, and COVID-19 compensation. The bills for COVID were paid for in advance by iron ore, taxes and commonwealth grants. The money required to pay the bills associated with COVID was sitting in the coffers of this government well before COVID actually struck—from a year before—yet we do not have a standardised process that business will be able to understand when this government inflicts another lockdown on it. Another lockdown will come. We will not get 100 per cent vaccination coverage. Ultimately, we will not keep COVID-19—the coronavirus—out of this state forever. It is interesting to see that most places get to that 70 per cent vaccination rate and then see the rate slow down. That last 20 to 25 per cent is going to be very, very tough. Unless we put up a brick wall at the border and let nobody in, it will eventually get here. It is simply a mathematical calculation of the risk by the number of incursions—that is how epidemiology works. If we have enough incursions and if there is any risk at all, then it will ultimately get in. There will be an outbreak. If we have high vaccination numbers and good systems in place, it will be a small and hopefully well-managed outbreak, but it will happen, and there will be further lockdowns. How will businesses be treated by a government that has \$15 billion in its kitty that it is trying to work out how to spend? That should be an embarrassment for the government. The government's performance to date on managing small businesses through the COVID crisis should be an embarrassment to itself, and I would like to think that we could look at this and ask it to do better.

The issue of skills shortages is ongoing, particularly in the agricultural sector, and I know that we have recently asked the Minister for Agriculture and Food; Regional Development a couple of questions on how that is going to be repaired. We are actually trying to get to the key of this, because we are trying to support the position of the Minister for Agriculture and Food. I get the feeling that the minister for agriculture is making a genuine attempt, perhaps not successfully at this point, to rectify this problem. I give her some credit for that.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Sorry, which problem, again?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: This is agricultural workforce. I think some things are occurring and I think that the minister is trying to make an attempt to rectify this. I have not yet got the minister to answer the question of how much progress has been made on a business case for Bladin Village in the Northern Territory. I suspect that the minister has looked at that in some detail. We finally got to the point last week when the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Hon Colin de Grussa, posed a question that the minister answered suggesting that a business case or proposal of some form was in train but potentially not yet finished. I think that we need to keep coming back to that process and that question. I am hoping that, at some point, the minister for agriculture will tell us how far that business case or proposal has progressed. Was it finished or not? I suspect that the fence that cannot be jumped on this issue is probably not the Minister for Regional Development but the Premier. If that is the case, that is a shame. I would like to think that the Minister for Regional Development recognises this issue of not being able to get an adequate workforce in train and the threat that poses to the agricultural sector.

That is not to say that Bladin Village in the Northern Territory is the only solution. It has to be pointed out that other state governments in Australia have constructed their own solutions. I understand that the proposal for a facility at Toowoomba in Queensland has been done without any federal funding; the state has stepped up and provided the resources required. As is indicated by the budget papers and the briefing notes provided to us, Queensland is a state that is significantly worse off and has been more impacted by the COVID crisis than has the state of Western Australia. If Queensland can do it, maybe Western Australia could have done this as well. That was an option that might have been looked at. I do not know whether going it alone has been examined—I think that is a question that the Minister for Regional Development should answer at some point—but it is obviously the case that some states have done exactly that. At the very least, I think the Minister for Regional Development should tell us how far the business case that she said last week was being developed has been developed. Has it got to the point of being a formal proposal? Did that formal proposal go to the Premier; and, if so, did the Premier, through the process of national cabinet, I guess, submit that proposal to the commonwealth? I would be very interested to hear the answers to those questions. I do not know whether the government will be making responses to the budget speech, but it would not be the first time that the Minister for Regional Development has made a contribution and spoken on the budget. That would perhaps be an opportunity for the minister to provide those answers so that we can work out whether she has done the job that we would expect but is being hamstrung by the Premier, or whether there is an alternative answer to that. That would be a great thing to find out. We may have to ask that question more formally. As we know, we do not necessarily get answers to the questions that we ask; certainly, we do not get substantive answers to those questions. That is one question I would like answered. Again, at a time when this state has ample funds, that might be another way that the state of Western Australia could invest some of its \$15 billion surplus to support the community of Western Australia. That might be a useful outcome.

One way that the government of Western Australia proposes to spend some of this \$15 billion surplus—this enormous largesse—is on a response package to the closure of the timber industry in Western Australia. That is in the budget papers in a number of places. If we look at page 5 of budget paper No 3, we see the creation of a \$750 million climate action fund, which includes \$350 million for the expansion of the state’s softwood plantation estate, \$206 million for some renewable energy initiatives—we have not got to the point of knowing what those are, whether it is wave energy or anything else; we will tease it out in the budget estimates—and \$50 million for the development of renewable hydrogen. I think we have all become fans of the hydrogen industry and sector, so I am sure that will be gratefully received and widely supported.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You’re not suggesting you people were first, are you?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No, but the Minister for Regional Development might remember that when she opened the plant in the South Metropolitan Region a couple of years ago, I was there. I remember the minister having a slight jab at me at the time. It is not the case that I specifically or the opposition have been blind and not engaged in this process.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Nothing happened during the Barnett government.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The joy is that I was not here during the Barnett government, so the minister can tell me what happened then all she likes. It is all grist for the mill, because I was not a part of it. All I can tell the minister is that when I returned—I have a feeling it was 2019; it might have been 2018—the minister opened the plant not far from Cockburn, and I was present at the time. It is not as if the hydrogen process is unknown or unsupported.

I want to focus on the timber process in particular. There is \$350 million for the state’s softwood plantation, and \$50 million has also been provided. We do not know whether that is a compensation package for the timber industry, but it is true that the timber industry was absolutely blindsided by this announcement. Maybe it should not have been. Perhaps the timber industry took the government far too much at its word and should have adopted a far more cynical approach. As I said last week during a fairly heated debate, I still remember the Minister for Forestry, Hon Dave Kelly’s media release of 3 December 2019, in which he spruiked the benefits of the timber industry. It said that the native hardwood timber industry was worth more than \$200 million a year to the state of Western Australia, with hundreds of jobs—800 jobs, I think it said—and that all those things were critically important.

The timber industry probably should have looked at the government’s so-called consultation process about the new forest management plan and seen this coming. I guess the argument could be made that the timber industry was naive in assuming that the government had any other agenda apart from its demise. A cynic would look at this as an immensely contrived process. For some reason, the timber industry took the government at its word when, in 2019, it said that the industry had a future. It is the case that this industry has been undermined by government processes all the way along. What the Western Australian timber industry has needed for something like 30 years is a genuine definition of the word “sustainable”. The word “sustainable” is chucked around a lot. It was in Hon Dave Kelly’s 2019 press release: “We need to make the timber industry sustainable.” I have been around long enough to remember the regional forest agreement with the commonwealth that we signed in the late 1990s. Its intent was to make the timber industry sustainable. During the 2001 election campaign, the Labor Party had its old-growth forest policy, and if we read the rhetoric of Hon Geoff Gallop, we see that the policy was to make the industry sustainable. A new forest management plan was initiated in 2003—it is a 10-year rolling plan—and obviously it had to reflect the old-growth forest strategy. That should have made the timber industry sustainable and the new plan in 2013 should have made the timber industry sustainable. There has been government failure on all sides for as long as I can remember in that I do not think there has been a forest management plan that genuinely sought to make the timber industry sustainable in the long term. But that has not been the agenda of those opposed to the timber industry. Their agenda has been to stop the harvest of any tree, because cutting down any tree is a problem. The timber industry has fought forever to hold on to its resource. Now the majority of its remaining resource will disappear. Effectively, some timber will come out of the mining sector. There will be some thinnings but not much more than that. It needs to be said, of course, that if we do not cut down trees of a reasonable bole size, we would just be taking thinnings. For the most part, we would be taking thinnings from trees with a bole size in the category of 10 to 20 centimetres. It will be very interesting to see what will be made out of those. To be honest, because it is young, growing timber, even just to make firewood it would have to be stored for a fair period. This industry, which has been on its knees several times in the past, will once again be on its knees.

The sum of \$350 million will be put into plantations. We have to assume that it will pretty much all go into pine plantation. That in itself is not a bad thing, except it needs to be remembered that the state lost a massive amount of pine in the Yarloop and Bridgetown fires and the pine planting regime has been significantly reduced. There is that absolute dearth; there is a cliff coming up. There will not be enough pine to service the state for 15 years and we will potentially be importing pine. Although the government’s investment of significant dollars into pine plantations is welcome, it has to find the land, plant the pines and wait 25 to 30 years for the trees to grow. There is an enormous lag time between that and anybody getting a benefit from this investment, apart from those who are planting. That is not saving an industry; it is useful. It will serve a function in the future but that process will not save the industry.

At the other end, there is \$50 million effectively for a compensation process. Fifty million dollars is not going to cut it; it is less than the amount of money that the new owners of the Nannup and Whittakers–Greenbushes mills have spent upgrading their equipment in the last couple of years. That was on the encouragement, I might add, of

the Minister for Forestry, Hon Dave Kelly, who was glowing in his press release about the sale of those two mills and the investment that would come. It would have been nice, I suspect, if that company had been told that the Labor Party intended to shatter the entire industry before it invested \$50 million or \$60 million of its own cash. That would have been handy to know, but that did not happen. Fifty million dollars will not cover the investment that has been put into these things. The \$350 million plantation investment is ultimately welcome, but it will not have a significant impact on the industry until those trees are at least ready to thin or more likely ready to harvest 25 to 30 years down the track. In the meantime, an industry that could have been made sustainable would have been sacrificed, and that is the bit that gets me. We could have been having a debate about what is sustainable. There is a harvest of jarrah logs that is sustainable. Interestingly, because there is less demand for karri—we are not sending out the same levels of woodchips—there is probably a sustainability level for karri that might be higher than the current harvest. We could probably increase and sustainably manage the harvest of karri over the long term. We want to take the logging rotations of jarrah back out to a more appropriate time frame, which, to be honest, is probably around 120 years, but it has got significantly less than that. As more and more of the older harvested forest is pulled out of harvest, we have to go back into areas that were harvested far more recently to try to get the resource.

If the government was to reform the timber industry in this state, it could have asked, “What is the total amount that we can harvest? We want to put in a 120-year rotation and we know that that is going to drop the amount of jarrah we can harvest.” Everybody involved with the upcoming forest management plan expected the harvest to drop from 130 000 cubic metres of bole log, sawlog and residuals to under 100 000—probably under 90 000. It would have been worthwhile investing in finding out what the true definition of “sustainable” was in those jarrah forests and allowing that to develop. But that is not what the government did. The government threw out the definition of “sustainability” because it thinks that it can get more votes in the areas in which it wants to get them. The party of Hon Dr Brad Pettitt should be careful that the Labor Party does not “out-green” the Greens! That does not usually work; in recent times that certainly did not do other parties any good. It does not necessarily do parties any good when they try to out-green the Greens. I will be interested in the outcome of this political manipulation to see whether the Labor Party can out-green the Greens, change that vote and pick up those extra votes or whether, after thanking the Labor Party for killing off the timber industry, the green movement simply demands the next sacrifice and the next sacrifice and does not change. There will still be a green movement out there. I suspect that once they have come for the foresters, there will be somebody else on the list. That is an absolute shame, and it is devastating to the people in the south west. It is another industry lost. I think that is enormously problematic.

I am looking for the exact reference to another point I want to make. I will see whether I can find it. The \$350 million plantation fund is spruiked in the budget papers as the planting of trees to contribute to locking up carbon and climate change. I thought that was a very brave move. Maybe the Labor Party cannot out-green the Greens yet. When the budget papers say that the government is tying up this carbon plantation, it needs to be remembered that at some point—I imagine the plantations will mostly be pine—the trees will get cut down and be used as structural timber. That being the case, is that carbon in a cut-down tree still stored?

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Yes, it is.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Absolutely. Here is the problem: the Greens will say that having a forest, harvesting some of it and tying that carbon up in structural timber for the next 100 years does not count, because a tree cannot be cut down. I am pleased to see in the budget papers that the government has said that trees can be cut down and more regrown and that carbon can be stored. I think that is great; it is really good.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: If you burn the trees, if you cut them down and use them as firewood, then you are not storing carbon.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That is right, but we will come back to firewood in a minute.

Jarrah’s original use was for structural timber. There is still a bit of structural timber out there. There is some artisan timber; there is some structural timber. People still build things out of jarrah on occasions.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: There is a little bit. Jarrah floorboards still go down in people’s houses. It still exists. That is the industry that has now been closed down. The interesting thing is that the justification has been climate change. We can no longer harvest it because climate change demands that we leave the trees exactly where they are, except for the far greater part of the compensation package put together by the government, which is to put plantations in from which trees will be cut down and put into structural timber. Talk about a double standard. This is an absolute double standard. Trees cannot be cut down, because the carbon cannot be stored, but they can be if it is a plantation in which the government has invested. Hang on a minute; the government cannot have it both ways. That is the problem with the government: if it is trying to out-green the Greens and is trying to rid of the Greens’ end of that argument, the government has to plant new forests and never touch them in order to be competitive. I think it is great that that is in the budget. I cannot find the exact page it is written on. I will probably find it after I sit down! It is a great line to say that plantation timbers will contribute to the government’s response on climate change! If anybody happens to have recorded that reference, please let me know, because I think it is a cracker.

There are a few other things I want to start moving through a bit more rapidly. I think we have done the general budget process. I think we have looked at the good luck rather than good management argument. We have looked at where the money has come from. It is now time to have a bit of a discussion about where some of the money is going. We started that process after question time. There are a few things I would like to look at. The first one will go right to the heart of the Minister for Regional Development. Surely, with a \$15 billion surplus, the minister can do something about replacing the Boyanup saleyards. I am a supporter of the minister's plan to extend the current lease for 10 years, because we have basically run out of time now; there is very little alternative. Surely it is time, with \$15 billion worth of surplus, to fix this in the longer term. It only gets fixed if we complete the original regional saleyards strategy, as endorsed by the late Hon Kim Chance and, originally, by all our political parties. The government has \$15 billion in surpluses. It should take some money and finish the regional saleyards strategy. Take Boyanup saleyards, move them out of town and put them somewhere where they can provide a long-term service. I think it is time when the government has that level of money. I do not understand why the Shire of Capel seems determined to mess around with the 10-year lease extension.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: They have had six CEOs in three years. They are incapable of making a decision.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The shire president has just announced he wants to run for Mayor of Bunbury. The world has indeed gone crazy. I would like to say that the south west is perfect, but there is a bit of nuttiness that comes in every now and again. That is a little particular.

Hon Jackie Jarvis: Don't talk about yourself like that!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am the only sane person in the world!

I think it is time to act. There is a lot of agreement. We agree that the extension is to be put in place, and then I think the minister should bite the bullet and find the money. I think she has problems with the Premier.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Do you think there is a business case to support that, seriously?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Does the minister think there is a business case to support public transport? I mean, it is massively subsidised. We move people around on buses and trains.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: That is the whole mobility of the city. The whole workability of the city depends on it, and it benefits everyone. Imagine how many roads you would have to build if you did not have public transport.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It still requires a massive subsidy. This would be a very small subsidy.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Members, we are moving beyond some discreet interjections!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I think that is a reasonable thing that should be addressed in the budget.

While we are down in that neck of the woods, the energy transition is going to be a fairly painful process, typically around the town of Collie. With the main coal-fired units, Muja C and D, unit 5 closes next year and unit 6 goes in two years' time. To be honest, from everything that I hear, I am concerned that Collie A, which is the newest power station, is in a state in which it might not outlast Muja D units 7 and 8. That will advance the closure of coalmining in Collie. I understand there is \$100 million, and I think the government has added an extra \$20 million to the fund. It would probably be good for the forestry industry if it got an equivalent \$120 million, rather than the \$50 million on offer, but we can quibble about that later. There will be significant economic impact and hurt in the town of Collie if that process is sped up. I still have concerns about where a lot of that money is going, and a lot of it is coming out of the royalties for regions fund. Some of the projects are reasonable; they will create jobs. I quite like the driverless vehicle training exercise. I think that is a good unit to put in Collie. I am concerned about other ones though. I raised this in the debate last week. I will be interested to see precisely how many permanent full-time jobs are in place as a result of the \$120 million spent on this package, bearing in mind that \$40 million of it came from dud election commitments that the minister at least had the good sense to throw away and start over. Those things need to be addressed. Again, an era in which the government has \$15 billion in services is surely an era in which the government shows some vision and invests in the diversification of that economy. The entire economy of Western Australia requires diversification; the entire economy needs to be looked at. That is where some of that vision should have gone, and that vision is missing.

It is not in my area, Mr Deputy President; it is more so in yours. I have been asking the minister representing the Minister for Transport what is happening with the tier 3 grain line business cases. I cannot get a better answer out of the government than I got out of the Bladin Village one. When will those business cases be completed and when will they be submitted to the federal government? This is what the government is spending its money on—a lack of vision and a lack of intent. With a federal election coming up in the next eight or nine months, surely that would be the time to present the government's proposal to the commonwealth, if it is seeking funding. Surely at a time when it has \$15 billion worth of surpluses, that is when it could invest. We cannot even get an answer to our question about where the business case is. Three business cases are being worked up to be submitted. Where are they? Have they been submitted? Let us get some answers. I am getting very tired of not getting answers from the government. It talks about a rolled-gold level of accountability. It is very hard to get a straight answer. I would like to know where is the business case on tier 3 lines. Where is that money, where is the business case and how much should be asked for from the federal government?

There are a few other things I would like to speak about very quickly. I have a few examples of the government not supporting the community, despite having the money and the capacity. Tier 3 rail lines is one of those. One of the others is the upgrade to Bunbury Hospital at South West Health Campus. It is in the budget papers. The estimated total cost is \$200 million. Practical completion is not anticipated until the last quarter of 2027. We are not even at the last quarter of 2021. There is a six-year process. I refer to that because one of the greatest failings of this government has been in managing the health system. Its biggest crisis appears to be in housing. I will let others talk in more detail about why there is a crisis in housing when there is a set of surpluses worth \$15 billion. The management of the health system surely needs to be looked at. I will say the same thing about the Bunbury hospital as I do about the Albany Health Campus and a range of other ones, and it probably applies in Perth. The government has a couple of choices when it gets into office: it can invest in hospitals and emergency departments to meet the needs of the people or it can divert some of that demand elsewhere. I know that the Minister for Mental Health is an advocate for trying to get additional resources into that sector. Emergency departments are not always, or are very rarely, the best place for acute mental health disorders. It is an even worse place to try to house those who are afflicted with drug addictions who often become violent. It is time for some investment in that system as well. I know there is some money in the budget for that. Again, we come to a position where, with \$15 billion in surplus, much of it in advance, we are in the middle of a health crisis and a housing crisis. It should not be that way. It should not be the case that, with all this money floating around, service delivery to the state of Western Australia is as poor as it is.

I would like to get to a couple of other things and then I will rest. I have asked a range of questions about alternative systems in wastewater treatment. Again, I struggle to get answers to those questions. Another thing I struggle to get answers for is the rewards of the machinery-of-government changes introduced by the government. At some point, surely the government will give us a rundown of precisely what has been saved and precisely what improvements in services are available. The machinery-of-government changes were lauded, a bit like the Office of Shared Services was lauded some years ago. There were to be major savings and major improvements. We keep asking what level of savings and what level of improvement this government has been able to deliver with those things. We are still asking. Again, we are unable to get an answer. I know it is difficult. We go in with all sorts of great and bold hopes that the government will be able to save money and improve service delivery. Certainly, with the Office of Shared Services, the intent was good. Changing departments is often a bit like the old changing of the deckchairs. If we change the stationery, we do not make much in the way of savings. At some point, the government needs to have a good look at whether this is a good system. It is incredibly difficult to manage when we have super departments with five or six ministers rolling through. We would like to think there was some economic or service benefit for going through all those painful exercises. The government seems unable to tell us precisely what that looks like.

I intend to sum up by running through a couple of key things. This is a budget of astounding proportions. We have the biggest economic fiscal boom in the history of this country. There is more money than any government has seen before by a significant margin. But it will not always be that way. The iron ore price will correct. At some point in the not-too-distant future, we will see what that correction looks like. At that point, we will see whether there is any financial management—good, bad or indifferent—occurring in the McGowan government.

This government has its priorities askew when it comes to managing money in and money out. It is very good at collecting money. It is very good at sitting on that money. Like Scrooge McDuck, it is easy to roll around in the Money Bin. It is a wonderful feeling, I imagine. When the service delivery in this state is in the state that it is, it is an embarrassment to have that level of money. If this is a report card, this budget should have a piece of cardboard that says, “Okay. Been a bit lucky but must do better.” I want to see the “do better” part. I want to see the government explain how it will take this embarrassment of wealth and deliver better outcomes, economic diversification and better delivery of service because, in all honesty, that is not what the government presented in the budget papers on Thursday.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Pierre Yang**.

CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second Reading

Resumed from 9 September.

HON SAMANTHA ROWE (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.58 pm] — in reply: I had the opportunity to give my substantive speech in reply to the second reading debate last Thursday. I wanted to reiterate my thanks to the members who made a contribution last Thursday and for indicating their support for the bill.

I commend the bill to the house.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Just before I leave the chair, I remind members that the bells will ring at five minutes to seven tonight.

Sitting suspended from 5.59 to 7.00 pm

Committee

The Deputy Chair of Committees (Hon Peter Foster) in the chair; Hon Samantha Rowe (Parliamentary Secretary) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1: Short title —

Hon NICK GOIRAN: In the second reading speech delivered on 12 August this year, the parliamentary secretary stated that this bill —

continues the government’s progress towards implementing all 310 recommendations of the royal commission’s final report that have application in Western Australia.

I appreciate that not all 310 recommendations are intended to be addressed by this bill, but which of the royal commission’s recommendations are intended to be addressed by this bill?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Member, they are recommendations 7.3 and 7.4; recommendation 12.20, which is the Aboriginal child placement principle; and recommendation 12.22, which is around assistance to care leavers.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Recommendation 12.20 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse reads as follows —

Each state and territory government, in consultation with appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community representatives, should develop and implement plans to:

Then it lists four things —

- a. fully implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
- b. improve community and child protection sector understanding of the intent and scope of the principle
- c. develop outcome measures that allow quantification and reporting on the extent of the full application of the principle, and evaluation of its impact on child safety and the reunification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families
- d. invest in community capacity building as a recognised part of kinship care, in addition to supporting individual carers, in recognition of the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in bringing up children.

Regarding these four objectives set out in recommendation 12.20, which of the clauses in the bill address each of those objectives?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Members, I am advised that that information was tabled to the committee last year. Quite a number of areas are covered for each of the five principles, and a number of clauses are impacted by that. Does the member want me to read it out? It is quite a lengthy document that was tabled.

Hon Nick Goiran: When you say the “five” principles, is it the four principles in recommendation 12.20? I have four.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: It is the five elements of the child safety principle itself. Does that make sense?

Hon Nick Goiran: It does, yes.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: A number of clauses are impacted by those five placement principles. The document is available online, or we can give the member a copy.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Recommendation 12.20 has four parts. The first is —

- a. fully implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

I think the parliamentary secretary is saying that a number of clauses of the bill do that. For what it is worth, I accept that that is the case. I do not think it will necessarily take us forward to itemise all those clauses. There are another three elements in recommendation 12.20. Putting aside the first, the other three are —

- b. improve community and child protection sector understanding of the intent and scope of the principle
- c. develop outcome measures that allow quantification and reporting on the extent of the full application of the principle, and evaluation of its impact on child safety and the reunification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families
- d. invest in community capacity building as a recognised part of kinship care, in addition to supporting individual carers, in recognition of the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in bringing up children.

I am seeking confirmation or clarification of whether there are any clauses in the bill that deal with those final three recommendations.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised no, because those three issues that the member just raised are not legislative.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: When the government says that this bill is implementing four of the royal commission's recommendations, namely 7.3, 7.4, 12.20 and 12.22, at least in the example of recommendation 12.20, I take it that this bill is partially implementing that recommendation. If that is the case, what is the government doing with respect to the implementation of the remainder of recommendation 12.20?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it is in line with those recommendations.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I take the parliamentary secretary again to the third of the four sub-recommendations in 12.20. It states —

- c. develop outcome measures that allow quantification and reporting on the extent of the full application of the principle, and evaluation of its impact on child safety and the reunification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families

Is there a clause in the bill that will do that? If there is no clause in the bill that will do that, has the development of those outcome measures already occurred; and, if not, what are the plans to make that happen?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised no. I am not really in a position to advise further.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Just to clarify, no, it has not done; or, no, this bill is not doing it; or, no, the government does not have a plan for how that will occur?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised no, this bill is not doing it, but recommendation 12.20c. is being progressed at a national level.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: According to the government, this bill will fully implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle in a number of clauses, and we have agreed that there is no need to itemise those clauses. With respect to the idea of developing outcome measures that will be able to be quantified, that currently has not been done, for the reason that it is waiting for agreement at a national level. What is the status of those discussions at a national level?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am not in a position to advise, but we can certainly undertake to find out for the member.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: It would be good, parliamentary secretary, if at some later stage we could be advised to what extent discussions are happening at a national level to fully implement recommendation 12.20, at least 12.20c.. I thank the parliamentary secretary for providing that update. What is the status of recommendation 12.20b. and d.?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: We do not have that information with us, but we will undertake to see whether we can get that for the member.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That would be good. I stress at this point that the government is saying and has said, as the parliamentary secretary indicated earlier, that this bill will implement two of the recommendations of the royal commission, namely 7.3 and 7.4. There is no dispute from the opposition about that. We agree that this bill is doing that. In actual fact, one of the key differences between the 2021 version of the bill and what I think was the 2019 version of the bill is the inclusion of additional groups of mandatory reporters that were absent from the earlier version of the bill. The opposition in the last Parliament advocated very strongly on that. We would now agree that this version of the bill does seek to implement recommendations 7.3 and 7.4 of the royal commission. It is also clear that this bill will implement only part of recommendation 12.20. It would certainly be beneficial to clarify for the record what is being done with respect to those other recommendations. I note that the parliamentary secretary and the advisers will make some efforts to try to find that information at a later stage.

I now move to recommendation 12.22, which is the fourth of the four recommendations from the royal commission that this bill purports to address. The fourth paragraph of the explanatory memorandum specifically states that the amendments in the bill align with recommendation 12.22 “for strengthened supports to assist care-leavers to safely and successfully transition to independent living”, yet I note that both parts of recommendation 12.22 refer specifically to victims of child sexual abuse who are leaving care. Can the parliamentary secretary advise the chamber which clauses of the bill seek to implement recommendations 12.22a. and b.? There are two parts to recommendation 12.22—paragraphs a. and b.—so which clauses will implement each of those?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: The clauses that support that recommendation are clause 37 and clauses 44 to 46.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Clause 37 seeks to amend section 89. Does that one deal with recommendation 12.22a. or recommendation 12.22b.?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised it is recommendation 12.22a.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Recommendation 12.22 reads —

State and territory governments should ensure that the supports provided to assist all care-leavers to safely and successfully transition to independent living include:

- a. strategies to assist care-leavers who disclose that they were sexually abused while in out-of-home care to access general post-care supports

Therefore, do clauses 44 to 46 address recommendation 12.22b.?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised, yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: To clarify, recommendation 12.22a. will be implemented by clause 27 and recommendation 12.22b. will be implemented by clauses 44 to 46? I am happy to take the parliamentary secretary's response by interjection if that is the case.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised it is across both of them.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The advice from government is that clauses 37, and clauses 44, 45 and 46 as a package, will implement recommendation 12.22. To be clear, the royal commission states at recommendation 12.22 that state governments should implement —

- a. strategies to assist care-leavers who disclose that they were sexually abused while in out-of-home care to access general post-care supports

And —

- b. the development of targeted supports to address the specific needs of sexual abuse survivors, such as help in accessing therapeutic treatment to deal with impacts of abuse, and for those supports to be accessible until at least the age of 25.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the amendments aim to improve in a number of various ways not just a specific cause of action for care leavers.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I think we have identified the government's position with respect to the royal commission recommendations that the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2021 will implement recommendation 7.3 with regard to mandatory reporters, and recommendation 7.4, which is an ancillary recommendation associated with recommendation 7.3. We can deal with that later in the bill. The government says that it is implementing part of recommendation 12.20, is specifically implementing recommendation 12.20a. and is implementing all of recommendation 12.22. I just want to clarify that the government's position is that the bill as a package—the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2021—will fully implement recommendation 7.3, fully implement recommendation 7.4, partly implement recommendation 12.20 and fully implement recommendation 12.22.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: If I can clarify for the member, I am advised that the amendments align with recommendation 12.20, and support, rather than implement, recommendation 12.22.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I think that is a better way of describing it, because it is not clear to me that they implement recommendation 12.22, but I think it is a fair to say that they support recommendation 12.22. With regard to recommendation 12.20, I think the bill will implement recommendation 12.20a., but it is right to say that it is consistent with recommendation 12.20b., c. and d. but will not implement them, least of all recommendation 12.20d., which refers to investing in “community capacity building”.

To assist the parliamentary secretary, I indicate that I want to cover four topics on clause 1. We have now dealt with the royal commission. I now would like to touch on the statutory review, which is another substantial element being implemented by this bill. I would then like to touch on the consultation process that has been embarked on, and conclude with the differences between the 2019 and 2021 bills. I have those four topics to cover in clause 1 and then we can dive into the content of this 76-clause bill. Having dealt with the royal commission's recommendations, I turn now to the statutory review. In the second reading speech there was mention of this bill implementing 40 recommendations that arose from the statutory review. How many recommendations were there in the statutory review?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: There were 70 recommendations.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Of the 70 recommendations, the government says that 40 will be implemented by this bill. As I understand it, eight of the 30 recommendations will not be implemented by this bill. There are 70 recommendations in total, of which 40 will be implemented by this bill. That leaves 30 that will not be implemented by this bill. Eight of those 30, as I understand it, have been excluded because they relate to the intersection between Child Protection and Family Court proceedings. What is the status of those eight recommendations?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the eight recommendations the member referred to have been deferred to a review of the Children's Court of Western Australia Act 1988 and the Young Offenders Act 1994.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: This statutory review is dated November 2017. It is starting to get pretty close to four years ago since the statutory review was implemented. These eight recommendations, as I understand it, deal with the intersection between Child Protection and Family Court proceedings. The eight in question run from recommendations 27 through to 34. If I understand the response correctly, these things have been deferred. To what exactly have they been deferred? Can the parliamentary secretary clarify whether they have been deferred to someone else to undertake a review of some sort?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that those eight recommendations do not come under the Minister for Child Protection's portfolio; they come under the Attorney General. That is why it is appropriate for them to be deferred under the acts that I mentioned.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The parliamentary secretary will appreciate that I have a keen interest in both portfolios. I absolutely acknowledge that the parliamentary secretary is here representing the Minister for Child Protection and cannot assist either me or the chamber on matters under the Attorney General’s portfolio. This is not a question; it is a statement to the deputy chair. I note that this is the statutory review of the Children and Community Services Act 2004. This bill, which we have been waiting a long time for, the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2021, is not the first iteration that the Parliament of Western Australia has seen; in fact, it is the second iteration. We have also seen the 2019 version.

Correct me if I am wrong, parliamentary secretary, but we have now found out that 70 recommendations were made almost four years ago by the Department of Communities, which is what it would have been called at the time; I have the review in front of me. The department undertook that statutory review, as required by the law of Western Australia, and part of that review manifested in some 70 recommendations. Here we are nearly four years later and eight of the recommendations fall under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General. The government’s position, at least at a general level, is that those matters have been deferred. Clearly, this matter needs to be taken up in a different forum. Having eight substantive recommendations dealing with the intersection between Child Protection and Family Court proceedings sitting in abeyance un-actioned by the Attorney General of Western Australia and his department is unacceptable. Here we have the child protection department, or at least the Child Protection division under the mega-amalgamation of the Department of Communities, seeking to progress at least 40 out of the 70 recommendations. However, the Attorney General and the Department of Justice, seemingly—unless someone from the government can correct the record—has done nothing about these other eight recommendations. They are no small recommendations. For example, recommendation 32 is that a protection order for special guardianship be made by the Children’s Court and, when that happens, it should automatically be registered in the Family Court. Is that the case in Western Australia? Certainly the Department of Communities felt it was necessary to highlight it as a recommendation nearly four years ago. Is that the case now? I flag to government members that I accept we cannot deal with those eight recommendations here. We know, for the record, that they are not being implemented by this bill, but these are matters that the government needs to be accountable for. We simply cannot have, yet again, a silo effect in government in which Child Protection has progressed 40 recommendations and seemingly has not communicated with the Department of Justice or the Attorney General and said, “By the way, while we are progressing these 40 recommendations, you should be moving in earnest with respect to the other eight recommendations.” It appears that that has not occurred.

As I said earlier, the parliamentary secretary kindly advised the chamber that 70 recommendations came from the November 2017 review, 40 of which will be implemented by the bill and eight of which we cannot deal with today because they are clearly matters for the Attorney General. What is happening with the balance of those recommendations? There are another 22 statutory review recommendations. According to my notes, they are recommendations 1–5, 17, 19–24, 35, 53, 54, 59, 63 and 66–69. Is there an update on those 22 statutory recommendations? I appreciate that they might cover a broad remit. Could something be tabled to explain what is happening with those 22 recommendations?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: If it is helpful, I can table a list of the non-legislative recommendations and where they are at.

[See paper [571](#).]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Thank you, parliamentary secretary, for providing that information to the house. While it is being provided, I might move on to the third of the four themes concerning clause 1—that is, dealing with the differences between the 2019 and 2021 Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2021. The 2019 bill had a history of its passage through the Western Australian Parliament. The draft that was before the Legislative Assembly was passed in full. It came to this place and was then referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. We did not have a further debate after the legislation committee had reported but I think at least seven supplementary notice papers were issued in the last Parliament for the 2019 bill. On my count, some 45 amendments were proposed by the government, the opposition or the crossbench in the last Parliament. To what extent does this bill implement those 45 amendments?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that each of the committee’s legislative recommendations, bar one, was accepted. I am not sure that we have the information on all the other amendments the member asked about.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: When I look at supplementary notice paper 157, issue 7, from the last Parliament, I see a number of recommendations, some in my name, some in the committee’s name, some in Hon Alison Xamon’s name and some in the name of the Leader of the House, who, at the time, was representing the Minister for Child Protection. I am looking for clarification of which of those 45 amendments will be implemented by this bill. The parliamentary secretary has indicated that all the committee’s proposed amendments, bar one, will be implemented by this bill. What is the situation with the government amendments of the last Parliament? Will they all be implemented by this bill?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that all the government amendments were accepted, as was the amendment to clause 30 moved by Hon Alison Xamon.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: There was, for example, an amendment standing in my name to what was clause 51 of the 2019 bill that sought to insert early childhood workers. There was also an amendment in my name seeking to insert out-of-home-care workers and out-of-home-care service providers. Are those amendments taken up by this bill?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that they were accepted in principle but the bill reflects the government amendments, using different definitions.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: In the last Parliament, an amendment was moved by Hon Charles Smith. What is the situation with that amendment?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: We did not accept that.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I do not mind if we have that discussion now or whether the parliamentary secretary thinks it is better at another clause that she can identify. Is it the parliamentary secretary's preference that we deal with it in when we get to that clause?

Hon Samantha Rowe: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That is fine. With respect to the amendments compared with those in the 2019 bill, the parliamentary secretary indicated that the amendment by Hon Alison Xamon to clause 30, for example, had been accepted. This may assist us with the passage of the bill when we get to further clauses, because from what I gather, the clause numbers are not the same. It is additionally complicated by the fact that the 2021 version of the bill is not the same as the one from the other place. What was the trigger for any amendments from the other place that have now found themselves in bill 20–2 in this chamber?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am sorry; would the honourable member mind repeating that question?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: This is the easiest way to understand it. The bill before us is bill 20–2, which is an indication that the bill has been amended in the other place. Above the long title, under “Legislative Assembly”, it says “As amended during consideration in detail”. The other place has moved some amendments, as it is quite entitled to do. I am just asking what was the genesis of those amendments and what are the amendments that now see us dealing with this 76-clause bill. It may also assist us in understanding the numbering when we are looking at things like the amendment made by Hon Alison Xamon to clause 30 in the last Parliament. Are we talking about clause 30 in this bill or has there been some renumbering? I just want some indication of what amendments were passed by the other place.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the amendment moved and passed in the other place was around commencement provisions. I am also advised that that has not impacted on the numbering, so clause 30 is still clause 30.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Is the commencement provision in clause 2 or in some other clause in the bill?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it amended clause 38 and it created a new clause 39.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Let me get this right; there is a new clause 39 that was not here beforehand. The parliamentary secretary indicated earlier that the amendment made by Hon Alison Xamon to clause 30 is one and the same as clause 30 that is before us; nevertheless, everything from clause 39 onwards is a different number from that in the last Parliament.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Yes, that is right.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I will just put a little—how would I describe it?—bookmark on clause 39; I might come back to the explanation of why the Assembly felt the need to move that amendment.

Before I go to the final topic, which is the issue of consultation, earlier this evening the parliamentary secretary kindly tabled a document titled “Non-legislative recommendations”. The context of this document is that 70 recommendations were made by the statutory review almost four years ago. Forty of the recommendations are being implemented by this bill. Eight of the recommendations should be being dealt with by the Attorney General, but we do not know what is happening with those eight recommendations; they need to be followed up in another forum. The other 22 recommendations are not being implemented by this bill. The parliamentary secretary has kindly provided us with a document that indicates that seven of them have been completed. That of itself is not only encouraging, but also self-explanatory. For example, recommendation 67 reads —

The benefits of undertaking a 24-month pilot in the Children’s Court of a specialist list for protection matters involving Aboriginal families should be explored ...

It goes on to refer to matters being piloted in Victoria. The government is saying that that has been completed, and that is one of seven non-legislative recommendations that the government says have been completed. The list that was provided earlier indicates that five are progressing and two are ongoing. The distinction between the five progressing and the two ongoing is not immediately apparent. Can the parliamentary secretary clarify what is intended as the difference?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the two that are ongoing will forever be ongoing and continuing. That is the difference. Five have already progressed and two have progressed as well, but they will continue.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Three are said to be on hold. Why are they on hold?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that we might need to get back to the honourable member with some information about those three that are on hold.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Could the parliamentary secretary please let us know why recommendations 1, 2(a) and 4 are on hold? They deal with Aboriginal representation on cross-sector panels, a cross-sector carer framework and community sector compliance with carer assessment standards in regulation 4. That would be greatly appreciated. Again, it is curious language. It is a little bit like the language of five are progressing and two are ongoing, although the parliamentary secretary has kindly explained the difference there; five are progressing but have a finite end, whereas two will be indefinitely on the go. Three are on hold and the parliamentary secretary indicated that the government will give a response to us at a later stage, but at the bottom of the page it states that a number of matters are said to be deferred. Again, the distinction between something being deferred and something being on hold is not immediately apparent. Can the parliamentary secretary clarify that for us?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that recommendation 23 is progressing outside this bill, recommendation 64 requires further consultation and recommendation 66 is connected to the review of the Children's Court of Western Australia Act.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: There are four dot points at the bottom of the page. One is recommendation 66, which talks about the review of magistrates' decisions in the Children's Court. Underneath that is a final dot point that talks about the eight recommendations under term of reference 5. It says that those things are deferred to a review of the Children's Court of Western Australia Act and the Young Offenders Act 1994. Is the parliamentary secretary saying that that should read nine recommendations and that one of them should be recommendation 66?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the eight recommendations listed at the fourth dot point fall under term of reference 5, and that is why recommendation 66 stands alone.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: It mentions that recommendation 64 was removed from the bill in the other place in 2019. Why was that the case?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it was because further consultation was required around that.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The self-evident question that follows from that is that we are now in 2021, some two years later, so what consultation has occurred on recommendation 64?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that a number of stakeholders raised concerns and so consultation has to occur with them and with the Children's Court.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I understand that, parliamentary secretary. I am just saying that I understand a decision was made in 2019 to remove provisions dealing with recommendation 64 from the bill. The provisions were removed because consultation needs to be undertaken. I am simply asking what consultation has happened over the last two years.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: It was taken out only last year.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The reference to provisions being removed from the bill in the Assembly in 2019 in this document is a reference to the 2019 bill and does not actually mean the provisions were removed in 2019, but in 2020. The government's position is that it has been incredibly busy over the last 12 months and so there has been no consultation on recommendation 64; is that right?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: As I understand it, yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: We might take that up a little later. Maybe a heads up to those involved to get ready for estimates, when we can have a discussion around what has been happening in the department over the last 12 months on recommendation 64, but let us move ahead. With respect to the general concept of consultation, was the Commissioner for Children and Young People consulted about the 2021 bill?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the commissioner was supportive of the 2019 bill, but I am unsure about the one before us.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Is the lack of certainty about the Commissioner for Children and Young People's position on the 2021 bill because the information is not readily available or because he has not been spoken to about this bill?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: It is because the information is not readily available.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Was the commissioner definitely consulted on the 2021 bill?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the commissioner is regularly updated through interagency meetings and consultation.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: These regular updates happen frequently or semi-frequently but, at one of these updates, I am seeking confirmation of whether the Commissioner for Children and Young People was advised of the existence of the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2021. The Commissioner for Children and Young People either knows that this bill exists and has been asked for his view on it or not. I absolutely accept that the parliamentary

secretary has already indicated to the house that the information that is not available to us at this point, which I do not necessarily need, is the commissioner's response. That information is not readily available this evening. Although that might be regrettable, that is the situation. I want to know whether he has been consulted or spoken to about this bill. He clearly has been about the 2019 bill and has given it broad support but what about the 2021 bill? The bill before us is quite different from the 2019 bill.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that his office was consulted. He sent someone from his office to the briefing on the 2021 bill.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Regarding consultation more broadly, is there a convenient list of individuals who have been specifically consulted on the 2021 bill? Obviously, we now know that the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People was. Is there a convenient list of who else was consulted?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised no.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The context is that, as I recall, the explanation from the government in the fortieth Parliament on the groups of mandatory reporters that would be included certainly did not satisfy the opposition, hence the amendments that were on the supplementary notice paper and the work done by the Standing Committee on Legislation. The primary explanation provided by the government at the time was that it was not ready to bring in all five groups of mandatory reporters because further consultation was required. In the end, the record reflects that the supplementary notice paper included amendments from the government, which would then incorporate all the mandatory reporters that are now found in this report. An interesting provision was prepared by Parliamentary Counsel. It would allow for different mandatory reporting groups to commence at different times, so they would not necessarily all become mandatory reporters at the same time. The justification provided by the government at the time was that it would allow further consultation with those groups to take place. Between the 2019 version and the bill that is before us now, has there been any consultation with those mandatory reporting groups that are now being included? If there has been, what can the parliamentary secretary tell us about the nature of those consultations?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that obviously there has been ongoing consultation, and that online training is being trialled at the moment with departmental staff. The next category will be for ministers of religion. We will then start trialling training for what we are calling stage 2, which will be the remainder of the mandatory reporter groups. I also bring to the member's attention that I do believe he was given a document that listed all the consultations and the date and where it is at.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: When the parliamentary secretary says that there has been online training with departmental staff, that is not an indication that that is the only consultation that has taken place between the 2019 bill and the 2021 bill; the full list of consultation is the document that the parliamentary secretary has referred to. I am aware, obviously, of that document, but for the benefit of the chamber can that document be tabled, number one; and, secondly, is it up to date?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I might suggest that it is appropriate that we provide the member with an up-to-date version at a later stage.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That is fine. I thank the parliamentary secretary for that indulgence. With regard to this round of consultation that has occurred since the 2019 bill, has any of the feedback received by the government been negative towards any of the provisions in the bill; and, if so, which are the clauses that have caused any consternation or lack of agreement?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that there was overwhelming support, particularly in relation to mandatory reporting. However, concerns were raised around the confessional seal, and that relates to clause 54 of the bill.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: As the parliamentary secretary would be aware, in the last Parliament the 2019 bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation, and a number of people were consulted on the bill. The parliamentary secretary will see that a number of public hearings were also held. Some 606 submissions were received by the inquiry. I think any member who has had a bit of experience on a parliamentary inquiry would fairly say that 606 is a very large number of submissions to receive for an inquiry, but such was the strength of feeling within the community on this bill. The parliamentary secretary has quite rightly identified some elements of concern within an element of the community with regard to the confessional seal. I note that public hearings were held with the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, Noongar Family Safety and Wellbeing Council, Child and Family Alliance WA, and the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia. Public hearings were also held on 6 August 2020 with the Western Australian Council of Social Service; Wanslea; YACWA, otherwise known as Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia; and Survivors' Support Network in Western Australia. Have any of those organisations reached out to government and expressed concerns about the 2021 bill? I think in the context it is clear that they had concerns about the 2019 bill. It would be good to be satisfied that they no longer hold any concerns if that is the case.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that one of the main issues was that the Aboriginal stakeholders were unhappy that the 2021 bill does not contain Aboriginal family-led decision making. That was the main area of contention.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I agree that that is what happened in 2019. My question is: have they since reached out and expressed any concerns about the 2021 bill or have their concerns been satisfied? I suppose as a bit of an analogy, the parliamentary secretary would know that from time to time, members here will move a motion for disallowance, and, when they withdraw it, they will indicate that their concerns have been satisfied. I want clarification that the concerns of those stakeholders have now been clarified and they are no longer concerned about the issue that they had with the 2019 bill.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that there were a number of recommendations from the committee that did make them happy, but there still remains an issue that they are unhappy with.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Is it fair to say that those stakeholders are not completely satisfied but that they are more satisfied than they were with the 2019 bill?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: This is my last question on clause 1 and the general issue of consultation. The statutory review consulted and involved a number of what I call “experts in the field”. The review committee membership is set out at page 1. A number of the individuals mentioned here strike me as experts in the field. For example, general counsel Tara Gupta is mentioned. I am interested to know whether any of the individuals who were part of the statutory review process were consulted on the 2021 bill? The general context of this question is that I find—this happens across government, whoever is in government; it does not matter whether it is Labor or Liberal—when we undertake statutory reviews and invest the time of these experts, who then produce these significant reports with a number of recommendations, at the end of the day it is up to the government whether it wants to implement some or all of the recommendations. But I question how frequently we go back to those individuals to check to see whether they are satisfied that the work we are putting forward—the reforms—meet their expectations given that they are the group of experts who came up with the recommendations at first instance. To what extent were the people who were part of the review membership or the legal working group membership consulted on the 2021 bill?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the majority of the review committee membership were consulted and advised on the 2021 bill, and if not the person who is listed, it was maybe someone below in the organisation.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2: Commencement —

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The parliamentary secretary will see that clause 2 is different from that in the 2019 bill. For what reason did the government decide to amend clause 2?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that new clause 2(b), which states that proposed section 75 “on the day on which section 3 comes into operation”, links the next review of the act to the day on which the bill will come into effect.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That begs the question about clause 3. Clause 3 is the same as any provision in any bill and simply indicates that we are amending the Children and Community Services Act 2004. When does the government intend that to commence?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it will commence when the majority of the act is brought into effect.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: We will get to that in a minute, but this is the second week in a row that we have been dealing with some peculiar drafting. Why do we say that section 75 is going to commence on the day on which section 3 comes into operation? Why not just have section 75 come into operation on the date that section 75 comes into operation; in other words, the day that has been fixed for proclamation? I cannot understand the connection between section 75 and proposed section 3.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it makes more sense for the next statutory review to commence once the majority of the amendments come into effect.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I do not disagree with that, but I do not see the connection between section 75 and section 3. It is not apparent to me at all why clause 2(b) would be necessary. Where it would be useful is if it said, for example, it will commence on the day after the day of royal assent. We see that from time to time. Clauses 1 and 2 would commence on the day of royal consent. Clause 75 would commence on the day after royal assent. I can understand the purpose of that, but the purpose of linking clause 75 to an innocuous clause like clause 3, after which we would need to read clause 2(c) to see that it would commence “on a day fixed by proclamation, and different days may be fixed for different provisions.” I appreciate that those assisting the parliamentary secretary are not the drafters of the bill, but it is curious and it is perplexing as to why there would be such a provision. In any event, let us park that to one side as a curiosity of drafting. The main point is: when does the government intend to commence the substantive provisions?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it is anticipated most of the amendments will commence operation six months after royal assent.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: As I understand it, this bill intends to bring in at least five new groups of mandatory reporters. Those provisions are found, I think, in and around clause 51. Clause 51 seeks to amend section 124A. Is it the intention that the commencement date for all those groups will be the same?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised no; they will be phased in.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Will any of those groups commence at the six-month mark with the substantive provisions?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that six months after the other provisions in the bill are proclaimed to commence, the first reporter group will be the minister of religion. That is six months after the commencement.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: So 12 months altogether.

Hon Samantha Rowe: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: We keep talking about five groups of mandatory reporters, but looking at clause 52, we could easily refer to a larger number than five because some of them, I guess as a result of the work of the royal commission, have been grouped together, but this bill then separates them. For example, clause 51(9) refers to ministers of religion and the parliamentary secretary indicated that that provision is intended to be proclaimed 12 months after the passage of this bill; that is, it will take six months for the main operative provisions to come into effect and then a further six months until the provision for ministers of religion is proclaimed. Clause 51(10) talks about an assessor. In what period of time is it intended that the assessors will become mandatory reporters?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it will be one and a half years after the bill's commencement.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The ministers of religion are at the 12-month mark and the assessors are at the 18-month mark. What about the departmental officers?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Departmental officers and out-of-home care workers are the same—one and a half years after the bill's commencement.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: We have this group of three: the assessors, the departmental workers and the out-of-home care workers. They will all commence at the 18-month mark. What is an example of an assessor? A departmental worker is self-explanatory and so is an out-of-home care worker, but what is an assessor?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that “assessor” is defined under section 125A of the Children and Community Services Act. They visit and inspect residential-care and secure-care facilities.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Clause 2 deals with the commencement dates. Members will be aware that clause 2(c) allows the government, at a time of its choosing, to allow for all these provisions to commence on a date of proclamation and that different days may be fixed for different provisions. I have spent time looking at the intersection of clauses 2 and 52 because clause 2 allows the government to bring in these different provisions at either the six, 12 or 18-month mark. I am keen to know what the government's intention is for the commencement of the mandatory reporting provisions for early childhood workers.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that for an early childhood worker it will be two and a half years after the bill's commencement.

The DEPUTY CHAIR (Hon Steve Martin): I thank you for that explanation on this broad-ranging discussion on clause 2.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Thank you, deputy chair, I could sense what was coming.

To complete the picture, can the parliamentary secretary indicate to us what the intention is for psychologists, school counsellors and youth justice workers?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: For school counsellors and registered psychologists, it is two years after the bill's commencement. For youth justice workers, it is three years after the bill's commencement.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: This is a statement, not a question on clause 2, deputy chair. This is unacceptable behaviour by the government. Keep in mind that last week was National Child Protection Week. In 2019, a bill was brought into the fortieth Parliament in substantially similar terms to the bill that is before us. The main difference between the 2019 bill and the 2021 bill is that the government at the time, also the McGowan government, albeit under a different iteration but with the same minister responsible for child protection, was adamant that it would bring in only one of the five groups of mandatory reporters. We, the opposition, said that was not good enough and that the government needed to bring in all five groups in accordance with the recommendations of the royal commission. The government then agreed that the matter would be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. The Standing Committee on Legislation unanimously said to bring in all five groups. The government, to its credit, agreed to that at the end of the fortieth Parliament. A supplementary notice paper contained amendments that all those groups would be brought in. However, the bill was never brought on for debate. We could have brought in those five groups at the end of the fortieth Parliament. But the thing is we now find out that there would have been absolutely no point doing so because, according to the government, there are groups that will not be brought in for three years. According to the McGowan government, it will take it three years to bring in—correct me if I am wrong, parliamentary secretary—I think the parliamentary secretary said two years for school counsellors and psychologists were two years.

Hon Samantha Rowe: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: But youth justice workers will be three years. I think they are the ones at the three-year mark.

Hon Samantha Rowe: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Let us use youth justice workers because they are at the furthest end of the time spectrum. It will take three years, according to the McGowan government, before youth justice workers become mandatory reporters—three years! The statutory review that is the genesis of this Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2021 is nearly four years old. Now the government wants us to wait another three years before youth justice workers become mandatory reporters. That was never the intention of the opposition in the last Parliament or of the Standing Committee on Legislation. We were all of the view that this needed to be done. Get on with it, expedite things. I had a lot of sympathy for the minister's advocacy in the last Parliament who said this needed to be done in a phased approach. I do not have a problem with a phased approach. I find remarkable the priorities for who will be first. How the government's own departmental workers are not first on the list beggars belief, but that is a decision of the government. According to the government they can wait 18 months—but three years for youth justice workers? Why will it take three years before youth justice workers need to become mandatory reporters? Why will it take two years before school counsellors and psychologists need to become mandatory reporters? Why? Do more resources need to be provided for the department for the consultation process? I understand that the government was saying in the fortieth Parliament that we need to consult with these groups. Here I am asking what consultation has been undertaken in the last 12 months and, evidently, it is not much. Whatever particular consultation has been done in the last 12 months is clearly completely inadequate to make youth justice workers mandatory reporters. The unanimous view, as I understand it, of all members was that all five groups recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse should become mandatory reporters. It was not the view of the government in the fortieth Parliament. It said no; the only group that needed to be put in as a priority were ministers of religion. It was due only to the pressure from the opposition at the time that the government eventually brought in the other four groups. Here we are now; we have the bill before us and all five groups are underway. Members should ask themselves: Of those five groups, which group is most likely to come into contact with children at risk? Do we think the ministers of religion are most likely to come into contact with children at risk or do we think that it is the youth justice workers? But for inexplicable reasons, the youth justice workers will not become mandatory reporters for three years, according to the McGowan government. What about school counsellors? Do we think school counsellors or psychologists might have some interaction with children at risk? Might they have more contact than ministers of religion? According to the McGowan government, not to the point that they need to be expedited; they can afford to wait two years. According to the McGowan government we can afford to wait two and a half years before early childhood workers become mandatory reporters. What is going on? Who is responsible for the consultation process? I cannot believe that after all this time and all the work done by the opposition on a bipartisan basis, with the unanimous recommendations of the Standing Committee on Legislation, and the time that has elapsed in the meantime, we are being told that it will take three years before youth justice workers will become mandatory reporters.

That is the record of the McGowan government. This is the priority when it comes to child protection—people like youth justice workers who frequently come into contact with children at risk can afford to wait three years! However, ministers of religion, who would most infrequently come into contact with children at risk, will become the mandatory reporters of the highest priority. These are the wrong priorities. Get one thing straight. The opposition is of the view that all those groups should become mandatory reporters. We have said that repeatedly in the fortieth Parliament and the forty-first Parliament, so let there not be any misunderstanding out there that we are suggesting otherwise. All five groups should become mandatory reporters but the priority should be right. The priority according to the government is that youth justice workers can wait three years. That is unacceptable. If there needs to be more resources, we know that the McGowan government is sitting on rivers of gold at the moment and it can certainly afford to pay a few people to expedite their consultation process. That would be an inexpensive exercise and there is no good reason this should be delayed for three years.

That said, I have one final question on clause 2 before we move on, and that is with regard to the provisions for Aboriginal representative organisations. At what time do we expect that the clauses concerning Aboriginal representative organisations will come into effect? Is that part of the group of provisions the parliamentary secretary indicated would come into effect within approximately six months?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the provisions for Aboriginal representative organisations will come into effect once AROs are ready to be implemented statewide. There is no date. The provisions are clause 15, proposed section 22A; clause 32, proposed section 81; clause 39, proposed section 89C and clause 40, proposed section 90(2A).

Hon NICK GOIRAN: There is a large group of clauses in this 76-clause bill that will commence approximately six months after the bill receives royal assent. Presumably, that is so the government can prepare regulations and be ready for these things in the normal course. Provisions will then come into effect that affect ministers of religion at the 12-month mark—these are all approximate times—18 months for assessors, departmental workers and out-of-home-care workers, two years for school counsellors and psychologists, two and a half years for early childhood workers and three years for youth justice workers. Is the parliamentary secretary saying there is another group of clauses in this 76-clause bill that does not have a specified time frame to come into effect? If that is the case, how many clauses have this indefinite status?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the department has consulted with Aboriginal people to inform early thinking about implementation of Aboriginal representative organisations and the department is in the process of finalising the project scope to pilot the AROs, including decisions about budget requirements, locations of the pilot and the approach to monitoring and evaluation. The pilot sites are proposed to commence in the first quarter of 2022 and will run for a 12-month period. The minister is going to make further announcements about AROs in the near future. The pilot will inform place-based operational ARO models, including the criteria for the approval of AROs to be placed in the regulations.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: We have a situation in which it is anticipated that in the first quarter of next year, this pilot will be underway, and the pilot is expected to take 12 months. If I understand the parliamentary secretary correctly, she is saying that presumably after some evaluation, those particular clauses, including clause 15, will be made operational and it is not appropriate to make them operational until this pilot work has been undertaken.

Hon Samantha Rowe: Yes; correct.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That being the case, that is understandable. My question, though, remains. With regard to this 76-clause bill, I want to be clear that no other elements will be left hanging out there with this indefinite status. I can understand why the AROs have what I describe—in fairness, this is not the government’s language—as this indefinite status. I understand that, but are there any other elements of the bill that can be categorised in the same way or is everything else either in one of the mandatory reporting groups, which we know have a 12-month to three-year time frame, or in the first six months?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: There is nothing else.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3 put and passed.

Clause 4: Section 3 amended —

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Clause 4 deals with the terms in the bill. One of the terms is “care plan”. Clause 4 says —
care plan has the meaning given in section 89(2);

Should that read “section 89(3A)”?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: It is meant to be “section 89(2)”.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: If we leave it as it is at the moment, one of the definitions in clause 4(2) of the bill is of the term “care plan”, which says that it has the meaning given in proposed section 89(2). Proposed section 89(2), which is referred to in clause 37(2) of the bill, says that a plan is a care plan, which does not define anything. The subclause immediately below that, which is clause 37(3), looks to insert proposed section 89(3), which defines a care plan. It says —

A care plan for a child must —

- (a) be in writing; and
- (b) identify the needs of the child; and
- (c) outline steps or measures to be taken to address the needs of the child; and
- (d) for an Aboriginal child, Torres Strait Islander child or child of a culturally or linguistically diverse background — incorporate a cultural support plan for the child; and
- (e) for a child who has reached 15 years of age (subject to subsection (3F)) — incorporate a leaving care plan for the child; and
- (f) record decisions made by the CEO about the care of the child, including —
 - (i) decisions about a placement arrangement for the child; and
 - (ii) decisions about contact between the child and a parent, sibling, other member of the child’s family or other person who is significant in the child’s life; and
 - (iii) secure care decisions;
 and
- (g) contain a summary of —
 - (i) how the principle set out in section 10 has been applied in connection with the decisions recorded in the plan; and
 - (ii) the wishes and views expressed by the child about the decisions recorded in the plan.

On a plain reading, proposed subsection (3A) is very comprehensive about what a care plan is, whereas proposed section 89(2) tells us nothing.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it is a drafting issue and that that is just the way parliamentary counsel drafts it.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I just make this other observation and perhaps it can be passed on to parliamentary counsel: we have just dealt with the issue of a care plan, but there is also a concept known as a provisional care plan, which clause 4(2) says has the meaning given in proposed section 39(2). The amendment to proposed section 39(2), which is found in clause 21 of the bill, says —

The CEO must prepare and implement a plan (a *provisional care plan*) for a child

It provides no definition whatsoever of a provisional care plan. It is simply a direction as a statement of law that the CEO must prepare a thing—in this case, a plan that is referred to as a provisional care plan. But to suggest that that somehow defines a provisional care plan is, respectfully, nonsensical. Clause 21(3) looks to insert proposed section 39(2B). It sets out in substantial detail what a provisional care plan is. I think that is what the definition should be, but I accept that, for the same reasons the parliamentary secretary provided earlier, the response will be that that is the way parliamentary counsel decided to do it. If someone could pass on that feedback to them, I would be much obliged.

I move to the definition of “family”, which is also found in clause 4. Clause 4(2) seeks to insert a number of definitions into the original act. They are listed in alphabetical order. One definition is for the term “family”. Can the government explain why no provision has been made to have a broader definition of “family” for children of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds similar to that set out in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it is a recommendation of the review to have references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I accept that is why that particular definition has been included. My question is why not then include a definition for children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that this has been the focus because of the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: There had been a lot of modelling, and we will get to that in a moment when look at the definition of “community” in other jurisdictions, including, for example, in Victoria. Do other Australian jurisdictions specifically incorporate a term or definition for “family” that addresses the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: We do not have that information.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I take the parliamentary secretary to the definition of “parent” set out in clause 4(2). There is a curious phrase that says —

... a person who would have been a parent of the child if the order had not been made;

What is intended to be captured by that phrase?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: It relates to a birth parent or another person who has responsibility for the child before the order is made, because, once the order is made, the CEO has parental responsibility.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The definition of “parent” is in two parts—parts (a) and (b). Is the group of people intended to be captured at (b)—this notion of “a person who would have been apparent of the child if the order had not been made”—different from the group of people that will be captured at (a)? I can see that at (a) we are talking about a person who at law has responsibility. It is in the present tense; they currently have that responsibility. It seems potentially that (b) looks to capture the same group of people who had that responsibility. It is in the past tense. Is that really the distinction between the two or are we trying to capture a different group of people altogether?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Not necessarily. It depends on the context of the particular provision.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: It may be helpful to provide some examples of the type of circumstance in which this definition of “parent” under (b) would apply? In the ordinary sense, a person is a parent. At any given time, they were parent. It is not very clear what is intended to be meant by this concept under (b). Can the parliamentary secretary provide some examples of how that will apply? Is this concept of parent readily used at the moment and we are simply enshrining something that is already common practice or commonly interpreted as such and there are circumstances, or cases, that cover this type of situation? Can the parliamentary secretary clarify that?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that we can provide the member with examples, but not right now.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: We will put that to one side, take it on notice, and see if we can get to it at a later stage. To round off the issue of the term “parent”, has this definition been modelled on a provision either in another statute in Western Australia or another jurisdiction?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: It is already in the act.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The exact words that are here for the definition of “parent” in paragraphs (a) and (b) are already in the existing act but, presumably, the reason it will now find its way into section 3 of the act is that it has been moved from some other provision. It is now being put specifically into the front end of the act, which happens from time to time. That being the case, there must be some examples in which paragraph (b) has been applied. I appreciate that the government will provide that information in due course. I thank the parliamentary secretary for that clarification.

I now move to the definition of “remote communication”. Section 120(1) will be deleted via clause 50. Why will the provision about a telephone typewriter be deleted and not included in the definition of remote communication?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised it was a drafting action.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I think it is more than that. I said clause 50 but since then the bill has been amended, as we discussed earlier, so it is actually in clause 51. Clause 51, on page 34, lines 29 and 30, reads “Delete section 120(1).” Unless we go to the primary act to see what we are deleting, we have no idea what section 120(1) is. Clause 51 will delete the concept of a telephone typewriter. When this was drawn to my attention, I had to ask my staff what on earth was a telephone typewriter. The answer, which might interest the parliamentary secretary, is that according to my notes, a telephone typewriter is a telecommunication device that enables people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired to use the telephone system. It is a substantive piece of equipment that helps a proportion of individuals in Western Australia. The deletion of that clause is snuck in here. What was the genesis for deciding that this particular type of telecommunication device should be deleted and no longer included in the definitions?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: We might have to get back to the honourable member on that one.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Fair enough. Maybe the answer to this question is the same. I am interested to know why videoconferencing has not been included in the definition of “remote communication”, which is found on page 4, lines 16 to 18.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Does the member mind repeating the question?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Clause 4(2) seeks to insert a number of definitions, one of which is “remote communication”. Page 4, line 16 reads —

remote communication means any way of communicating at a distance including by telephone, fax, email and radio;

Why is videoconferencing not included?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it is an inclusive definition so it captures videoconferencing, and it could capture the telephone typewriter.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Notwithstanding that, could the parliamentary secretary still take that issue on notice with parliamentary counsel to clarify it? I understand what the parliamentary secretary is saying about videoconferencing. In essence, she is saying that it is not included in the act at the moment but it is an inclusive definition so there is no reason it cannot be included. It is different for the telephone typewriter because we are specifically deleting reference to it. I want some confirmation that we are not creating any form of injustice for the speech impaired or hard of hearing. That can be taken up at another time.

When we move to the definition of “community”, interestingly, in the 2019 version of the bill, there was no definition of “community” as I understand it. It has now been included in this bill. That is to be commended because this has its history in recommendation 7 of the statutory review. The parliamentary secretary will recall that I referred to the statutory review earlier in the debate. Recommendation 7 ends by stating —

Consideration should be given to defining a child’s community based on section 176 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic).

That does not appear to have been done, so obviously there has been an intention to deviate from what the statutory review has recommended with on the Victorian model. Can the parliamentary secretary provide an explanation for this deviation?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that recommendation 7 was considered but, through consultation, there was a preference not to define it in the same manner.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Section 176 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 of Victoria, as recommended by recommendation 7 of the statutory review, uses this definition with respect to a child’s Aboriginal community. Subsection 5 states that a child’s Aboriginal community is —

- (a) the Aboriginal community to which the child has a sense of belonging, if this can be ascertained by the Secretary; or
- (b) if paragraph (a) does not apply, the Aboriginal community in which the child has primarily lived; or
- (c) if paragraphs (a) and (b) do not apply, the Aboriginal community of the child’s parent or grandparent.

The parliamentary secretary indicated that some consultation took place that determined that we would not use that definition but would go with the words in the bill before us. For what reasons was it determined that the Victorian provision would not be satisfactory, given what we discussed earlier, namely that the group of experts had been consulted and had specifically made recommendation 7 in the statutory review?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that we did not want it to be too prescriptive, but also that we wanted to be able to have some flexibility so that it could be defined in policy and through consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The parliamentary secretary will recall that there was discussion earlier about consultation that was undertaken by the Standing Committee on Legislation, and that a number of Aboriginal organisations or stakeholders were consulted or provided submissions. Have any of them fed into this definition of “community” that has now found its way into clause 4?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it is in relation to a drafting issue. The 2021 definition is a new definition, and because it relates to drafting issues, there was therefore no need to consult on the 2021 definition. Whenever the child’s “community” is referred to in respect of an Aboriginal child, it refers to the child’s Aboriginal community. This accords with the intended meaning of that term wherever it is used in the act. It addresses an inconsistency with section 12, which was amended under the 2019 bill.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: This is confusing me a bit. I had understood that the genesis of this is recommendation 7 of the statutory review. Recommendation 7 of the statutory review states that consideration should be given to defining a child’s community based on section 176 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 of Victoria. We then had a discussion to say, yes, we have decided not to use that exact form of words because of consultation that has been undertaken. I accept that. My question was simply: were the Aboriginal stakeholders who had participated in the Standing Committee on Legislation inquiry part of that consultation, and did they then agree with this particular definition of “community”? I now feel as though I am getting a different response to a different issue. It would be helpful if the parliamentary secretary could clarify exactly who was consulted about this definition of “community”, which I think we agree differs from the Victorian definition.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the definition is not in relation to recommendation 7. That does not form part of the definition for the 2021 bill.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I know that time is passing, and maybe this can be considered overnight. Can I just say that I know that; that is kind of where I started at the beginning. Recommendation 7 states that consideration should be given to incorporating the Victorian definition of “community”. My question was: if we are now inserting a definition of “community”, why are we not using the Victorian model? The explanation that was provided was that, “Consultation told us not to do that, and we have gone with a different model.” I accept that. I just want to be clear about who has provided that feedback to not go with the Victorian model. Remember, the experts in the statutory review told us in recommendation 7 that we should do this, and maybe there were very good reasons, and the new group of experts, or the original experts, have now changed their mind on that. I am just seeking clarification as to why there is a difference. There could be a plausible reason for it, but at the moment it is not clear to me what that explanation is.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, on motion by Hon Samantha Rowe (parliamentary secretary).

CITY OF KALAMUNDA DOGS LOCAL LAW 2021 — DISALLOWANCE

Motion

Pursuant to standing order 67(3), the following motion by Hon Lorna Harper was moved pro forma on 23 June —

That pursuant to recommendation of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, the City of Kalamunda Dogs Local Law 2021 published in the *Government Gazette* on 16 April 2021 and tabled in the Legislative Council on 4 May 2021 under the Dog Act 1976, be and is hereby disallowed.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [9.41 pm]: I indicate that the government supports the recommendation of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation. The City of Kalamunda adopted the City of Kalamunda Dogs Local Law 2021, which was gazetted on 16 April 2021. Upon gazettal the local law stood referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation. The Legislative Council received the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation’s *City of Kalamunda Dogs Local Law 2021*.

Local governments have the power to make local laws on many subjects and that power is subject to any restriction imposed by the Parliament via the Local Government Act 1995. Section 3.12 of the act requires local governments to consult the community on any proposed draft local laws since those local laws impact on the public within the district once they are gazetted. The act considers that local governments might want to make changes to draft law during the drafting process; however, section 3.13 of the act explicitly requires that if a local government decides to make a law that is significantly different from what it initially proposed, it is to restart the lawmaking process.

The Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation found that the City of Kalamunda failed to do this, which means that its local law is potentially invalid. The significant difference between the advertised law and the adopted law identified by the committee relates to the number of dogs that can be kept at a premises within the city without a kennel licence or exemption. That can be found at section 3.2 of the gazetted local law. In the draft local law advertised for public comment, the maximum limit is four dogs; in the gazetted version, the maximum is two dogs. Based on the relevant provision of the Local Government Act, the ratepayers and stakeholders of the district should be entitled to a review and engage with the city on the provision of the draft local law. Accordingly, the government concurs with the committee's recommendations and supports the motion to disallow the City of Kalamunda Dogs Local Law.

HON JAMES HAYWARD (South West) [9.43 pm]: I indicate that the opposition supports the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation's finding. It is pretty simple. The City of Kalamunda advertised that people could have four dogs and changed it to two. We think that in order to do that the City of Kalamunda should go back to the community to get feedback and re-advertise. We support the disallowance.

Question put and passed.

STILLBIRTHS AND NEONATAL DEATHS SUPPORT SERVICE—RED NOSE DAY

Statement

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [9.44 pm]: According to Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data on stillbirths and neonatal deaths in Australia, in 2018, 2 789 babies died in the perinatal period; three-quarters were stillbirths and the remaining were neonatal deaths. The report provides information relating to those deaths, including the causes, maternal characteristics, timing and investigations. More than 30 per cent of those deaths were caused by congenital abnormality. Every day in Australia, six babies are stillborn and two die within 28 days of birth. Nearly two in five perinatal deaths occur before 22 weeks' gestation. There were 9.2 perinatal deaths per 1 000 births in 2018.

I provide members with these statistics because 21 years ago yesterday our family was one of those statistics. We lost our little angel Cooper David West on 13 September 2000, almost at full term, to a major placental abruption. That event has stayed with our family ever since and is, obviously, a major event in our lives. The worst fear of every parent is to have to say goodbye to one of their children. We said hello and goodbye to little Cooper on the same day, but we still had to organise a funeral and go through all the legal requirements of a death even though we had expected to come home from hospital—in our case, King Edward Memorial Hospital—with a happy and healthy baby to the joy of life that is yours to behold.

Twenty-one years is a long time, but to us it feels as though that event could have occurred yesterday or it could have occurred a lifetime ago. I remember very, very clearly the events of that day. We are very fortunate because we almost lost Cooper's mother, Lesley, my wife, on that day. She was in dire need of the support of King Edward hospital. She lost a lot of blood in those very traumatic events and to this day still carries the emotional scars of that day.

I have said before in this house that it is an area of medicine in which we are not really improving as much as we are in others. The statistics have continued to remain relatively stable since 1999. Although it is terribly unfortunate—Western Australia is doing as well or better than the national average in a very disparate and remote state, which is a credit to us—there is always more that we can do in this area.

Today will be another family's day to grieve and imagine what might have been and to reflect on how their lives could have dramatically changed should they not have been afflicted by the loss of an infant or neonatal baby. It is a day that families mourn with others who have been through a similar experience. Tomorrow, it will affect another family. It happens every day. As I said, about 2 000 stillborn and neonatal babies die every year. I know there are a lot of good causes, and I acknowledge the great work of the Stillbirths and Neonatal Deaths Support Service and Red Nose that provide grief and loss support, and much-needed funding for research. I am hopeful that in the future there will be a reduction in the number of families who are torn apart and go through the emotional heartache. You go through absolute heartache when you reflect every day on that sense of loss.

I like to bring this up at this time every year. While I am a member of the Legislative Council, I will keep doing it to shine a light on this very important medical research and this very important area in which we can improve more. I also acknowledge all those who work in the support network for families like ours and, of course, those families who have been afflicted. We catch up annually with groups of people who have suffered a similar experience to us. We are one of the lucky ones in that we have two healthy children who were born before Cooper, so we are able to experience the joy of that. Just imagine how you would feel if you lost your very firstborn child and the effects that that would have on you.

Members, there is always more that we can do, but please think from time to time about those who have been through the horrendous experience of losing one of their children.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENTARY SPORTS CLUB — LAWN BOWLS*Statement*

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [9.49 pm]: I wish to inform the house that on Friday of last week the Western Australian Parliamentary Sports Club locked horns with the Western Australian Police Bowling Club in what was an incredibly hard-fought battle on the green at the South Perth Bowling Club. Members may not be aware, but this is an annual event that goes back many decades.

The day started with a pleasant lunch, courtesy of the President and the Speaker, during which the Speaker, a veteran of many previous such battles, gave what started as an inspirational speech before pointing out that she played the last time the Parliamentary team won, which was well over 10 years ago, before finishing on the confidence-building note that this year she did not think we had a chance.

The competition is open to members of both houses and former members as well. I was told more than once during the course of the day that we could have done with the skills of Hon John McGrath; however, he was unavailable on the day, unfortunately.

The format is such that each side provides three teams and a prize. The prize from Parliament goes to the WA Police Force team that performs the best and the WA Police Force prize goes to the Parliament team that performs the best. The harsh reality of this is that our prize went to the police team that won by the most and the police prize went to our team that lost by the least! It was a one-sided affair, as the Speaker, with all her years of experience, had predicted.

You will be pleased to know, though, President, that your house was well represented. Hon Sophia Moermond, Hon Wilson Tucker and I headed up the three teams. I was fortunate enough to lead the winning Parliament team—that is to say, the team that lost by the least—but it was in no way at all due to my skill with the bowls. Aiding me was the former member for Kalgoorlie, who is well known to members in this place, Megan Anwyl, resplendent in her full retro bowling outfit, including a parliamentary bowling team Panama hat from before the turn of the century, and also “Woolly” and “Macca”, a couple of star ring-ins from the Gosnells Bowling Club.

Although it was hard to keep tabs on the other two games, Hon Sophia Moermond deserves a special mention for being the only member to win an end off her own bowls, with her teammates remarking that she was “high on life” after doing so. Hon Wilson Tucker apparently had a purple patch in the middle as well, leading to a discussion around whether he was simply in the zone or just in a time zone of his own!

President, it was a fantastic day. I would like to thank the South Perth Bowling Club for opening its doors to us, all the members of the Western Australian Police Bowling Club who were there, the members of the Gosnells Bowling Club, and especially Lachlan Gregory and Peter Gale for putting the event together. I very much look forward to next year.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, honourable member, and better luck next year.

FINANCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (EMERGENCY RELIEF) BILL 2021*Receipt and First Reading*

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by **Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Mental Health)**, read a first time.

Second Reading

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Mental Health) [9.52 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021 seeks to amend the Taxation Administration Act 2003 and the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000 to allow the Treasurer to declare tax or grant relief measures considered necessary to relieve the financial or economic impacts of a declared emergency. When the government announced the payroll tax relief measures for small businesses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic last year, the measures could not be administered until new legislation was passed. As a result of delivering that urgent legislation, it was identified that emergency tax relief powers, similar to those introduced in Victoria at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, would provide a flexible mechanism for the government to urgently respond to emergencies.

The amendments to the Taxation Administration Act will allow the Treasurer, in consultation with the Minister for Finance, to declare tax relief measures considered necessary to provide relief from the financial or economic impacts of a declared emergency. A tax relief measure means a waiver of tax, a reduction in a tax rate, an exemption from tax, or a deferral of the due date for lodging payroll tax returns. After a tax declaration is made, the Commissioner of State Revenue can administer the measures as part of the state’s tax laws without passing legislation. This means the commissioner’s administration and enforcement powers will apply, including information-gathering powers to investigate claims for tax relief, and statutory objection and review rights for taxpayers who disagree with how tax relief measures have been applied.

The amendments include safeguards to ensure declarations can be used only in limited circumstances. Tax relief measures will be declared only in connection with a state of emergency or an emergency situation declared under the Emergency Management Act 2005 or a public health state of emergency declared under the Public Health Act 2016. The Treasurer's declaration must specify which emergency the relief measures relate to, describe each tax relief measure and the period for which they will apply, and specify the persons to whom the measures will apply. The declaration can contain relief measures for a period that occurred before the emergency was declared or before the tax relief declaration came into effect. However, relief measures cannot be declared for an emergency more than 12 months after the emergency has ended. The measures also cannot be declared for a period longer than two years. This is on the basis that longer term relief measures should be supported by specific legislation.

A tax relief declaration is subsidiary legislation and must be published in the *Government Gazette*, and can be amended by publishing a further instrument in the *Government Gazette*. This may include changes required to a tax relief measure to facilitate its proper administration or to prevent it from being misused or improperly applied.

Corresponding amendments will be made to the First Home Owner Grant Act to allow the Treasurer to declare an increase to the grant or cap an amount to alleviate the financial or economic impacts of a declared emergency. Unlike a tax relief measure, a grant relief measure cannot apply to a retrospective period that has ended before the emergency was declared. Passing this bill quickly will ensure the government can provide further COVID-19 relief as it considers necessary, or tax or grant relief in response to any other emergencies in our state. The associated explanatory memorandum contains further details of the amendments.

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

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

[See paper [572](#).]

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 9.56 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

HEALTH — SCHOOL HEALTH NURSES — STAFF**242. Hon Donna Faragher to the minister representing the Minister for Health:**

- (1) I refer to the Department of Health's most recent workforce analysis undertaken to determine school health nurse staffing requirements needed to meet current demand in Western Australia, and I ask, when was the last workforce analysis undertaken?
- (2) How many school health nurses, by FTE, did the most recent analysis identify as being needed to meet the current demand for these services?
- (3) How many school health nurses, by FTE, does the Department currently employ?

Hon Stephen Dawson replied:

I am advised:

- (1) 2013
- (2) Child and Adolescent Health Service: 234.4 FTE
WA Country Health Service: 100.8 FTE
- (3) As at 30 June 2021
Child and Adolescent Health Service: 172.7 FTE
WA Country Health Service: 75.41 FTE

LEGAL AID — OFFICE ACCESS**243. Hon Nick Goiran to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:**

I refer to the Attorney General's statement on 10 August 2021, that there is limited access to physical Legal Aid offices in regional areas, and I ask:

- (a) what are the locations of all physical Legal Aid offices in the metropolitan area; and
- (b) what are the locations of all other physical Legal Aid offices in Western Australia?

Hon Matthew Swinbourn replied:

- (a) There is 1 physical Legal Aid Office in the metropolitan area:
32 St Georges Tce, Perth
- (b) There are 9 other physical Legal Aid Offices in Western Australia, including:
Southwest Office: 61 Victoria St, Bunbury
Great Southern Office: 43–47 Duke St, Albany
Goldfields Office: 120 Egan Street, Kalgoorlie
Midwest and Gascoyne Office: 273 Foreshore Drive, Geraldton
Pilbara Office: 28–32 Throssell Road, South Hedland
West Kimberley: 15–17 Dampier Tce, Broome
East Kimberley: 98 Konkerberry Drive, Kununurra
Indian Ocean: 20 Jalan Pantai, Christmas Island
Carnarvon Office: Carnarvon Lotteries House 1 Camel Lane, Carnarvon

CHILD PROTECTION — CARE PLAN REVIEW PANEL**244. Hon Nick Goiran to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Child Protection:**

I refer to the Care Plan Review Panel established under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* to review care planning decisions in care plans for children in the care of the Department, and I ask:

- (a) how many Care Plan Review applications were received in the 2020 calendar year;
- (b) how many Care Plan Review hearings were undertaken in the 2020 calendar year; and
- (c) further to (b), how many days did each review take, from the date of the applicant's request to the date the applicant was notified of the outcome?

Hon Samantha Rowe replied:

- (a) 25.
- (b) 15.
- (c) The review of each application undertaken in the 2020 calendar year took between 69 and 127 days from the date of the applicant's request to the date the applicant was notified of the outcome. The number of days is calculated based on the date on which the application was received and the date of the written notification of the decision to the applicant. Some delays in the process occurred in the 2020 calendar year due to the impact of COVID-19.

See table below for a detailed breakdown.

Number of days taken to complete review
69
73
75
80
85
86
87
89
92
94
102
102
121
125
127

EDUCATION AND TRAINING — SCHOOL CHAPLAINS

245. Hon Wilson Tucker to the Minister for Education and Training:

- (1) I refer to an article published in *The Sunday Times* on the 15 August 2021, titled 'Should we still keep the faith?'. The article quotes the Minister as saying 'there is no State Government requirement for school chaplains to be of faith'. However, I note that each of the three approved providers of chaplains for public schools states explicitly on their websites that chaplains must be 'of faith', therefore I ask:
- (a) does the Minister agree that these requirements create a de facto policy of public school chaplains being 'of faith'; and
- (b) what steps will the Minister take to correct this inconsistency between Government policy and the policy of the providers the Department engages?
- (2) I refer to correspondence from the Rationalist Society of Australia (RSA) to the Department of Education, dated 20 March 2021 and 6 April 2021, in which the RSA raises their concerns over the *prima facie* religious conviction discrimination of the Department in the current policy of approved chaplain providers, and I ask, has the Department received this correspondence, and when can the RSA expect a response?
- (3) Will the Government review its policy, and the policy of approved chaplain providers, to allow people 'of no faith' to apply for chaplain roles in public schools:
- (a) if no to (3), why not?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (1)–(3) There is no State Government requirement that school chaplains be of faith.

Schools in Western Australia have the option to purchase chaplaincy services from an alternative provider and undertake an independent procurement where the buyer's guide does not apply.

