



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2023

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, 30 March 2023

Legislative Council

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

HON BEN DAWKINS — SWEARING-IN

Statement by President

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) [10.01 am]: Good morning, members. Members, I have a statement. I advise that have received correspondence from the Electoral Commissioner, Mr Robert Kennedy, stating that he has declared Mr Ben Dawkins to be elected as member of the Legislative Council to fill the vacancy in the South West Region. I table that letter. I advise the Council that this morning I presided over the swearing-in of Hon Ben Dawkins as a member of the Legislative Council. I take this opportunity to welcome the new member to the chamber.

[See paper [2141](#).]

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES — INCARCERATION

Petition

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [10.02 am]: President, I have two petitions. I will start with an e-petition that contains 83 signatures, couched in the following terms —

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

support an urgent review of the justice system to first identify the systemic and procedural factors contributing to the over-incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Western Australia, and then make appropriate recommendations for urgent adoption by the Government. The Australian Law Reform Commission's Pathways to Justice Report (2018) found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are significantly more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous people charged with similar crimes. Solutions to address this implicit structural racism—such as a ban on all white juries (particularly in trials involving non-white parties)—need to be urgently considered and implemented. We therefore ask the Legislative Council to support an urgent review of the causes and potential solutions for racial discrimination within Western Australia's justice system, including a ban on all-white juries.

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

[See paper 2142.]

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES — INCARCERATION — RECOMMENDATIONS

Petition

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [10.03 am]: I have another petition on the same topic with slightly different wording. I assume I will probably need to read it in again. I present a petition containing 2 599 signatures, couched in the following terms —

We the undersigned support an urgent review of the justice system to first identify the systemic and procedural factors contributing to the over-incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Western Australia, and then make appropriate recommendations for urgent adoption by the Government.

[See paper 2143.]

PAPERS TABLED

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

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION

Eighth Report — Unlawful detention in public hospitals: Parliamentary inspector's report — Tabling

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [10.05 am]: I am directed to present for tabling the eighth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission titled *Unlawful detention in public hospitals: Parliamentary inspector's report*.

[See paper [2144](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The committee's eighth report tables a report by Matthew Zilko, SC, the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. The report provides an update on a previous

parliamentary inspector report titled *Report on the operation of the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003: the definition of 'public officer'*. That report was attached to the committee's fourth report, tabled in both houses on 24 March 2022. Members may recall that the committee's fourth report highlighted flaws in the statutory definition of "public officer", and the complexities of determining whether a contractor engaged by the public sector is a public officer. It is extremely important that the definition of "public officer" is clear, as it defines the remit of the CCC.

This issue arose from the parliamentary inspector's investigation of a complaint by an 84-year-old man who alleged that he was assaulted by two security guards at the Albany Health Campus, where he was a voluntary patient. The security officers, employed by a company contracted by the WA Country Health Service, detained the man in the corridor of the hospital and in his room. In that case, the CCC concluded that the security guards were not public officers and that therefore the complaint was not within its jurisdiction. Amending the definition of "public officer" will ensure that the jurisdiction of the CCC evolves to recognise the increasing use of varying employment arrangements in the public sector.

In its fourth report the committee recommended that the Attorney General instruct the Department of Justice to examine the definition of "public officer" and matters raised in the report of the parliamentary inspector as part of its current project to modernise the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003. The committee is pleased that the government accepted its recommendation. I very much look forward to the modernised CCC bill being tabled in Parliament.

As to the issue of unlawful detention in public hospitals, there are some circumstances in which a person may be detained in hospital against their will; for example, if they are an involuntary patient under the Mental Health Act 2014. There are other circumstances in which a person is under no obligation to stay in the hospital. The parliamentary inspector considered the detention of the 84-year-old voluntary patient at the Albany Health Campus unlawful.

Through this eighth report, the parliamentary inspector alerts Parliament to a District Court of Western Australia ruling that hospital staff did not have the right to detain another voluntary patient in a public hospital. In this case, after the patient advised hospital staff that he intended to walk outside and smoke a cigarette, hospital staff called a code black to prevent him from leaving. Five security guards forcibly brought the patient back inside the hospital. In the struggle, a guard fractured his ankle. The patient was charged with an offence. A District Court jury ultimately returned a verdict of not guilty. Her Honour Judge Linda Black ruled that none of the hospital staff, including doctors, nurses and security personnel, had any legal right to prevent the patient from leaving the hospital or to detain him within the hospital. Her Honour observed that the patient was, as a matter of law, entitled to leave for a smoke; entitled to leave to go home; and entitled to leave to go and sit on a park bench, and hospital staff had no lawful power to detain him or to use any force upon him. Hospital staff appear to have sincerely believed that they had the right to detain a patient.

The parliamentary inspector respectfully suggests that these cases demonstrate a need to ensure that all hospital staff are made aware of the law to avoid future incidents of this kind. The committee considers this suggestion reasonable. Appropriate education and training will minimise the risk of future serious misconduct events. The committee recommends that the Minister for Health consider the parliamentary inspector's report and report to Parliament as to the action, if any, proposed to be taken by the government with respect to the matters raised by the parliamentary inspector. I thank the parliamentary inspector for bringing this issue to the attention of the Parliament.

Ninth Report — A need for clarity: Parliamentary inspector's report: Can the Corruption and Crime Commission decline to form an opinion that serious misconduct has occurred despite the definition being met? — Tabling

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [10.14 am]: I am directed to present the ninth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission titled *A need for clarity: Parliamentary inspector's report: Can the Corruption and Crime Commission decline to form an opinion that serious misconduct has occurred despite the definition being met?*

[See paper [2145](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The committee's ninth report attaches another report by Matthew Zilko, SC, the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission, entitled *Can the Corruption and Crime Commission decline to form an opinion that serious misconduct has occurred despite the definition being met?* The parliamentary inspector informs the Parliament of a legal disagreement between his office and the Corruption and Crime Commission on whether the CCC can decline to form an opinion that "serious misconduct" has occurred, despite that definition in the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003 being met.

In summary, the parliamentary inspector advises of a disagreement on how to interpret an important provision of the CCM act. This difference of opinion arose from the inspector's consideration of a complaint. In that case, a magistrate found that a police officer had unlawfully assaulted the complainant. After that court finding, the complainant made a formal complaint to the WA Police Force and the CCC, alleging that the police officer acted contrary to law and, therefore, engaged in serious misconduct. Members may be aware that the CCC has a broader scope to scrutinise the conduct of police compared with the rest of the public sector. All police misconduct is serious misconduct.

The parliamentary inspector says the CCC and he agree that all unlawful actions by a police officer will be police misconduct and, therefore, serious misconduct. However, they hold different views on whether an opinion of serious misconduct follows. The parliamentary inspector considers that when a public officer has engaged in conduct that meets the definition of “serious misconduct”, it is not open to the CCC to decline to form an opinion that serious misconduct has occurred. The CCC considers that in the above circumstances, it has a discretion as to whether to form an opinion of serious misconduct; that is, it is not bound to make an opinion of serious misconduct. It is undesirable for the office of the parliamentary inspector and the CCC to have opposing views on something as important as the CCC making an opinion of serious misconduct against a public officer. The law should be clear.

The committee agrees with the parliamentary inspector’s suggestion that consideration be given to amending the CCM act to clarify its intent in respect of matters raised in his report. There is an opportunity to do this as part of the Department of Justice’s reform of the CCM act. Therefore, the committee recommends —

That the Attorney General direct the Department of Justice to examine matters raised in the attached report by the Parliamentary Inspector as part of its project to modernise the *Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003*, and report to Parliament as to the action, if any, proposed to be taken by the government with respect to these matters.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the parliamentary inspector for bringing this issue to the attention of the Parliament.

With today’s tabling of committee reports 8 and 9, the committee has tabled four reports by the parliamentary inspector this Parliament. These reports demonstrate the importance of having an independent body such as the parliamentary inspector whose responsibilities include reporting and making recommendations to either house of Parliament or the committee on the operation of the CCM act. I thank the parliamentary inspector, Matthew Zilko, SC, and his principal adviser, Sarah Burnside, for the support they provide to the committee.

I might just add that this is one of those instances when it is important to clarify the position in law. During the debate on this report in future months, I may well take a position that I support the CCC’s position on this but the CCC’s position may well be in conflict with the laws of the day. Therefore, the rewrite of the CCC act is of particular importance. It is important that the Attorney General consider this as an issue.

The position of the CCC—that it has discretion under its act to make a finding of serious misconduct—may well need to rely on whether that is an appropriate outcome. The CCC currently gives itself that level of discretion. The question in my mind is not whether the CCC should be given that level of discretion as to whether it potentially would not proceed to a finding of misconduct, but whether the law itself enables the CCC to do so. That is the debate that I ask the government and the Attorney General to look at and hopefully report back to this Parliament. If it comes back and says it thinks in a similar way to me, again, the law can be addressed in the update of the CCC act, which I understand is in train, and hopefully we will see some outcome on it soon.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*Fifth Report — Report review 2022: Examination of selected reports by the
Commissioner for Children and Young People — Tabling*

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [10.15 am]: I am directed to present for tabling the fifth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People titled *Report review 2022: Examination of selected reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People*.

[See paper [2146](#).]

Hon NEIL THOMSON: The committee has reviewed the Commissioner for Children and Young People’s annual report for 2021–22 and considered several other reports published by her office in the past year. Most of these were published in the period since January 2022, when Jacqueline McGowan-Jones took over the commissioner role from Colin Pettit.

Some of the work referenced has its origins in work begun by Mr Pettit. For example, the second Speaking Out Survey, which collected the views of around 16 500 year 4 to 12 students, was conducted in early 2021. A summary of the results was published at the end of 2021. In 2022, the commissioner’s office continued to explore the data, revealing some startling findings around kids’ views of their own safety. Further exploration of the data related to mental health mirrored findings from the first survey in 2019, showing that teenage girls are more likely than teenage boys to feel depressed and unhappy about themselves. The commissioner tackled this worrying trend by establishing a Girls’ Wellbeing project to explore the reasons for the gap and gather views on how to improve girls’ experiences.

The commissioner also received Lotterywest funding to extend the Speaking Out Survey to several groups that the mainstream survey could not cater for. These were students who are home schooled, students with special educational needs and students in remote communities. It is important to capture the views of these minority populations to provide the best possible understanding of what children and young people in this state are experiencing. Hopefully, funding will be available to do this in future years.

I also draw the attention of members to a very important section of the report—section 4, “Ongoing Issues”, particularly the reference to matters that were raised by the committee. It states —

On 18 November 2021, the Committee tabled a report detailing the history of a proposal to create a commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people. There have been calls for such a position since the creation of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. After consideration of the merits of such a proposal, this Committee recommended that a separate statutory position dedicated to the advocacy of Aboriginal children and young people be created to work alongside the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

I also bring to the attention of the house the other ongoing issue—the lack of decision on the oversight mechanism for the royal commission recommendations. Section 4.2 of the report states —

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released its final report in December 2017. In his annual report in 2021, the then Commissioner Colin Pettit noted that 4 years of the 10-year implementation period had passed and progress had been slow. At our hearing with Commissioner McGowan-Jones in October 2022, Ms McGowan-Jones reported with some frustration that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet had stated ‘as late as this morning’ that it was ‘still reviewing policy settings’ regarding who within the WA government would have oversight of the implementation of the Royal Commission’s recommendations. The Committee received an update from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet regarding progress on recommendations for which it is the lead agency and was told that ‘the Department continues to progress the development of a policy proposal for a model of independent oversight of child safe organisations responding to the recommendations of the Royal Commission, for consideration by Government’.

Finally, the commissioner told the committee that she had enjoyed her first months in what is her dream job. We have every confidence that she will continue to perform the role as well as she has in this first year.

SELECT COMMITTEE INTO CANNABIS AND HEMP

Final Report — Medicinal cannabis and industrial hemp in Western Australia — Tabling

HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [10.19 am]: I am directed to present for tabling the final report of the Select Committee into Cannabis and Hemp titled *Medicinal cannabis and industrial hemp in Western Australia*.

[See paper [2147](#).]

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: The report that I have just tabled advises the house of the current barriers to the use, prescription, availability and affordability of medicinal cannabis products and makes recommendations to address these barriers. It also looks at the potential benefits and risks of human consumption of industrial hemp.

Medicinal cannabis has been lawful in Australia since 2016. It is a pharmaceutical-grade medicine available only via a prescription from a medical professional and dispensed from a pharmacy. Patients use medicinal cannabis to alleviate the symptoms of health conditions, including, but not limited to, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, chronic pain, nausea and vomiting, sleep disorders and palliative care.

The committee identified barriers to prescribing and accessing medicinal cannabis for healthcare professionals and patients. The first barrier is regulatory and administrative, such as the need for medical practitioners to obtain approval from the Department of Health before prescribing a schedule 8 medicinal cannabis product and the department’s daily prescribing limit of 40 milligrams a day. The second barrier is GP reluctance to prescribe due to a lack of confidence in their knowledge of the subject and its regulatory process. The third barrier is the cost to patients. The fourth barrier is Western Australia’s driving laws. It is unlawful for anybody to drive with any THC in their system regardless of whether it is legally prescribed and whether the person is actually impaired. The mere presence of THC in a person’s bodily fluid has no correlation to their current level of impairment. The fifth barrier is zero tolerance workplace drug testing, with some workplaces treating medicinal cannabis differently from other potentially impairing prescription medications.

The committee has recommended various regulatory and legislative changes to overcome these barriers. Industrial hemp contains no more than one per cent THC. It does not produce any psychoactive effect. It is cultivated for use in products, such as fabrics and textiles, building materials, personal care products and food supplements. The consumption of hemp seed foods has been legal in Australia since 2017. There are applications before Food Standards Australia New Zealand to allow the sale of hemp leaf, seed sprout and root as food and food ingredients. Industrial hemp farmers face issues such as the inability to extract CBD from the leaves and flowers of industrial hemp plants without a licence from the Office of Drug Control and lack of export opportunities.

We thank all those who contributed to this inquiry by making submissions and appearing before the committee and those we met with during our domestic and international travel. On behalf of the committee, I acknowledge the excellent work of dedicated staff and thank them for all their assistance. I commend the report to the house.

DISALLOWANCE MOTIONS*Notice of Motion*

1. Edith Cowan University Amending Statute No 1 of 2022.
2. City of Vincent Animal Local Law 2022.

Notices of motion given by **Hon Lorna Harper**.

ROAD TRAUMA*Motion*

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [10.24 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house —

- (a) recognises that 175 people lost their lives on Western Australian roads in 2022, which is, tragically, the highest toll since 2016;
- (b) acknowledges the impact of road trauma on individuals, families, first responders and communities and the benefits of access to trauma support services;
- (c) notes that the closing balance of the road trauma trust account at 31 December 2022 was \$89 million; and
- (d) discusses strategies and initiatives to improve road safety outcomes, including how to address the disproportionately high number of fatalities on regional roads.

I rise as I have done on numerous occasions to raise the important issue of road safety in our state in a motion that I hope will be embraced by members across the chamber as we discuss this wicked problem that has plagued governments of all persuasions over many decades.

The first thing I want to acknowledge is that although Australia's road safety record is constantly improving, that should never stop us from striving to do better. As I have said before in this place, it may take a technological revolution before we see the real next step change that is required to reduce the incidence of deaths and serious injuries on roads in Western Australia and, indeed, more broadly.

The 2022 data for Western Australia shows a trend up in the short term in fatalities driven by deaths on regional roads. In the same year, there was a decline in metropolitan road fatalities. That is an important point because often when we talk about road safety, we focus our time on issues in regional areas, but it is also important to recognise that approximately one-third of fatalities occur on metropolitan roads.

Recently I had the opportunity as the shadow Minister for Road Safety to visit the City of Wanneroo at the invitation of Councillor Jordan Wright. We inspected an intersection on Wanneroo Road that has become increasingly dangerous, largely due to the volume of increasing traffic and ageing road design. However, road safety is much more than just roads. Often when we talk about road safety, the debate can easily become fixated on roads themselves. To provide some context, last year's road toll was the equivalent to the death of every member of both houses of Parliament—twice. If that is not compelling enough, I draw members' attention to the government's *Driving change: Road safety strategy for Western Australia 2020–2030*, which has placed an economic cost on road trauma. Each fatality costs an estimated \$7 million, each hospitalisation some \$300 000. Road trauma costs Western Australia approximately \$2.4 billion each and every year. I bring this motion today, as I have done on previous occasions, because I genuinely believe that we need to continue to engage on this issue. It is not a condemning or congratulatory motion, as is my preference; rather, it is a genuine attempt to advance road safety outcomes in Western Australia.

I now turn to the second limb of the motion, which states —

acknowledges the impact of road trauma on individuals, families, first responders and communities and the benefits of access to trauma support services;

It is pleasing that the government's *Road safety strategy for Western Australia 2020–2030* contemplates this in the section categorised as "Post-crash response", which recognises that whilst we strive for improved road safety outcomes, we still need to deal with the consequences of road trauma, and those consequences are many. Road trauma impacts many in our community, as this limb of the motion outlines. Currently, road trauma support services are delivered by an organisation called Injury Matters, through Road Trauma Support WA. From all accounts, this is a good service. However, it is entirely a metropolitan-based offering, providing outreach by telephone or videoconference only. Given the prevalence of road trauma on regional roads and in regional communities—as I said before, two-thirds of fatalities last year occurred in regional Western Australia—there is unfortunately an opportunity to expand this service beyond Perth. Families grieving the loss of a loved one have shared their experience with me that in seeking access to this specialised trauma counselling service, they often have to travel long distances away from their community, support networks and family, and probably, more tragically, along the same road that took the life of their loved one.

Late last year I had the opportunity to meet with a bunch of dedicated volunteers behind an organisation called Heart Hub South West—an organisation that was born from tragedy, is community-funded and driven, and delivers a person-centred approach to road trauma support across the south west more broadly. Sadly, the demand for its services has exploded, resulting in Heart Hub delivering services across the south west region from its Collie base. It is much more than a counselling service; it is a road safety advocate, an educator and a promoter of general wellbeing. This organisation reminds me, and should remind all of us, that whilst we should remain focused on preventing and, indeed, avoiding road trauma, in the interim, we still need to support those left behind. That is why I am glad to see a focus on this issue in the government's 10-year road safety strategy. Heart Hub South West is an innovator in service delivery; it is nimble, it is flexible and it achieves results quickly on very limited funding, as we know not-for-profits and community-driven organisations are prone to do.

The other cohort that I want to touch on are the first responders, who often deal with the aftermath of road trauma. We know the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder among first responders is much higher than the population average due to their exposure, and often sustained exposure, to trauma. It is disappointing in the extreme that on Boxing Day 2021, the state government announced PTSD presumptive protection to ambulance officers, paramedics and ambulance 000 call centre operators, yet, to this day, no such protection has been extended to volunteer ambulance officers, firefighters or others who serve our community, often at significant sacrifice. I put this on the record again as an opportunity for the government to immediately address this inconsistency and matter of gross inequity.

This takes me to the third limb of the motion, which notes that the closing balance of the road trauma trust account at 31 December 2022 was \$89 million. That information was obviously sourced from the quarterly financial statements published by the WA Department of Treasury. The road trauma trust account has long been a matter of some controversy. I am sure members who have been here long enough would be aware of some of the even recent history. The initial observation I will make, which the government ought to reflect on, is that in a year in which we recorded our worst road toll in six years, we had a closing balance in this account of some \$89 million. There will always be project slippage and there will always be lumpiness in the expenditure of funds, particularly when projects are not necessarily controlled by the Road Safety Council. In fact, probably more often than not it relies on other agencies, departments or, indeed, the not-for-profit sector to deliver projects and initiatives funded by the road trauma trust account. But there is always room for improvement, as there is always room for improvement around transparency and accountability, as funds increase year on year in the road trauma trust account.

We have seen some questionable expenditure. At one stage, the advice of the Road Safety Council to government was against an investment that, in its words, provided no demonstrable road safety benefit. The example I am referring to is the procurement of a replacement police helicopter. This was at a time when the midwest and, indeed, other regions in Western Australia had been advocating for a dedicated rescue helicopter service. According to Western Australian research, such a service would increase survivability from major road trauma. I am sure that some members in this house would be aware of the research conducted by Mr David Ford of ECU in 2020—both Western Australian and recent research—that found that people were 50 per cent more likely to die from major trauma if transported by road rather than helicopter. An article that appeared in *Air Medical Journal* says under the heading “Conclusion” —

Our results suggest there was more than a 50% increased risk of death for major trauma patients who were transported indirectly to a rural hospital before retrieval to a tertiary hospital compared with direct HEMS retrieval from the incident scene to a tertiary hospital.

People are 50 per cent more likely to die from major trauma in regional Western Australia, where there is not an available and dedicated rescue helicopter. This initiative would surely have been a higher priority for expenditure from the road trauma trust account than a police helicopter that has, in the words of the Road Safety Council, no demonstrable road safety benefit. There are, of course, opportunities to increase the capacity of the road trauma trust account. At the last election, we put forward two specific policies. One was to commit all traffic infringement revenue to the road trauma trust account. What people may not realise is that the road trauma trust account is effectively made up of funds collected from traffic infringements relating to speed and red-light cameras in Western Australia; it does not collect all the revenue that is raised from traffic infringements generally. If the government were to adopt the policy that we put forward, it would increase the funds flowing to the road trauma trust account by, on average, \$30 million each and every year. The other thing that would do is allow government to say that traffic infringements are not about revenue raising because we have a fund called the road trauma trust account, and its purpose is to reinvest the money from people who do the wrong thing in saving lives and preventing serious injuries on Western Australian roads.

The other opportunity that the government has and that we presented and proposed at the last state election is that the Insurance Commission of Western Australia can do more. In other states, its equivalents are actively engaged in road safety initiatives and road trauma prevention. Recently, on 24 November 2022, I wrote to Mr Rob Bransby, who is the chair of Insurance Commission of Western Australia. He was appointed chair in October last year, so he had only recently been appointed, but I recognise that he had been a commissioner of ICWA for some years before.

In part of the letter, I said —

I note in 2021–22, the Insurance Commission of Western Australia (the Commission) received almost \$900 million in motor injury insurance premiums and across the forward estimates are forecast to deliver some \$370 million to government in dividends and tax equivalents.

In 2019–20 the Commission contributed just \$1.2 million to road safety initiatives whilst its counterpart in Victoria, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) contributed some \$181 million. Notwithstanding the fact that the TAC has roughly twice the premium revenue, I think the above figures demonstrate that there is capacity for the Commission to play a larger role in road safety prevention but also in supporting those impacted by road trauma.

Time is escaping me, but that takes me to the fourth limb of my motion, which I think is probably the most important part and for which I hope there may be some diversity of views because we should all endeavour to make real progress on this terrible issue. If one looks at the *RAC state budget submission 2023–24*, the first recommendation of this esteemed road safety organisation is to fully fund the regional road safety program. Here is another budget initiative that could be taken up by the state government. It is \$73 million unfunded from a \$900 million 10-year program, and it has been rated as having a benefit–cost ratio of 4.05, which is a very high BCR. According to the RAC’s pre-budget submission, the BCR assessment of the Morley–Ellenbrook line was 1.1. If we look at the regional road safety program, its BCR was 4.05, and it is still not fully funded. I hope that, when we return from the autumn recess, we will be presented with a budget that resolves that issue. This program is estimated to save 2 100 people from being killed or seriously injured, and it would reduce regional road trauma by 60 per cent, not to mention it would create thousands of jobs in our regions.

Before I move on from the RAC, I want to recognise the imminent retirement of Patrick Walker as group executive, social and community impact. I am sure that Pat is a friend of many in this place. I know that Hon Steve Martin, Hon Darren West and potentially others were at his retirement farewell last week. I want to recognise his 12 years of service not just to the RAC, but also as one of the best advocates for road safety that I have come across in my time in Parliament. I wish all the best for him and his family in the future.

Obviously, fixing roads and dangerous intersections is one thing. It is often the easiest thing to fix; it just takes money. Cultural and behavioural change in delivering road safety outcomes is much more difficult; it is generational. Whereas once driving without wearing a seatbelt or while intoxicated were the focus, today’s challenges particularly relate to increasing levels of distraction within the motor vehicle and the environment, and they are just as difficult problems to face.

That takes me to road safety campaigns. Obviously, they are just one way of trying to resolve some of the challenging issues we face in this area. Changing behaviour is hard and slow, but we must be consistent. We must be consistent in our resolve to achieve results. The government’s road safety strategy that I mentioned earlier, *Driving Change 2020–30*, has a bold target of reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured by 50 to 70 per cent by 2030. Unfortunately, road trauma will affect all of us, if it has not already affected some of us at some stage in our lives. It is for that reason—for our friends, families and communities—that we must strive to be bold and to be better.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.45 am]: I rise to make a contribution to this excellent motion brought before us today by Hon Martin Aldridge. It is something that as a chamber we ought to discuss often because road safety has many different aspects and putting our minds to some of the different opportunities that exist can only be a good thing.

I have some particular aspects I want to focus on, but I was reminded of cultural change by the contribution of Hon Martin Aldridge, just towards the end when he talked about it. That is something that I did not plan to talk about, but I want to talk about it because I think it is incredibly important in the whole aspect of road safety. I will talk about my experience and some observations I made years ago when I had the privilege to drive in other countries, specifically in Europe. I drove several thousand kilometres across a few different countries in Europe, and one thing I really noticed there was the attitudinal difference across the different countries compared with Australia, particularly Western Australia. I know members probably have plenty of examples of having got into an Uber, a cab, a DiDi, an Ola or whatever they are called, and they have had drivers from other countries or other states who have made the observation that Western Australians are the worst drivers in the world. I hear that very often, and in some ways I agree that we have some attitudes here that probably need adjustment. One observation I make from the time I spent driving across other countries—in particular, Germany—was that it took me a while to get used to the fact that the drivers were all aware that the road was not their road; it was everybody’s road, and they were sharing it with other people. Their attitude was so different that if they overtook or passed a vehicle on a multilane road, they would always move out of the way to the slower lane, in fact, to the slowest lane if they could, assuming a truck or something else was not travelling quite slowly in there. Everyone would always simply overtake and move back out of the way. The other thing I saw was that as they approached an accident, roadworks or something like that, hazard lights would be flashing on all the cars in front for kilometres. It took me a while to work out what it was. It was simply the other drivers letting everyone else know that something they ought to be aware of was up ahead so slow down and be bit careful. That was quite profound in many ways because it demonstrated an awareness that

those drivers did not think they were the only people on the road; they were acutely aware that other people were around them and that by assisting their fellow drivers they could perhaps prevent accidents and, therefore, trauma. I am not sure what the road trauma statistics are in Germany; I just make those observations.

I will make a final observation about when I crossed the border from Switzerland to France. If I thought Western Australian drivers were bad, well, they have nothing on the French! Literally, within 50 metres of crossing that border, there were fingers out windows and all sorts of profanities in French. It was a totally different attitude, and I thought that contrast was very interesting.

Hon Darren West: They are even on the wrong side of the road, member.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: I was on the right side of the road. I had probably got a kilometre down the road when I saw the first road accident that I had seen in all those thousands of kilometres of driving. Anyway, it was an interesting story.

I think that attitudinal change is very hard to do, as Hon Martin Aldridge said, and it starts with our kids when we are teaching them to drive. Programs like Keys4Life are a good start. Both my two daughters, who have their drivers' licences, did that program and it helped with their awareness and attitude; however, I think people can slip into bad habits pretty quickly once they start driving on the road, see what other drivers do and mirror their patterns.

I will move on. As Hon Martin Aldridge said, there have been significant deaths on our roads, in particular on regional roads in Western Australia, and that rate is around six and a half times more than in the Perth metropolitan area. Since 2012, 1 069 people have died on our regional roads, and that is unacceptable. That obviously has a devastating impact on not only the families of those involved in those tragic accidents, but also the first responders for those communities, because so often the myth is not true that people who die on regional roads are city drivers who do not know what they are doing. It is often country drivers and young country drivers who die on those country roads, and that has a devastating impact on their small communities, especially when we consider the fact that many of the first responders in those instances will know that person or know someone who knows that person. I cannot imagine having to respond to an incident like that and coming across a child or a loved one of someone I know. It is just unimaginable and something that we, as a community, need to work to improve. We do not capture those sorts of statistics and impacts in the road trauma figures. We do not capture the impact on those communities. The statistics do not talk about that. I think that again identifies the importance of why we have \$89 million in the road trauma trust fund. We need to use that money for genuine efforts to improve outcomes for people on our roads. We need to expend it on things that will deliver a return in reducing the road toll. Hon Martin Aldridge commented about the regional road safety program. That is probably the low hanging fruit that needs to be funded completely. I hope we see that funded completely in the forthcoming budget. That would be an excellent start in trying to reduce road trauma figures in our state.

Some of the other issues I can talk about include some of the highways and the traffic on those roads. A lot of tourism happens on our roads, and that increased over the COVID period. A lot of people took the opportunity to look around WA, which is fantastic, but the mix of heavy traffic and the quality of those roads means we need to spend significant money on work to improve those roads. In terms of the improvements that we can make, I know that Main Roads has done some work on improving the shoulders of roads, improving line markings and —

Hon Darren West: Audible edge lines.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: — audible edge lines. That is exactly the comment I was going to make, honourable member.

That sort of work, which is relatively inexpensive, can be done and will have an impact. Consider, particularly, the road between Esperance and Ravensthorpe. I will talk about that road in the brief time I have left. There is a lot of traffic on that road. A lot of tourists head down that way. Esperance recently had its busiest tourism season ever. A lot of people went down there to visit that beautiful part of the world, but of course there has been a record grain harvest, which saw a lot of trucks on the road transporting grain. There is mining as well, which obviously has all sorts of different products on that road, adding additional pressure. The other aspect of that is gas. I am not laying the blame here at the government, but unbelievably—it is mind boggling to me—we now need to truck gas to Esperance for the power station, when we already have a pipeline from Kalgoorlie that was delivering the gas. As I said, I am not laying the blame here at government, but those extra trucks on the road —

Hon Darren West: You would have thought they would have tendered a cheaper price.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: I would have thought there would be some contemplation of the additional cost of road maintenance and the potential risks to people's lives from trucking gas. As I said, I am not blaming the government here, but I think everyone would be confused about how it could be cheaper to truck gas all the way from Perth, rather than push it down a pipeline that is already there. I am sure other members might know more about that than I do. It is just one of those other things that adds additional pressure to our road trauma, and potentially creates extra hazards that we do not need to have, in addition to creating a need for extra maintenance, which of course costs money. Having said that, a significant amount of money needs to be spent on our road network. We have many thousands of kilometres of road that need funding at a state and federal level.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [10.55 am]: I rise to speak to this motion as well. As outlined by my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge, disproportionately, the impact of road trauma is on regional Western Australia. The number presented regarding the calculated cost of each fatality is around \$7 million. It is a very important number, even though the impact of the trauma and loss on every family cannot be valued; that is just an incredibly painful and terrible experience for the many families who are affected by road trauma across our state.

I believe there is an underinvestment in our regional road network. One of the challenges we face in assessing the value of road improvements is making business cases for road improvement. Prior to coming to this place, I worked as an economist in the north and did a number of business cases on road improvements for local authorities and Main Roads. This is part of our challenge. Let us take a particular road, Duncan Road, which runs from the Northern Territory through to Halls Creek. That road is very quiet; it does not have a lot of traffic. Some work is underway and it is great to see the investment now in play in relation to the mine site south of the community of Ringer Soak, which is allowing for some investment, but there is a problem with the assessment of much-needed road improvements. The comparison rate of fatalities for the number of people who travel that road is horrendous. I do not have the exact number, but if the same rate of accidents occurred on Leach Highway, it would be in the order of about 15 000 car crashes. The problem is that so few cars travel on these roads that those few cars are much more exposed to risk because of the horrendous driving conditions. It is hard to make a case based on the statistical values that were presented by my honourable colleague around the road trauma impact. This is a challenge for us. We have to look at it more from an equity point of view. There has to be an adjustment when Main Roads or other policymakers assess the value of those improvements. There has to be a further adjustment from the point of view of equity and the impact on those communities. It may be true that the statistical cost of a fatality across the nation might be around \$7 million, but those costs and the ongoing trauma are concentrated, particularly within our remote Aboriginal communities and right across the remote areas of Western Australia.

RAC has some data online and there is data available through the Road Safety Council as well, but I will give members a comparison of some actual data, which was over the period up to 2017. It is the only readily available data I could find on a map, but it reflects the general trend. The fatality rate in metropolitan Perth over a five-year period up to 2017 was 2.2 per 100 000 people. In regional communities like the Kimberley, it is 40 per 100 000. It is a very similar number for the Pilbara and likewise for the goldfields. That is broad data that we know just from the highways. We are not talking about those gravel roads—for example, those that go from Balgo to Halls Creek or from Ringer Soak through to Halls Creek where the rates are much higher. We are talking about the highways across our network. Even so, the fatality rates are in order of about 20 times higher per head of population.

I do a lot of kilometres and drive huge distances. One of the good things about having this job is the ability to get around and speak to people. I have travelled right across the state in my region. I note the different road conditions across our state. I have seen the North West Coastal Highway in pretty good condition. There are some challenges relating to a section from Munjina Gorge through to Port Hedland. There has been an incredible increase in the number of quads and road trains operating up there. I know there is some investment on the cards to create more passing lanes. However, with the huge value that has been ripped out of the Pilbara region through royalties, it would be good to see more passing lanes. It is incredibly difficult when there is a road train over 50 metres long and a person is travelling at 110 kilometres per hour and that road train is doing 100 kilometres per hour. There is a large amount of time that is actually spent on the wrong side of the road just trying to get past that vehicle.

These are some of the challenges that we have. We need investment. I note that down in the goldfields there has been some widening work undertaken by Main Roads Western Australia, such as on the Coolgardie–Esperance Highway. However, there are long sections of the road that are in accordance with the old standard of eight metres over 10 metres. That is a way of saying there are eight metres of sealed road with a metre of shoulder on each side. That basically means that each lane is four metres wide. There are a lot of road trains on that road, operating out of Widgiemooltha, for example, to take ore down to Esperance. These are huge challenges. I have driven that road several times in recent years. I spoke to the Shire of Dundas about the concerns about the edges. I have stood on the side of the road and taken photos. There are gaps of up to 300 millimetres and drop-offs at the edge of that seal where the grading has probably not been kept up to the standard that might be expected because of the constant stream of trucks. I know that there have been rollovers. I have taken photos of that. I have seen trucks go by with their left wheel literally right on the white line, only millimetres away from the edge of the road. If there is a little bit of wobble and something happens, that trailer can just spill off into the edge and unsettle the truck.

This is creating massive issues. I mentioned Widgiemooltha. That is a spot showing some good data on trafficmap online. If people want to inform themselves of what is going on, look at what is going on there. There used to be just 300 vehicles travelling back each way over the period of a week. It has now gone up to 500. There has been an incredible increase in vehicle traffic on those roads, and yet those roads are still trailing behind in terms of upgrades. We need to upgrade them faster. There is incredible wealth coming out of that area, so we need to upgrade those roads. We know there are a whole range of issues reducing safety on our roads. I certainly urge the government to look more thoroughly at that.

Of the traffic on those roads, 43 per cent of it consists of heavy vehicles. It is constantly just truck after truck. We need our trucks, the heavy transport industry and the mining industry, and we need to support them. However,

we need to make sure that we invest in and fortify our road network. We have seen the events north and what is happening with the huge challenges resulting from flooding. The roads are not open and people are having to travel thousands of extra kilometres through South Australia. People are being put at a greater risk. There has apparently been a 20 per cent increase in traffic through Norseman in the last period since the floods because of all those trucks having to move around.

The Liberal Party took a proposal to the last election to speed up the safety program with the commonwealth. We wanted to accelerate it from completion in 10 years to just four years. I urge the government. We need audible edges and 12-metre sealed road platforms.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [11.05 am]: I rise to put forward the government's position in response to the motion. I thank Hon Martin Aldridge for moving the motion. I think in his contribution he made the point that everyone in this chamber will know somebody who has been, or be, in some way, personally affected by road trauma. I am certainly in that category. Some people know that before I entered this place, in 1994, just three months short of her sixtieth birthday—younger than I am today—my mum was in a catastrophic motor vehicle accident. It happened here in Perth on Newcastle Street, just near the Water Corporation. She went through a red light. It was a Sunday morning and also my grandmother's birthday. She was going to pick up my grandmother to go to the family celebration.

Nobody could ascertain what actually happened. The most likely cause was that she had some form of an aneurysm or something like that. Neurosurgeons could not put their finger on it. She was certainly not the kind of person who would drive through a red light, but she did. She was hit side-on on the driver's side by a four-wheel drive with a bull bar. That had its consequences on her little Datsun.

She lived for another 20 years, but with an acquired brain injury. It had an effect not unlike a stroke; it slurred speech, limited movement, particularly down her right side and caused some cognitive deficit as well. For most of the 20 years that she lived after the accident, she lived at home with my dad. We arranged for carers for the most part of that time. We paid for those ourselves. My father was known to some to have worked in the resource industry and was the CEO of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia. He will not mind me saying this—I have said it publicly before—he used up all his superannuation and the family resources. They sold the house and moved into residential independent living where we continued to pay for care until that became impossible financially, and certainly, mentally and emotionally for my dad. She was moved into an aged-care facility and passed away in 2013.

Obviously, that had a devastating impact on my mother. I am my mother's daughter, so imagine my personality writ large. That was my mother. It had a devastating impact on her, and an equally, in a different way, devastating impact on my father and the rest of us. I had to take out a second mortgage. It had significant consequences for us. It is the case that we always need to do more to strive to get better at how we stop, where it is possible, road trauma. I do think we need to acknowledge this point, and I think that former ministers including Terry Redman have made it: I just do not think we will ever get to the point where we can be able to stop it completely. As in the case of my mother, we do not actually know what caused it. It is the case that young people think they are invincible, particularly young men. It is also hard to convince people to not drink and drive. We are getting better at those sorts of things and we need to strive constantly to do more. Whenever I talk about mum, I try to do a shout-out, so I am going to do it again, to all the people who helped my family. We were so lucky that on the day of her accident Professor Bryant Stokes, known to some as "Bar" Stokes, was on the roster at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, and I am forever grateful to him. We still see him occasionally. He continued to look after my mum for the next 20 years as well. So a shout-out to Bar Stokes.

I will talk a little bit about what the government has done and what the government is doing and I will address the elements of the motion before us. In part, the motion refers to \$89 million. That was the amount of cash in the fund at the end of December 2022, but that does not reflect the funding commitments that had already been made. The Road Safety Commission advised that of that \$89 million, \$58 million is committed to road safety programs, \$10 million is being kept aside as a prudential reserve, leaving \$21 million available for new spending commitments. The \$89 million on the current budget will fall to \$53 million by 30 June 2023, and that \$53 million will fall to \$31 million by the end of the forward estimates period. It is important to note that although there is cash in the account, this is not reflective of what has already been committed.

I will talk a little bit about the Road Safety Commission and what it has been doing. The Road Safety Commission has responsibility for reducing road trauma by supporting a range of strategies to deal with road safety. The Road Safety Commission also works in collaboration with the key stakeholders within government agencies, the private sector and the community through community education campaigns and community engagement and grants. Members will have seen the advertisement that started playing in December 2022, the "No one plans a crash" campaign. The ad follows two typical Western Australian households—a family home and a share house. The ad shows a member of the household setting out on one of their typical everyday journeys, while another member is gripped by a premonition of a crash awaiting their departing loved one. It is quite a confronting ad. The

12 commercials highlight a number of everyday tragedies, each of which could have been avoided or had a lower impact if a better one-off choice had been made. The campaign was backed by research and was deliberately designed to provoke the kind of conversations that we need to have in our own households.

The other thing to note is that this year WA will be the host state for the National Road Safety Week in May. It will be an opportunity to raise awareness, and ministers for road safety from around the country will be meeting in, I think it is, Perth—I cannot tell; I will check whether that is correct.

It is important for people to know that the road trauma trust account receives 100 per cent of the revenue resulting from photographic speed and red-light camera fines. Some people use the term “revenue raising” when referring to red-light cameras as if that is a bad thing, but people need to understand where that money goes; it goes into the road trauma trust account. Those funds are managed by the Road Safety Commission and allocated to the range of programs that fit within the *Driving change: Road safety strategy for Western Australia 2020–2030*. We are aiming for a reduction in road deaths and serious injuries of between 50 and 70 per cent by 2030. That is a very ambitious target but it is one that we need to strive for.

The Road Safety Council is made up of members from the Western Australia Police Force, Main Roads Western Australia, the Department of Transport, the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Insurance Commission of Western Australia, RAC WA and the Western Australian Local Government Association. Submissions on how to spend those funds are reviewed by the commission and then recommendations are made to the minister. These submissions and projects vary every year.

The Road Safety Council has adopted a practice of holding a \$10 million prudential reserve, firstly, to guard against unanticipated cost increases for funded road safety programs and, secondly, to guard against unexpected volatility in infringement revenue. This means that \$21 million is available to fund new road safety projects and initiatives across the forward estimates period. In a perfect world, there would be no funds in that account because nobody would be running through red lights and everyone would be adhering to the rules. Some of the programs such as the road trauma support programs are supported by this account. An important point is that we need to look to evidence-based programs for some of the things that were canvassed in paragraph (d) of the motion regarding new strategies and opportunities.

The road safety research centre is located at University of Western Australia. It was developed by a multi-agency committee, and is supported by the Road Safety Council and the Road Safety Commission. Some of its research is on driver behaviour; the impact of speeding, safe vehicles, road safety infrastructure and a safe systems foundation. The honourable member who moved the motion made the point that technology can assist us to a certain extent; people will be familiar with vehicles that self-lock when triggered by the driver’s behaviour. Technology will get us so far, and I certainly support research going further, but I think that a lot of it is about behaviour and then acknowledging that I do not know what we do about young people whose brains are still not fully developed when they are given formal permission to drive a vehicle. I am not sure how much more we can do in that space.

It is important to note in the time that I have left some examples of the drawdowns from the road trauma trust account in 2022–23. Main Roads’ regional road safety improvements project is \$20 million. The delivery of camera operations and infringements by the police is \$17.7 million. Main Roads’ metropolitan intersections project is \$14.3 million. The continuation of the impaired driving detection program is \$10.4 million. For the research that I referred to, it is \$8.9 million. The community education and engagement program, delivered by the Road Safety Commission, is \$8.4 million. Each year, decisions on how to spend that funding are made independently by the Road Safety Council.

I thank the honourable member for moving the motion. I could talk more. I have a note somewhere about regional roads funding because it is the case that disproportionately that is where the many road traumas occur. There is \$827.5 million on the regional road safety program to provide important road safety improvements to 8 500 kilometres of road network by June 2024. Between 2020–21 and December 2022, \$518.47 million worth of road safety improvements were completed across just over 6 000 kilometres of our regional and remote road network, comprising a completed stimulus package of \$121 million and a completed road safety program of \$398.47 million. Tranche 1 was completed in the first half of 2021, tranche 2 was completed in the second half of 2021, and tranche 3 was completed in 2022. The current delivery of regional road safety upgrades worth \$170 million commenced in July 2022 and is expected to be completed by June 2024. In addition, the delivery of the \$134 million road safety program is expected to commence in 2023–24. Overall, the works commenced will see an additional 1 300 kilometres of network improvement across 2023–24. We are pleased to continue to work with the new federal government on joint funding arrangements to continue to improve our road safety. There is more to be done in this space and we need to continually strive do better.

HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural) [11.20 am]: I rise to make a contribution on this excellent motion moved by my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge about the very sad data that he and other members have presented to us. I would like to thank the Leader of the House for her personal reflection on how this issue has affected her family. I was unaware of those details. Very sadly, that story is way too common across our society.

I was fortunate enough to be a member of the Road Safety Council more than a decade ago. It is a role that I seriously enjoyed. I am certain that I was the only regional member of the body at that stage. Before I moved on from that position, I got to make a brief farewell speech to the other members of the council and some of the staff members of the Road Safety Commission. I took the opportunity to thank them for the enormous amount of work they do, and to also point out that in my circumstances, over a decade ago, more than half of my neighbours had lost someone on the roads. The other members of that body were all from the suburbs, which, of course, is okay. I said, "Go home tonight and as you drive up your street in Dianella or Armadale or wherever, imagine that in every second house is a family who has lost someone." That is what regional Western Australia can look like. That is the impact. We have heard some of the data presented today. The impact is far greater in regional WA, very sadly. That is not to diminish the impact of these awful accidents and deaths in metropolitan Perth—absolutely not. It is a tragedy wherever it strikes, but because of the scale of the communities in regional Western Australia, I think that the impact is much, much more severe. If I threw in the number of neighbours who were seriously injured who had been in a serious accident, it might not be every neighbour, but it would be nudging close to it. I think Hon Colin de Grussa mentioned volunteer ambulance officers earlier. I also had another neighbour who was a volunteer ambulance officer who attended a fatality of a very close friend. Like Hon Colin de Grussa, I simply cannot imagine how that evening progressed for that young man. That is just one of the tasks we ask our volunteers to do in regional and metropolitan Western Australia. We need to send support their way, particularly after the event. That occurred some time ago and the young man was pretty much left to deal with it himself, and with the support of the locals, of course, but that would have been an awfully traumatic set of circumstances for him and his family and obviously for the family of the deceased person. That is what we send them out to do on a far too regular basis.

I will add to the data that has been presented. We know that it is bad in regional Western Australia. The number of people killed and seriously injured in the Perth metropolitan area is 58 per 100 000 and 107 in regional Western Australia, which is almost double. That is very bad. We are not quite sure why, but, extraordinarily, in the wheatbelt, 219 people are killed and seriously injured per 100 000 head of population. That is the worst in Western Australia and almost the worst in the country, I believe.

Hon Darren West: And it is the worst for not wearing a seatbelt—30 per cent. That is the difference.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: But regional Western Australians all over Western Australia are doing a better job. There is something about the wheatbelt. I will come to some of the things that I think explain it.

Hon Darren West: It is seatbelts.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: It is not entirely about seatbelts.

Going back to my time on the Road Safety Commission, I came to that body with the normal opinions that most people have about how people behave on our roads. I think Hon Colin de Grussa mentioned them. People believe that it is city drivers loose in the bush or young people and this and that. The chair of the Road Safety Commission at the time was a wonderful gentleman called D'Arcy Holman, who was a scientist. From day one he said, "We look at the data. We don't make a decision or make a recommendation unless the data tells us it's the case." Shortly after that, we arranged a visit to parts of the great southern and the wheatbelt to look at a few sites where fatalities had taken place. We stopped the bus and got out on the road between Wickiepin and Narrogin and stopped at a memorial, as there often is around those sites. Whilst I was standing on the bitumen, I could touch the white gum. Mr Holman asked what the speed limit was and I said it was 110 kilometres an hour. He said okay and I quickly said that speed was not an issue. Mr Holman said to me, "Well, Steve, if he was doing 20 kilometres an hour, he'd still be here." His scientific mind thought that speed was always an issue in a fatality, and he was very right. But his point was that we need to look at the data on all sorts of issues.

One of the things that we were confronted with on that body then, and I am sure it is the case now, was passing lanes. People say that we must have passing lanes because they are very important for all sorts of reasons, including speeding the flow of traffic, thereby avoiding anxiety for drivers, and making it easy for truck drivers. However, the data is simply not there when it comes to stopping fatalities. The data that is there is on audible edge lines. A trial was done on Albany Highway and the fatality rate dropped by 50 per cent. Audible edge lines on the edge and in the middle of the road, and an extra metre of seal, is enormously effective and not expensive. That saves lives. They are the sorts of initiatives we can implement. It is interesting when we think about why it saves lives. It stops someone from running off the road. In the wheatbelt and regional Western Australia, those accidents involving fatalities and serious injuries are almost all single-car run-offs. People go off one side, overreact and flip the car or fall sound asleep and hit a tree. We can do a lot in response to that.

Like Hon Martin Aldridge, I would also like to give a shout-out to Pat Walker from the RAC WA, who has retired after an outstanding career in that important organisation. Pat was a true believer in road safety, so thank you very much. I would also like to give a shout-out to Roger Farley from the Road Safety Commission, who retired early last year, I believe. I will mention Roger and explain why. Roger's role was to market and promote the road safety campaigns that we see. I believe the Leader of the House mentioned the latest one. He was a genius at doing that. That is one thing we can continue to do to change people's attitudes.

Hon Darren West mentioned seatbelts. Staggeringly, wearing seatbelts is still a substantial issue. I had a conversation with my local police officer recently in Wickepin and he said they had two or three issues recently around seatbelts. If we think that the messaging is done, it is not. Roger Farley has moved on to other things. I think he is a counsellor for RAC. We need to continue the great work that he and his team did. We need to convince people that accidents usually occur because of them; it is not usually because of the road conditions. It is either a lack of attention, speed, alcohol or not wearing a seatbelt. All the obvious stuff is still killing people at an alarmingly high rate on our regional roads. We need to keep working on those issues.

I have held a view for some time that is not particularly popular. I believe in road reserves being for roads. One thing we can do is clear a few trees. I think that is why the wheatbelt is significantly worse than other parts of regional Western Australia. Almost all our road verges have very large trees right up against them. We spend a lot of time in our cars. Up north, there a lot more vacant road verges. I am constantly harassed by shires asking for permission to clear their road verges because they simply are not safe. It is very hard and very slow to get permission to clear those trees. Apparently, the safety of the people who use the roads is not high on the list of reasons to put forward if people want to clear them. I think we simply need to do more to clear those spaces.

I do not know this for a fact, but I am guessing that one of the safest roads in Western Australia is Forrest Highway, running from Rockingham out to goodness knows where. If we look at the number of kilometres travelled by the number of people, it would be one of the safest roads in this state. People are endlessly doing 100 kilometres an hour, bumper-to-bumper, but the stats on that road would be spectacular. There are no white gums on that road, it is well lit and it is well regulated. Lots of wheatbelt roads are not.

I congratulate Hon Martin Aldridge for bringing this motion to the house. I would like to finish by thanking our first responders and the efforts they make, and will continue to make, on our behalf. I commend the motion to the house. Thank you.

HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West) [11.30 am]: I rise to speak in support of this excellent motion moved by Hon Martin Aldridge. I was sorry to hear about Hon Sue Ellery's mother. Last year a person very dear to me acquired a spinal cord injury in a traffic accident and it is hard; it is really hard. Any death due to traffic accidents is too many, although I am fully aware that there is an inherent risk in driving. I do not doubt that there are many contributing factors, some more complicated and others less complicated, but the simple ones I come across quite regularly in the south west are the issues of potholes, visibility and trees, as has already been mentioned. I think those issues could be easily fixed.

Road signage is another issue. My dad always said that the road signs here in Perth were very useful if you were a local and knew where you were going! I agree with him. Coming from Europe, we had a lot of overhead signage that allows people to preselect the lanes they need to take much earlier than does a sign on the side of the road. It just makes it clearer.

This is speculation on my part, but I have also wondered whether certain videogames falsely inflate confidence in children. They mimic the roads; they are driving a car and in their minds they are being trained to believe that they will survive every accident in those games. I have not seen any evidence for this, but I would be really interested to know whether there is any evidence around that.

WA people are notorious for our lack of ability to merge and I would love to see more education around that. Other countries have managed to master that; it basically works like a zipper, but that does not seem to be the case here. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

HON JAMES HAYWARD (South West) [11.32 am]: I also stand to support this motion. I must say that it is good to see another member for South West Region in the house to help lobby for better road safety outcomes. We are slowly building the numbers on the crossbench here; we will be wining and dining Hon Martin Pritchard and Hon Stephen Pratt to get them to come and join the team as well. We will get the numbers to about 17 or 18, and that will make life in the house far more exciting!

I digress; I turn to the motion before us. I want to talk specifically about the South Western Highway at Picton East. There is a caravan park there called Waterloo Village Caravan Park and its residents have been lobbying Main Roads, members of Parliament and the state government for some time to reduce the speed limit along their section of highway. There were some industrial developments along that section of the highway, with some large factories being built, so the number of road movements increased significantly and it became a much more competitive space in terms of vehicles travelling along that section. The speed limit was 100 kilometres per hour. I would describe that section of the highway as a very, very long S-bend, if you like; it is on a bend, and there would be near-misses every single day.

The residents of the caravan park began raising concerns about the road from probably about 2015. On 23 June 2020 a resident of the caravan park, Anne Rennie, was killed as she turned onto that section of the highway. That really motivated residents to start a bit of a public campaign to bring about some change. I got involved in helping to run that campaign and raising that issue and we had a number of meetings with Main Roads. However, those meetings

were very difficult. Main Roads was completely inflexible. Although it took the time to meet with the residents, and that was appreciated, there was simply not going to be any support from Main Roads to drop the speed limit, despite the fact that there had already been a fatality on that section of highway. Every time we went to the site for a meeting with these people, we would witness a near-miss, with people's cars skidding. It was quite a scary environment.

There was another fatality in August 2020. A cattle truck rolled over and spilled cattle all over the highway, and the driver was killed. At that point, the campaign really ramped up. I do not know the exact figures, but a significant amount of money was raised by the local community; we are talking tens of thousands of dollars. They started taking out full-page ads in newspapers and they lobbied GWN. They erected their own road signs, urging people to slow down, and they became very, very active in the media. In the face of all that pressure, the view of Main Roads was: "Nothing to see here. We don't change speed limits because people think it's a good idea. We want real data and real science." There had already been a couple of fatalities, but Main Roads said that the fact that somebody had died on a section of road was not enough for it to respond and drop the speed limit. It just seemed like a completely ridiculous situation. It was completely obvious to anyone who visited that space that the speed limit was simply too high.

There were a lot of truck movements on that section of the highway also, and although they were not speeding, they were doing 100 kilometres an hour, so with people pulling in and out of the Waterloo Village Caravan Park, Condello's Liquor, which is the shop next door, and the caravan business and all the industrial lots on the other side of the highway, it was a really contested space. Members can imagine B-doubles racing through there at 100 kilometres an hour; it was a fairly scary experience. In the end—probably because it was during the lead-up to an election—the Minister for Transport made a decision on 27 November 2020 to change the speed limit. I have to say, that was a terrific outcome. Since the speed limit was dropped there has not been another fatality on that section of the highway, and I hope that that remains the case moving forward.

I raise this issue because one of the things the government could do is to encourage Main Roads to engage more proactively in listening to people's concerns. There is a problem. The simple answer is to just slow everyone down and make the state speed limit 80 kilometres an hour instead of 110, and all the rest of it; let us make residential areas 30 kilometres an hour. People do not like that because it is inefficient and frustrating, and I have some sympathy for that position. But I think Main Roads has gone too far the other way. The government could encourage Main Roads to be a bit more flexible and a bit more engaged in trying to solve some of these issues before there are more fatalities.

Since then, concerns have been raised about the Albany Highway at Narrikup, with six fatalities at the black spot there. Residents in Capel also have concerns and could not get any action from Main Roads. There ended up being a fatality related to speed, but I am not sure whether the accident that happened there was specifically because of the condition of the road. However, there was a fatality and that became the impetus for the minister, the department and Main Roads moving to drop the speed limits at both Narrikup and Capel.

I think that demonstrates that there has perhaps been a bit of a move on the part of the government, but it could certainly do some more in this space in terms of encouraging Main Roads to be a bit more proactive. There is no doubt that local people have local knowledge—they are on the road all the time. Their greatest concern is that everybody thinks that the solution to all the problems is to reduce the speed limit; many people do not want that outcome. One of the jobs that I did on the campaign was to help with the social media page. I was amazed by the number of attacks on that page from people who did not like the idea of dropping the speed limit. Dropping the speed limit effectively added 18 or 19 seconds to the journey; it was not a significant change, but it has made a significant difference. I encourage the government to do more work in that space.

Hon Colin de Grussa talked about drivers. I drive up and down Forrest Highway all the time and I cannot work out why drivers do not understand that the left-hand lane is the lane they ought to drive in; it is frustrating. There is no excuse for drivers who scoot along more quickly than they ought to. It is not about facilitating drivers to scoot along faster than they ought to; rather, it is about creating a safe driving environment in which everyone knows where they will be. It is bit like playing football and reading the play. A person becomes a great football player by working out where the ball is going to be next and making sure that they are there. Football players need to have good skills to work that out; it is not supposed to be so difficult on the road. The left-hand lane is there for people who have reached their speed. They can sit in the left-hand lane and only use the right-hand lane when overtaking.

Another frustration on country roads is when a driver gets to an overtaking lane but a big truck with two trailers decides to overtake another truck with two trailers and it can only do about three kilometres an hour faster than the truck it is overtaking and it battles to get past. We need to do more work in talking to heavy haulage operators about the way they operate. They all have radios and can talk to each other. If a guy in one truck needs to get past another, surely the other truck driver can just slow down. It is about those practical things.

Ultimately, the real change that needs to happen is in people's attitudes to the way they drive. I have a young 17-year-old boy; I am terrified about what the next five years have in store for him. As parents who have gone before me have done, I am doing the best I can to make sure that he is as prepared as he can be and that he understands

the absolute serious consequences of being silly, not concentrating or looking at his phone to read a message that says “Laugh out loud” instead of concentrating on driving. These things are modern problems and hopefully technology can find a way to help arrest those types of behaviours.

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [11.42 am]: In the short time remaining, I would like to make a quick contribution in support of the motion. It is an important topic and certainly one that affects us all. We live in a vast state, with a spread out, sprawling city, for those members who live in Perth, so we all have a relationship with our cars. We certainly know of someone who has directly or indirectly been involved with road trauma.

Since returning to WA about two years ago, I have been a personal contributor to the road trauma trust account. When I went through a red light camera and it flashed, I uttered under my breath “This is just a revenue-raising exercise.” I was glad to learn that the funds that I would contribute would go to a good cause. Despite a few speeding infractions in my time on this planet, I have been very fortunate enough to have not been involved in a serious accident, but I have witnessed a serious accident. A couple of months ago, I was driving northbound on Kwinana Freeway. A car driving southbound became airborne and flipped through the air. I think it rolled about six or seven times. When it finished rolling, it landed on its roof and flames started to come out of the vehicle. I was with my partner at the time and we both thought that no-one would walk away from that accident. We had basically just witnessed a car full of people die. It was very triggering for my partner, whose friend had passed away in a vehicle accident when she was 17, which was very tragic for her. We have heard some moving personal stories about those who have been directly involved in road trauma incidents. It is a very important topic, one that is worth raising from time to time. As a regional member, I hope to become more familiar with the topic over the term. I thank the honourable member for raising this issue today.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

WOMEN’S ISSUES — PROGRESSIVE INITIATIVES

Motion

HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan) [11.45 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house acknowledges the progressive initiatives that the McGowan government has implemented to advance women’s issues in Western Australia.

I am very proud to have moved my motion that the Legislative Council acknowledge the progressive initiatives that the McGowan government has implemented to advance women’s issues in WA. I am very proud to stand here today as a member of the McGowan Labor government; I am very proud to be one of the 115 women who have been elected to this Parliament in the last 102 years; and I am very proud to be one of the 43 women elected at the 2021 election. I am especially proud to say that 91 per cent of the women in Parliament today are members of the McGowan Labor government. That is just extraordinary—91 per cent.

WA Labor has been a leader on women’s issues for a long time. It was a Labor government that introduced a Minister for Women’s Interests 40 years ago. Unfortunately, though, the first two Ministers for Women’s Interests were men! However, since then the role has been continuously occupied by women, with Hon Sue Ellery becoming the eleventh Minister for Women’s Interests. What I will be speaking about today will be the culmination of the work of the current Minister for Women’s Interests and the previous Minister for Women’s Interests, Hon Simone McGurk, who, members will agree, are formidable women.

The McGowan Labor government does not just talk about the importance of women’s issues—it acts. In March 2020, the McGowan Labor government launched *Stronger together: WA’s plan for gender equality*. This 10-year plan sets out a long-term coordinated approach to address gender inequality in Western Australia. The Premier’s message in the plan states —

I am very proud to present Stronger Together: WA’s Plan for Gender Equality, a long-term coordinated approach to addressing gender inequality in Western Australia. It provides a road map not just for Government, but for businesses, communities and individuals.

The data tells us that women in Western Australia are still at considerable risk of violence and abuse, and we continue to have a significant gender pay gap. This is unacceptable and our State risks being left behind if we don’t take action.

The plan has four priorities. The first priority is health and wellbeing, with the goal that women are healthy, active and lead fulfilled lives. The second priority is safety and justice, with the goal that women live safely and have appropriate access to adequate legal protections. The third priority is economic independence, with the goal that women are financially independent across all life stages. The fourth priority is leadership, with the goal being that women’s skills, achievements and strengths are valued, enabling them to participate equally in the community, including at leadership levels. My colleagues will go into the report in more detail because the topic of women’s issues and interests is so vast, and the government is doing so much in this area, that I could not possibly tell members everything that is going on in 15 minutes. We know it is going to take a long time. We know that this attitude towards women continues. People still do not value women in society.

This plan relates to a lot of our other plans, policies and strategies, including Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity, the WA strategy to reduce family and domestic violence and the workforce diversification strategy. Under the safety and justice priority area it states —

Women in Western Australia are far more likely than men to experience physical or sexual violence during their lives ... One in five women in Western Australia report having experienced partner violence since the age of 15, and more than one-third of those women reported that the violence occurred during pregnancy.

One in five women! That means that we are sitting in this chamber with a woman who has experienced some form of violence in their life. There is no doubt about that. There is probably not a woman in this Parliament who has not been sexually abused in some form since a young age, whether verbally, physically, socially or even via the internet or email—there is not one. We have seen in recent newspaper reports that women’s fear of violence is real, but women are told on a regular basis that they are responsible for their own safety and that they have to modify their behaviour because of this. I have spoken about this before. The responsibility lives with all of us. We are responsible as a society to teach men how to treat women better. We are responsible as a society to teach children to treat everybody with respect. It is not up to women to modify their behaviour; it is up to the whole of society. We need to continue down that path.

In looking at this motion, I picked up the *Second action plan 2021–2025*, the progress report for *Stronger together*. We are moving forward. We are currently implementing the second action plan; work is being undertaken by the government. One of the focus areas is COVID-19 women’s recovery. As we all know, we have had issues coming out of COVID. I was speaking to a young woman last night about the fact that she went through year 12 as a COVID student, and we spoke about the impact of that on some young people. It has been extraordinary talking to her, my daughter and other women of that age. As a young woman, I would say, “I’m a feminist! We’re moving forward. No children for me. I want a career”, and all that stuff. We now have a whole society of young women who are going inwards and saying, “No, I want to be a mother at a young age. I want to be married with children.” It is a very weird and unconventional step backwards for women’s lib. They are still powerful young women, but what I am picking up is that they have a sense of insecurity in society that makes them want to retreat into traditional roles. That is quite sad. We should be building up and empowering these young women.

Excuse me; I have a bit of a sore throat today. Being a woman, I talk loud; I always have. Members are used to it; they can probably hear me halfway down the corridor!

The action plan also looks at safe workplaces. We had an absolutely amazing but very sad inquiry into women in the mining industry and what has been happening to a lot of women when they go into male-dominated industries. As a woman who came from the union movement, I understand. I have been there, sitting in a room with 30 big smelly men who, when I stood up, were still taller than me. We were negotiating agreements. These men, coming from a traditional men’s union, tried to say, “Sit down, lassie.” Again, me being me, I did not take that; I stood up and very proudly said, “No, we are here together, working in solidarity. I am a woman, but, firstly, I am a member of this union.” All the women out there, whether they work as a police officer, as a paramedic, as a firefighter, in the mines, driving a bus or as a member of Parliament, are work colleagues and they should be treated with respect. Members are polite and professional to each other. Sometimes we are more friendly. It does not matter what side of politics one sits on, we are courteous and polite to each other. That is what we should model to people out there, and we should continue to move forward.

Another aspect of the plan that was brought in is the drink-spiking test kit. On the rare occasions I go out, I have seen young women carry their glasses onto the dance floor. Being the mum I am, I would say, “What’re you doing? You can’t do that.” It took me a while to realise that they do it for their own safety. It is ridiculous that young women cannot go out and get up on the dance floor and dance without having to hold their hands over the top of their drinks. They are not holding them at the side; they are covering the tops of their drinks so that nobody can put anything in their drink as they walk past them. When I was a young woman, we left everything sitting there. It did not matter whether we were in Edinburgh, Glasgow or the small town I came from, we did not think about that. We were not worried about somebody spiking our drinks. Now, every young woman who goes out has that concern, and a lot of young men as well, to be honest. What on earth are we doing as a society? It really boggles my mind at times.

Another great thing is that period products are now available in schools. This is sensational. Every woman will remember going through the first flush of puberty and becoming a woman and getting their period. They will remember sitting in a classroom and going, “Oh my God; I’ve got my period”, and being so embarrassed by it as there was nothing there to help them, or the boys making fun of them because they had supplies in their bag or they pulled them out at the shops or something. It has happened to every one of us. But by having these products available and talking openly about periods, we take away the myth. Women have periods, by the way. We are taking away the myth about this. Females around the world get their periods. To have access to these products when in school is amazing.

The *Path to safety* report, which is connected to *Stronger together*, states —

To stop family and domestic violence before it escalates, people need to be able to recognise controlling behaviours.

That comment from Simone McGurk is in the foreword to *Path to safety: Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020–2030*. She also said —

Fundamentally, this work is about respect and valuing women and girls as equal partners.

If people look through all the literature and programs that the Minister for Women's Interests and her office are doing, they will see that every single one is about respect for women, empowering women to step forward and empowering women to take on non-traditional roles in the workplace. They are about empowering women in the community to make sure that their voices are heard on a regular basis, and empowering young women in society. I have a young woman who works part-time in my office. She is an extraordinary young woman—hey, Ebony; you are pretty remarkable. She is at university studying a business degree with marketing on the side, as well as all the other things she does. I see my role as an older woman as being to mentor and empower Ebony to be the best that she can be. I see my role as a member of Parliament as being to make sure that every other young woman who comes from a working class background like me, who did not come through the university ranks because they chose a different pathway in life, who were not handed everything in life and who have had to work hard and long hours to get where they are, knows that they can do it. I want every female who is a single parent out there to know that they can actually come here and do it. The Stronger Together plan for the future is one of the ways that we can do it. Women in here, sisters, we should continue to work together to ensure that respect is shown to all. We should continue to work together to support each other and to build each other up, and we should continue to be proud to be members of the McGowan Labor government. It is the one government in WA that is actually going forward and putting its plan into place to ensure that the future of WA will be strongly female. Next time, we want to see more than 43 female MPs; we want to see 50 per cent at least.

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [12 noon]: I rise in support of the motion brought forward by Hon Lorna Harper and thank her for raising the motion and providing us with an opportunity to discuss some important issues about women in both Parliament and the WA community.

Last year I had the opportunity to attend the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in Halifax, Canada, and the conference theme was “Inclusive, accessible, accountable and strong Parliaments: The cornerstone of democracy and essential for development”. It is difficult for a community to truly call itself a democracy if it excludes or underrepresents groups proportionate to the population. I am incredibly proud to say that I discovered at the conference that WA Labor and the McGowan government are, in fact, world leaders among Commonwealth countries. Women hold only 26 per cent of seats in Parliament around the world, yet we are around 49 or 50 per cent of the global population. Only 25.5 per cent of all national parliamentarians are women, and we are only 19.5 per cent in Commonwealth countries, but WA Labor is edging very close to 50 per cent women MPs, and that is something we can be incredibly proud of. It is something that has been achieved by active effort, initiatives and policy within WA Labor, and setting the standard is something that the McGowan government should be incredibly proud of. It includes the first woman to hold a seat in my electorate, the Agricultural Region, Lara Dalton, which is something that we are incredibly proud of. The fantastic synchronicity of that happening was that it was very close to the birthplace of Edith Cowan and 100 years since Edith Cowan was elected; I think that is highly symbolic of how far we have come. Moreover, in the last state election, we achieved some great diversity. Just in the Legislative Council, we have the examples of the first Sudanese person elected to Parliament, Hon Ayor Makur Chuot; the first Indigenous woman elected to the Legislative Council, Hon Rosie Sahanna; and the first Serbian-born person elected, Hon Klara Andric.

It is also important to address why that is so important. Why is it so important that we have women in Parliament? I would like to make the argument that we operate and form policy on data. If we look at data globally and we explore how data operates, it operates from a default male setting, and that results in some key structural outcomes, even in how buildings, furniture, equipment and machinery are designed. They are all designed to suit the physiology of men because the designs are based on the data of men, data that has been collected around male experience. An example is the commonwealth Parliament building not having toilets for women when the first women were elected to federal Parliament. It also results in things like the temperature in the chamber being set to a temperature that best suits men in suits, and men have a naturally higher body temperature than women. The default setting is male; it is a one-size-fits-male default setting, and it has an impact on women's lives and safety. Another example is that crash test dummies in cars represent the male physiology, which means that if women are involved in an accident, they are far more likely to not achieve the full benefit of safety mechanisms in vehicles because they were not designed for the female physiology. Data impacts policy, and data bias impacts policy. It is so important to have female voices contributing to policy, and it is important to have data.

Today, the Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Closing the Gender Pay Gap) Bill 2023 passed in the federal Parliament, which I am very excited to note. The bill will ensure that companies with more than 100 employees will be required to publish their gender pay gap data. It is an important policy reform. If we look at the gender pay gap in Australia, it still sits around 13.3 per cent.

Undervaluing the importance of representation of women in politics does not just form structural inequalities; undervaluing women begins at home. It results in proprietary rights and in outcomes like family and domestic

violence. I am really pleased that the McGowan government appointed the first Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and put significant work into the development of Minister McGurk's *Path to safety: Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020–2030*. It represented a significant paradigm shift. Most importantly, it looked at the prevention of violence against women and children. The survey looked at national community attitudes towards violence against women, and it showed us that the understanding of what constitutes violence against women is declining, particularly in the 16-year-old to 24-year-old age group. That is a very worrying statistic, and it has never been more important that we continue to have the representation of women in Parliament. It also signals to us our collective responsibility—we cannot continue to fail our young men because the harm that will cause them in their future lives will be significant.

The prevention programs that the McGowan government is implementing are particularly important. It is investing over \$7 million to prevent family and domestic violence, including our respectful relationship teaching support programs, which are particularly important in schools. It has invested over \$1 million to expand those programs through schools; they continue to expand and will be expanded into sporting and recreational clubs as well. They are important. The programs also work to educate some of the teaching staff, and that is particularly important. I can give members a very concrete example of when I was teaching; I saw a young man behave in a way that was aggressive and worryingly disrespectful of a young woman. We had a pastoral care system in which homeroom teachers addressed behavioural issues with their students, and I explained to the male homeroom teacher the situation, what I had seen and heard, and how that was a form of aggression and violence against the young woman. His response to me was “Yeah, I think he likes her. I think he has a bit of a thing for her.” That is not an example of understanding respectful relationships or understanding the significant underlying issue of how violence against women happens. It continues to be perpetuated unless we are all taking personal responsibility, stepping in and calling it out. That is why I emphasise the importance of the McGowan government's commitment to those respectful relationships programs and the way they are operating within schools.

Another really fantastic example is one we just saw in this sitting of Parliament, and that is the offensive advertising bill we passed earlier. I think that collectively we can all be proud of that. Things like offensive slogans on vans, things that normalise or create humour around violence against other people and misogynistic or racist attitudes towards others are other ways in which we endorse unhealthy attitudes. They are ways that we quietly and subtly perpetuate violence throughout society, so I am incredibly proud to be a part of the McGowan government, which brought this bill to Parliament and recently passed it. It is a fantastic reform and one that also started a really important dialogue about the impact of that kind of advertising.

Some really important legislation has also been passed on the new specific criminal offence of suffocation and strangulation. It is particularly important legislation because the research tells us that victims of strangulation are seven times more likely to be the victims of homicide. That legislation is potentially life-saving. It is important to note that those kinds of events need to be spoken about. We need people to comment and communicate about those kind of things, because if we are not talking about those kind of things because it is uncomfortable or we do not like to think that they are happening, they continue to happen. Again, I talk about our collective responsibility and part of the role of women in Parliament is to continue to raise these points and carry those conversations forward so that we can address those things and prevent that kind of violence and proprietary rights over women and elevate their status in the community. That is something I am proud to say that the McGowan government has been working towards.

I am going to run out of time. We have also spent more than \$7 million on a new restraining order system, which is something to be particularly proud of.

HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [12.10 pm]: I did that with such enthusiasm! Thank you, Acting President.

I begin by thanking Hon Lorna Harper for bringing this motion to the house with her fantastic contribution, and also Hon Sandra Carr's. According to the latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics from June 2021, women make up 50 per cent of the Australian population, would you believe it? But equality stops at the statistics as there are several challenges and issues as we all know that are unique to women throughout all facets of our society. These include much higher rates of domestic violence, pay inequality and a lack of workplace opportunities, to name a few. I am so pleased to see that this government in particular, as an Australian first, created a new offence for non-fatal strangulation. As we all know, whilst we must do more to protect victims of domestic violence with steps like this—I wanted to mention this particular step first-off—introducing serial family violence offender declarations are really important for unfortunately too many women.

I would like to use my time today to speak on some of the challenges that we face, and include the initiatives and achievements of the McGowan government towards closing the gap in several of these areas. Firstly, I would like to observe the trends for women in roles of leadership, and say that they are looking quite positive, with a few examples being the McGowan government's 2017 election commitment of having 50 per cent women on government boards and committees being achieved by October 2022. That is an incredible achievement. Women now make up 52.9 per cent of government boards and committees. This is an increase of 32 per cent from 2015. Women now

make up 50 per cent of senior executive service contracts in the public sector, which is an increase of 33 per cent. Women occupy almost 30 per cent of the Public Transport Authority, which is an increase of 50 per cent since 2017. Women now make up 46 per cent of WA Parliament, which is an incredible increase from 31 per cent in the previous term, and something I am so incredibly proud to see. It is no doubt that this is in fact mainly thanks to the McGowan government, with 52 per cent of the McGowan Labor government caucus being made up of female members of Parliament. In this house, 60 per cent of MPs in the Legislative Council are women. These are the kinds of track records of our government that I am really proud to see. Unfortunately, and I do not want to use this opportunity to make a dig at the other side —

Hon Donna Faragher: Yes, but you will.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: I will, I am sorry, Hon Donna Faragher, but it is something that I hope that she, being the only female sitting on that side, will listen to because I am sure she understands that until the other side's representation of women reflects the community, which, as I said when I first started speaking today, is 50 per cent, it will struggle. It is a fact, because without that understanding, without women being representatives in Parliament, which is a reflection of the community, I do not believe that good governments can be formed.

One of the several initiatives put in place by the McGowan government is *Stronger together: WA's plan for gender equality*. Members talked about this earlier. The stronger together plan is the first of its kind in WA that provides a framework for coordinated action by not only the government, but also businesses, organisations and individuals, with practical steps aiming at advancing gender equality. The plan was launched in 2020 and it is now in its third year. It will be delivered through four action plans spanning a 10-year period from 2020 to 2030. I am pleased to know that the plan was drafted by an extensive consultation process with a wide range of people from all age groups, diverse backgrounds, different abilities and diverse sexual identities across Western Australia who provided their thoughts and their ideas. Stronger together has now entered its second action plan with focuses across four priority areas, including safety and justice, health and wellbeing, leadership, and economic independence.

I move on to the stronger together plan's action area of economic independence relating to pay inequality in Western Australia. The gender pay gap of WA is the highest of all states, not a record that we like, but it is a fact. We are currently sitting at 22.1 per cent, which is higher than the national average. Several factors contribute to the gender pay gap, including the lack of female representation in leadership positions and the undervaluation of occupations predominantly held by women, such as child care. Although I am pleased to hear that women's workforce participation rate currently sits at 64.5 per cent, which is an all-time high, we all know that there is still room for improvement. Additional studies indicate that gender bias in recruitment and promotion practices is a significant factor that contributes to the pay gap between genders. The ideas of stereotypical gender roles in the workforce are in fact learnt in childhood and reinforced through a woman's formative years and further. I talked about this last week when we spoke about education and women in STEM. This has a significant influence on what careers women tend to go for, including the fields that attract higher wages and higher pay. This, as I said, includes STEM roles. I believe that in order to engage more women in STEM, we need to encourage women to take up these career paths.

We have done this through McGowan Labor government policies. I talked in detail last week about the "Future jobs, future skills" strategy. This strategy aims to meet the government's Our Priorities target of 85 per cent of year 12 students completing two or more STEM skills by 2024. As we know, the key objective in this strategy is to address the lack of gender diversity in STEM education and careers. However, as we know, STEM is not the only career path that is highly dominated by men and attracts some of WA's highest-paid jobs. The mining and construction sector also sees higher wages and shares the same problem when it comes to gender inequality. As I have repeatedly said in this house, education is once again the key to opening pathways to more lucrative roles, and I am pleased to see positive statistics coming from TAFE schools and across our state. Thanks to the McGowan government's lower fees, more women are enrolled in traditionally male-occupied roles.

There was so much that I wanted to talk about in this area, but once again I have run out of time. I have to get better at summarising what I want to say more efficiently. I want to say that this government knows that if we can close the gender pay gap, every Western Australian will share in the economic and social results.

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan) [12.20 pm]: I also rise to make a few comments on the motion on women's issues. I indicate that I will not take the bait from Hon Klara Andric, because I think that, so far, this has been a good and positive motion in terms of the issues being raised.

I come to this debate with a very clear view. I have always taken the view that background and circumstance should never define someone's ability to lead or make a difference within the community, and neither should gender. But it is quite clear and understood that there continues to be disadvantage, inequity and challenges for women in a range of areas. My response to that, and I think it is shared by, and in line with, the comments of the other speakers so far, is that we all have a role to play whether we are female or male in advancing the status of women and promoting equality of opportunity for girls and women and identifying areas that require change and action.

Empowering women is critical to supporting economic prosperity and growth. It is critical to reducing poverty. We know not just here in Australia but around the globe that education absolutely is the key to opportunity and

that educating women across all ages leads to better health and wellbeing opportunities, as well as a range of other areas such as better child nutrition, improved financial literacy and so forth. Having support mechanisms for women—I think Hon Lorna Harper talked about this when she mentioned her electorate officer in this context—and encouraging more female role models and mentors who can inspire girls from a very young age is incredibly important. Equally, it is imperative that for women we have continued identification, encouragement and support for leadership opportunities; pre-employment and further education programs; a greater involvement and partnership between industry and school or government and school or a combination of all three; and identified, promoted and supported career opportunities, particularly in fields—I think Hon Klara Andric raised this—that might not be seen as “traditional”.

A couple of weeks ago, I was at the Women’s Wall of Fame ceremony with the Leader of the House, and the Leader of the House talked specifically about that, and I absolutely support what she was saying. I will always give support to initiatives and actions that promote those career opportunities—to ensure that women know that they can achieve in whatever field they have an interest in. In saying that, though, it is quite clear, as I said at the beginning, that in terms of equality of opportunity there continues to be challenges and disadvantages across a range of areas, and a number of those areas have already been identified.

I will say that although this is somewhat of a self-congratulatory motion, which we have become used to on a Thursday morning and which is fine—that is the government’s prerogative—I think it is also important that we recognise that there are many, many organisations, non-government organisations and individuals right across our community who each and every day support women across a range of areas. I do not think we should ever underestimate the value that they play.

In preparation for today, I looked at the *2022 Women’s report card: An indicator report of Western Australian women’s progress*. I will reference the executive summary. It states —

... through lockdowns and working from home arrangements, the COVID-19 pandemic has created an environment where women’s exposure to family and domestic violence may have been heightened. Working from home arrangements coupled with lockdowns have implied lower levels of traditional modes of social connection, with the potential to lead to feelings of isolation and poorer mental and physical health.

For many women, access to health services such as cancer screening and face-to-face mental health treatments also changed.

The report card identified a number of priority areas and the overlay across all of them was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of mental health and wellbeing, the report quite clearly identifies the need that we ensure that women can continue to have access to critical health screening and support during both state and national crises. Members know that on numerous occasions last year I raised questions in this place about my concerns on the restrictions, which I think were too long, of face-to-face appointments for mothers accessing child health nurses. I think those restrictions went on for far too long. I raise that in an area that does not get talked about a lot, and I appreciate that I have only three minutes, but I will take this opportunity now, given we are heading closer to a May budget, to ask the government to consider the issue of mental health support, particularly perinatal mental health support for women.

Many community-based organisations and programs support new parents, families and their children. It is an area that does not get talked about a lot, but it needs to be talked about because change will not happen in this area if we do not do something about it. We have specialist programs through the mother baby units that are offered at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women as well as Fiona Stanley Hospital. They provide specialist care for mothers who are under significant mental health stress. Equally, Ngala provides a residential parenting service, which is really important because it is a preventive measure, in the hope that by supporting mum and bub early, it will reduce the likelihood of those more intensive treatments. There is, however, a gap for a number of women right now in the state who do not have private health insurance. We have those women who can afford the residential support and another group of women who are provided support through a contract of services between the Department of Communities and Ngala. It has been in place for some time. It is for at-risk families and it is a really important service. But there is a large group of women in the middle who miss out because of financial and other circumstances. When those mums miss out, it can not only lead to a further decline in their mental health and wellbeing, but also have a significant impact on their child and their entire family. Someone said to me, and I think it is a pretty good line, that a universal service focusing on prevention and early intervention should be a service that 100 per cent of mums and families can access. That is a very clear statement. I hope that the government looks into this issue. It is an issue that I am particularly passionate about because there is a group of women who are missing out on a really important health service.

In the last minute I have, I will also say—with my hat on as the shadow Minister for Seniors and Ageing—that one of the biggest issues that continues to be raised with me is about older women’s financial security and their need for secure housing. There was a recent report on these issues by the Council on the Ageing. I have spoken with COTA, as well as Anglicare and others on this particular issue. Women represent the fastest growing cohort of older people seeking access to homelessness services. The COTA report also identified a number of other areas that

disproportionately affect older women. There are issues in and around elder abuse; financial security and financial literacy; digital literacy, which impacts their ability to navigate services; as well as inclusion and connectedness. I would like to say more, but I am running out of time.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [12.30 pm]: I thank Hon Lorna Harper for moving the motion. Before I get into my comments on behalf of the government, I acknowledge a former member of this place in the President's gallery, Rick Mazza—is he still honourable? It is nice to see him back to visit.

I will get into the substance of the motion before us today. I am delighted to be standing here in one of the roles that I now have. I have a sense of *deja vu* because I was the Minister for Women's Interests for 17 months when Labor was last in government—not that I am bitter about how long I was a minister in that government. It is delightful to be back in this portfolio. So much has changed since I was last in the portfolio, and yet there is still more to do. I have been active in the women's movement for my whole adult life; it started in high school. When I heard officers from Treasury talking about the place of women in our economy as a point for national debate, I could not believe it. I did not think I would live to hear child care finally being identified in a policy sense as a major driver in how we shift our economy, even though some of us have been saying that for a long time. I am glad that things have moved as far as they have. However, there is still more to be done.

I want to talk a little bit about the things that I see will have an impact on women in Western Australia going forward. Hon Donna Faragher mentioned the range of stakeholders and community organisations that are actively pursuing policies on behalf of women. I have been delighted to catch up with those, meet new ones and meet some of the people I worked with before. Whether it is Circle Green Community Legal, which has funds allocated to assist women in employment matters; CEOs for Gender Equity; the Country Women's Association of WA, which I was delighted to have a really constructive meeting with; or Women in Sport, I have had meetings with all those stakeholders. I also met with the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing, which has grown into one of the leading organisations in Western Australia looking at the breadth and depth of women's safety and health. I was delighted to catch up with those organisations and hear from them the things that they want me to prioritise in my role.

I said that I want to concentrate on what is still ahead of us in this term. We have done a lot of work already, particularly in the area of law reform, whether that is around revenge porn legislation or supporting women's right to seek a safe and private abortion through the Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Act. Later this year, we will introduce legislation to modernise our laws around abortion. That will be treated as a conscience vote. I accept that people in this place will have a different point of view on that. They will be able to exercise that. However, it is the case that the vast majority of women in Western Australia want our abortion laws updated. We are going to deliver on that.

Another area in which we have been doing an enormous amount of work is around family and domestic violence. The Law Reform Commission is currently undertaking a piece of work reviewing sexual offences and examining the issue of affirmative consent. This is a really interesting piece of work. It is looking at whether we should make laws to mandate that people make sure that their sexual partner gives consent. New South Wales has already done this and the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria have committed to doing it. The Law Reform Commission will give that report to the government sometime later this year. I think it will be a really important piece of work. We have also completed consultation on coercive control and creating better measures to address that kind of behaviour.

Our work on family and domestic violence has been really wide and broad. I want to obviously acknowledge the work of my predecessor—the previous minister, Simone McGurk—in this area. We have invested in more community-based services, including two new women's refuges. We have also established WA's family and domestic violence one-stop hubs. One is in Mirrabooka and the other is in Kalgoorlie. They make it easier for women experiencing violence to come forward and seek help. We are rolling out two more, in Armadale and Broome. We increased the capacity of systems to better identify and respond to family and domestic violence, including training frontline police and paramedics, and introducing antenatal screening for family and domestic violence in public hospitals. I think that is a really important piece of work. We have prioritised raising awareness of the drivers of violence so that we can stop it before it starts. My colleague Hon Sandra Carr talked about the respectful relationships program in schools. We are also developing a respectful relationships pilot for sporting organisations.

The 16 Days in WA campaign, which was created to draw attention to violence against women, is a key time to shine a light and focus on what we have done and need to do further to keep women safe in their homes and within their families. We have allocated \$3 million in family and domestic violence primary prevention grants to 17 WA organisations to help stop family and domestic violence before it starts. We have funded practical supports to victim-survivors, such as \$930 000 to support Healing Smiles through to October 2025. Healing Smiles helps women who have experienced dental injuries from family and domestic violence to get their teeth fixed. It is something that is simple and practical. For many women experiencing family and domestic violence that is an area that will never get fixed because it is so expensive.

One of the reasons women have given in the past for not wanting to leave violent situations is their concern for their pets, and that they will become, if not already, a victim to violence in a family and domestic violence situation. We funded the Pets in Crisis program and expanded the program so that people who need to leave home because

of family and domestic violence can have their pets cared for. We are developing two new specialist youth family and domestic violence counselling services to better support young people affected by family and domestic violence. The service in Rockingham commenced earlier this month. We are also developing a family and domestic violence forensics service to give law enforcement the best chance of successfully prosecuting perpetrators. We are funding a rapid rehousing pilot to assist women exiting refuges to find accommodation. A contract has been awarded to Zonta House. A shout-out to Zonta; it is located in my electorate. It does amazing work. I love that organisation. We have also expanded the Safe at Home program to provide things like security upgrades for women who stay in their house when the perpetrator leaves.

I want to again thank Hon Lorna Harper for moving this motion. We have achieved a lot. The McGowan government has a lot to be proud of about women's social, economic and community status in Western Australia. There is always more to be done, and I am pleased to be able to lead part of that work.

HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West) [12.40 pm]: I rise to speak in favour of this motion and thank Hon Lorna Harper for bringing this up. I suspect that many Labor women in both places have worked hard at creating awareness and driving change in policy and leading initiatives. I was very pleased to see that period products will be made available to girls in high school. This is such a simple strategy to support the wellbeing and participation of girls in school.

One area I would like to see more work done is increasing the understanding of the risk that violent men pose to women and children. The news regularly reports on violence perpetrated by men with a history of violence, possibly even whilst out on bail for violent crimes, including those of a sexual nature. We deserve protection from those men and leniency in the laws that allow this need to be addressed. Compassion must be reserved for the victims. I have noticed this leniency in sexual crimes against children, too, when having a hard drive with sexual abuse material is dismissed as victimless. This is simply not true. Whilst a jail sentence is often primarily seen as a punishment, it is also there to keep us safe. Lenient and out-of-touch sentencing satisfies neither goal.

A recent study by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety—ANROWS—showed that although there was a better understanding of violence against women, certain attitudes still persist, specifically around victim blaming. Although statistics show that one in five women and girls experienced sexual violence, many are still not believed. One of the contributing factors that I see is the continued sexual objectification and commodification of women and girls. It is increasingly normalised in the fashion and entertainment industries. Our suffering has become the entertainment of the masses. We see this in movies, television shows, video games and in porn. This normalisation minimises our suffering, reduces empathy and perpetuates the cycle of violence. To fix this, a massive cultural change is needed and I applaud any government brave enough to tackle that. I thank Hon Lorna Harper for bringing forward this motion and hope to see more women-centred initiatives in the near future. Thank you also to the other honourable members for speaking.

HON ROSIE SAHANNA (Mining and Pastoral) [12.42 pm]: I rise to speak to the motion my colleague Hon Lorna Harper presented, and support the incredible and ongoing work the McGowan government has undertaken to implement solutions and strategies that support the empowerment of women in Western Australia. Last year, the McGowan government supported community initiatives that focus on women by presenting grants to 12 organisations to fund programs designed to address the priorities of women's economic independence, safety and justice. The funded programs were developed to support and empower women to reach their potential in all stages of life, including at school, in the workplace, in retirement homes and within their communities.

Earlier this month, in recognition of International Women's Day, the McGowan government delivered a significant increase in grant funding to women through the Strong Futures program. Fourteen community organisations received grants of up to \$100 000 each to help tackle gender inequality in Western Australia. One of the ventures that received this funding was an intergenerational project in Roebourne in the Pilbara in which Aboriginal women worked alongside elders, female artists and mentors to build skills as leaders in the community. I am proud that the McGowan government recognises the importance of having female leaders in our community. It is very important.

A common elephant in the room, which my colleagues have mentioned, is the gender pay gap. Women are still not always being paid as much as men for doing the exact same jobs. Companies and organisations around Australia are committed to closing the gender pay gap but inequality still exists. In recognition of this absurd gap, the McGowan government committed to a 10-year gender equality road map in 2020 to tackle inequality in Western Australia. At the time of its implementation, women in Western Australia faced Australia's largest gender pay gap of 22.1 per cent. There have been results from the McGowan government's plan for gender equality. One example is that at the end of last year, the Water Corporation reported a narrowing of its gender pay gap from 11.2 per cent in 2015 to 4.7 per cent in 2022. This is a great result.

I am a sporting fanatic, so I would like to talk about equality in women's sports, where women continue to fight for equal salaries and recognition. There have been gradual advances in this sector, too. The FIFA World Cup will be held here later this year.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

DISALLOWANCE MOTIONS*Discharge of Order*

Hon Lorna Harper reported that the concerns of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation had been addressed to the satisfaction of the committee on the following disallowance motions, and on her motions without notice it was resolved —

That the following orders of the day be discharged from the notice paper —

1. Shire of Kojonup Cat Local Law 2022 — Disallowance.
2. Shire of Kojonup Parking Local Law 2022 — Disallowance.
3. Shire of Dumbleyung Bush Fire Brigades Local Law 2022 — Disallowance.
4. Shire of Dumbleyung Health Local Law 2022 — Disallowance.
5. Shire of Dumbleyung Local Government Property and Public Places Local Law 2022 — Disallowance.
6. Shire of Kondinin Bush Fire Brigades Local Law 2022 — Disallowance.
7. City of Wanneroo Bush Fire Brigades Local Law 2022 — Disallowance.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2023*Second Reading*

Resumed from 23 March.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [12.50 pm]: I rise with much enthusiasm as the lead speaker for the opposition on the Local Government Amendment Bill 2023, and I am glad that —

Hon Sue Ellery: You know that *Hansard* doesn't always pick up irony?

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Ha! I am glad that we have not found ourselves disallowing seven local government local laws immediately preceding this order of business today, being order of the day 11, Local Government Amendment Bill 2023.

I do not have primary carriage of the bill for the opposition; I am representing the shadow Minister for Local Government in the other place, the member for North West Central. I am sure that, like me, many members in this place have some connection with the local government sector, and that is the topic on which I would like to start my contribution today. Firstly, I want to thank the advisers from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and the Minister for Local Government's office, who provided me with a briefing recently. They were most helpful in terms of the information that was provided. Their advice was genuine, thorough and timely. When we have a large bill like this that does many things, I must say it was refreshing and very helpful for the advisers to group relevant clauses together in terms of the policy outcomes being pursued. In my recent experience of dealing with the Health Services Amendment Bill 2021, that sort of information was sought from the advisers but was not forthcoming. When we deal with bills that do many things, as this bill does, that will certainly be helpful when we get to Committee of the Whole and have to navigate its many clauses.

Another thing I want to briefly touch on is the very significant body of work—some 418 pages—that was the final report of the Select Committee into Local Government, *Final report—Inquiry into local government*. I am not sure what I did wrong to find myself on that committee for this very lengthy examination of local government, but just looking at the list of committee members—this was in the last Parliament—I am the only member who seems to have survived! I do not know whether that is a good or bad thing, but it is interesting to see some of the connections between the issues that were contemplated in the select committee's examination, which resulted in that report in 2020. We identified in the report the primary legislation for local government as being the act that this bill will amend, a 1995-vintage act that comprises some 500 pages of primary legislation. If I recall correctly, we also identified some 400 pages of regulations. In common, I am sure, with the minister representing the Minister for Local Government, today I feel a bit like a local government CEO or elected member, swimming in reports, paperwork, legislation and regulations as we find ourselves navigating the Local Government Amendment Bill 2023.

If that demonstrates anything, it demonstrates that local government is a highly regulated sector. Obviously, we want to make sure that that regulation is effective. Many of the measures that we are considering today have arisen from the findings and recommendations of the select committee and from a number of other inquiries, such as the *Report of the inquiry into the City of Perth* and the *Local government review panel: Final report*, amongst others.

There are many acts of Parliament that relate to local government; members should not make the mistake of thinking that it is only the Local Government Act. There is a handy appendix, appendix 2, at the rear of the select committee's report that identifies all the legislative instruments that, in one way or another, directly affect local government. That spans three pages. I have not counted them, but there is a significant number of pieces of state government legislation and, indeed, there may also even be commonwealth legislation, but we focused on state legislation in that report.

There is a question I often pose in the course of debate on these types of amending bills, and I will probably pose it again when we go through the relevant clauses in Committee of the Whole: are we holding local government to a standard to which we do not hold ourselves? As we go through the clauses there will be certain provisions on which it will be relevant to pause and consider that question for a moment.

I also want to talk about the scope of local government. As a regional member, the scope of local government outside both the metropolitan area and urbanised regional areas varies quite significantly. In Western Australia, 139 local governments fall under the Local Government Act, and 137 of them are to be found on mainland Western Australia. I am lucky enough to represent 63 of those 137 local governments, as do the other members who represent the Agricultural Region. There is a significant number of local governments, but also significant diversity in the sector.

In the September 2020 final report of the Select Committee into Local Government there are a couple of paragraphs that talk about scope, paragraphs 4.14 and 4.15. I want to quote from the *Final report—Inquiry into local government*. Paragraph 4.14 states —

In 2001 the Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC) analysed local government expenditure over the preceding 35 years. The CGC found that the composition of local government services had changed markedly, with local government increasingly providing social welfare type services such as recreation and culture, housing, community amenities, education, health, welfare and public safety at the expense of traditional property-based services such as roads.

Paragraph 4.15 states —

The CGC identified five broad factors as causing the increase in local government functions and responsibilities:

- (i) *devolution* — where another sphere of government gives local government responsibility for new functions;
- (ii) *‘raising the bar’* — where another sphere of government, through legislative or other changes, increases the complexity of or standard at which a local government service must be provided, and hence increases its cost;
- (iii) *cost shifting* — where there were two types of behaviour. The first is where local government agrees to provide a service on behalf of another sphere of government but funding is subsequently reduced or stopped, and local government is unable to withdraw because of community demand for the service. The second is where, for whatever reason, another sphere of government ceases to provide a service and local government steps in;
- (iv) *increased community expectations* — where the community demands improvements in existing local government services; and
- (v) *policy choice* — where individual LGBs [local government bodies] choose to expand their service provision.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Before the recess for lunch, I was starting to talk about the significant scope of many of our local governments. I live in an area that has had, politically speaking, a fairly stable local government authority, but this year we had an electors meeting. As is the case with most councils, council chambers are relatively small. Most of a council’s chamber is occupied by the elected members themselves, with a small public gallery that can probably accommodate 20 to 30 people. Usually, the annual electors meeting is fairly non-eventful, but this year it had to be relocated to the town hall because some 200 or 300 people wanted to attend. Those numbers might seem small for the Cities of Wanneroo, Joondalup, Stirling or Canning or somewhere like that, but there was a significant increase in interest in local government.

I sat at the back of the room. I was there for a bit of entertainment, amongst other things. My observation from the few hours that I was there listening was that probably 80 to 90 per cent of the issues that were raised would not be considered to be traditional local government functions, business or responsibilities. We often talk about local government being the tier of government that is closest to the people, but, because of that, it is also a tier of government that we expect a lot of as a community. When I pull out of my driveway in the morning, I drive over the local government verge onto its bitumen. The street is lit courtesy of the local government. When I visit my general practitioner, that practice is supported and subsidised by the local government. In fact, there would not be a day that goes by when each of us do not have an interaction with local government. I do not think that is the case with the state and federal governments. Local governments certainly do not have the capacity to raise revenue that the state and commonwealth governments do. In many respects, local governments have a tension between their limited capacity to raise revenue and an increasing community expectation around the services that they deliver. It is not only a community expectation, but also an expectation of Parliaments, particularly state Parliaments, which continue to legislate and regulate and add to the functions of local governments because they are the level of government that

is closest to the people and are focused on service delivery. In a state as geographically large as Western Australia, many of the services that either the state Parliament or the community asks local governments to deliver simply would not be achievable without local governments.

Of all the fees, charges and taxes that we pay to local, state and federal governments, the contribution that we make to local governments is relatively small. Certainly, as we approach this time of the year, local governments are starting to enter into their budget sessions. Linked to what flows from agreement on a budget for the next financial year is the rating that will occur on the properties within their districts. I do not have a precise figure for what the average household pays, but an average home in my community would be paying local rates of between \$2 000 and \$3 000. We can think about the daily services that we get, let alone the weekly rubbish bin service, which is probably worth a couple of thousand dollars alone. There is obviously a lot of contention around rating, but when we consider the services that we all enjoy, and often take for granted, our financial contribution directly to local governments is not significant, certainly not when compared with the contribution that is made to state and federal governments. Obviously, there are grant schemes and the like that support local governments. Before the lunch adjournment, I read a quote from the Commonwealth Grants Commission. There are mechanisms to support local governments, but many of those mechanisms are outside the control of local governments. They often get to contribute and have a say on how the pie is divided up, but the levers for the quantum of funds that are delivered to the sector are usually well and truly outside their decision-making capability. As we consider the amendments that we are making to the Local Government Act 1995, it is important that we also consider where local governments have come from and their rapid evolution in recent times as what I have described as a deliverer of government services of last resort.

Members might be aware of a book authored by Christopher Berry called *To Dwell in Unity: Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of Local Government in Western Australia*. I bought this book last year. It is probably in the Parliamentary Library, and other members might have purchased it as well. It is a book that I do not purport to have read from front to back, but I have certainly read chapters of it, particularly in anticipation of the debate today. Inside the cover of the book, there is a quote that is attributed to Councillor Keith Frame, the then Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Perth, when speaking at the local government centenary dinner in January 1971. He said —

There is no pursuit more honourable but less honoured than being an elected member of local government.

I thought that was a pretty apt reflection, although it occurred some 50 years ago. I think it goes to that apathy that I was talking about in some general community views about the expectations of local government. But that is not the quote that I was going to refer to. There is a section very early on in this book that refers to what led to the formation of the local government sector in Western Australia. It is a period around 1870. Keep in mind that in 1870, the Swan River Colony was granted responsible government. It elected 12 members to the Legislative Council and six were appointed, so there was an 18-member Legislative Council in Western Australia. Of course, the other place was not formed until 1890, and it was an Assembly of 30 members. It happened in the period shortly after responsible government had been granted in Western Australia. I will read a small extract from the book under the title “The Legislative Council Committee for Roads and Bridges” that is of direct relevance to the bill we are debating today in Legislative Council. It says —

WL Brockman, a Swan River pioneer since 1830, was one of the colony’s largest landowners. He was a nominee to the Legislative Council from 1839 and later an elected member for Swan province. Brockman was always vocal on the issue of roads, working ‘hard and unremittingly for the betterment of the roads in the colony ... resolute and determined to the point of desperation’.

One of Brockman’s Legislative Council contributions was to initiate a committee to look at the administrative arrangements for roads and bridges. He was really echoing points previously made in the *Inquirer*, suggesting that less had been achieved under the years of convict labour than should have been and that the supervision of roads should be in the settlers’ hands. Brockman noted the government was spending £3,000 yearly for the upkeep of eighty-two horses in the employ of fifty-eight government road parties. Brockman’s proposal for a committee of review got the support required, acknowledging that ‘the time would come when the various districts would have hugely to contribute to the formation and repair of public highways and or the support of road boards’. Governor Hampton admitted that road boards would manage supervision far better than the government, but he was not inclined to make any alterations in arrangements as his term was finishing and a new governor would soon be in place.

The Legislative Council Committee, comprising Brockman, John Hardey and James Lee-Steere, reported to Governor Hampton just a couple of weeks later, and its findings were reported in the press:

The Committee are of [the] opinion that it is most important that the parties more immediately interested in the roads should have a voice in the management of them ... they recommend that a Central Board should be established ... to appoint District Boards, to consist of 5 members, composed of the most practical men in each district, who shall have the management of the roads in their district, and the expenditure of such portion of the funds as shall be allotted them.

The committee was acknowledging, and the Legislative Council agreed, that the only feasible way to efficiently supervise road maintenance was to decentralise the work, by establishing local boards responsible for improving and making roads. This report laid the foundations for a more decentralised system and was pivotal in facilitating the move to local road committees later in 1868, the precursor of the roads boards of 1871.

The *Inquirer* welcomed the proposed road committees:

The idea of a Road Committee in every district of the colony has been received with alacrity and promises to result in much good, if maintained in a proper spirit, and worked with the single object of making the most of such funds and labour as are available ... It is intended they should work precisely as the Perth City Council, and the Fremantle Town Trust work. A certain amount of convict labour is given by the Government, but the particular work within the towns on which that labour is to be employed is left to the Council to determine. In this way it will be for each Road Committee to decide what works it is most desirable to carry out with the labour available in its own district from time to time ...

The system should work advantageously, if the settlers put their shoulders to the wheel carefully and judiciously and it is the more necessary that they should do it thoughtfully, seeing that the general result will take all responsibility in works undertaken and executed, from the Government to themselves.

That was quite a lengthy quote about events many years ago, but I think the sentiment expressed in the 1870s still rings true today, and it goes to my earlier comments on local government being very good at service delivery. In part, that is down to the decentralised nature of the local government sector.

I turn to the bill. It is a substantial bill, with 24 key reforms. It simply will not be possible to examine those reforms in any depth in a second reading debate, but the useful support of the advisers and the provision of information will help expedite the Committee of the Whole stage of the bill. It is probably the most appropriate stage of the bill to deal with specific reforms.

The proposed reforms we are dealing with in their final form were put out to public comment from November 2021 to February 2022. As I mentioned, that followed some very significant bodies of work, not least of which was the work of the Local Government Review Panel, the inquiry into the City of Perth and the work of the Select Committee into Local Government amongst others. The consultation process received over 200 submissions. The government's final provisions were developed with stakeholders, principally the Western Australian Local Government Association as the sector representative, and are in the bill before us. I understand the bill is one of two tranches of reform. If I am not mistaken, this is the most significant body of work, with the second tranche to follow.

The legislation needs to be implemented ahead of the October 2023 local government elections because a number of provisions in the bill relate to elections. I understand from my briefing that there is a need—I would not use the word “urgency”, but there is certainly a recognition that it would be optimal for the government if the bill is passed during the May sitting so that it can implement the significant regulations that will flow from the legislation ahead of the elections in October. There are a lot of head of power clauses in the bill that allow for regulations to be made. Often when we see that in legislation, we do not get a lot of detail around the regulations that are likely to follow. In this instance, I think we have a greater level of visibility because of the journey that has occurred with the reform process and the engagement. The government had to lay out the policy intent. Even though some of that cannot be found by reading the bill, it can be understood from the government's intention or commitment in the regulations that will follow.

The bill will amend the Local Government Act 1995 and will consequentially amend the City of Perth Act 2016, the Local Government Amendment (Auditing) Act 2017, the Salaries and Allowances Act 1975, and the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2007. As I said, 24 policy reforms will be achieved with this bill. They include the introduction of a statewide caretaker period during ordinary elections and the creation of consistency in the size and structure of councils. I will pause here to say that this might be something that I will come back to if I have time because there is some sensitivity amongst the sector about this provision. The reforms include enrolment changes to address sham leases, parental leave for council members, and the introduction of principles for local government on sustainability, climate change and involving Aboriginal people in local decision-making. Again, this issue was further ventilated in an article that occurred over the weekend. There is some interest in the sector in exploring this aspect, which will probably best be achieved in Committee of the Whole. It also includes extending electoral periods to account for slower postal services, offences for inappropriate use of the electoral roll, publication of information about candidates, changes to voting and counting provisions to introduce optional preferential voting for local government elections, recording council meetings and reforms to elector meetings, publication of CEO key performance indicators and results, establishing a panel of independent persons for CEO recruitment panels, clarifying strategic plans for councils, implementing a community engagement charter and community surveys, implementing communication agreements between CEOs and councillors, publication of registers of local government assets, remuneration for independent committee members allowing local governments to pay education expenses for councillors to attend training, grouping or tiering of local government through regulations, allowing

compliance exemptions when required for the urgent benefit of the community, clarifying processes for the backfilling of extraordinary council vacancies after an election, clarifying processes for the backfilling of a vacancy due to the election of an incumbent councillor to the position of mayor or shire president, clarifying counts for optional preferential voting and other transitional consequential amendments.

It has taken quite a bit of time just to name the 24 reform areas, let alone scratch the surface of some of them. As I said, I will touch on a few of them as we go through this today. One area I paused to mention was the consistency in size and structure of councils. I understand from my briefing that this is an area in which there was some change between the consultation paper and the final policy decision of government. I think it was proposed that the upper limit of council member numbers was going to be lower than what the government landed on. I do not want to misspeak by quoting that number but I think it is fair to say there was some change between when the government went out to consultation and where it finally landed on this issue. Many of the initiatives in this bill are linked to the banding arrangement in which the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal—an independent tribunal—effectively categorises all local governments into four bands. It is not clear to me how it does that. I know it is not purely population based. When I read the current determination of the tribunal on local government, it reflected in a couple of short paragraphs that it takes into account a number of factors in allocating bands to local government. Obviously, there has been a decision at some point. Perhaps there is information buried on the tribunal’s website, which is not the easiest place to navigate. I do not want to start a debate in my 28 minutes on the usefulness of the myGov website. I think members are well aware of my views on the government’s one website strategy. It would be good to try to get some clarity around how the tribunal sets the bands. My initial concern at the briefing was that if we essentially are outsourcing many of the triggers for different treatment in the Local Government Act to the tribunal, we might be at risk. I was told we are not doing that. We are going to adopt and codify the banding structure that it has into the reforms before us. It would be good to understand what the relationship will be between the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, amongst other things, and the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal as an independent tribunal that provides advice and makes decisions to ensure some consistency.

I am sure we want to avoid over time ending up with two banding structures. If we are going to codify the four bands in legislation, obviously there will be a mechanism for changing them—I assume perhaps by head of power and regulations. It would probably be more complex if we ended up in a situation in which the government and the tribunal form different views around the banding of local government, which may add confusion to the way in which we regulate the sector. I understand from my limited research that once upon a time, the tribunal had eight bands that applied to local government. We now have four. As I said, all local governments fall within one of the four bands. Obviously, the tribunal is interested in effectively the remuneration of the chief executive officers and elected members and their relevant entitlements. That is about the limit of its interest. This bill is adopting the banding and applying it in different circumstances.

I started talking about the consistency, size and structure of councils. This is one of those examples in which the policy will be applied differently based on the band categorisation of a local authority. This issue was considered by the Select Committee into Local Government. I will not be able to turn to the exact findings or recommendations or even quote from the report at this point, but the concept of regulating local government by size and scale was something that the committee members heard time and again. I am sure there were some recommendations, if not findings, around making sure that we regulate the sector according to size and scale. The select committee’s report has a really interesting table on page 5 under the heading “Diversity in Western Australia local government sector 2018–19”. Effectively, it includes a number of factors and has identified the smallest and largest local governments. For example, Nungarin —

Hon Darren West: A great community!

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Yes, I agree, Hon Darren West. I spent a lot of time living not far from Nungarin.

In 2018–19, Nungarin had 5.1 full-time equivalent staff. The City of Stirling, at the other end of the scale, being the largest employer of staff, had 893 full-time equivalent staff. Obviously, that measure alone demonstrates the significant diversity but also capacity of local government. I could go through a number of other factors, including population. The smallest local government authority by population was Sandstone with 79 people. The largest local government authority by population—probably no surprise—is again the City of Stirling with 221 040 people in the local authority area. The smallest total expenditure of a local government authority was Wandering at \$2.87 million. That is another local authority in Hon Darren West’s and my electorate.

Hon Darren West: That’s where the best local governments are.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Amongst the 63, that is very true.

Again, there are no surprises that the City of Stirling had the highest total expenditure at some \$235 million. It makes sense that there needs to be a size and scale approach to local government. I think we are seeing that in various elements of this bill. I do not know whether it is the first time we are starting to see a size and scale approach taken to how we regulate the sector, but it would be good to unpack that a little further as we progress through the consideration of this bill.

One of the areas in local government that will see some structural change is the popular vote for mayors and shire presidents. The Local Government Act currently allows local governments to have the presiding member, being the mayor or the president, elected either by the electors of the district through a public vote or by the council as a resolution at a council meeting. Across Western Australia the overwhelming preference is for the presiding member to be elected by the council. Of the 137 mainland local governments, just 27 currently use a popular vote to elect the presiding members. This is where the example of the banding process comes in. For band 1 and 2 local governments, a popular vote for mayors and shire presidents will be required, while band 3 and 4 continue to have discretion over how they elect their presiding member. I know that this is one of the few reforms that did not attract the support of the Western Australian Local Government Association. It states in its response that it opposes this proposal and supports retaining the current provision and that the election of mayors and presidents should be at the discretion of each local government.

I have been helpfully provided a list for these changes. The councils that will be impacted by this decision include Armadale, Gosnells, Augusta, Margaret River, Kwinana, Ashburton, Belmont, Broome, Busselton, Derby, West Kimberley, Esperance, Murray, Serpentine–Jarrahdale, Swan and Wyndham East Kimberley. There are quite a few there and quite a mix of both metropolitan and regional local government areas. The view of the Minister for Local Government in his second reading speech in the other place is —

Requiring band 1 and 2 local governments to have their mayor or president elected by the electors of their district will give ratepayers a direct line of sight to the person who fills this most important leadership role.

Other views could be canvassed on this. Although the view of the minister in his second reading speech is that it will keep the mayor or the president accountable to the electors, another point of view might be a concern that it could lead to a disconnect between the elected council and the mayor or president. I have seen councils when a mayor or president is completely at odds with the rest of the elected members, yet they have the support, obviously at an election that might have happened some time before, to remain for their term of four years. I wonder whether we might get some more circumstances where there is a relationship breakdown between popularly elected mayors and presidents and their elected council members who constitute the rest of the council. I think that is a risk. It is interesting when there are comparisons between voting systems, which I will come to shortly. We like to say that preferential voting is good enough for state Parliament so it is good enough for local government. We certainly do not appoint the Premier of the state by popular vote. We do not appoint the Prime Minister of this country by popular vote.

Hon Dan Caddy: The people know who they are going to get. They know who the leader of the party is.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: They do not always keep them though.

Several members interjected.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: You don't have a great grasp of history, do you?

Hon Kyle McGinn interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Stephen Pratt): Order! Hon Martin Aldridge.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: No, rocks and glass houses come to mind, Hon Kyle McGinn.

I need to express some caution about this approach and the sector has some concerns about it as well. If we simply look at the democratic principle, why would we not want a mayor or a president directly elected? However, when we actually contemplate the dynamic of the governing body of local government, the council, led by a mayor or president constituted by elected members, that is a dynamic that it wants to function, and function well. I worry that this is creating a disconnect between the leader of the council and the rest of the council, or at least that risk exists in my view. The election of the presiding member will involve changes for 22 local government areas, or 50 per cent of band 1 and 2 local governments. One of the other structural reforms that will occur is the abolition of wards for band 3 and 4 local governments. There are almost a dozen band 3 and 4 local governments. We will see some change to their representation through the abolition of wards. They include Denmark, Northampton, Claremont, Cottesloe, East Fremantle, Boyup Brook, Kulin, Menzies, Nannup, Shark Bay and Victoria Plains.

Hon Darren West: Do you know that a councillor in Victoria Plains got elected with 38 votes?

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I did not know that, member, but I think a member was elected to this place on even fewer, potentially!

Hon Darren West: It was 98. But the Victoria Plains councillor was elected with 38.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Of how many votes?

Hon Darren West: Fifty-seven.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: That was a majority—they didn't have to go to preferences! Why does the government want a preferential voting system? First-past-the-post. It is all right; I have only 14 minutes left and then Hon Darren West can recite all his facts.

The other matter is the tiered limits on the number of councils. As I said, the government adjusted its policy on this following consultation. This will be linked to the size of population. They will impact around half of the state's local governments. Under the current act, the number of councillors, between five and 15, is determined by each local government and reviewed by the Local Government Advisory Board, with approval by the minister. It is proposed to limit the number of councillors based on the population of the entire government area. A district with fewer than 5 000 people will be able to have between five and seven elected members, and then there is a big jump. A district of between 5 000 and 75 000 people will have between five and nine councillors. A population of more than 75 000 people can have between nine and 15 councillors. These changes will result in some 48 local government areas having their representation compulsorily reduced. That is not something that is new for this government that likes to remove representation from regional communities, but that is a debate for another day when I have more than 12 minutes remaining.

It is interesting that we have accepted at one point the banding structure of local governments based on what appears to be a multifactor assessment by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. Here this test is entirely population driven. I want to check whether that is right, because that is what my research has told me. The first observation I make is that there is a big range. It is below 5 000 people, and the next tier is 5 000 to 75 000 people, and then 75 000-plus. I do not have an issue with the first and third tiers, but it is a big range in the middle from 5 000 to 75 000.

Another factor that has not been considered is that some local government authorities literally cover only one community or town; others cover more than 10 distinct communities. Some local government authorities cover an enormous geographic area. The resources that are provided to elected council members are not like the resources that are provided to state and federal elected members, who are given an entitlement to enable them to support and represent people in geographically significant or isolated parts of the state. I thought that factor would have been considered in this new tiering process. That factor might well be considered as part of the State Administrative Tribunal banding; however, that banding will not be used with regard to the number of elected members. There is some contention in the sector about this.

I now want to talk about the recording of council meetings. This issue was also considered by the wonderful Select Committee into Local Government. It stated in recommendation 30 of its report —

The Government consider requiring local governments to provide the Local Government Standards Panel with any audio or video recordings of council meetings that relate to a complaint of minor breach.

This arose from evidence that had been received by the committee from the Local Government Standards Panel. Members can imagine the types of complaints that are made about behaviour at committee or council meetings, whether a minor breach or otherwise. Evidence was provided to the select committee that it was very difficult for the standards panel to test the veracity of information that it received about behaviour because it effectively became an argument between the complainant and the defendant, with one person's view of what had happened versus another. Page 273 refers to the evidence from the Local Government Standards Panel —

If you want the standards panel to operate properly, we have to ensure the veracity of the information that is given to us. Unfortunately, you cannot get that from just the minutes of the meeting, as some of you would appreciate, having been councillors. The minutes really just record the decision. A lot of what is involved in the complaints is the behaviour of the councillors at the actual meeting and things that are said between councillors.

...

The only way to check the veracity of that kind of allegation is to listen to the transcript. It does give you a sense of what is happening in the meeting as well and what may have precipitated the circumstance, which is valuable information for the panel, or at least for me as a panel member.

As I have said, that is what led to recommendation 30.

This issue also arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members might recall a bill that we passed during COVID-19. The name of the bill escapes me, but that bill contained the largest Henry VIII clause that I have ever seen and that probably has ever been passed by the Legislative Council. That bill allowed the Minister for Local Government to amend any section of the Local Government Act as he or she deemed fit to do. Effectively, that bill outsourced legislative-making power entirely to one person in cabinet. One of the regulations that arose at that time in response to COVID-19 was the Local Government (Administration) Amendment Regulations 2020. There was a risk during COVID-19 that local governments would not be able to meet in person, and that would have had implications on their ability to set and approve a budget, rate their residents, or make a bunch of other important decisions, perhaps not even related to the COVID-19 response but just in the ordinary functioning of local government in every form that takes. I remember that different councils dealt with this in different ways. Some held hybrid meetings. I would be surprised if there was one council in this state that did not introduce some form of audiovisual conferencing. Some councils put their meetings entirely online. I remember doing committee work at the time. In the early days of COVID, hybrid meetings were often difficult to achieve. The accepted view was that they had to be either all in or all out. We have become a bit better at doing hybrid meetings. Last year, we conducted our budget estimates debates

by hybrid participation. The local government regulations allowed councils to participate and conduct their business virtually. However, because there was no requirement for councils to provide or live stream their broadcasts, ratepayers and residents in those districts were effectively disenfranchised because they were unable to know the context of the decisions that were made by their local governments. I am, strangely, a regular reader of the minutes of my local council. I have found that there is often not much difference between the agenda and the minutes. The only variation is whether the motion is carried, amended or defeated. People cannot get the whole story from reading a set of minutes. They certainly cannot get an understanding of how the debate occurred, what the debate involved, and how the council ultimately arrived at its decision.

One of the fundamental principles of democracy is transparency and access. I remember that a former President of this place, Hon Barry House, used to say that except in the most exceptional circumstances, the public galleries should always be open to all people to enable them to observe the proceedings of their Parliament. The public galleries had to be closed during COVID-19, as has our gallery on occasion when ratbags have thrown things into the Legislative Council chamber and done other things, but otherwise our galleries are always open. However, when the public galleries were closed due to COVID-19 and the public health risk to the Parliament, the live broadcast still continued.

I have written to the Minister for Local Government about this issue, because I believe that we can do better. I will not be able to explore this fully in the time remaining, but when local governments implement audiovisual meetings, they should be live broadcast, as they certainly can be, or at the very least an electronic recording of the meeting should be made, which would not be difficult. The only requirement at that time was to simply provide the unconfirmed minutes within a certain time frame. My council meets on a Tuesday evening, and I believe that the unconfirmed minutes are available on the Friday. I understand that there needs to be a due diligence process. However, as more of these things start to occur, we need to ensure that local council meetings do not become even more inaccessible to people who want to observe or engage in them. We need to remember that people have a right to go to a council meeting, petition a council, make a deputation on a matter on the agenda, and ask questions. A lot of people do not realise that ordinary ratepayers have these powers. People write to me frequently, as I am sure they do to all members, about local government concerns, and I always remind them of their right as residents or ratepayers to hold their local government accountable. However, that becomes very difficult when councils conduct meetings that are not accessible to the public. This is an area that we need to consider perhaps in a different context from this bill. Although some might see this as progress, we also need to make sure that we put in place the appropriate protections for many of the things that I have mentioned.

I started by talking about the view of the Local Government Standards Panel. It might even have a positive impact requiring band 1 and 2 councils to make an audiovisual recording, and band 3 and 4 to make an audio recording. There will be an exemption process for meetings outside of chambers. It may also become a deterrent for certain types of behaviour that might occur amongst elected members from time to time. It is a bit like CCTV; I do not think it stops bad people from doing bad things, but it keeps good people honest. Hopefully, this requirement will remind people about where they are and their conduct in particular, and it will not only place some downward pressure on complaints, but also help deal with complaints as they arise. As I said earlier, local governments with five staff may need some support from the department. Beyond technical guidance, they might even need funding support to implement systems that provide good quality audio and visual recordings of council meetings, because some of the recordings can be highly variable.

I really do not have any time remaining. I probably could have spoken for another 60 minutes on the second reading. I am not going to ask the government for an extension, because I suspect that I know what the answer will be; it will be the answer that I always get. But I look forward to engaging in the committee process, particularly through the lens of the many things that I have talked about around the scope and capacity of local government.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [2.51 pm]: I rise also to speak on the Local Government Amendment Bill 2023 and to lay out a few issues, at the risk of some repetition. I will try not to talk about what my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge laid out, which were the issues at the high level at least. I will try to put a slightly different perspective on things with a focus on my region and some of my experiences in the region as a member of this chamber and also prior to my involvement in this place.

We all agree on the importance of local government and the role it plays in our community. I have seen firsthand the incredible role that the local governments in the Kimberley have played, for example, during the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. They performed phenomenally in responding to some of those challenges, which required local feedback and development, that were hitting the decision-makers at a very fast and rapid pace. In the early stages of the pandemic when movement was shut down across our region and we did not know what was going to happen with COVID, it was almost like a moment in time when everyone froze and stood still to protect our most vulnerable communities. That was driven to a large extent by those four shires that form the Kimberley Regional Group. It was an incredible piece of work. I saw firsthand the advice that was given back to the Department of Health and decision-makers in Perth. Over time, the state moved towards having a hard border and so forth, but it was very much an instantaneous response that occurred at that local government level.

Local government played a key role in some of the advocacy that was going on around some of the hard border exemptions to ensure that the pastoral industry in particular could continue to function and that critical seasonal workers, despite the timing of the border closures, would be able to move from the Northern Territory to the Kimberley as part of their normal flow of employment. That process worked well and I saw firsthand the key role that local governments played in that.

I have also seen firsthand the key role that local governments have with matters that do not normally fall under that banner of rates, roads and rubbish—a phrase that people often use. At a local government meeting the other day, somebody mentioned that another “R” should be added to those three Rs: regional development. That is important because local governments play such a key role in the regional development space, even to the extent of engaging with and ascertaining what the big issues are for those local communities. They have played that role in the Kimberley. I am focusing on the Kimberley at the moment, but I will move to other parts of my region shortly.

Local government has played a key role in dealing with some of the challenges around youth and juvenile justice, for example, and providing advice back to those government forums, particularly to state agencies and working back with the minister. I know that local governments take very seriously and welcome the visitation by senior members of government to their region. I think they would like to see more of that. They take those visits very seriously as well as getting feedback on their responses and how to face law and order challenges and make social improvements. For example, the Shire of Derby–West Kimberley, through the Kimberley Regional Group, has called for more safe houses to be put in place to allow juveniles who might be roaming the streets late at night without supervision to be placed in a safe environment. This is yet to be responded to. I know that local government has been a keen proponent of that.

Sometimes local governments can play a role in the most obscure of areas, for example, in feral animal control. That is a huge challenge for some of the shires in my region. Environmental protection is another area in which local government has to make some decisions—for example, seasonal decisions around closing beaches and making sure that turtle nesting grounds are protected. These are examples of the day-to-day activities undertaken by local governments. Local governments are involved with various cohorts in our community that might be disadvantaged. For example, they make sure that the aged community has better access to services. Another aspect of their work is around public health and engaging with not-for-profit groups in our communities such as the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services. I know that that service’s relationship with local governments, particularly at a strategic level, has been ongoing and good in terms of providing, developing and working to respond to some of those challenges around public health.

I mentioned earlier this morning about the big challenges for local government in the areas of transport and road safety. I know that Western Australian Local Government Association has a road safety group that provides advice to the community, particularly on helping awareness with matters like cattle on the roads and with running campaigns. WALGA also does quite a lot of work to make sure that our communities operate well.

I am a huge fan of what I see happening in local governments. I want to express my gratitude to all members and councillors who have put up their hands over time to serve their communities, often with very little remuneration. When I see what councillors get paid, I do not think that people do it for the remuneration. I think we can all agree in this place that those councillors put in many voluntary hours, sometimes having to deal with sensitive issues in the community, making sure we have the right approaches to diversity and inclusion, for example, and making sure that we have the outreach to ensure that some of those marginalised groups in our community are able to be encompassed—these are some of the challenges. It is a political environment, as well. We could probably all talk about some of the challenges that occur in our local governments.

I think that the zone structure is fantastic. In my region, we have the Gascoyne, Goldfields–Esperance, Kimberley, Murchison and Pilbara zones. It is interesting to note that the Kimberley zone includes the two island shires—Christmas Island and Cocos Island. They are not part of my region. I have said it would be great to have them as part of my region, but because of the interesting arrangements under the commonwealth, they are not voters in the Mining and Pastoral Region. They get involved in complicated engagements through our constitutional arrangements, but they are integrated into those local government bodies.

As I mentioned, there are 139 local governments. Each of those operates with a huge set of rules. I have huge respect and trust for local governments. It is easy to bemoan some of the challenges that we see coming from local governments, particularly around planning. We have heard members in the other place utter at length about the lack of action on planning schemes et cetera, but I think that local governments are under enormous pressure. Their compliance requirements are increasing. I stand here today and take a neutral attitude on this bill, because there are aspects I am not that fussed about. If I were Minister for Local Government, there are things in this bill that I would not necessarily be putting forward, but, I must say, there are a lot of challenges. I will go through some of those. There are the black-letter law changes—we are going to change the way people get voted in, and we are looking at issues like the abolition of wards, band 3 and 4 local governments and the impact of that. But, really, at the end of the day, I think that some of this reform may not be as transformational as some of the other challenges that we face.

I pick one area in which I think there is a massive need for change, and that is support in the delivery of waste management. It is a massive cost issue. We are seeing huge regulatory burdens applied for good reason, as we move into more recycling and less harmful impacts on the environment, but, in the regions, it is really costly to do that. I refer to small waste disposal sites, whether they be on Aboriginal Lands Trust land or remote communities, all the way from small communities like Halls Creek through to the larger communities that have the capacity to take some of the more sophisticated approaches—honestly, that is the real reform we need to see. There are huge challenges and costs associated with this regulatory burden. I could take anybody in this place to 20 different locations around the state that face these challenges, and sometimes the state is involved in that—not complying in any real way in some of the waste management, for example—yet, in spite of that, the local governments are there doing their very best to ensure that people comply.

Local governments have a massive role. I reiterate my appreciation and thanks to local governments across my region and the state. We heard Hon Martin Aldridge mention the size and scale of local governments, and we know that we are relying on the Salaries and Allowance Tribunal to make a determination on those bands, but I think that, if we tease it out and break it apart, the complexity is part of that scale. I would like to focus a bit on that. Certainly, in the regions, I think that sometimes reforms are a bit driven by a Perth-centric approach. We look at how things might operate. No disrespect to Minister Carey, he has obviously been very involved in local government and has formed a view on what works and what does not, but some of these regional local governments are incredibly complex.

As I mentioned, the Shire of Halls Creek was a major advocate for, and made an incredible amount of investment in, the upgrade of roads. The shire purchased a fleet of civil engineering machines, side-tipping trailers, graders and things to try to bring that work in-house and create some ongoing employment for people as part of the Duncan and Tanami Roads upgrades, which it is working on now in conjunction with Main Roads. These sorts of complex and hugely expensive projects are well beyond the scope of a shire that has a population of not even 2 000 people. I am glad that the minister listened. As Hon Martin Aldridge rightly said in his contribution, there was a proposal to limit the number of councillors in local governments. I think that the Shire of Halls Creek was in line to have its number of councillors reduced from seven to five. I use the Shire of Halls Creek as an example, because there are many local governments in that band 3, I think it was, that were going to have their numbers reduced down to that level. I am sorry; it was the district population being not more than 5 000, not the local government band. I correct that for *Hansard*. I think that at one stage there was a suggestion that local governments with a population of less than 5 000 would have their number of councillors reduced, but that shire has managed to retain seven councillors, which is good. I commend the minister for listening to feedback from the Western Australian Local Government Association and others. The complexity of decision-making is great. We know that many wise heads in a room often results in better outcomes. Sometimes people have to travel great distances; sometimes they may not find it easy to attend meetings. In regional areas, people often have to travel great distances for health service or family reunion or other purposes, so having those extra councillors is vital. There has been some movement on that specific issue of the number of councillors, and I think that is good. I know that the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder will have a reduction in its number of councillors. The city does not seem to be too concerned about that. It has a higher population, so it will be able to have up to nine members; I know that it currently has more than that on its council, but it will still have nine councillors. I think that there was some sensible movement in the council sizes. That highlights the complexity of the work that is underway.

I note that some of the shires in my region will have a reduction in their number of councillors. For example, this part of the legislation will impact the Shire of East Pilbara—this is beyond my region, but I will speak about it, because nobody else will—the Shire of Christmas Island, the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder and the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku. I was trying to contact the shire just to get its read on it. The Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku is unique with a very difficult demographic configuration. I am not sure of the wisdom of reducing of reducing the number of councillors in the shire. Again, if we add the criteria of size, scale and complexity, one would suggest that the complexity is enormous.

Hon Martin Aldridge interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I thank Hon Martin Aldridge. For the sake of *Hansard*, Hon Martin Aldridge, meant all the roles and the communities. Shires like Ngaanyatjarraku, Halls Creek and Wyndham–East Kimberley often have a very strong relationship with the federal government because there is a lot of the support for the programs that operate in those shires, which unfortunately have high levels of welfare dependency in their communities and high Aboriginal populations. They require a lot of support from the federal government. Members of the Kimberley zone have been in Canberra for the last few days doing some lobbying work on specific issues of need. To be honest, someone in the Town of Cambridge—I mean no disrespect to a particular local government—a metropolitan shire, town or city does not necessarily have to deal with this sort of complexity. I am sure there are other complexities that these shires, cities and towns in the metropolitan region have to deal with, but there is a huge reach with diverse approaches to service delivery and the fourth R, regional development, which is absolutely critical to service. I thank Hon Martin Aldridge for raising the issue of the involvement of committees. There is even just sheer travel time. A lot of members of these local governments have to tie in things that are happening in Perth.

Hon Kyle McGinn: They are using Zoom a lot.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Hon Kyle McGinn talks about the use of IT and Zoom. I appreciate the comment. That came out of the pandemic, and it was something people really worked on. There are still massive challenges to make sure telecommunications work efficiently. From personal experience, sometimes these things do not always operate seamlessly and many times we have to revert to the trusty old Telstra phone on speaker to deal with a Zoom meeting that has gone awry. Let us hope some of these requirements to record meetings and so on can be delivered by local government in some of these difficult-to-access places.

There has been a push with the issue of wards. I am not speaking in any specific order on this because I will be part of the Committee of the Whole House going through the bill. It deserves a fair bit of scrutiny. Things need to be put on the record. The Western Australian Local Government Association put out a comprehensive table on the impact of reforms to clarify which shires are affected. Only six shires are required to abolish wards. I will speak briefly on that. I understand they are band 3 and 4 areas, which are Cottesloe, Denmark, East Fremantle, Menzies, Shark Bay and Victoria Plains. The Shire of Menzies is in my region. There is probably little bit of discontent because there is a feeling of needing people to represent regions. I note some feedback I got from the Shire of East Pilbara and the Shire of Broome, which are band 2 shires with wards. They were not forced to do anything, but I would like things to be clarified because there was some informal feedback about the fact that there might have been pressure to remove wards due to implications of not removing them. I give notice of that so the minister representing the Minister for Local Government can comment on it. I note that the Shire of East Pilbara did not want to remove its wards, and it does not have to. There will be a proposal to reduce the number of wards to three. The shire has thought about the retention of those unique wards on the eastern part of the East Pilbara, which includes communities like Punmu, Kunawarritji and Kiwirrkurra. Those are unique wards and have almost exclusively Aboriginal populations. If it were not for those wards, a person from one of those communities would find it very difficult to be elected and get on the council because they would be drowned out in the voting process. It is so hard in the election process for someone who lives in a small community like Punmu. They will have maybe 20 or 30 voters at the most. Newman would have the dominance. It is a wise approach to retain those wards to make sure there is proper representation. I think the Shire of Broome is deciding to remove wards as part of this process. The two councillors from the community on the peninsula will probably not find it quite so easy to be elected, but I believe it was a decision of the council. I raise that point just to make it clear that wards are not a bad thing, particularly in those complex and diverse shires, where wards are a good thing.

I turn to the list of shires that have to abolish wards. The Shires of Shark Bay and Menzies are two local government areas in my region that have been forced to abolish wards. I do not think that is necessarily a good thing because it takes away the ability to have more discrete representation that does not reflect the key town in a community but maybe the pastoral industry, Aboriginal communities or some other remote communities that might not normally have access to the decision-making processes.

I turn to mayoral elections. A few shires on the list now have to go to the direct election of mayors. I put on the record my disagreement on this in our regional shires in particular. I have spoken extensively to councillors and there is a fear that the collegiate nature of local government will disappear; that is the worry. To be blunt, we have seen some of the challenges in the Town of Port Hedland, where there is a directly elected mayor, and whatever people like to say, the situation there is not necessarily ideal; the mayor will need to face the electors at some point in time. But at the end of the day there is a level of collegial engagement in those shires where the mayor is a peer. I think that is the better way, particularly for regional shires. Maybe it is okay in some of the bigger cities like the City of Armadale; maybe that works. The City of Joondalup has a directly elected mayor. Campaigns are run with a lot of candidates. It is a big city and is able to run that process. The City of Gosnells is another one. I will not comment on the Shire of Augusta–Margaret River because it is not in my region. There is also the City of Kwinana, the Shire of Ashburton, the City of Belmont and the Shire of Broome, which I can comment on. I do not think it is something that has been warmly —

Hon Pierre Yang: Can I just say that the City of Gosnells does not have a directly elected mayor at this stage.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: That is correct, but it will be required to under these changes. I am mentioning only the ones that do not have a directly elected mayor and will have to move to this system. This is the list from the Western Australian Local Government Association.

Hon Pierre Yang: Kwinana has a directly elected mayor.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: It does; it is on the list from WALGA. I thought that was the case. The member might be correct. I am reading from some material I got from WALGA. I appreciate the interjection. We will make sure that we have that right. For the sake of *Hansard*, I will put a caveat around that: this is what I have received. I thought the City of Kwinana did, but I might be wrong. I am sure that WALGA is right, but who knows?

Several members interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: There you go. We have now clarified it; thank you. For the sake of *Hansard*, WALGA is right; its material is correct.

Hon Martin Aldridge: It's been vindicated.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Yes. The interjection by the honourable member got me worried a little bit. I do not like being wrong. When such an esteemed member from the other side raises an issue that really troubles me, I get rattled. A lot of other members could interject and it would not bother me in the least, but Hon Pierre Yang is normally so accurate that I would never want to question him on this matter.

There is the Shire of Ashburton, the City of Belmont, the Shire of Broome, the City of Busselton and the Shire of Derby–West Kimberley, which is quite a small shire to have a directly elected mayor process. That is an interesting one. There is the Shire of Esperance, the Shire of Murray, the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale, the City of Swan and the Shire of Wyndham–East Kimberley. Three shires in the Kimberley will now have to have presidential-style elections. I am sure the right person will get up, but what will happen if there is a bit of disagreement and a majority of councillors do not agree with the president? I will be blunt: in that hypothetical situation, it could become toxic.

Hon Peter Foster interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: There are comments on this matter by those on the other side. I am just making the point that we talk about owning this issue ourselves. We had a referendum on a republic. We did not manage to get there, but I know that there was a lot of discussion about directly elected presidents and how that could twist things around. It is an analogy I use. My honourable colleague raised the issue of having a directly elected Premier. We could have that as a thing—just tick a box.

Hon Martin Aldridge: Don't encourage him!

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I am sure that Hon Mark McGowan, MLA, would love that, because then he would not have to deal with the rabble called the party room! That would be absolutely fantastic.

Another issue is that some councils will have a reduction in representation and a directly elected mayor. Those councils include the City of Bayswater; the Shire of East Pilbara, which is in my region; the Shire of Harvey; the City of Kalamunda; the City of Karratha; the Shire of Manjimup; the Shire of Mundaring; and the Shire of Northam. These are the councils that will have fewer heads around the table to make decisions. What is so bad about having the numbers? That is a question I have to ask. It is a rhetorical question, but I am not sure that anything will be gained from this. Let us hope that the City of Albany, the Shire of Beverley, the Shire of Bruce Rock, the City of Bunbury, the Shire of Chapman Valley, the Shire of Christmas Island, the Shire of Collie, the Shire of Coorow, the Shire of Cranbrook, the Shire of Cunderdin, the Shire of Dalwallinu, the Shire of Dandaragan, the Shire of Dowerin, the City of Fremantle, the Shire of Gnowangerup, the City of Greater Geraldton, the Shire of Irwin, the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, the Shire of Kent —

Hon Darren West interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I could keep going. There is the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku, which I have mentioned. I am not going to go through all of them because members can access this themselves. Only 71 of the 139 shires mentioned by Hon Martin Aldridge will not be affected by these changes. Will it make a huge amount of difference? I think that WALGA came to the position in the end that it probably will not. There has been a lot of debate and there is probably some discontent about how effective this will be. But it is what it is. It is what has been put forward by the minister. I certainly think some of the rhetoric about the reforms has been a little overstretched. This is quite an administrative reform. There are some aspects that we agree with, such as some of the accountability mechanisms, but that is part of the continuous improvement that should go on at any stage. Well done to the minister for that.

There will be some other changes, particularly the issue of optional preferential voting, which WALGA was not particularly keen on. This may not be WALGA's reason, but my view is that it will potentially lead to more coordination around group voting. People will put themselves before the community by having a go. First-past-the-post voting may not have the best result in some circumstances. The optional component is probably a good thing. We have certainly seen some of the challenges with preferential voting as part of the state electoral reform. I want to talk a bit about that, because we had this reflection about ourselves and how democratic we are. There has been some rhetoric about how democratic the reforms are that will be put in place under this bill. We saw the reform that was put through to abolish our regional representatives in this place. We are the last class of those who come here to represent our regions. Some members opposite were really happy to embrace it. They were quite happy to go to a statewide system. I do not believe that any of the rhetoric about that is going to play out in reality. It is a bit like the discussion about the wards. At the end of the day, we are going to see a diminution in the representation in those complex, hard-to-get-to areas. The regional members in this place who were elected will know full well how difficult it is for their communities to have services delivered. The people in the regions face unique challenges that are not necessarily faced by the people of Perth, and there is one that I would like to see more focus on. There will be reform around owner–occupiers on the roll. I think the clean-up of the roll is a great piece of reform. There will no longer be sham leases whereby people try to set themselves up to vote in the City of Perth election when they live somewhere else and do some kind of artefact of a lease to try to get on the roll. That is all fine.

I want to look at the Pilbara for a moment. Right now, the Electoral Commission is going through a reassessment. It is not a review; it is a process of looking at the boundaries of electoral areas.

It ties in with broader issue of reform in our local governments. For example, the Shire of East Pilbara has a population of almost 10 000 people. If the census were done properly, the fly-in fly-out people who work in the Pilbara would have to register their address in the Pilbara. We should really look at that because, from recollection—this could be wrong—there are many more than 10 000 jobs in the east Pilbara. The number of jobs in that region may be in the order of 50 000. I say 50 000 with a word of caution but I know it is a big number from when I last spoke to the shire. We talked about it, and it was a very big number. People might want to have a look at that and see how many there are, but it is certainly a lot more than the population. We have a huge number of FIFO jobs in that region; we have a massive amount of wealth; and we have huge demands on local government for service delivery as a result. They even have to manage airports, for example, to make sure that all those people can travel seamlessly in and out of the east Pilbara to their jobs.

Looking at it a bit more, it comes back to the role of local government. Those volunteers in the east Pilbara are dealing with an economy the size of economies in many countries. I do not need to tell government members about that; they all know about it. They have some incredibly complex and difficult work to do because the decisions they make have an impact on housing affordability—for example, the sewerage service delivery. Some of our local governments actually provide services that local governments in the city do not necessarily get involved in. We have that issue.

The population of the east Pilbara at the last census was 9 760 people. I know the Electoral Commission grabbed a little bit of the east Pilbara and put it into the Kimberley, and I do not know what will happen at the next redistribution. It is going to be a nightmare. I would hate to see all of the east Pilbara thrown into the Kimberley. That would be a mess. How could a member for the Kimberley and the east Pilbara service that area? It would be impossible. That is where we are trending. If you put together the populations of the City of Karratha, the Town of Port Hedland, the Shire of Exmouth and the Shire of Ashburton, it is about 50 000 people, but 15 000 people voted at the last election. That is because a lot of those people are not even citizens. We have a huge number of people from other countries coming in and working in these places. If people want representative democracy, I think we have to look deeply at how we do that. The point I am making is that the complexity of the local governments in the Pilbara that I mentioned is just enormous. I think the community needs to appreciate that. I do not think this reform even touches that. We need to do a lot more to make sure local governments in those complex areas actually deliver for their communities in the way that they should. We are seeing it breaking down.

We talked about reform to the electoral roll. If a proper count was done, in the order of 10 per cent, it could be higher—who knows—of people who are eligible to enrol are not on the electoral roll. At the last election, the Pilbara had the lowest voting rate, with something in the order of a 69 per cent turnout. It was very low. These are the sorts of numbers that filter into decision-making on the reduction of representation in our region. I think there needs to be a stronger focus on making sure that everyone who is eligible to vote is on the roll at both the local government level and the state government level. We should make sure that everyone who is eligible to enrol to vote is enrolled. The voting numbers do not reflect the number of people who live in those communities; they have zero reflection on the complexity of those economies or the number of jobs in the regions. That is hard work that needs to be done. We have to make sure communities are represented. It is easy to play around with the theoretical approaches and say, “We’ve going to have few wards here and this and that” and bring in preferential voting. Honestly, although I disagree with it, it will probably not make a lot of difference at the end of the day. It is great that the government can use this bill to say, “I’m a great reformer”, but it is not doing the hard work to make sure that it delivers outcomes for our community, particularly in relation to abolishing the regions in this place—the removal of the voice of the regions. That is what is happening. We are seeing the removal of the voice of the regions. It is being picked away bit by bit.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot): Member, could you sit down for a moment, please. It has suddenly got very noisy in here. I know that we all miss Hon Alannah MacTiernan and her invitation to a bit of biff on a Thursday, but I thought we had put those days behind us. We have only got a little while to go, so can we just all keep very calm.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: This is a good opportunity to get the message across. Real reform would be strengthening the voice of the regions, enabling those local governments to have a better voice in this place.

HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [3.36 pm]: Unlike many members in this chamber, I do not have the benefit of direct experience with local government. I have chosen to take the path listening to those who do, councils, shires, lawyers and others interested, to inform me about what is really going on. On the face of it, the Local Government Amendment Bill 2023 is very sensible legislation, and I must congratulate, if you like, the minister for doing an excellent job. There are, however, questions I need to ask because I find that I am unsatisfied at present. After Committee of the Whole, I will probably have a better feel for what is actually going on.

Let us be clear about what we do not have. We do not have the green bill that the government promised us. As a result, we have not had the level of consultation that we were promised either. I read the *Hansard* of the other place. I note that a lack of consultation was also raised there. The minister responded that there had been so many inquiries

and panel discussions that a green bill was no longer relevant. I take that on board. I am sure the Western Australian Local Government Association and Local Government Professionals were consulted—and perhaps even listened to. The public, on the other hand, was largely shut out of the process, not least because the minister made it very clear that he did not intend to deviate from his last discussion paper and was only seeking feedback on the way in which the reforms might be implemented rather than on the reforms themselves.

I will not make any comment about the reforms because they are on paper and we will discuss them in some detail during Committee of the Whole. But it might be worth noting that the current act, when it was proposed in 1994, was the subject of a green bill that led to somewhere in the region of 11 public forums, almost 700 written submissions, 45 seminars, and substantive correspondence with more than a thousand individuals and bodies leading up to the parliamentary debate. I am relying on the second reading speech from 1995 for those numbers, in case people are wondering where I am getting those numbers. That level of consultation stands in stark contrast to what we have seen from the current government.

Should we be concerned? We have a wealth of experience. The Premier was the deputy mayor of Rockingham back in the day. The current Minister for Local Government was the Mayor of the City of Vincent. In our chamber here we have members who have extensive experience at local government level so I am sure there is plenty of experience that would have been reflected in the current legislation but I still have some questions.

One of the areas I began to question was a stated aim from the Labor Party's platform. I took advice a few weeks ago that maybe my information is out of date from 2019 but the 2021 Labor Party policy platform gives some information about its local government intent. At chapter 1, "Enduring Labor Values" on page 5 it states at paragraph 18 —

WA Labor will:

...

c. Proactively pursue a 50% representation target on all Western Australian local councils;

That is excellent. It is a good idea. As a political party moving forward, getting more trained members via the local government is a fantastic idea and I would fully support that were I a member of the Labor Party. It is an admirable political target. It is also an admirable political target if the government is seeking to transform local government from what had originally been nonpartisan community-based efforts to improve the lives of people at a local level. That has been turned into what we see in the eastern states, which is political and politicised food fights. Local government then becomes a staging post for the leap into state or federal politics, and I think that would be a loss for Western Australian local government. There is no doubt that some of our politicians come up through that school. We already have examples in our chamber and our Premier as well. I know this will not stop. Those who have cut their teeth in local government provide excellent advice and standing in Parliament. I have seen this with my own eyes in this chamber. However, I do not believe it is anything like the majority of members in this chamber or in the other place, and I am perfectly happy that that is the case.

Much has been made about the different aspects of optional preferential voting. In my relatively short contribution to the second reading debate, I intend to talk about some of the details of the current legislation being proposed. One of my areas of concern is, as mentioned earlier by other speakers, the optional preferential voting model. Optional preferential voting is a very good system. I thoroughly approve of it. However, we are looking at an optional preferential voting system in a system in which there are no compulsory votes. Such a system for the state government, where we have compulsory voting, gives a very good view of what the community is saying. If we have optional voting and 30 per cent of the population can rock up, the numbers will be skewed. These changes could benefit the Labor Party in its aim of attaining 50 per cent of seats across our councils. How? It will allow party-affiliated candidates—I am talking in theory, of course—to preference their fellow travellers. It is probably not advantageous to declare their affiliation during their campaign because it would open them up to the claim they are engaging in partisan politics rather than serving the general public. That concerns me and I suspect it will force other parties to do likewise. We would therefore be moving into a system of politicising the local government —

Hon Peter Foster: Do you realise people are already doing that?

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: Yes, I do but I do not think we should encourage it. I thank the member for that. I like the idea of people being nonpartisan and working in a nonpartisan way to serve the local population. That is just my personal preference. It would also force non-aligned and Independent candidates into forming factions and cliques. I do not know whether that is the best solution for local government but I am happy to be corrected based on other people's experience. We could also see things like dummy candidates appearing, for want of a better term—candidates whose reason for standing is not to win in their own right, but simply to funnel votes to someone else. We are now getting into the nitty-gritty of quite serious politicking and we ought to be serving the people. Has this matter been thought through to the end? I do not think this is a deliberate policy on the part of the people who created this bill but I see this as a possible law of unintended consequences. I may be wrong but I can see the risk.

Hon Kyle McGinn interjected.

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: Yes.

WALGA did not support the idea of optional preferential voting either and I think we ought to listen to the people who are engaged at that level. There are other things here but bear in mind I do not have the experience. I am really hoping to hear from those who are more experienced. On the abolition of wards for smaller councils, my personal experience has been in the wheatbelt. Looking at the smaller shires there, they are struggling to firstly find members who are willing to stand up and be voted for and, secondly, representation at a local level by people who know the local area. We in the Legalise Cannabis WA Party have no philosophical issue with the abolition of wards for smaller tier councils but we do have an issue with the way in which it is being progressed. Colin Barnett's ill-fated attempts to force mergers onto unwilling councils should have taught us something—that governments need to bring the local government sector along with them, rather than drag them kicking and screaming. I am very keen to see how this progresses. Debate will succeed where diktat will almost always fail, at least as willing partners are concerned.

The same is also true of the mandatory elections for the mayor or president in larger local governments. I had a fairly extensive submission, which I presented last year on behalf of the Legalise Cannabis WA Party to the minister's recommendations—the consultation exercise last year. Back then, we thought we were getting a larger, more comprehensive bill. One size does not necessarily fit all. Clause 16 of the bill before us allows the Governor, on the advice of the minister, to issue a change order for the number of councillors a local government has, or the number in a particular ward. Such a change order will apply, if I understand the bill correctly, “as if the change order were regulations made under this Act”. In the representative minister's reply to the second reading debate, I would like some guidance on whether change orders are disallowable here in the Legislative Council, as regulations would be. I suspect they are not, and, if I am right, that is a worrying path for the government to go down if it is committed to taking on board the concerns and the wishes of an individual local community.

Others have already spoken about the idea of directly elected mayors. Purely on a personal level, I like the idea of directly elected mayors and presidents, but it is not something I think we should be forcing onto those handful of councils who find themselves at odds with the concept. Most, if I have understood the figures correctly and other speakers will surely confirm this, have either of their own bat or after petitions from local ratepayers, opted to implement this change. I imagine more would have followed suit without the need to impose it upon them as a requirement. I am equally certain that there would have remained some councils that, for reasons unique to themselves, would have preferred to retain an internal election process. If their ratepayers are happy with that, I wonder why we would go to such lengths to override their views. We are dictating what should happen rather than listening to what people want. Section 2 of the act clearly states that we are looking to increase community participation in local government, while at the same time requiring councils to be accountable to their ratepayers. That is admirable, yet here we have an example of overriding the wishes of local communities to defer to a formula that fits the centre of Perth. It is a one-size-fits-all solution. I am not convinced on this point and I remain worried. Perhaps in the Committee of the Whole we can get some clarity on that point.

Others again have also suggested that we ought to be concerned about the ideas of sustainability. I have spoken repeatedly in this chamber of my support for the concept of sustainability. I am very attached to it. Without it, we are going to be in deep distress all through our society. I cannot help but notice that the concept of sustainability has been moved in the proposal before us. I think this is very important. It was originally mentioned in section 1.3(3) of the act, where it is stated —

In carrying out its functions a local government is to use its best endeavours to meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity.

I am fully on board with that. Clause 4 of the bill before us deletes that section entirely. It has been moved, under this bill, to clause 21, where it now states, in a better statement —

... the general function of a local government must be performed having regard —

It does not even say “due regard”, but simply “regard”. That is something that can easily be ticked off, then dismissed — to the following —

- (a) the need —
 - (i) to promote the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the district; and
 - (ii) to plan for, and to plan for mitigating, risks associated with climate change; and
 - (iii) in making decisions, to consider potential long-term consequences and impacts on future generations;
- (b) the need —
 - (i) to recognise the particular interests of Aboriginal people; and
 - (ii) to involve Aboriginal people in decision-making processes;

I ask members to please note that I heartily welcome this robust language. My only concern is its location within the bill. Why would that concern me? My learned friends on either side of this chamber might correct me if I am wrong, but a number of external lawyers informed me that the movement of this clause in particular is significant. Traditionally, a weightier understanding has been given to concepts encapsulated in part 1 of the Local Government Act and interpretation of all other clauses then flow on from that positioning. If that is the case, it appears possible—I stand to be corrected—if not likely, that for all the fine words we have heard, we are watering down this concept by moving it from section 1 to section 3. This move was not foreshadowed in the consultation phase, which took place last year. It has effectively come out of the blue. In recent weeks I have heard from a number of councillors who are concerned about that. I am certain that I would not be alone in saying that climate change and the needs of future generations are not concepts that should be easily discarded. I fear that by downgrading this provision, we may be doing just that. I will be particularly interested in understanding from the minister the legal understanding of downplaying section 1 to section 3 if the force of that recommendation has been diluted—weakened, if you like—such that we are putting less attention, less force, on the need for sustainability at local government level. I will move on from that.

There is the concept of extraordinary vacancies. I see merit in the new provisions for filling extraordinary council vacancies, including the option to backfill if there is an eligible candidate from a recent ordinary election. I have consulted with councillors in my electorate of East Metropolitan Region, which has highlighted just how expensive it can be to hold a single extraordinary election. I have heard examples of \$60 000 or \$70 000 being bandied around. That is not loose change, and it is ratepayers' funds we are talking about. I wonder whether that change in backfilling will be offset by the potential additional costs associated with the introduction of optional preferential voting. I would be interested to know whether the minister has any figures that suggest what that change will cost the average local government in dollar terms.

Reading the bill, I can well imagine that it will make election counts considerably more complex and, by definition, also more expensive. The WA Electoral Commission could provide governments with software to help them navigate the additional requirement, but how much will that software cost, has it been designed yet and what additional staffing provision, if any, will there be on local governments to make it work? Those are potential issues that I am hoping the minister could shed some light on when she is next on her feet.

I turn to the concept of parental leave. My children are somewhat older now; the last one is about to leave school. One of my staffers is expecting a child next month. I have just prepared him for the weight of change that is about to fall on his shoulders. I am wholly supportive of the provision of parental leave for councillors who give birth or adopt a child, or have a partner who gives birth. I think that is very sensible modernisation, and I completely support it. I do have a concern though. Why is the government doing this piecemeal when there has long been talk of updating legislation to give councillors access to superannuation payments as part of their remuneration? It is interesting that the lack of superannuation payments at present will disadvantage those very councillors who are likely to be helped most by the additional parental leave—young women who, because they are in their child-bearing years, are unlikely to be in receipt of superannuation payments from another employer and potentially for some considerable period while they raise their children in the family home. It would have been sensible to bring on both provisions at once—superannuation and parental leave—unless of course the government has abandoned the idea of superannuation for the foreseeable future, which I think would be a mistake. Although I support the parental leave provisions before us today, I wonder at the reasoning behind their inclusion in this bill rather than in a later, more comprehensive, amendment bill. Again, I repeat that the green bill that was promised almost certainly would have resulted in such a recommendation feeding through to the final iteration of that bill.

Mention was also made of the statewide caretaker periods. These caretaker periods prior to an election appear sensible on the face of it, although I would not want these to cripple the functionality of local government. It is worth remembering that local council elections are biannual events, so caretaker periods would be a remarkably regular hurdle for local governments to navigate. As it stands, the bill might tie the hands of the entire council, even though only half of its members will be up for re-election at any given time. Is it really necessary or are we being overly prescriptive?

When it comes to being overly prescriptive, we also need to talk about standardised meeting procedures. They are innocuous enough at first glance, but when we consider their imposition, it gives rise to the following question: how many councils do not currently have adequate meeting procedures in place, and why have those lapses not been dealt with on a case-by-case basis before now? I assume that the vast majority already have perfectly functional systems in place. That leads me to worry whether we are placing an unnecessary burden upon those councils that are already performing at or, indeed, above the standard and we could now bring them down to a common denominator, all in the name of a one-size-fits-all approach. I hope we are not. Perhaps the minister with carriage of the bill can reassure me in that regard when she gives her speech in reply.

I began my remarks by noting that one thing that was not in front of us was the green bill. We were promised that, and I think we all agree that we should have had that. I want to close by noting something else that is not in the bill—a funding commitment. I have looked at bills we have recently passed and say that the legislation is fine but

how are we going to implement it? Where is the funding coming from to implement the bill? We watched the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries suffer budget cut after budget cut. There comes a point when I wonder whether it will be able to deliver anything but the most basic of its oversight functions. I am looking forward to Hon Wilson Tucker's speech about funding IT services. That will be very interesting. In a time of surplus, I would have thought reform might better have been started at the centre rather than out on the peripheries. Nowhere in the bill before us is there any provision to enhance the functions or the budget or the department to allow its staff to do their jobs more effectively. Instead, it is proposing to shift responsibility onto individual councils, with no sign of additional funding to allow them to comply.

I am now going to speak about cannabis, as I am sure members expected, because I have long been a fan of the idea that legalised cannabis could easily lead to a licensing head of power granted to local governments on an opt in, opt out basis. You were expecting it, were you not, colleagues?

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: We could then reap the money from cafe and cannabis club licences. I suspect that model would not find much support in Treasury but it would certainly provide a valuable source of revenue stream for cash-strapped councils. Of course, it remains a debate for another time.

I have listened to experienced retired politicians and active councillors comment critically. By "critically", I do not mean negatively; I mean comments on how to make improvements on the bill. That is really our purpose. It is a good bill. How can we make it better? Some have said words to the effect of suspecting this to be just the latest in a series of buck-shifting and buck-saving exercises designed to allow people to wash their hands of responsibilities. I tend not to think like that. I do not personally have the experience to comment on that view but I will be happy for colleagues here in the chamber with relevant experience to reassure me and set me straight on the matter that the intents are as we expect.

I suspect that the results of these reforms will be to see local government rates continue to rise. The funding issue is going to be there and rates will have to rise to meet that. Successive governments of either persuasion will say that it is not their fault and blame the councils for the decisions we make now, which will force changes upon them, which cost cash. I would be very delighted to be proven wrong, but members may recognise my concern that perhaps much of what is before us is motivated by party politics rather than a case of genuine engagement with stakeholders and the community at large, leading to sensible and reasoned change. I am happy to be convinced of the opposite. I look forward to Committee of the Whole. I am an optimist, I stand ready to learn from this bill and I support it.

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [3.59 pm]: I rise to make my contribution to the second reading debate on the Local Government Amendment Bill 2023. I state from the outset that I will be supporting this bill. I state also that my knowledge of local government is fairly limited. It is confined to putting out my rubbish bins on a Monday, and even then I occasionally get that wrong.

Hon Dan Caddy: That's essentially because you're in a Tuesday area.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: That is exactly right, member. That is my first mistake, clearly.

Hon Dan Caddy: Just make sure you put the right stuff in the right bin!

Hon WILSON TUCKER: That is the other part that I also get wrong, honourable member, but I will get there eventually.

A lot of members in this chamber have more experience with local government than I have, so I will be listening intently to the debate during the passage of this bill. I support the bill. Some parts of this bill are very sensible. The bill seeks to codify what good councils are already doing to standardise the number of councillors and remove ghost ratepayers who can potentially help to stack election results. That is all good stuff.

In my contribution today, I would like to not focus on the content of the bill but rather do a slight pivot, as my honourable colleague Hon Dr Brian Walker does quite frequently, and talk about the missed opportunity in this bill to address some of the feedback contained in a recent report from the Auditor General titled *Information systems audit report 2022: State government entities*. The report is backdated and covers the period 2021–22. This is the fourteenth information systems audit report from the Auditor General, and the Auditor General will continue to produce these reports on an ongoing basis. This report summarises the strength and resilience, or in some cases the weaknesses, that the Auditor General and her hardworking officers have found in local government IT systems. The Auditor General noted in her report that an increasing number of services and interactions between people with not only their local government, but also the state government are taking place online. That creates a larger digital footprint for hackers who want to target local governments. The evolving nature of hackers means that local governments need to place greater emphasis on securing their online systems and that they keep up with current trends and do not fall behind and expose any glaring weaknesses in their IT systems.

The Auditor General made 325 findings across 53 local government entities. I note that nine per cent of those findings were considered significant defects or weaknesses in IT controls and systems, 70 per cent were considered

moderate, and 21 per cent were considered minor. On face value, that nine per cent does not sound too bad. However, in the Auditor General's own words, it was disappointing to find that 69 per cent of these findings had been carried across from 2020, the previous year, to 2021. From talking to the Auditor General, some of these findings were considered to be low-hanging fruit. They were easy wins for local governments to fix up. We heard multiple accounts of passwords that had been written on a sticky note and plastered on the side of the monitor. We heard one account of how a server at a local government had been positioned in a toilet block. That is not necessarily a security weakness; it is potentially just a health and safety risk. When we talk about low-hanging fruit, people can remove the need to use a sticky note by getting a password manager. I think that costs about one dollar per user. That is a very quick and cost effective way of removing that defect. The Auditor General found that for 69 per cent of the findings, no action has been taken. That is obviously very disappointing, as the Auditor General pointed out.

As part of her reporting process, the Auditor General will look at a local government's IT systems and make detailed findings. The local government will then be given a detailed summary of the findings that have been made and the deficiencies in their systems, and a blueprint for how it should try to fix that up. On the back of that, the council is required to develop a management plan, in which all the sensitive information has been stripped out and put that on the council's website so that it is publicly available. The Auditor General does not have any visibility into whether the management or action plans have been followed up. That is a bit of a black box. The only accountability mechanism for councils is from ratepayers who ask councils questions about whether they have followed up with their management plan and put in place practices and processes to ensure that their personal information is secure. However, when we look through that chain of events, the concern is that there is a chink in the chain, because that process is not being followed up.

The Auditor General mentioned that the biggest reason that councils gave to her office about why 69 per cent of the findings that had been made by the Auditor General last year had not been acted upon was in most cases not resourcing constraints but a lack of awareness about the need to put in place proper controls and processes. The main reason that was cited was cost. I will dig into this a bit more. There was not a regional versus metro, or city versus country, divide on this issue. In some cases, regional councils did a lot better than their metro counterparts. The Auditor General was of the view that this came down to the proficiency of the local government's IT managers. If good people were in place, they put in place good processes and procedures and lifted the game of the whole council and helped improve its score. It is refreshing to see that there is not a regional divide, as is the case in other areas. Nonetheless, there is a general lack of awareness and also a cost restriction that is a barrier for a lot of councils.

I have given a couple of examples of low-hanging fruit. We can deduce from this report that not all these findings will be easy to address. There may be large migration projects from legacy systems, which will obviously take a lot of time and energy. There are a couple of sayings in the IT world. One is, "Have you tried turning it off and on again?" I can confirm, having spent about a decade in the software development field, that that is a legitimate troubleshooting step.

Hon Dr Brian Walker interjected.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: I am telling the truth, honourable member. The other is, "If it's not broken, don't touch it." If a legacy system is humming along in the background with an application that is running the financial systems or HR systems or whatever it might be, and it continues to work, people leave it in the darkness without touching it. Over time the operating system will become out of date, the software company will stop releasing security patches for it and hackers will find vulnerabilities. Potentially there might be changes in staff and the new generation of developers will not have the expertise to dive back into a legacy system, to look at legacy code and to debug or fix it, and there is no desire to touch it. It is hard to justify, from a business perspective, when a company wants X dollars to migrate a system to not produce a new functionality, but just keep the lights on with existing functionality. People might say, "But what about this shiny piece of functionality or service that we can give to our clients?", or "We can spend six months and, say, \$100 000 going backwards in trying to prevent something from breaking that is already working." The reality is—not just with local governments, but with any sector—that the longer things are left, the more entrenched that system becomes and eventually it will break or it will have to be moved and it will have to be rectified using a big bang approach. In the long run, it is less cost prohibitive to go back and make smaller changes or iterations, or to bite the bullet and migrate the system earlier, than to leave it sitting in the darkness for 20 years.

I asked the Auditor General a few questions about the cost side of things. I asked what funds local governments can access to address not necessarily the low-hanging fruit, but the big bang migration projects related to some of these findings and vulnerabilities highlighted by the Office of the Auditor General. I also asked about the digital capability fund, which is available to state government entities with these legacy systems. Those entities can put in a grant application or a request asking for funds to migrate a system. That is what the digital capability fund is there for and it seems to be doing its job. The Auditor General was of the view that this digital capability fund was not available to local governments. This is a little bit outside the scope of what we are dealing with in the clauses of this bill, but I am interested in any commentary on whether local governments have access to this digital capability fund; and, if not, what other funds are available to them. In terms of having to bite the bullet and do these migrations to fix up some of these risks, perhaps they do not have access to any funds except for the ratepayer dollars.

My other question is around utilising the Office of Digital Government to provide centralised services to local governments. In the same way that state government entities have access to the digital capability fund, they also have access to the Office of Digital Government to provide some cost-cutting services. Rather than individual state government entities reinventing the wheel countless times across WA, they can access shared services and utilise people with a high degree of expertise in a certain area to save money and time. To centralise that expertise in one area makes sense. As part of the Office of Digital Government, a security operations centre provides cybersecurity experts to provide a real-time view of hackers trying to access networks in state government entities. I asked whether local government had access to that service in particular, or any service offered through the Office of Digital Government. The answer was no, again. I think that the Office of Digital Government is looking at potentially putting in place some top-down processes and procedures that could give some guidance to local governments, but, again, I would like to request some commentary in this regard. It makes sense to talk about centralisation when the Office of Digital Government has a higher capability and can give guidance and potentially create some cost-saving benefit for these councils.

In summary, I support the Local Government Amendment Bill 2023. I have some questions, mostly about information technology systems. It is disappointing that 69 per cent of the vulnerabilities that were found by the Auditor General have been carried across. I daresay that if we look back at the other reports as well, that similar percentages will be found. More awareness and potentially more funds are required for local governments to fix these deficiencies and protect the personal information of Western Australian ratepayers.

HON JAMES HAYWARD (South West) [4.15 pm]: I stand to make a contribution on the Local Government Amendment Bill 2023. Traditionally, reforming local government has been a very difficult process in Western Australia. It has never been easy for a lot of reasons. One reason is because of the vastness of our state and the massive differences between shire councils, and the need to create change that will work for the small Shire of Murchison as well as for the Cities of Wanneroo or Joondalup in Perth. Those local governments have similar responsibilities, but the level of sophistication in a shire compared with the city councils is massively different. It has always been a very difficult task. I would like to congratulate Minister Carey for the work that he has done here. When I have met with him in the past to talk about these matters, I genuinely believed that he had a commitment to finding the best way forward for local government, and to be fair and reasonable. The vast majority of changes that he has proposed in this bill will bring about positive changes for local government. On that basis, he should be congratulated for his work.

I want to speak briefly about some of the changes. The caretaker period will be an interesting change. I am not sure that it was all that critical. Generally speaking, I do not think that city councils rush off to sign up multimillion-dollar deals the week before an election. Traditionally, councils usually take a long time to make a decision about things. I hope that these provisions will not make life even more difficult for councils in terms of getting things through. Councils meet at different rates. Some councils will meet weekly or bi-weekly and some will meet only once every three weeks. Depending on how the caretaker period falls, it could have some impact on a council's ability to do some work, but I have no issue with the change, other than that it will need to be carefully managed through.

I turn to creating consistency in terms of the size and structure of councils. I may get some criticism about this, but I actually think it is a very smart move. The nature of the work for local government councillors has changed significantly over the years, with the availability of telecommunication options and shire websites. Around 20 years ago, a local councillor's phone would not stop ringing because somebody would be upset that a cat was living next door, that their bin was not emptied or whatever their particular issue was. Often that councillor would be literally working at the coalface to deal with complaints and issues raised by members of the community. These days, the vast majority of those types of inquiries are managed by the council itself through its website, Facebook apps and other types of technology, as well people having the opportunity to attend in person. I do not think that has diminished the role of councillors at all. Councillors are responsible for running their local government; I am just saying that the role has changed. Because that role has changed, I think that there is an acceptance that councils can potentially run leaner than they have before because they do not have those added areas of responsibility.

The changes to lease arrangements are good. It amazes me that this continues to happen in this modern world. I am aware of issues in the south west whereby people have run for seats using their mother's address or rented a parking bay somewhere or something like that. That has always surprised me. At the end of the day, the local community often knows anyway, so I did not really understand why that was a great plan, but it has obviously worked and people have previously been elected that way, so I think that those changes make sense.

I do not have any comments to make about parental leave—I think that is something that the state is entitled to ask councils to do—or the principles in the act. Again, I have no real comments to make on that. I think that it makes sense to extend the election period because, certainly in regional WA, there are sometimes significant issues with the post. In my experience in local government, I have not ever heard of anybody abusing the electoral roll; however, again, obviously the minister has had some feedback that that was an important thing to do, so I have no issue with supporting that change. Again, I do not think that it will make a big difference.

I refer to the publication of candidate information. Again, I think that these are subtle changes and will not make a difference to how local governments run. Perhaps this will give people more opportunity to share their story when they are running for a local seat.

Obviously, there are big changes being proposed to the voting and counting provisions. Those changes are going to make counting far more sophisticated and difficult; I do not think there is any doubt about that. But I think that this is a step in the right direction. I will give members a few reasons why. At the last mayoral election in Bunbury, Mayor Jaysen de San Miguel won the mayoral election with 1 496 votes. In total, 7 530 people voted. That is just a touch under 20 per cent of the total votes, so he was elected as successful mayor on less than 20 per cent of the available vote. The runner-up, Amanda Yip, got 1 393 votes, so she was only 103 votes behind the mayor. She had about 18.5 per cent of the vote. We can see with those numbers that the mayor is walking around the City of Bunbury—Jaysen de San Miguel is doing a fantastic job, and the city is very pleased to have him, and I give him a shout-out and thank him for his work—but the reality is that four out of five people in his community did not vote for him. Moving to optional preferential voting would rapidly and massively change the level of support that any individual mayor will have in the future, because they will have the support of over 50 per cent of their community through the preferential voting system. I think that is really a step in the right direction. I know that some people are not so keen on it, but I think it will work very well. Even in smaller shire councils that do not have mayors but have presidents, I think that being popularly elected makes sense. I think there is a higher level of accountability. There is an argument that people might vote for the popular guy and he may not have much experience, but the reality is that people get the person they voted for. I think it is a fairly transparent way of dealing with local government elections. The reality is that whoever is voted mayor or shire president will have to lead that group of people, they will have to work it out, and they will work it out—they already do.

I turn to clarifying council plans and plans being published on the website. Again, I do not see these things as being massive changes. The next clause refers to community engagement charters and community surveys. I think that community surveys are a great idea because the opportunity to get data from local governments right around the state of Western Australia will certainly give the state government some great feedback, but it will also make it a competitive space for local governments who want to excel in their area, and I think that natural competitive streak will encourage better outcomes for ratepayers.

The payments for committee members will be a big change to what has happened in the past, but I do not think it will be a significant change for local governments to manage. I am probably not a supporter of the proposed changes to the paying of education expenses. I am not sure whether that is local government's role, but that option will be available moving forward. The grouping and tiering of local governments through regulation makes sense, because it will bring about a more uniform approach to local government across the state, and I think that is something worth supporting.

The backfilling of ordinary council election vacancies will be a fantastic step forward. It really made no sense at all that when a sitting councillor who had served two years of his four-year term ran for and was elected as mayor, the council had to hold an extraordinary election to fill the vacancy on the council. That was just a complete waste of time, effort and money for that council. I think this is an excellent idea. I foreshadow that I will seek to move an amendment on this once we get into the committee stage, because what is currently being proposed is that only members who resign or leave in their first year will be subject to these provisions. I think it makes sense to backfill, from the latest ordinary election, members who leave in the first and third year.

With that, I finish my contribution. Again, I congratulate the minister for the work he has done in this space, and I look forward to the committee stage.

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [4.26 pm]: Knowing that we have only a short time —

The PRESIDENT: You will get about a minute in, member.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: That was a local government joke!

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: Where do I start? I have a feeling I should just start later!

I rise to share my thoughts on the Local Government Amendment Bill 2023. I will start by making a quick comment. I think that the amendments proposed in this bill are very sensible and I will be supporting them. I pay a special note of thanks to Minister Carey and also the advisers and departmental staff who yesterday gave us a really good briefing that outlined very clearly what this bill will cover and the many sensible recommendations that it makes. That said, I am not without criticism. I will talk about some of the extra things that I think should have been done, but I will probably get to that further down the track.

I guess one of the key successes to acknowledge in this bill is that it actually captures many of the expert recommendations from the *Local government review panel: Final report* and the *Report of the inquiry into the City of Perth*. I think it is really important to see those recommendations captured in this bill. I spent 16 years in local government, and I think that when local government works, it is one of the best forms of government, but I think that, reflecting on those 16 years, I would certainly have welcomed many of these reforms, because I think that they will make things better.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 1739.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**PFAS CONTAMINATION — FORRESTFIELD–AIRPORT LINK****390. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:**

Thank you, President. Feels like a proper Thursday!

Hon Stephen Dawson: Only if you've got PFAS!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Just listen and wait!

I refer to the 564 000 cubic metres of PFAS-contaminated spoil stockpiled —
Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: — at 777 Abernethy Road, Forrestfield, down from 600 000 cubic metres in October 2020.

- (1) Excluding the 36 000 cubic metres of spoil utilised on the Great Eastern Highway bypass, what projects have been beneficial recipients of the Abernethy Road spoil on infrastructure projects across Perth since October 2022?
- (2) What volumes of Abernethy Road spoil have been utilised on each of these infrastructure projects across Perth?
- (3) Will the minister detail to the house the McGowan government's specific plans to address this long-time 564 000-cubic metre waste stockpile?
- (4) What specific time frame has the McGowan government allocated to the beneficial re-use of the remaining PFAS-contaminated spoil stockpiled at 777 Abernethy Road, Forrestfield?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(4) None during this time period. Approximately half of the soil will be utilised on the Great Eastern Highway bypass interchanges project. The remaining soil is intended to be re-used on future infrastructure projects.

GRIFFIN COAL**391. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade:**

I refer to question without notice 300 of 22 March 2023, regarding the Minister for State Development meeting with Mr Dev Sindhu of Oceania Resources on 7 November 2022, and departmental officers Mr Sadler and Ms Young meeting with Mr Sindhu on 9 February 2023.

- (1) What updates—using the minister's terminology—were provided to Mr Sindhu on the state's consideration of Griffin coal matters at the meetings of 7 November 2022 and 9 February 2023?
- (2) What time frame matrix and trigger points will the government apply to determine when the appropriate time is to provide updates on Griffin Coal to Oceania Resources?
- (3) In the “general in nature” ministerial meeting of 7 November 2022 and the departmental officers meeting of 9 February 2023, what “general issues” were discussed with Mr Sindhu, and how were the issues discussed prioritised for follow-up action?
- (4) Can the minister confirm that there were absolutely no records, minutes, documentation, notations or follow-up actions compiled at both the senior ministerial meeting and the departmental officers meeting?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1)–(4) I refer to the answer to question without notice C308. In relation to the meetings, government advised Mr Sindhu that it was considering options on Griffin Coal matters and would provide updates as appropriate.

SYNERGY — COAL IMPORTS**392. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:**

I refer to question on notice 676, asked by Shane Love, MLA, in relation to coal imports and origin of that coal.

- (1) What WA-specific biosecurity controls are in place for coal and boats importing coal from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Indonesia?
- (2) Has the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development provided advice to all regional ports and Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety in relation to biosecurity risks from the regions in (1); and, if no, which ports have not been provided advice?

- (3) Has DPIRD provided the minister advice on the potential risks of this coal importation to Western Australia's unique flora and fauna, and our agricultural sector?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

- (1)–(3) Biosecurity measures for international imports are controlled by the federal government. I encourage the honourable member to refer these questions to the federal minister responsible for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT — PATRONAGE

393. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to levels of patronage across the metropolitan train network.

- (1) When does the Public Transport Authority expect network-wide patronage to return to 2018–19 levels?
 (2) When does the PTA expect network-wide patronage to return to 2013–14 levels?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(2) Total patronage on the Transperth train network is at 95 per cent of pre-COVID levels. The bounce back in WA public transport patronage is one of the strongest in the country and is expected to continue as the McGowan government continues to provide affordable, attractive and environmentally friendly services for the community.

HARDSHIP UTILITY GRANT SCHEME

394. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the hardship utility grant scheme.

For each of the financial years 2021–22 and 2022–23 to date, will the minister advise —

- (a) the total number of applications received for a HUGS grant;
 (b) the total number of applications that were approved; and
 (c) the total number of applications declined?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

- (a) For 2021–22, full year, it is 11 833; 2022–23 to 27 March 2023, year to date, it is 8 277.
 (b) For 2021–22, full year, it is 10 480; 2022–23 to 29 March 2023, year to date, it is 7 347.
 (c) For 2021–22, full year, it is 1 353; 2022–23 to 29 March 2023, year to date, it is 930.

POLICE — STAFF

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

I refer the minister to the \$16.5 million specifically allocated for extra staff to support WA police's 950 additional officers.

- (1) How much of this allocation has been spent to date?
 (2) How many additional staff have been employed for this program?

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

KIMBERLEY FLOODS — FITZROY CROSSING

396. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to work by Main Roads on the low-level crossing over Martuwarra Fitzroy River.

- (1) Can the minister please provide an estimate of full-time equivalent contractors and employees working on the construction of the low-level crossing?
 (2) How many of those referred to in (1) are people who have Fitzroy Crossing or other communities in the Fitzroy Valley as their primary residence?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) Fifty-seven people are currently employed at the Fitzroy River site, working on all aspects of recovery.
- (2) Eight of these employees are from the Fitzroy Valley.

SYNERGY — HARDSHIP SUPPORT

397. Hon JAMES HAYWARD to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the inability of Synergy to provide basic headline data relating to financial hardship.

- (1) What has been the lifetime cost to date of the Synergy SAP billing system in terms of licence fees paid and moneys paid to IT services performed in India?
- (2) Are current IT issues, as referenced in the answer to C431, related to the online portal for financial counsellors, which the minister made reference to in 2021?
- (3) When was the last time the minister received data from Synergy relating to financial hardship; and will the minister table that?
- (4) Are current IT issues adversely impacting on Synergy's ability to issue timely bills, issue accurate bills, assist people in financial hardship and issue reconnection orders to Western Power in a timely manner?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

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

- (1) Synergy only contracts with Australian-based companies for its system licence fees and IT services for the SAP billing system.
- (2) No.
- (3) The minister frequently discusses hardship matters with Synergy.
- (4) No.

WASTE MANAGEMENT — FOOD ORGANICS AND GARDEN ORGANICS

398. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the state government's own target of having all local governments transition to a three-bin food organics and garden organics system by 2025. I also refer to the answer to yesterday's question and the fact that only 64 per cent of metro area LGs and nine per cent of non-metro LGs have indicated they will transition to a FOGO system by 2025.

- (1) What percentage of total local government FOGO set-up costs, on average, has state government funding covered for the 30 per cent of metro area LGs who have implemented FOGO so far?
- (2) If an actual percentage is not known, has the state government estimated the proportion of FOGO set-up costs covered by state government funding for metro area LGs who are implementing FOGO?
- (3) If yes to (2), what is this; and, if no to (2), why not?
- (4) What are the consequences, if any, for LGs who do not meet the deadline to transition to FOGO by 2025?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

- (1)–(4) The cost of delivering a food organics and garden organics service may vary between individual local governments. The state government's Better Bins Plus: Go FOGO program has offered local governments that have not previously accessed Better Bins funding up to \$25 per household to support the FOGO rollout. Local governments that have previously accessed Better Bins funding have been offered up to \$15 per household. The introduction of FOGO services is the single most important thing that local governments can do to improve material recovery rates from their municipal solid waste streams. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is actively working with local governments that have not yet introduced FOGO services to ensure that these are rolled out as soon as possible.

PREMIER — BROOME — TRAVEL

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

I refer to travel undertaken by the Premier to Broome between 16 March 2017 and 31 December 2018. What were the dates of each visit?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

Given the question requests information over a period of 656 days, it is not possible to provide an answer in the limited time available.

CANNABIS — EXPERIMENTATION

400. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the Minister for Medical Research:

As we approach this year's 420 celebrations, I refer the minister to a press conference held recently by the German federal Minister for Health, Dr Karl Lauterbach, during which he admitted that in order to better understand the need for cannabis reform, he had experimented with the drug, broadening his own understanding in the process.

In the interests of medical research, will the minister, or any of his cabinet colleagues for that matter, commit to similar experiments so that he and they can claim at least some level of experience before refusing yet again to entertain calls for the legalisation of cannabis here in Western Australia; and, if not, why not?

Hon Sue Ellery: You should check the public record because you will find that some of us already have!

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

I have to say that the Bob Dylan song lyrics "Everybody must get stoned" were going through my head when I read the member's question! The answer is no. The Western Australian government does not support the decriminalisation of cannabis.

The PRESIDENT: It is the Thursday before Easter, but, members, honestly!

TIKTOK — GOVERNMENT BAN

401. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Federal–State Relations:

I refer to recent reports that federal and state governments around the world are banning the use of TikTok on government devices due to suspected data collection.

- (1) Is the minister engaging federal cybersecurity agencies for advice amid concerns over the social video app's link to China?
- (2) Is the minister concerned about Department of the Premier and Cabinet employees using TikTok accounts?
- (3) Does the minister intend to put in place a restriction on downloading TikTok on government-owned devices?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(3) The WA government has sought advice from the commonwealth on any potential security risks associated with TikTok. Advice on the installation and use of TikTok on government-issued devices will be appropriately considered following advice from the commonwealth. The WA government is committed to protecting the community through strong cybersecurity measures.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — STAFF — TECHNICIANS AND AUTO-ELECTRICIANS

402. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to a media report on Seven news on 28 March that stated that the \$250 attraction and retention bonus payment had been extended just three days before it was set to expire on 31 March 2023.

- (1) On what date was a request first made to extend the attraction and retention bonus payment beyond 31 March 2023?
- (2) On what date was the extension granted and for what time frame?
- (3) Noting the minister's answer to question on notice 1286 that nine of the 12 FTE mechanical technicians, radio technicians and auto-electricians are currently receiving this bonus payment, please explain why three staff are not receiving this payment.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1)–(2) The Department of Fire and Emergency Services has been working closely with its fleet technician workforce and government sector labour relations for a replacement to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services fleet and equipment services agreement 2021. Conversations around attraction and retention incentive measures have been running parallel to these negotiations.

- (3) All staff employed under the Department of Fire and Emergency Services fleet and equipment services agreement 2021 are in receipt of the attraction and retention initiative. Radio technicians are not employed under the same industrial agreement as mechanical and auto-electricians.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS AUDIT — AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

403. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to the report *Information systems audit: State government 2021–22*, in which the Auditor General says —

Concerningly, and similar to last year, half of the audit findings (282) were unresolved issues from 2020–21. At 13 entities, control weaknesses were so pervasive they resulted in qualified audit opinions—a serious matter—due to weak system access management, and network security controls. These findings, if not addressed, could result in data breaches, system outages and financial loss to the State and its citizens.

- (1) Has the Premier been briefed about the Auditor General's 566 general computer control findings to 61 entities for the last financial year?
- (2) Given the seriousness of the findings, has the Premier directed that urgent action be undertaken?
- (3) Will the Premier undertake to provide Parliament with monthly updates until the Auditor General's 10 recommendations have been implemented?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(3) The WA government takes these risks seriously and has implemented several initiatives to increase the level of cybersecurity maturity across the WA public sector. The Auditor General's report acknowledges the hard work being done by staff and leaders across the state government to mitigate these risks. The report found that risk management, which importantly reduces the likelihood and impact of negative events, reached its highest level of compliance on record at 87 per cent. This is double what it was under the former Liberal–National government, when compliance was only 44 per cent in 2012. Under the former Liberal–National government, more than 60 per cent of entities failed to meet IT and cybersecurity benchmarks. This year, 66 per cent of entities met information security framework benchmarks. This is the highest level of compliance on record.

FIONA STANLEY HOSPITAL — CARDIOTHORACIC SURGERY

404. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to cardiothoracic surgery undertaken at Fiona Stanley Hospital.

- (1) How many critical inpatients are currently waiting for surgery?
- (2) Over the last six months, how many patients have been removed from the waitlist due to death occurring before surgery could be performed?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

As per Legislative Council question without notice 293, to allow for a more fulsome and accurate response, I request the member to place the question on notice.

ENERGY — TRANSITION STRATEGY

405. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:

This question was lodged on 20 February. I refer to the joint media statement from the Premier and Minister for Energy on 14 June 2022 that announced that Western Australia's state-owned coal power stations will be retired by 2030 as part of the government's energy transition strategy.

- (1) How much energy will be stored by battery by 2030 under the strategy?
- (2) How many batteries and what capacity will be required to deliver that level of storage?
- (3) What would be the cost to construct that amount of battery storage?
- (4) How many hours of supply would that amount of storage provide to the south west integrated system if all generation went out?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Energy and it was correct as at 21 February 2023.

- (1) It will be a maximum of 4 400 megawatts at any point in time by Synergy, plus the amount stored in batteries installed by consumers and private industry.

- (2) A total of 1 100 megawatts of capacity will be required by Synergy. The number of batteries and the capacity of each storage system will be determined as part of Synergy's investment program. This has been communicated publicly following the announcements on 14 June 2022 at—I note that there is a website here, which is probably not consistent with our practices so I apologise for this—www.brightenergyfuture.wa.gov.au/our-energy-transition/.
- (3) The cost of storage systems will be determined as part of Synergy's investment program and subject to Expenditure Review Committee consideration within the announced \$3.8 billion budget.
- (4) Storage of 1 100 megawatts or 4 400 megawatts could supply 1 100 megawatts for four hours or 550 megawatts for eight hours as part of an operating power system. Synergy's storage is being built as part of Synergy's decarbonisation program. The Australian Energy Market Operator manages the operations of the south west interconnected system, and consumers and private industry are also installing storage. The idea that Synergy is the only operator in the SWIS misunderstands the electricity system. Please note that no electricity system in the world can operate without generation, and the WA government and AEMO are not allowing or planning for that to occur.

CRIMINAL PROPERTY CONFISCATION ACT — MARTIN REVIEW — RECOMMENDATIONS

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

I refer to the review dated 8 May 2019 undertaken at the Attorney General's request by former Chief Justice Wayne Martin into the Criminal Property Confiscation Act 2000.

- (1) Has the Attorney General made progress to date in respect of implementing any of the review's 64 recommendations?
- (2) When might this progress, if it has been made, become evident?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

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

- (1)–(2) The review report is being carefully considered and any further action will be the subject of consideration by cabinet.

COMMUNITY KINDERGARTENS — FUNDING

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

I refer to community kindergartens operating in Western Australia.

Will the minister provide a breakdown of the total amount of funding allocated to each community kindergarten in 2023 for —

- (a) operational grant funding;
- (b) staffing costs;
- (c) linked school administration support; and
- (d) any other costs not listed above?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. A response has been provided by the Minister for Early Childhood Education. As the response is in tabular form, I seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

The Department of Education advises:

| Community Kindergarten | (a) 2023 Grant ⁽¹⁾ | (b) Salaries: Teacher and EA | (c) Admin Support for Linked Schools | Total 2023 Funding ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾ |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Albany Community Kindergarten | \$17,786.00 | \$233,866.40 | \$19,076.05 | \$270,728.45 |
| Bullsbrook Community Kindergarten | \$17,665.00 | \$233,866.40 | \$19,076.05 | \$270,607.45 |
| Byford Community Kindergarten | \$16,334.00 | \$116,933.20 | \$19,076.05 | \$152,343.25 |
| Glen Forrest Community Kindergarten | \$17,544.00 | \$233,866.40 | \$19,076.05 | \$270,486.45 |
| Hazel Orme Community Kindergarten | \$18,875.00 | \$233,866.40 | \$19,076.05 | \$271,817.45 |
| Hillarys Community Kindergarten | \$16,334.00 | \$116,933.20 | \$19,076.05 | \$152,343.25 |
| Kindaimanna Community Kindergarten | \$15,971.00 | \$116,933.20 | \$19,076.05 | \$151,980.25 |
| Lockyer Community Kindergarten | \$34,674.00 | \$467,732.80 | \$19,076.05 | \$521,482.85 |
| Lower King Community Kindergarten | \$16,697.00 | \$116,933.20 | \$19,076.05 | \$152,706.25 |

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| McDougall Park Community Kindergarten | \$18,633.00 | \$233,866.40 | \$19,076.05 | \$271,575.45 |
| Eastern Hills Community Kindergarten ⁽⁴⁾ | \$15,003.00 | \$116,933.20 | \$19,076.05 | \$151,012.25 |
| Mullaloo Community Kindergarten | \$18,270.00 | \$233,866.40 | \$19,076.05 | \$271,212.45 |
| Padbury Community Kindergarten | \$18,754.00 | \$233,866.40 | \$19,076.05 | \$271,696.45 |
| Pineview Community Kindergarten | \$15,850.00 | \$116,933.20 | \$19,076.05 | \$151,859.25 |
| Rossmoyne Community Kindergarten | \$18,754.00 | \$233,866.40 | \$19,076.05 | \$271,696.45 |
| Seaview Community Kindergarten | \$17,786.00 | \$233,866.40 | \$19,076.05 | \$270,728.45 |
| Spring Road Community Kindergarten | \$16,576.00 | \$116,933.20 | \$19,076.05 | \$152,585.25 |
| Tuart Hill Community Kindergarten | \$16,697.00 | \$116,933.20 | \$19,076.05 | \$152,706.25 |
| Total | \$328,203.00 | \$3,507,996.00 | \$343,368.90 | \$4,179,567.90 |

⁽¹⁾ The grant is paid in two instalments following the February and August census. The 2023 grants in the table above are based on the February 2023 census. Some minor changes to the second instalment may be made if the August census varies from the February census.

⁽²⁾ Some in-kind Departmental resources are applied to administering the community kindergarten program which is not easily quantifiable and not included in the Total 2023 Funding.

⁽³⁾ In accordance with the advice from the Chief Health Officer schools returned to pre-COVID-19 cleaning protocols from Term 1, 2023.

⁽⁴⁾ Eastern Hills Community Kindergarten was previously known as Mount Helena Community Kindergarten.

POLICE — OPERATION REGIONAL SHIELD

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

I refer the minister to the \$2.5 million allocated for targeting youth crime in regional WA through the Operation Regional Shield program.

What resources have been provided for Kalgoorlie–Boulder and the goldfields region from this program?

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 advise that since 2019 annual additional resources have been provided to the goldfields–Esperance police district under Operation Heat Shield, targeting policing demand including youth crime.

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT

409. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

I refer to the implementation of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act.

- (1) What date will the act be promulgated?
- (2) Is the whole state now covered by an identifiable and established local Aboriginal cultural heritage service; and —
 - (a) if there are gaps, what areas of the state are yet to be covered by a LACHS; and
 - (b) how will economic activity, which is likely to require LACHS approval, be conducted after the promulgation date in those areas where a LACHS is yet to be established?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) The act will come into effect on 1 July 2023.
- (2) (a) Relevant parts of the act will shortly be proclaimed that will enable the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Council to designate Aboriginal organisations as LACHS where applications are received.
- (b) The new framework established by the act does not rely on the designation of LACHS as it provides for a range of other Aboriginal parties, including prescribed bodies corporate, to work with proponents seeking to carry out activities that may harm Aboriginal cultural heritage.

GOLD CORPORATION — GOLD BAR CONTENT

410. Hon JAMES HAYWARD to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

I refer to the answers provided to recent questions regarding Gold Corporation.

- (1) Can the minister clarify who made the 2021 decision to revert to refining practices that ensure a minimum average gold purity of 99.996 per cent, noting that in the answer to question without notice 316 the minister advised that it was not a commercial decision taken by Gold Corporation?

- (2) Will the minister direct Gold Corporation to furnish him with board minutes and any other documents or records that provide the answer to this parliamentary question, as required by section 6 part 7 of the Gold Corporation Act 1987; and if not, why not?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

- (1) The 2021 decision was made by Gold Corporation.
 (2) See part (1).

PUBLIC HOUSING — MARKET RENT

411. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to market rent for public housing tenants.

- (1) What is the formula used to determine market rent?
 (2) What was the average market rent for each of the following financial years —
 (a) 2018–19;
 (b) 2019–20;
 (c) 2020–21; and
 (d) 2021–22?
 (3) What is the current market rent price for people living in public housing in WA?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

- (1) The Department of Communities receives valuations from Landgate. This data is based on market rental information that Landgate receives from the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety.
 Market rental evidence considers the location and size of the dwelling. As such, the market rent rate differs across locations and types of dwelling. Public housing rent is calculated based on either 25 per cent of the household's total assessable income or Landgate's assessment of market rent, whichever is lower.
 (2)–(3) The data requested would require a manual review of individual files and is not considered a reasonable use of government resources. However, if the honourable member has a more specific question, the minister will endeavour to provide an answer.

SOCIAL HOUSING — BUILDING CONDITION ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

412. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the \$12.8 million assessment program to conduct building condition assessments of the state's 10 000 oldest social housing properties. Will this program include an assessment of energy efficiency; and, if not, why not?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

The McGowan government is investing \$2.4 billion in social housing and homelessness over four years. Through this investment, we are delivering a \$12.8 million building condition assessment program that will undertake to assess 10 000 social housing assets across Western Australia. The information gathered during the BCA program will inform future investment planning across the housing portfolio and help forecast future required works to keep social housing stock viable and in the system for years to come.

420 FREMANTLE — CANNABIS AND HEMP COMMUNITY

413. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer the Premier to the 420 Fremantle celebration being organised in Fremantle's Walyalup Koort, formerly King's Square, on 20 April 2023, which is expected to be the largest event of its kind held here in Perth for some years, involving a range of hemp stalls, innovative local businesses and entertainment.

- (1) What events does the Premier currently have in his diary for 20 April?
 (2) If the Premier has the time, will he join me, or perhaps deputise one of his ministerial team to represent him, to better allow the government to meet and directly engage with members of the cannabis and hemp communities here in Western Australia, because I can assure him that he or his representative would be made to feel very welcome?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(2) If the member would like to invite the Premier or a minister to an event, he should do so through the appropriate forums.

POLICE — DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING — MYALUP

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

I refer to my question on Tuesday, 21 March, last week, and the driver who had THC detected in their system on South Western Highway.

- (1) Did that driver present as being impaired or are any records kept when a driver presents as impaired?
 (2) Were any records kept on the last time the driver reported using cannabis?
 (3) Were any records kept on whether the driver had used medicinal or illicit cannabis?

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.

- (1)–(3) The Western Australia Police Force advises that police are unable to answer this question because the response to parliamentary question without notice 282 refers to Forrest Highway and multiple drivers testing positive to cannabis.

CYCLONE SEROJA — RECOVERY

415. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I note that 11 April will mark the two-year anniversary of the devastation of severe tropical cyclone Seroja.

- (1) Does the minister intend to travel to the midwest region to update the community directly on the state government's recovery progress; and, if not, why not?
 (2) In relation to today's \$9.2 million pre-budget announcement, is it an admission that the government's recovery program has failed?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1) My travel diary for the next couple of weeks is being worked out.
 (2) No.

VACCINE SAFETY SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM — ANNUAL REPORTS

416. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the response to my question without notice 271, which informed the house that the communicable disease control directorate briefed the minister on the contents of the *Western Australian vaccine safety surveillance—Annual report 2021*.

- (1) On what date did the briefing occur?
 (2) Has the director also briefed the minister on the data for 2022?
 (3) Was a briefing note or similar document created by the directorate in association with either of these briefings?
 (4) If yes to (3), will the minister table those documents?
 (5) If no to (4), will the minister undertake to comply with section 82 of the Financial Management Act 2006?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) The briefing note was sent to the minister's office on 9 January 2023.
 (2) The data for 2022 is still under review.
 (3) Yes.
 (4) No.
 (5) The information sought by the member does not relate to the conduct or operation of an agency within the meaning of section 82 of the Financial Management Act 2006, and, as such, no requirement to provide a notice arises.

SOCIAL HOUSING — HEAD MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

417. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to public housing head maintenance contracts.

- (1) For the following financial quarters in year nine, what was the average time taken in days to complete void maintenance activity for each of the Western Australian contract areas in —
 - (a) 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2022; and
 - (b) 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022?
- (2) Do these figures include every vacant public housing property, including those zoned for demolition or redevelopment?

The PRESIDENT: There seems to be an awful lot of data being sought there, but I will see whether the minister is able to provide an answer.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

- (1)–(2) Void properties include categories of properties that are not considered for maintenance. This includes properties that are scheduled for demolition, redevelopment or being further assessed for either consideration. Therefore, it is not possible to provide an average time to complete maintenance activity for these properties. For properties that are returning to service, the time required to refurbish and re-let a property can be impacted by the scope of works required, which may be significant. Where maintenance is undertaken to return a property to service, it is done so that they can be re-let in clean, safe and working order. The remainder of the answer is in tabular form so I seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

| Region | Average Time Taken (Days) | |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| | 2022-23 Q1 | 2022-23 Q2 |
| East Kimberley | 58 | 46 |
| East Metro | 18.5 | 21.5 |
| Goldfields | 11.8 | 13.9 |
| Great Southern | 14.6 | 17.3 |
| Midwest/Gascoyne | 24.9 | 43.4 |
| North Metro | 24.4 | 29.1 |
| Pilbara | 33 | 32.8 |
| South Metro | 28.5 | 35.2 |
| Southwest | 28.3 | 37.7 |
| West Kimberley | 30.5 | 25.5 |
| Wheatbelt | 19.8 | 13.6 |

GRIFFIN COAL

418. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade:

It seems like “Super Thursday” today! I refer to my question without notice 177 of 14 March 2023 pertaining to the negotiations of the extension of the Collie Coal (Griffin) state agreement, which is due to expire at the end of June 2023.

- (1) With whom from ICICI Bank has the government been negotiating with on the Griffin state agreement?
- (2) On what dates did these meetings occur and who represented the state at these negotiations?
- (3) What were the commitments and agreed outcomes between the state of Western Australia and ICICI that were flagged at the meetings?
- (4) What records, minutes or documentation of the meetings were compiled and will the minister table to the house all records; and, if not, why not?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1) Discussions with the ICICI Bank have been general in nature and were not for the purpose of negotiation. The representatives from ICICI were Mr Anjan Pal and Mr Tamojit Mondal of ICICI Bank.

- (2) These meetings were not for the purpose of negotiation. The Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade last met with ICICI Bank representatives on 7 November 2022 in person at the minister's office. Officers from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet last met with ICICI Bank representatives on 9 February 2023 in person at Dumas House.
- (3) There were no commitments from either party. Government agreed to continue to provide updates to ICICI Bank as appropriate.
- (4) The discussions were general in nature and no specific agreements or outcomes were reached.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [5.03 pm]: I will continue my contribution to the second reading debate on the Local Government Amendment Bill 2023. As I said last time, I rise to speak in support of the bill. I think it contains many good elements and much-needed reforms that will strengthen the local government sector. I am pleased to be able to support those. These recommendations mirror many of the recommendations that came out of the Local Government Review Panel and the Inquiry Panel into the City of Perth. I am very happy to support those recommendations.

I thought it would be useful to highlight some of the key aspects that I think are good, and I will also make some comments around what else I think could and should be done. It would be fair for me to say, as someone who was involved in local government for a long time, that this sector always feels like there is a wave of new regulations and change coming from the state government. Of course, the last major changes were attempted under the Barnett government. As someone who was a mayor at the time, I know that we spent literally millions of dollars on those changes, only to see them abandoned at the last minute. Interestingly, the City of Fremantle had negotiated quite a good outcome and had got to the point of being supportive of the changes, yet they still did not go ahead because the whole process was set aside. That is at the heart of some of my concerns—that by not going far enough and resolving some of those bigger issues, there is a danger that there will be a sense that there is more work to be done. The local government sector never has the sense that it can just get on and do its job without the fear of constant and regular change. I will come to that in a minute.

In many ways, I think this is a really good bit of work. It will make some good, clear, sensible changes. I congratulate the government for where it has got to. The first of those changes is the shift back to preferential voting. It is important to remember that, except for the last 12 or 14 years, we had preferential voting for many years in local government. It obviously works at the federal and state levels and is a much more democratic system, so I am pleased to see it back for local government.

I have to tell a very quick story here. When I first ran for local government as a councillor in 2005, the election was based on preferential voting, which was good. Four years later, I ran for mayor. In the lead-up to that election, we had preferential voting, but literally in the months before, the Barnett government changed it to first-past-the-post, which of course created quite a lot of confusion. I was running in quite a friendly manner with other councillors; we knew it was a preferential vote, so we knew the community would decide. Then, all of a sudden, those of us who had lots in common realised that a first-past-the-post system was going to require some of us to pull out; otherwise, we would end up with a perverse outcome. That happens in first-past-the-post voting, as similar candidates force each other out. I think preferential voting, and especially optional preferential voting as planned, is a good, sensible way forward, and one that I hope remains robust. I hope that it does not revert when we get a coalition government back, as that backwards and forwards is not healthy. I hope this will be locked in with support from both sides for a sensible, ongoing and continual way for local government to hold elections.

There are a lot of other really good changes around the election process in terms of the publication of greater information about candidates to help inform voters, and some of the flexibility around that. I forget whether it was 150 words or 150 characters, but people had to try to squash it in. Some ability to expand that is good. The bill will also establish a newly standardised and rational caretaker period. I know there was a lot of angst around that when I was in the City of Fremantle. Interestingly, we practiced, by convention, a similar caretaker period to what has been proposed, because we recognised that it was the right thing to not make major decisions in the lead-up to an election. Having this standardised for all local governments to follow is a really good and sensible move forward. Again, it is broadly in line with what happens with elections at the state and federal levels. It is a really good, commonsense reform that will undoubtedly improve and add clarity to local government election processes. I am very pleased to support those aspects.

I am also really pleased to support some of the changes around transparency and the provisions to increase the type of information that local governments are required to publish on their websites. There is no doubt that many of these reforms will benefit both the local government and the communities they serve. At the heart of local governments functioning well, there is a real sense of transparency and the trust that comes with that transparency.

The more we can build that transparency and, ultimately, public trust is a really key element of communities trusting their local governments. Following on from that, in many ways they become highly functional. One example of this that I think is worth highlighting is the publication of key performance indicators for CEOs and the performance of CEOs against those indicators. That is really transparent as there is an expectation of what a CEO does, which is really good. We should ultimately look at that not only at a local government level, but also at a state government level. I imagine that if we could extend this to directors general, CEOs and their equivalents at a state level, they would set a really good example of a higher standard. I often think that there are lots of good things like this that local governments have done and continue to do that in many ways raise the bar for governance that I think can be taken up at a state and federal level.

I also liked what I think were called council plans, which will replace the community strategic plans. It is fair to say that if we ask the average community member or council member—perhaps I should not say that—who has read the community strategic plan, lots of them could not tell us what was in it. The idea of having a short sharp document that clearly defines what local government does and then communicates that with the community is great and what we need. When we were doing our first strategic plan at the City of Fremantle, I was quite proud when we got it down to a very thin document—maybe 10 or 12 pages. I cannot remember exactly how long it was. I thought that was a good plan. The truth is that the more we put in, the more it disguises and blurs what we are really focusing on and trying to do. Communicating clearly to the community what we are trying to do is really important. That is a classic case of less is more. Having that template and a good brief plan that we can communicate is a really good initiative.

Another example in this space, which I think is a good one, is the ability to enact regulations requiring the publication of registers of leases, grants, contracts and the like. Again, this comes down to transparency—making these things visible and doing away with the lack of trust that sometimes emerges. This is one of the key things that came out of the City of Fremantle again and again. I do not know why local government gets tarnished with this because the overwhelming majority of local governments have quite good governance. In local governments, there is a sense—people like to throw this around—of “jobs for mates” or “deals for mates”. By publishing registers, we will get around that. There will be a clear sense that a footy club is given a lease of a certain amount. It may be below the market lease on the clubrooms, facilities and hall but that is for a good reason—because people want to keep that footy club in their town. That is a really transparent way of doing that, which is really important. Setting it up will make it easier and the way of doing these things will become a new better normal for local governments. We could probably also see that occur at other levels of government. It would really help navigate these tensions and see these things happen. These are really good sensible shifts.

I attended the briefing yesterday. I will not go through everything. The briefing was a really good way of going through each of the aspects of the bill. This bill will make many good, sensible and often overdue changes that I really think will make the local government sector function even better. In my experience, it would be fair to say that when local government functions well, it is a really good and quite nimble level of government that can do really good work. Unfortunately, we regularly see times when local governments unravel and that becomes pretty public. Many of these changes will help see less of that. That is certainly the intention, and I am really quite supportive of that.

I will make a criticism of the bill, but I hope members take away that I think the bill is good. My criticism can be boiled down to the simple point that the bill does not go far enough to resolve some of the broader issues of a sector that has operated under a cloud of looming reform for a long time. I understand that the state government had hoped that this bill would in many ways close out that period of uncertainty, and a second bill is obviously coming through later in the year. Obviously, the process has been going for five years now, and local governments always have a sense that these things are changing, and they are not quite sure where they sit. I do not think it is good or healthy for local governments to function in that kind of space. However, the need to put local government reform to bed is a bit of a lost opportunity here because some things have not been done. I will give two examples that are probably worth highlighting. Some of these changes are bolder and what I would think of as evidence-based changes that have been called for by experts in multiple reviews. These were not in the most recent reviews referred to by Hon Martin Aldridge in his speech, but in some of the earlier reviews. I think it is a bit of a lost opportunity.

A key theme of the local government reform process from the last five years has been cutting red tape, and that is a good thing. Perhaps a bit ironically, a significant portion of this bill is constructing a rather complex framework of potential red tape in an effort to regulate the use of sham leases. Regulating the use of sham leases is really important because, obviously, we have seen some of the implications of them. They were used for two reasons: for people to pretend that they were able to run for a seat, and so they could vote. An issue with sham leases that certainly came through in the inquiry into the City of Perth was that we saw several people leasing toilets or cupboards for small amounts of money, and that is all people needed to lease to be an elector in the City of Perth. There are some really good and sensible changes that will see those things made much more difficult. This bill will create an extensive list of rules and requirements that local governments will use in maintaining their owner and occupier rolls—rules and requirements that enable both businesses and individuals who are not local residents but own or otherwise occupy properties in the area to a vote in local elections. For me, this is one of the key bits that is a lost opportunity.

Complex rules will be needed to manage this. The idea that we give businesses and non-resident landowners a vote feels to me a little bit like some kind of weird and rather archaic process. Compared with somebody who actually lives in an area, people can get an extra vote—or an extra two votes—if they own some land and own a business in an area. I think that is something that should have changed.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

TRANS DAY OF VISIBILITY

Statement

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [5.19 pm]: Trans Day of Visibility is celebrated every year on 31 March to raise awareness and visibility of trans and gender diverse people and their experiences. This day is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements and contributions of trans and gender diverse people to society. This is a community that has historically faced marginalisation, discrimination and violence. Trans people are often subjected to social exclusion, economic inequality and, horribly, physical and emotional abuse. Trans and gender diverse people are also more likely to experience mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. At the same time, they face significant barriers to accessing health care and other services.

Trans Day of Visibility is an important opportunity to celebrate and uplift the voices and experiences of trans and gender diverse people. It is a chance to acknowledge the resilience and strength of trans people in the face of systemic inequality. I accept that it is difficult for some to grasp how important visibility and representation are unless they belong to a group that has been denied them. Our culture is soaked in representations of heterosexuality, whiteness and cisgenderism, but it is rather difficult for people to notice this if they happen to be heterosexual, white and cisgender. Why should they? They can see aspects of themselves reflected everywhere. Most of us do not have to try to find representations of ourselves in the media or public life. It is just there. It is just the way things are. Seeing people in the media and in public life whom we can strongly identify with reinforces our sense of self, providing positive role models and a feeling of fitting in. It helps us work out who we are and what we want without us having to do anything. It gives us someone to look up to. Visibility is about making sure that everyone has someone to look up to.

Trans Day of Visibility is also an opportunity to highlight the contributions of trans people to society. Trans people have made important contributions in fields such as art, science, politics and activism. By celebrating these achievements, we can help to promote positive representations of trans people in the media and public consciousness, and challenge harmful stereotypes. But visibility alone is not enough to address the challenges faced by the trans community. It is important to recognise that trans people continue to face significant barriers to access health care, education, employment, housing and other essential services. This in turn leaves many trans and gender diverse people at much greater risk of poorer health outcomes.

Discrimination and violence against trans people still exists. Around the world—although I am very proud to say not here in Western Australia—legislative efforts to restrict trans people’s human rights are on the rise. Trans Day of Visibility should be a call to action for allies and supporters of the trans community. We must accompany visibility with concrete action to support trans rights and equality. Our schools and workplaces must be welcoming and inclusive of trans and gender diverse people. We must support trans-led organisations such as the amazing team at TransFolk of WA, and we should challenge transphobic attitudes and behaviours when they arise.

Two weeks ago, outside this Parliament, there was a demonstration, poorly attended I might add, against the human rights of trans and gender diverse people. I will not dwell on the misconceptions that drove the organisers of that protest. Thankfully, my colleague Hon Dr Sally Talbot has already given this chamber a perfectly worded demolition of the motivations and ideology behind that protest. Instead, I want to reflect on the response inside this building. The response from the overwhelming majority of my colleagues was an outpouring of support for our trans and gender diverse community. That kind of support is what everyone deserves when their right to merely exist is called into question.

It would be remiss of me not to reflect upon the actions of one member of this place who chose to stand with the anti-trans protesters earlier this month. I want to further acknowledge and thank the other members of that member’s party who distanced themselves from that member’s stance. That includes members of Parliament and candidates from that same party in Victoria and New South Wales. That same member attended PrideFEST Fairday last year and co-hosted a stall with party members, and her actions earlier this month really call to question her support for the LGBTQIA+ community. I suggest that she reflects on this and I hope that the organisers, Pride WA, re-evaluate further stall requests from that particular member.

It was disappointing, but not surprising, to read an article in *The West* this week in which another member from this house chose to lend their support to the Victorian member of Parliament who chose to attend an anti-transgender rally in Victoria. *The West* quoted from an email that this member is purported to have sent to supporters. In reference to the member’s letter, the article reads —

... she was “rightly” speaking out on “the injustices against women who are being forced to include trans women in female only change rooms and sports, and calling for an inquiry into gender transition practices.”

It is a shame that *The West* did not bother to ask the Leader of the Liberal Party whether she supports this member's anti-trans comments made in the same article—they seem to ask her views on everything else. I call upon the Leader of the Liberal Party to clarify whether she supports the member's anti-trans views as we approach Trans Day of Visibility.

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of attending Sydney WorldPride and as part of that event, over 50 000 people walked over the Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of the LGBTQIA+ community. I also got to watch the Mardi Gras parade down Oxford Street and it was uplifting to see the support displayed to our LGBTQIA+ community, especially to our trans and gender-diverse community, including our trans kids who are now under threat.

Visibility is a crucial aspect of promoting and understanding our transgender people. By increasing visibility and awareness of trans experiences, we can challenge harmful stereotypes and misconceptions, and promote empathy and understanding. Greater visibility will eventually lead to greater social acceptance and support for our trans people, and that is something that we should all support. A society in which we can all be visible without fear or stigma, is a society that we can all be proud of.

DESERT BLUE CONNECT

Statement

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [5.27 pm]: I rise to make a brief comment on an opening I attended recently, but while I am on my feet, I will express my support for the comments made by Hon Peter Foster and I thank him for that contribution. Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to attend the opening of the Women's Wellness Centre in Geraldton. On 8 March, the centre was officially launched and it is now up and running. The centre has been provided by an organisation in the midwest called Desert Blue Connect. For those who do not know, Desert Blue Connect is a community not-for-profit that provides counselling and support for people who have gone through the awful experience of family violence and sexual assault. It provides counselling, support and advocacy services for children. It provides crisis accommodation for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence. It also provides rural support and programs in the region across the midwest in places like Mingenew and Morawa and further afield. It also provides a men's community intervention program and a caring dads program.

Desert Blue Connect is an organisation that is quite close to my heart. I have been on the board of Desert Blue Connect for a few years now and I was given the great privilege of speaking to the group who attended the opening of the new Women's Wellness Centre and cutting the ribbon before invited guests were allowed inside to tour this amazing new facility. The great thing about this particular facility is that it has been developed to be a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for women addressing a range of women's needs in the midwest community. It provides bulk-billed medical services for women, counselling services, pregnancy counselling and support, the Looking After Mums program, a mums' group and a program called Desert Rose, which is a First Nations women resilience program. I will speak more about that in a moment.

I will speak about the early seed of the idea for the women's wellness program. It came from the staff on the ground at Desert Blue Connect. As members can appreciate, Desert Blue Connect staff members are incredibly busy delivering highly important work, which is also highly stressful work, in our community. Amongst all the busyness and the important work that they deliver for the people of the community, they had a seed of an idea to provide a tailored, specific women's wellness service for the midwest community, and they took the idea to the leadership of Desert Blue Connect. They researched facilities and buildings nearby where they could develop their own facility, and they kept advocating and made it easy for Desert Blue Connect, as an organisation, and the board to say yes to establishing this program. The work that they have collectively done to establish this facility, open it and have it up and running to provide that service to the community is a great credit to everybody involved. I thank the CEO of Desert Blue Connect, Russell Pratt, for listening very carefully to his staff, recognising the need for a service like this in the community and working collaboratively with the community, the board and all the various groups involved to help build, fit-out and provide the service. I know it was a lot of work for Russell and the Desert Blue Connect leadership to find doctors. It is a regional service, so doctors are always hard to find, and they put in many, many hours getting a female GP and then a substitute female GP when the new GP had to go on leave. It was a lot of work for them, but they persevered to make sure that the service was available to the community because they recognised how very important it is.

The tour of the facility was a wonderful experience because as one goes inside, one can see the love that has gone into creating that facility. It is warm. It is welcoming. It provides safe spaces. Each of the staff have their various rooms or spaces in the building. There is a space for children to play when their parents are getting treatment or counselling. Every space is designed to feel warm, safe and welcoming, and that is a particularly important consideration that shows the heart and soul of that organisation and the love it put into making sure that it shows that it really cares for some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

I will speak briefly to the Desert Rose: First Nations Women's Resilience Program, and explain what that is about. As a member of the board of Desert Blue Connect, I had the privilege of listening to the creator of that program speak about the work that it delivers and why she created it. I will explain what Desert Rose is. Desert Rose is a culturally

safe life-skills program specifically for First Nations women created by a First Nations woman. It is a four-week program for women and it takes them on a bit of a journey over a few consecutive Wednesday and Thursday afternoons to help them reconnect with their culture and each other, regain their cultural identity and create some inner healing and empowerment. It is an incredibly important program and one that is delivered by First Nations people for First Nations people. It has now been incorporated into the Women's Wellness Centre. I thought that I would mention it specifically today because another one of its programs is starting up on 3 May and applications are open now, so I will pop the link on my Facebook page for anyone who is interested.

Lastly, I will mention Desert Blue Connect's WAVE, or Walk Against Violence event. Every year, Desert Blue Connect gathers members of the community—a variety of Indigenous groups, the Geraldton police, some of the school groups and a whole different range of people from the community attend—and they listen to speeches about various people's services that are provided to support people who have experienced family and domestic violence. The participants then walk along the foreshore and down the main street of Geraldton, through the CBD. It is a very quiet, peaceful walk through the community. In the most recent walk that I participated in, there was a really beautiful moment when we were walking along the foreshore. There were a lot of people out that day—it was a beautiful day—and groups of people broke out into spontaneous applause. That was a beautiful display of support for the people who participate in marches like that, for reasons that I probably do not need to elaborate on. It was really heartening to see that the message is seeping through, and they felt that support. It was definitely a goosebumps moment, and I have them right now! I thank Desert Blue Connect for doing that kind of thing for the community, for the work that it does in gently creating awareness, for the men's intervention programs it has created to help people who are ready to acknowledge that they need help and support, and for the way it has embraced technology to help the community provide wraparound networks for people who are vulnerable to family and domestic violence, and who can then use those community support networks to intervene before the violence takes place. It is doing some fantastic work in that space as well.

I want to reiterate that I really thank Desert Blue Connect for the amazing work it does. Thank you to Russell Pratt and his team. I would love to name them all, but there are a lot of people doing amazing work there. Please know that the midwest community is incredibly grateful for the work that you do.

ELLENBROOK SECONDARY COLLEGE

Statement

HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan) [5.35 pm]: Firstly, I say again publicly that, comrade, as a feminist, I stand here as a proud supporter of the transgender community. I stand in solidarity as an ally and a friend, and we need to keep continuing this conversation.

Comrades, last Friday, I had a wonderful morning out at Ellenbrook Central shopping centre with a whole bunch of children from a culturally and linguistically diverse background from Ellenbrook Secondary College. Their teacher, Janelle, came up with an idea. These children were from year 7 up to year 12, and, yes, the majority of them were taller than me, even the year 7s, but they were nice to me, whereas my colleagues here make comments about my height. Because these children have a culturally and linguistically diverse background, a lot of them have refugee status, and some of their parents have left war-torn countries. They have actually been through quite a lot in their life. Some of the older members of our community are not used to dealing with youths from such a diverse background, so the idea was that the children would go out and do random acts of kindness. Hon Donna Faragher spoke about children doing random acts of kindness. I was not there on my own; we teamed up with Jessica Shaw, the member for Swan Hills, and also Hon Ayor Makur Chuot joined us, without the baby—we told her off for that, but she was there as well. Coles donated a whole bunch of Easter eggs and flowers, we went round with the children and they handed flowers and Easter eggs out to people randomly in the shopping centre. The conversations we had with some of those people afterwards were amazing. One woman said that she was having such a bad day, and then she saw a six-foot tall young man with his cap to the side calling everybody “bro” and “cuz” and things like that, but he was so respectful. He handed her the flowers and said that he hoped she had a really good day. She said, “He's just lit up my life and he's just made my day.” Talking to her, I said that we need to remember that those young children need that positivity in their life.

Thank you to the students at Ellenbrook Secondary College. I say to those students: keep working hard. To that young man, I say: party less, study more. He knows what I am talking about. I am looking forward to the next time, as is Jessica Shaw and Hon Ayor Makur Chuot, and hopefully we will be able to get Tania Lawrence to come along as well out to Ellenbrook to join them again for more random acts of kindness.

DEROGATORY NAMES

Statement

HON PIERRE YANG (North Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.38 pm]: Two weeks ago, on 15 March 2023, I made a statement in this chamber about the word “Chinaman” and Ha Ling Peak in Alberta, Canada. I want to reiterate my congratulations to the Alberta and Canmore communities in Canada, and also to

Mr Roger Mah Poy and his colleagues for their work. Canada is not alone in that situation. In fact, there are many places closer to home that also bear the word “Chinaman” in their name. Across the Tasman I understand that there are about 13 place names in New Zealand that include the word “Chinaman”. For example, there is a suburb called Grey Lynn in Auckland within which there is either a former or current locality called Chinaman’s Hill. Grey Lynn is named after former New Zealand Governor Sir George Grey. This is a peculiar situation, because on Google Maps that name cannot be found within the suburb of Grey Lynn. Nevertheless, a quick search on a website called Mapcarta.com reveals that the words “Chinaman’s Hill” feature very prominently in the southern part of the suburb of Grey Lynn. The accompanying text reads —

Chinaman’s Hill is a locality in Auckland, Auckland Region. Chinaman’s Hill is situated nearby to the suburb Grey Lynn and the neighbourhood West Lynn.

On moovitap.com there are a couple of sentences that read —

Directions to Chinaman’s Hill (Surrey Crescent) with public transport

The following transport lines have routes that pass near Chinaman’s Hill

It lists a number of bus routes. Surrey Crescent is a street in the southern part of Grey Lynn.

On the National Library of New Zealand website there is some information about Chinaman’s Hill, and I quote —

Chinaman’s Hill, Grey Lynn

Date 1993-03-17

Description The 100-year old gatehouse to the farm on Chinaman’s Hill in Grey Lynn has been converted for use as a co-ordinator’s office for Village Green that is planned near local shops. Some historical details of the building given.

...

Source Auckland City Harbour News, p 1

From Auckland Libraries

On wikimapia.org there is a description of the origin of the name Chinaman’s Hill —

So named because in this area around 1900 were located several market gardens operated by Chinese immigrants

There is more to this story. Auckland Transport, which is an Auckland council-run agency responsible for transport services in the local area, had two bus stops called Chinaman’s Hill on both sides of Great North Road in Grey Lynn. Despite the suburb being called Grey Lynn, the bus stops were named as Chinaman’s Hill. According to an article on New Zealand’s news media website Stuff, which has a monthly audience of more than two million, an Auckland resident, Leon Tan, asked Auckland Transport to rename the bus stops in 2015, quite a few years ago. Leon Tan was quoted as saying —

“I feel offended by that term, as a Chinese person. Chinaman is an offensive and derogatory term that evidences normalised racism in New Zealand.”

...

“Racially offensive bus place names is where everyday normalised racism begins, and it should really end today,” he said.

“It might be a blind spot. People don’t really [know] how offensive these things are when they are not members of that group. I do think it will be good for people in Auckland to discuss this and talk about these things.”

He suggested that Auckland Transport use “Chinese Market Hill” for the two bus stops instead of that derogatory term. Nevertheless, Leon’s plea to Auckland Transport was rejected. He got a perfunctory and rather disgraceful response, which ran as follows —

... the name was a reference to the 19th century when the area was commonly known Chinaman’s Hill for the Chinese market gardens located there.

Because the name was historical, there was no plan to change it ...

Leon did not give up. After the Christchurch mosque shootings, Leon took up the matter again—according to him, as part of a wider conversation about racism. This time, Auckland Transport corrected its mistake of a few years before, and I confirm the report of the news site that the names of those two bus stops were changed in March 2019 and they are now called Grey Lynn School bus stop. I want to commend Leon for his effort and his tenacity in pursuing this matter when he hit a brick wall with Auckland Transport.

Here is another example. At Tiritiri Matangi Island in Auckland's Hauraki Gulf—I apologise if I have butchered these names—a bay on the east coast of the island is called Chinaman Bay. There is an online petition calling for the removal of the derogatory term and its replacement it with a traditional name. The online petition states that the bay —

... is named using an antiquated and racist term ...

why not rename it Piwakawaka bay ...

... Chinaman Flat and Chinaman Stream are also official names of land features in New Zealand. These too should be addressed ...

... we are trying to fight to stop the normalisation of racism in New Zealand. Let's continue that by thinking about some of the terminology on our maps.

This petition was initiated by Rebecca Connor, and I would like to thank her for standing up for social justice and against racism.

As I said in my previous contribution, the word "Chinaman" was a racist word 200 years ago. It is a racist word today. It is my intention to make further statements in the near future on place names in Australia that include the term "Chinaman". As for today, I am pleased to see that more and more people in New Zealand have become aware of how derogatory and offensive the word "Chinaman" is, and are shining a light on this important issue and working in their community in New Zealand.

FOUR-DAY WORK WEEK

Statement

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [5.47 pm]: In the dying minutes of a three-week sitting, I would like to spend some time again talking about the time, but this time I will not be talking about daylight saving time. I promise I will stop saying the word "time" very soon!

Hon Dr Brian Walker: Sometime!

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Sometime soon!

I would like to spend some time talking about how much time we spend at work because it is an important question. A lot of us derive a lot of value and a sense of identity from the work we do. Certainly, in a lot of Western capitalist societies we spend a lot of time at work as well. I know parliamentary hours are slightly different from the standard nine to five. It probably feels like a bit of a sticky wicket coming at the end of a three-week sitting block, but I do not think we are doing too badly here considering all the party pies in the members' bar next door, as opposed to the standard nine to five, or the five-and-two roster, that most West Aussies do on a day-to-day basis. There is an opportunity in Western Australia to read the room, look at what other jurisdictions are doing in this space and consider the vibe that is happening globally around our relationship with work. The pandemic has fundamentally changed how we work and where we work. Forty per cent of jobs are now considered remote positions. The other question we should be asking ourselves is: how much time are we spending at work? I am talking about the adoption of a four-day working week here in Western Australia. I recently conducted a poll by Painted Dog Research, which is a reputable research company based here in Perth. I asked a number of questions, one of which was the very simple question: do I support the implementation a four-day working week? It is a very simple question but it had some very striking results, although not as striking as we would expect when talking about reducing working hours. The results were that seven per cent strongly opposed the implementation a four-day working week; four per cent opposed it but not as strongly, although they were still against it; and 21 per cent were sitting on the fence. They probably wanted more information before making up their mind. Then there was 14 per cent who supported —

Hon Martin Pritchard interjected.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: We are talking about a four-day work week, Hon Martin Pritchard.

Support was at 14 per cent. A massive 54 per cent of people strongly supported a four-day working week. That is a net total of 68 per cent in support of a four-day working week in Western Australia and a net 11 per cent who oppose it. Painted Dog's research has a statistical significance to a degree of 95 per cent of the Western Australian population. It is proportional and representative of the Western Australian population. Some 68 per cent of the population supports a four-day working week. I know that the government typically leads from the middle. It needs a groundswell and a vast broad public consensus to get anything done, really, but I would say that 68 per cent gives the government that mandate. That is massive support. The majority supports a four-day working week.

I will frame this and give members some background into how much time we have been spending at work over the last century. About a century ago, people worked 60 hour weeks, so 10-hour days for six days a week. In the 1950s, there was a bit of a revolution led by Henry Ford and a few others, and industrialised countries changed their approach to work. We then moved from the 60-hour working week to what we now know as the 40-hour working week. We also got a few other employee benefits. The relationship with work fundamentally changed. Henry Ford discovered

that if employers threw more hours at their employees, they did not necessarily get more output. There was a drop off and a sweet spot. For a long time, that sweet spot has been the 40-hour working week. Since the 50s, we have not seen much change in this area, but the pandemic came along and has really changed where we work. There is now a global movement and a groundswell around how much time we spend at work. The four-day working week proposes essentially a 32-hour working model that is sometimes referred to as 180–100, which means employees get 100 per cent of the pay for 80 per cent of the time, and the expectation is that productivity is maintained at 100 per cent. I am sure that some members are sitting there and rolling their eyes thinking that is not achievable. How will we squeeze out 20 per cent more productivity in just 80 per cent of the time? That is not achievable for some industries. If we look at manufacturing industries or sectors that rely on manufacturing, we have about a century of studies on productivity and labour-saving investments in those areas. A 20 per cent gain in those areas is probably unrealistic or certainly harder to achieve, at least at the superficial level. Areas that are public facing and involve communicating with the general public have some challenges when talking about the adoption of a four-day working week. But a four-day working week is achievable for the majority of the population of people who live in Australia and western industrialised capitalist countries.

There are jurisdictions doing some work here. The political parties in Spain and Scotland went to the elections on the back of trialling a four-day working week. They were successful. There have been similar movements in the United Kingdom and there are six trials happening globally. The 4 Day Week Global Foundation is a consortium that is looking into this. A number of reports are coming out backed by Boston University, the University of Cambridge and others. Australia has just signed up as a participant in that trial, with a report to land in April. A recent Senate inquiry with members from Labor, the coalition and the Greens supported and recommended that the government of the day implement a four-day working week trial for agencies in the commonwealth public sector.

There is a movement here. There is a groundswell. I will certainly have more to say on this topic. As we enter what could be considered our autumn break, I ask members to consider the benefits of the adoption of a four-day working week here in Western Australia.

HEMP — CLOTHING

Statement

HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West) [5.55 pm]: Tonight I would like to talk about clothes, particularly the new jacket that I am wearing. It was made for me in India, and it will likely last longer than any other item of clothing that I own. It is made of hemp. It is thick and quite heavy and what is most exciting about it is that it has pockets. I have two pockets on the outside and two inside pockets. Most women will be aware how hard it is to find jackets that have pockets that are functional and not just decorative. Basically, this jacket should last me for the rest of my life.

In Australia, 6 000 items of clothing end up in landfill every 10 minutes. Hemp as an industry in WA could make a huge contribution to both the environment and the economy. The legalisation of cannabis would make the growing of hemp much more viable. There would be much less paperwork and many reduced conditions for farmers to comply with. The removal of barriers, particularly around the various terpenes found in hemp and cannabidiol, as well as less strict laws for THC content, would make this much more attractive. For me, this jacket signifies the move from fast fashion to slow fashion, whereby clothes last for many years and are produced with less water and fewer chemicals, thus reducing their environmental and economic impact. Plus, we have pockets!

I wish everyone a lovely Easter break.

House adjourned at 5.57 pm
