

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — PERFORMANCE

Motion

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition) [4.01 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the McGowan government for its failures in delivering on its election promises, cuts to frontline services, cost-of-living increases and failure to be open and accountable to the people of Western Australia in its first two parliamentary years.

It has been two years approximately since the McGowan government was elected. It has been an interesting two years; it is not the type of government that most people expected, on the basis of the commitments the Labor Party made in opposition for eight and a half years.

[Quorum formed.]

Dr M.D. NAHAN: This is not the type of government that we expected. Amongst the number of promises the Labor Party made in opposition, one was a gold standard of accountability; we see this now. This is Parliament; it might be painful for the government to listen to us during private members' business, but it is a regular event in Parliament during weekly sittings for the opposition to raise issues of public importance—and this is clearly one—and the government puts forward a minister to respond to it. I am looking over the government benches now and I am not seeing a minister sitting there to listen to what the Leader of the Opposition has to say.

Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski: She is here; she's not sitting.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Sitting? In order to participate, members have to be sitting in their chair. We now have a minister—a single minister—to listen to this. I assume she is going to be the minister who replies to us; I am not sure whether that is the case. But this just highlights one aspect of this government: it said things in opposition about high standards of accountability, but when it got in, it delivered the opposite.

We went through eight and a half years of a Labor opposition during which it said many things. It stood up for the poor, the weak, the people who were being hit by high increases in fees and charges. It fought for frontline services—so it said, anyway. It decried cuts to frontline services and, by the way, also criticised us for spending record amounts on frontline services.

There is a statement I want to start with. This is the height of the critique of the McGowan government: it is not what it was elected to be, it is not what it claimed to be, and it is not a traditional Labor government. Last week, I asked a question of the Premier during question time about the same issue I am talking about now—fees and charges. The Premier said —

The truth of the matter is that it will always be Labor that is more on the side of low-income people who work for a living. That is one of the reasons I joined the Labor Party —

The Premier said —

because I am on the side of those people who do it tough, who go through adversity in their lives, who through no fault of their own need government support and those people who work for a living. That is what Labor is all about. That is how our party came into existence.

The government is doing the opposite. It is doing exactly the opposite of what it promised to do, what people thought it was going to do, and what it claims its party stands for. The truth of the matter is that most of the people that the government hits, and hits hard and repeatedly, are its own constituents. It is not so much mine—although it also hit those—but it hits its own constituents. Let me outline some of that. It is not the member for Cottesloe's people or the member for Nedlands' people, or perhaps the people of Rossmoyne in my area.

A member interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Not South Perth, no; definitely not South Perth!

A member interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is not the businesspeople —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me, members. Member, you need to be in your seat if you are going to contribute.

Mr J.E. McGrath: I got disoriented!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I understand that that would probably be the case, member, but I do encourage you to take your seat, if you want to comment. Thank you.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]
p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I thought it was a very good interjection! South Perth is doing fine; it is okay. It is not the businesspeople, who are doing fine and getting better—although not all of them; some are struggling a bit—but particularly the mining sector is doing really well. It is the people who are struggling.

Let me go back to the Premier's quotes. It is these people who the government says have been the primary focus of the Labor Party since it came into existence. I repeat the Premier's quote —

... I am on the side of those people who do it tough, who go through adversity in their lives, who through no fault of their own need government support and those people who work ...

These are the people that this government has explicitly hit the hardest. It has been more merciless on these people than has any government of the last 20 years. Let me carve it out. It was not an afterthought or a mistake; the Labor Party said it was going to do the opposite. It said it was going to look after these people, help them fight for essential services, keep fees and charges low and help people, but it has done the opposite.

We have heard about fees and charges in this place many, many times, and we are not going to run away from that. For the last four years before coming into government, the Labor Party decried every increase in fees and charges. In that time, electricity went up by 4.5 per cent at the most in any of the four years I was Minister for Energy. In my last year, it went up by three per cent. We did not increase that fixed charge exorbitantly; we just increased it by the overall increase. We did it because we knew that people on fixed incomes with low electricity use would get hit doubly hard if we put on the fixed charge. Then the Labor Party came in. The Minister for Energy has not done much. He has sat at the energy minister's table, looked at the in-tray he inherited from me and has gone through it. That is what he has done. The only variation he has made is grab more money from anyplace that he could scratch out more money. One thing he did was increase electricity charges by 11.9 per cent in the first year, for all those on the fixed charge. That meant that in a single year pensioners, who do not use much electricity, faced a 40 per cent increase in their electricity charges—40 per cent! People on fixed incomes, on pensions, faced a 40 per cent increase in electricity and they could not avoid it because it was a fixed charge. They could not turn off the electricity. They could not substitute gas for electricity. They could not avoid it. These are the people that the Premier says are the major focus—in fact, part of the DNA—of Labor. This is not a Labor government then.

What did the government do the next year? It increased electricity charges by seven per cent and continued with the fixed charge. It has hit people like no other government. In the past, the Labor Party decried us for what we did. It said that we were miserly rip-off agents when we increased electricity by three per cent, or 6.5 per cent over two years—that was when we were subsidising the electricity sector to the tune of \$350 million. There is no subsidy now. The government does not provide a subsidy to Synergy—none. It also has ripped billions out of Synergy and other electricity utilities. It does not provide a subsidy to Synergy and it has raised prices by 19 per cent, and is concentrating on hitting the people who use and who can pay the least—the single mums, pensioners, working poor and people who rent who do not have insulation in their houses. It is those people whom the Labor Party says it is part of their DNA to support. It has been a full-out assault, especially when we look at water. The same thing happened with water. We were pushing towards full cost recovery for water when I commissioned the Economic Regulation Authority to do another review. The Labor Party confronted that report and was told that if it jacked it up in the forward estimates by six per cent, the Water Corporation would start to turn into a taxing agent. What did it do? It grabbed that full on and went for it. It has jacked up prices. Now it has come up with the idea of an extra levy, or a tax threshold, for large users—those who use more than 500 kilolitres of water. It says that it is attacking the people in Cottesloe, maybe my electorate, South Perth and Nedlands. But questions in the upper house have found out that that is not accurate. It is misleading. The people who have been hurt the most are in Labor Party electorates, the people in the newer and outer suburbs, the people who have large lawns—they might have gardens because they are trying to save money by growing their own vegies—people with large numbers of children, and renters. The Labor Party has gouged its own people, and it has done it by design.

There have been massive increases in public transport fees and car registrations. Some of the working poor whom the Premier says he is focused on are really struggling to pay. What did the government do then? When we were in government, we struggled with large deficits—I must admit that. We reduced the Seniors Card benefit and maintained the hardship utility grant scheme. But the government took HUGS payments and postponed them for 180 days. There was a big rush on HUGS payments. The government increased electricity prices by 11.9 per cent, the fixed charge, and lo and behold what happened? Households got hit. They did not see it coming—it was a fixed charge. They did not have the money and they went to get HUGS payments and found that the government had stopped them for 180 days. The government said, "Let's put a hiatus on all HUGS payments for 180 days and let those buggers sweat." That is what the government did. It hit people and left them high and dry. Then for those on Seniors Cards, the government reduced compensation for local government and water rates from \$300 to \$100. When we cut that by \$200 or \$300, the Labor Party screamed bloody murder. It told people out there, "We would never do that; that is abhorrent." It did worse to its own people. Who are the people who have been hit the most? It is people in Baldivis, Darling Range of course, Ellenbrook and Armadale. The Labor Party has hit its own people. Why?

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]

p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

I say that this government cannot be the Labor government that the Premier claimed or promised to be and do this. The government cannot do it this. It will be held accountable for it.

The Treasurer has stood up and said he cannot find a single piece of data that is not positive. I think he has a reading problem, or just has blinkers on. Members should talk to people in the housing industry, which is one of our largest industries. The housing industry is important not only as an employer, but also as one of our largest industries. It is also the industry that represents the largest asset of most households: their home—the place that shelters them, the place in which families live and the place where children and families play. It makes up our neighbourhoods. It is an essential element of the Western Australian culture to buy and own our own homes and live in the community with family and friends. More so than almost any other place on earth, Western Australians are home-oriented. In Western Australia there is a very high level of home ownership. It is the asset base. The value of houses underpins household expenditure and activity. We have witnessed the longest and largest decline of house prices in Western Australia since the Great Depression. House prices are still declining, house construction is still declining, housing finance is still declining and expectations are that the industry is not going to pick up for a period yet. There are some places in WA, like Baldivis, that are the mortgage stress capitals of Australia. We would think that the government would ask what it can do to assist those people to fund and pay for their houses. In December 2016 the Labor Party in opposition responded to a proposal by the then Barnett government. The industry came to us—it would have gone to the opposition—and said, “We are facing a catastrophic drop in the numbers of new houses that will be built over the next year. As a result there will be massive layoffs in the industry and massive layoffs in the manufacturing that goes with that, including bricks and tiles, and an increase in unemployment. The reason is that the first home buyer market is plummeting.” We proposed a first home buyer grant bonus, to which the then shadow Treasurer and opposition leader said, “We are on it. It’s a good policy. It’s expensive but it’s right on. We support it.” They got votes for it. The Labor Party appeared to be acting to help an industry and a community under real stress. Once it got into government, it cancelled the grant. The Treasurer said that the removal of the grant would have no impact on the number of first home buyer grants allocated. That was his analysis. It turned out to be completely and utterly ridiculous and false. In September this year we saw the smallest number of first home buyer grants ever allocated since the first home buyer grant was created in 2000. Our population is about 50 per cent higher. What was predicted? The concern that led to the bonus came through. We have had a complete collapse of the first home buyers’ market and with it, we saw mass layoffs in the industry—not only the tradies who inhabit many of our electorates, but also the people who work in the factories making windows and bricks, and concrete suppliers. They needed some stimulus. The Labor Party pulled out the grant under the pretext that it would not have an impact, but it had a massive impact.

This government can give \$250 million to Mineral Resources to continue running the Koolyanobbing iron ore industry, including \$55 million to Cliffs Natural Resources, which is leaving Western Australia. It is shutting down its operation and going back to the US. It has written off all its assets on its balance sheet, publicly, in its annual report. The government gave it dispensation of \$55 million owed to the Western Australian government. The government spent \$250 million on rich listers but it got \$20 million with a bonus. A total of 84 jobs in the port of Esperance were saved but 2 000 plus jobs were lost in the house building sector. That was the government’s choice. That is what it did. It is hoping that no-one will look and its army of spin merchants can get it out of this. That is what the government has done. It has left its people high and dry. It has abandoned them.

The Treasurer likes to talk about land tax. Yes, we increased land tax rates three times. It was the most painful process I ever went through, and we suffered the electoral consequences for it.

Mr W.R. Marmion: I had to run it through.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, the member for Nedlands did. I think the member for Bateman had one too. I own a couple of houses now but I used to own a number. I know all about land tax. It is basically a tax on a fixed asset that is a flow. If it gets too high, it is not funding. We increased it. The then opposition voted against the increases. It campaigned on the issue against us. It went to the various groups saying that land tax was terrible and it would never increase it. In two budgets, it validated those increases; it kept them. It owns them. Those land taxes are now the member for Victoria Park’s taxes, not ours. The government had two budgets in which to alter them if it wished but it chose to retain them. I suspect that the next budget that will come down in May or so will include those tax rates for the first time. They are the government’s taxes. It should not complain about them.

During the last term of government, I witnessed United Voice members protesting on a monthly basis outside my house about so-called cuts to education, health and essential services. The government promised to not only fill in those cuts, but also never do it again. During this past year, we have seen the government’s clear, unambiguous response through its cuts to education by the Minister for Health. We saw some pretty impressive backflips left, right and centre but they came about only after the community stood up to the hypocrisy of the Labor government. It stood up and said, “That’s not what you promised. That’s not what you said you were doing. That’s not why you won the election. You mislead us.” The people campaigned for the cuts to be reversed in their communities and

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

the government did so across a raft of areas. Some cuts were still made, including \$15 million from schools across the board in my electorate. That will not be forgotten.

The health minister has said that there will be no cuts and Treasury has said there will be no cuts. When we look at the annual report of the North Metropolitan Health Service and the detail of the budgets, we see that there were cuts to that service from state government expenditure of \$206 million in the last budget. That was cut out of the largest health service in the state. Admittedly, the commonwealth put more in and there was some money from other sources, but the state itself cut money from that service. In response to those cuts, the board of the health service popped up and said, “We’re having a hard time meeting the demand with the money that we have”, and the government fired the lot and put one of its mates in charge. In other words, it is cutting essential services to health, just as it did to education.

We heard a debate about Corrective Services. This not a crucial issue to household budgets, although the government does not like prisoners breaking out and potentially attacking officers. We heard a lot of guff from the Treasurer that the cuts to the budget of Corrective Services was my fault—that I introduced a range of cuts and then I struggled to meet them. The rhetoric from the government is very strange. I divert for a minute. On the one hand, it regularly goes out and says that the previous government was spending too much and left it \$40 billion in debt. That is the rhetoric. When the government gets caught out trying to be held to account for its own cuts, it denies making the cuts. It cannot deny it because it is in the budget. It blames us for the cuts. We cannot have excessive spending and then excessive cuts to health, education and Corrective Services. It is just not possible, but that is the government’s rhetoric.

The Treasurer asked me to look at the budget for Corrective Services today, and I did. The level of expenditure in adult corrective services in 2016–17 was higher than 2017–18. Every year from 2017–18, 2018–19, 2019–20 and 2020–21, the amount of money in the budget for adult corrective services goes down; it decreases. Over the four-year estimates, there is a \$50 million reduction in the amount of money allocated to adult corrective services in this state as a result of the government’s decisions. The government cut the budget. As I pointed out, prison numbers are growing at about 10 per cent a year but the budget is going down, not in real terms but in absolute terms. The government would argue otherwise. That is the rhetoric.

One of the interesting things that Troy Buswell and I had to deal with during our term was a massive change to the public sector. We had 5 500 redundancies in the public sector. That was a lot. It was done over many waves. We also had increasing wage restraint. I remember proposing another wave of restraint, plus substantial further reductions in wage growth in the public service. I was walking the gauntlet to Dumas House, and a journalist, as they do to a minister, stuck a microphone in front of my face and said, “I hear the rumours that you’re proposing further reductions in wage growth”, and I said, “Yes, we are.” The journalist then said, “The union movement has said that if you pursue those reductions, there will be a mass shutdown of public services such as transport, hospitals and schools, and if you make further redundancies and lay off even more people, it will lead to the same action.” Our government lost and the new government came in, and it went one step further.

Ms S.F. McGurk: Did the journalist say that or did the unions say that?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The unions said it. The McGowan government came in and immediately announced 3 000 redundancies, on top of the 5 500 we had put in. We did not include frontline services in those redundancies. We quarantined them from that. In most cases, we made the redundancies in the back office space and hired more people in essential services. The government’s 3 000 redundancies—it has not quite got there yet—includes a lot of frontline service providers, such as police. The McGowan government also came up with an even tighter wage growth policy than I had been thinking about. Do members know what the unions said? They said, “We don’t like this very much, and it’s very hard, but we’ll think about it”, and they shut up. They hid under the table. The question is: Who are they supporting? Who are they looking after? Who do they represent? Why are they there? I think they were bought off by this government. This government got the workers in the public sector to shut up. They did not complain. They did not fight it. There were no strikes. They did not even have a protest outside Parliament. Why? I am pretty sure that if we look at United Voice, which is one of the most powerful unions, it got all sorts of benefits. It got new members. It was funded to provide training courses. It was funded to talk directly to new applicants to the public service about joining United Voice.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am not taking interjections from the minister.

The head of the Community and Public Sector Union, who was very militant on our watch, was quiet, like a little mouse, under this government’s watch. Where is she now? Okay, the unions are doing their best. They are looking after themselves. However, it was an exercise in silencing the people who are supposed to stick up for the workers, many of them low-income workers.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]

p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

Earlier we had a debate about Christmas shopping hours. We have highlighted that when this government was in opposition, for six long years, and even before that, the now Premier called himself the champion for deregulation of shopping hours. He fought for that. He argued for that. He said, “We have to get rid of this shopping hours debate. It’s a mess. It’s taking us away from more important things. People should be allowed to shop and businesses should be allowed to open when they want.” That is what he said over and over again. The Premier is now winding back Christmas shopping hours. If David Jones and Myer in the city are not open, the other shops will not have enough customers and will not open. It is the same in the shopping centres. The Premier is the grinch who stole Christmas. He is taking away the ability of shops to hire more people, and for people to earn more money. He is taking away the ability of people to shop when they want to. Why? It is not because of the Premier’s values. He said the opposite when he was in opposition. We would expect the Premier to do what he said he would do for six long years in opposition. Instead, the Minister for Commerce is saying people cannot shop when they want to.

Mr W.R. Marmion interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am not going to go there. The Premier is the grinch who stole Christmas.

I now want to go to a couple of things that show how miserly this government is. One is VacSwim. We live in a hot area. My area has a large number of migrants who do not have a swimming pool. VacSwim is an important part of our community. For a week or two during summer, the government has been subsidising people at our local pools to teach kids how to swim. It is a great program. It is part of our culture. However, this government has increased the price of VacSwim lessons from \$13.50 to \$30. That will not save the government much money. Many of the people whose children use VacSwim are low-income people, migrants and single parents who cannot afford it. The government is saying to those people, “If your kids want to learn how to swim, we’re going to tax you for doing that.”

The government has also cut the subsidies to KidSport. That is a really good program that our government expanded. It is basically a subsidy to enable children from low-income families to join sporting clubs. It is a really good idea. This government has also taken funding from Sea Scouts. It said that is not a sporting group. What kind of world does the government live in? Has the Premier not seen what Sea Scouts does? Has it made that decision without knowing what it is doing? As a coach at Sea Scouts, I can guarantee members that it includes kids from low-income families. It is a very physical sporting activity. We teach them sailing, kayaking, and how to be safe and careful on the water. This government has cut the funding to Sea Scouts.

The worst funding cut made by this government has been to VenuesWest. I will go through some of this stuff. VenuesWest is a very important organisation. I will read from a table headed “Tariffs, Fees and Charges” for 2018–19. One of the columns in that table is level of cost recovery. VenuesWest fees across the board have gone up by 7.5 per cent. That is 700 per cent higher than the inflation rate. The increases are just ridiculous. The fee for “casual group fitness class concession”—that is, people on pensions and health cards and other concessions, the people the Premier said he is looking after—has gone up from \$13.50 to \$14. When we look at cost recovery, the fee is three times the cost of providing the service. For a charge of \$14, there is a \$9.10 profit, or tax. The fee for “casual Xpress group fitness class” has gone up threefold. The fee for “aquatic swim, sauna” has also increased threefold. Another event is “carnival event spectator”. During the summer, we all go to swimming events at various venues, particularly the pool at HBF Arena. Kids go there for different types of events, and the parents and guardians like to watch the kids, and the kids like the parents and guardians to watch them. Most of us can remember sitting there for hours and hours enjoying ourselves sometimes. There is an 854 per cent uplift on the cost. It costs 45c, but VenuesWest charges \$3.60. That is usury. I often hear the Labor Party talk about payday lenders. This is worse than any payday lender I have ever come across.

Let me go to the parent and baby lessons for swimming school. Parents come down and their babies are taught at a very young age how to be comfortable in the water, how to breathe around water and perhaps how to swim. VenuesWest charges 50 per cent above cost recovery for that and it charges 63 per cent above cost recovery for preschool lessons, 14 per cent above cost recovery for kids toddler gym, and 31 per cent above cost recovery for kids kindy gym. Every cost at VenuesWest facilities, particularly the concessional costs, are substantially above cost recovery. In other words, this government is treating VenuesWest as a taxing agent. Why do we have VenuesWest? We have VenuesWest because it provides facilities that are not provided in the private sector at a cost that we think the community needs to bear. This is a cultural place where people from a young age to an old age really appreciate physical activity. It is very important. Lifestyle activities are what we want to do and what we should do, yet the government is taxing them.

Let me go back to when the Premier’s people lied. His government is looking after those who are doing it tough, those who are going through adversity in their lives, those who through no fault of their own need government support, and those who work for a living—that is unless they want to be healthy, they want to teach their kids how

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]
p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

to swim or run, or they want to use the gym. It is ridiculous. The government has lost the plot. We will continue, as we have done this year and as we did last year, to hold the government to account for its actions and decisions. We surmise that its grand plan was to come to government, knowing full well the tough fiscal position, and increase any tax or charge that it could get its hands on, irrespective of the regressiveness of that tax, irrespective of the impact it would have on struggling families and irrespective of the ethics of it. It was going to grab the revenue and try to blame us and hope that when it came closer to the election, all those people it ground down would have forgotten about it when it splurges and spends the GST.

Mr A. Krsticevic: Darling Range didn't forget.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The Darling Range electorate did not forget. The government will try to do that and we will hold it to account. We will not allow those people to forget what the government has done in its first two years. It claims to be a Labor government. It is not. It is a government that is grinding down the people it is supposed to look after, the people who voted for it and the people it represents in most cases. It has ground them down. At a time of need, it has abandoned them. At a time when they were struggling with household budgets, declining house prices and declining wages, and they were struggling to live a decent lifestyle, it has hit them in the solar plexus with higher electricity, water and public transport costs. It has pulled back on school and public health spending. When they tried to save money by cutting back on private health care, the government cut back on public health expenditure. Now it is turning sports facilities into a taxing mechanism. These people have been hit.

The government is hoping that the mining sector will stop the tide. The trouble is that the largest sector in our economy is the household sector. Household discretionary spending is flat to negative. One of the major reasons it is flat to negative is the hits that the government has made to it. It lacks confidence because house prices—the value of the major asset—are going south and have been for four or five years and do not look like changing. The government is not going to get a boost in the housing sector. People are not going to forgive the government for this, and nor should they.

Going back to the principle of this, the government promised to be a Labor government, it promised to look after the people, it promised it would not have high fees and charges, it promised to increase expenditure on frontline services, and it promised not to be a payday lender, yet it has done the opposite. We are not going to allow it to get out of this. It is trying to weasel out of it and blame everybody else. We heard one of the most absurd excuses today. The Minister for Corrective Services blamed the prisoners, a fence, me, the previous government and the head of the prison, even though we thought this was a system for which the minister was accountable. We see this on a daily basis. The government blames everybody else for its decisions. These were its decisions. It made them. It knew what it was doing. It knew the consequences. It knew it was going to hurt its own members and the community. It knew what it was going to do to the economy; it has hurt it badly. The greatest threat to our economic recovery is the government, and people know it now. It has been in government long enough. It is not what it said it was going to be. It is not what it says it is. It is a government that has lost the plot.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [4.47 pm]: I rise to support the motion that our leader has moved. It is very clear that the actions of the McGowan Labor government have led directly to severe hardship and distress for families in Western Australia. When we reflect on almost two years of Labor government in this state, we see the government clambering to claim responsibility for an area that the government has no influence over—that is, the mining economy. There is no doubt that the mining economy is recovering. It is recovering entirely for two reasons, one of which is the outstanding network that was set up by the previous government.

Point of Order

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek your advice. Should there not be a minister in the house?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is, member. Minister McGurk is in the chamber.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am just seeking your advice. I have never participated in a debate on a private member's motion when there was not a minister listening to it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I understand what you are saying and I believe the minister is in the house, so we will just continue.

Debate Resumed

[Quorum formed.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: When we reflect on the almost two years of Labor government in this state, we see improvement in the area that the government has had no influence over, and that is mining. The mining economy is recovering because of the outstanding work done by the previous government to build the framework and encourage the

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

projects that the government is now enjoying the fruits of. I think it is important for this government to reflect that it is only two budgets to the next election. We see no improvement in the parts of the economy that the government has influence over—that is, the domestic economy and areas such as tourism, overseas students, overseas student enrolments and the domestic retail economy. There is no doubt whatsoever that the government is clearly failing the people in Western Australia. In particular, it is little wonder that the local retail economy is struggling when so much money has been taken out of the economy through massive increases in the cost of utilities. There has been a massive \$700 tax imposed on all Western Australian families by this government, and to make matters worse, the government plans to continue increasing fees and charges, causing more pain for Western Australian families in the forward estimates. Recall, members, that this is the government that got elected on the promise of no new taxes, yet it is the most massive taxing government the state has seen in some considerable time.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ministers, thank you!

Dr D.J. HONEY: I believe that many members opposite, not most, think that these fee increases are just fine and that families can easily cope. I know there are members opposite who do understand that families struggle. I know that the member for Pilbara has a good empathy for people who are doing it a bit tough. I know that the member for Murray–Wellington cares about people who are doing it tough, as does the member for Balcatta. I know that the member for Armadale has a special empathy for people who are doing it tough. Being in an adjacent electorate, I have been to a number of events with the member for Fremantle, and I know that she has an empathy for people who do it tough, but it is quite clear that many members of the government do not care. Members who take an interest in their local communities understand that for many families the increases in fees and charges are insurmountable. They are not just trivial increases and they are not just a few spare dollars that people have; they are insurmountable increases. That is especially the case for families in the outer suburbs who are struggling on a number of fronts. Small business has not been spared the pain either with the large increases in utility charges. In WA today there was an article just a couple of days ago entitled “Massive electricity cost blow-out hits WA small businesses” that outlines the whole issue of fees and states that increases in the base electricity charge have led to massive increases in fees.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Member for Collie–Preston, there has been a 236 per cent increase in the supplier charge portion of Synergy’s L1 tariff for small businesses. That is a massive hit on the small businesses in Collie. The member for Collie–Preston has pointed out to us how tough things have been in Collie from time to time. I know Collie. It is on the way between my mum’s house in Harvey and our family farm in Cranbrook. I know a lot of people in Collie do it tough, and those businesses in Collie have been knocked for six with those increases in charges.

It is a really simple equation of these fees and charges. I am sure the Treasurer, who is a very bright spark, has the capacity to understand this, but —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, that is enough. Minister, do not go there. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, that is not helping your member who is on his feet.

Dr D.J. HONEY: As I have said, I am sure the Treasurer has the capacity to understand this, but, equally, he appears to choose to ignore it. If the government is pulling money out of the domestic economy through increased fees and charges, families have less money to buy goods and services, and that affects the local economy. That affects small businesses that suffer with reduced customer spend. In the best of circumstances, those increases in fees and charges could result in a decrease in discretionary expenditure; however, we are increasingly seeing a growing problem of families having to sacrifice essential expenditure to pay for government fees and charges. That is certainly the feedback we are getting from the not-for-profit welfare agencies. We are seeing a major hit on retail sales. I get around. In this role in particular I make a point of asking retailers how they are going and how their business is going, because I hope they are improving. Those retailers tell me pretty well universally that this is the worst economic time they have seen, and they are talking decades—not a year, not a couple of years, not a month. It is the worst retail setting they have possibly seen and experienced, and, as a consequence, we are seeing a massive number of shop closures.

Mr M.P. Murray: You do not see any of that as your legacy?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Member for Collie–Preston, when a government is pretty well two years into its term, blaming the previous government loses its impact.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]

p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! Member for Cottesloe, if you address the member across the chamber, you are bound to get a response, I might point out, so can you not address members; could you speak to the Deputy Speaker.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you for your direction, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister!

Dr D.J. HONEY: The fees and charges that the government has imposed on the people of Western Australia are simply compounding a range of negative impacts on families. I have pointed this out before, but it appears that the government needs reminding: over 80 000 people are unemployed and house prices are dropping, and I will talk a little bit more about that. There are 33 per cent of families with mortgages suffering mortgage stress, which means they are paying more than one-third of their income on their mortgage each month. Again, that is something that the media and the community are all too aware of. An article that appeared on news.com.au on 19 November is entitled “Report reveals suburb struggling the most from mortgage stress”. The member for Wanneroo does not happen to be in the chamber at the moment, but in Wanneroo almost 7 500 homes are in mortgage stress—that is just in the City of Wanneroo, not the electorate of Wanneroo—and 298 homes are on the brink of default; they are likely to default. That is almost 300 homes just in Wanneroo that are likely to default. We have seen a substantial drop in property prices. Across suburbs represented by government members such as Armadale, Ellenbrook, Midland and Wanneroo, there has been on average a drop in the price of homes of over 20 per cent. Some government members may not particularly care, but those families care, because they lie awake at night worrying themselves sick about it. There has been a significant restriction in the availability of housing finance and also an increase in the cost of housing finance. Many households have seen a reduction in household income, and those members with an association with the mining industry would know that pretty well all mining contractors have seen a reduction in their incomes. A very large number of shiftworkers have seen a reduction in their shift penalty rates. That is because those businesses have to reduce costs. However, that has meant that household incomes have not only not gone up in many cases, but also have gone down. Houses in the outer suburbs are predominantly occupied by young families.

I have greatly enjoyed a couple of things this year, one was welcoming the member for Darling Range into this house, an outstanding member of Parliament. I was pretty keen that the member for Darling Range was elected and I had a chance to talk to the electors in that electorate. I can tell members what a revelation that was because those people, predominantly young families with kids, are worried sick because their house values have dropped so much. Many of them who bought houses in the last five or six years have been on interest-only loans and now they have to pay back both interest and principal, and that has increased the percentage of the family income that has to go on the mortgage against, as I have said, reduced income in many cases. Many families are being forced to make the most unpalatable choice to sacrifice critical expenditure because they have to pay their mortgage; otherwise, they inherit a huge debt that they cannot possibly pay back. They also have to pay government utility charges or else their supply is cut off. We have heard a lot of boasting from the government that there has been an apparent reduction in this. I can tell members that the utilities have become ruthless. A constituent who was not wealthy came and saw me about his water bill that was due to be paid on 28 September. On 14 October there was a knock on the door from a Water Corporation person saying that a restrictor would be put on their water supply—just over two weeks after the payment was due—so we are seeing heavy-handed tactics for people who are doing it tough and struggling. Families are making really serious choices. They are even having to choose whether or not to pay those utility fees. They have to have the utilities to keep their families alive. They are even choosing not to feed their kids. They are choosing not to provide food for themselves and their children in a desperate bid to keep their family home and maintain those critical utilities.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I can tell the member that that is across Perth. Last week I talked a bit about a recent visit to Foodbank headquarters located at the airport. I encourage the member for Collie–Preston and all members to read its report; it is very illuminating on the hardship people are facing across the metropolitan area. There are 6.1 million meals delivered throughout the state. That is the greatest number it has ever had to deliver in its 24-year history. I will talk about the major theme with regard to a visit to another not-for-profit agency.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you like some protection, member for Cottesloe?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am happy to let them thrash it out as long as it does not go on for too long.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are the one on your feet, so please continue.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister!

Dr D.J. HONEY: In commentary we have heard elsewhere, there is a major concern about the growing demand from the working poor. These are people who have jobs; they are not people living under a bridge. Quite often mum and dad have jobs but they cannot feed their kids because the mortgage, the council rates and the utility fees have gone up. They are the things that have hit them. If we talk to them, they will tell us. We do not have to pull it out of them. That is what the people of Darling Range told us.

The demand for services continues to grow. Here is the most startling statistic I heard during that visit. There has been 44 per cent growth in demand for Foodbank's services. That is almost 100 000 Western Australians, one-third of whom are kids who need to be supported. Foodbank's estimate—this is not my estimate—is that one in five children are now living in a food-insecure household and have gone without food in the past year. I lived in basic circumstances as a kid down in the bush, but I can tell members that I never went without food. One in five homes are food insecure on their estimate and that means they have gone without food in the past year. Foodbank has served 2.5 million breakfasts at over 450 schools. It is seeking government support to bring another 50 schools into that program but it has not received that support. That might be something for members to take into account.

Mr M.P. Murray: All kids are invited to have breakfast, not just the ones who cannot afford it, so the numbers are skewed.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The number of emergency meals has also continued to rise. Almost 900 000 meals are provided to children who otherwise would not get a packed lunch for school and when there is no means for stressed households to do it. The observation I made at Foodbank is also reported by Anglicare. That was quoted in a recent article in *The West Australian* of 19 November. It states —

A growing number of West Australians are seeking help after plunging into poverty, according to the national social service charity.

By its figures, 17 per cent of Western Australians could not afford the basic necessities such as food and shelter in the past year compared with the national average of 16 per cent. Here we are, nominally the wealthiest state in Australia accounting for 50 per cent of Australia's export income and we have a higher percentage than the national average of homes that are struggling.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I thought an interesting comment from Anglicare, given that the McGowan government is in power and apparently these are the McGowan government's people, was —

“We are not optimistic that people living in poverty or disadvantage will receive any benefit from the recent economic growth in WA.”

They are Anglicare's words, not mine. Earlier this week, along with several of my colleagues, including the excellent member for Darling Range, I had the opportunity to attend the hardship utility grant scheme call centre run by Anglicare in Armadale. I was glad to go down to the member for Armadale's territory.

Dr A.D. Buti: Why didn't you let me know?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I should have sought a leave pass, member; I will do better next time. The staff there outlined the excellent work they carry out helping people struggling to meet their utility payments. They told us the same story that the Foodbank people told us; that is, they have been increasingly inundated with requests for support, not from people who are unemployed but in fact from the working poor, including from families with one or both parents working. They simply cannot meet their utility bills in significant part because of the substantial increases in the utility bills over the course of this government. Again, they are very dire circumstances.

I want to dwell on the impact of water charge increases on families and the justification for those because there continue to be arguments from the government and the minister to somehow justify the substantial increases by a government that was to have no new taxes. The last budget delivered a 5.5 per cent increase in water charges on top of six per cent the previous year. That hits every family that is getting water provided through government services in Western Australia. The money in the previous budget going back into government from the Water Corporation is completely above the cost of running its service. This is paying all Water Corp's operating expenses and all its capital expenses. Members may not know that in many government departments, Treasury funds the capital for the organisation, hence departments look for a dividend on capital. In this case, the Water Corporation completely funds its own capital. The money coming back into government is pure profit and pure cash flow. In 2017–18 it was \$831 million. There are about a million households in Perth, so that averages at about \$830 per household, including for struggling families in Armadale, Baldivis and other parts of Perth, coming back into government revenue.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]

p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

Coming back to government, the Water Corporation, in effect, cross-subsidises country water users, which one would think is a consolidated revenue responsibility. In any case, that is about \$409 million. On top of all of that there is a net cash flow of \$408 million; next year that net cash flow will be \$511 million. As I explained a while ago, that is actually not true. The real tax is the full \$986 million that will be coming in next year. Going forward in forward estimates, that goes up eventually in 2021–22 to \$1.2 billion net cash into government coffers from metropolitan water users. These are families that cannot feed their kids. On average, there will be \$1 200 going from every house into government coffers. That is a massive tax. Over four years, it is a \$4.4 billion tax on families. We have heard various arguments for that, but in fact the Premier was sort of at least a little bit honest on this one, almost admitting that he was taxing households. I refer to a good article in *The West Australian* by Dan Mercer from Tuesday, 13 March 2018, before I joined this place. The Premier is quoted as saying —

“So if we don’t get that revenue from government trading enterprises, we need to get it from taxes, we need to get it from fees and charges and the like.”

As Dan Mercer states in that article —

McGowan effectively admitted the Government was using the Water Corp as a cash cow.

The Premier recognises it; he knows and understands it, but he must know that he is hitting families that cannot even afford to feed their kids.

I have discussed a number of times the false premises that have been used to justify these increases—the so-called “water guzzlers” in the wealthy suburbs. What have we seen? These “wealthy suburbs” are Baldivis, Byford, Joondalup and the like. The fact is that the so-called water guzzlers tax affects a handful—I think about three—of the western suburbs. The great majority of the suburbs that are hit are outer suburbs with large families. These are the people—this is the cruel part—who have also been hit by the reduction in house prices. Some members may know that in the more exclusive suburbs house prices have turned around, but in the outer suburbs house prices are still going down, so these people are just getting belted over the head from one side to the other.

I want to look a little further into the claim that these charges are necessary to reduce water use. It is really interesting to look at the data around that. The Water Corporation is a pretty up-front organisation and it has said that water is price inelastic—that is, if you increase the price of water, it does not reduce usage very much. Why? It is because people have to use it, and people are getting down to a minimum. The real point is that the people of Perth have been extremely responsible with water use—not because of price, but because of the outstanding advertising campaign that was run by the Water Corporation. I think all members would remember vividly—I do—the cute little frog jumping around, telling people, “Hey, save water. Hey, look after me.” People have been doing that; people have been saving water. There was a target to reduce water usage down to around 120 kilolitres per person by 2030. Guess what? We have already achieved greater savings than that, so the idea that people are using more water is completely false. In fact, people are using significantly less water—not because of price, but because of the social campaigning, in much the same way that people are smoking less because of the excellent public anti-smoking campaigns. The government is looking to increase those prices even further.

The other justification the government uses is that the Liberal government was going to increase those prices by even more. We have said on a number of occasions that that is simply untrue. In fact, it goes as close as it can go to being a lie. Do not take my word for it, and do not take the word of the former Treasurer, now the Leader of the Opposition, for it. I refer to the November 2017 Economic Regulation Authority report “The efficient costs and tariffs of the Water Corporation, Aqwest and Busselton Water”. I quote from the report’s introduction —

On 21 October 2016, the former Treasurer of Western Australia —

The current Leader of the Opposition —

tasked the Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) to undertake an inquiry into the efficient costs and tariffs of the Water Corporation, Aqwest and Busselton Water. The inquiry is for the five year review period beginning 1 July 2018 and ending 30 June 2023.

Here is the important part, members —

This inquiry will inform the State Government’s setting of service tariffs for the five year period starting from 2018–19.

That is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition has said. It is a complete nonsense to say that the previous government was going to increase the prices by six per cent. That was the previous forward estimates; the Treasurer at the time recognised that the Water Corporation was moving into over-recovery and initiated this study so that there would not be over-recovery of water charges. That is made quite explicit in the report. The report notes that the over-recovery will represent about \$400 per household—that is, \$365 million, mostly for the wastewater services, which is the larger part of that, and then the other parts. However, if we look at the basis of the cost

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

recovery, we realise why we get all that extra money. What is the difference between the \$358 million and the \$830 million or more going forward that is going into government coffers? The reason is that the ERA report includes an illusory return on capital and an illusory tax equivalent. This is a government monopoly and is not contestable, so in fact those things are all nonsense. Government monopolies do not pay tax; in this case, they fund all their own capital and all their own expenses within their internal operating budget. There is no return on capital. Government does not require a return on capital as it does from other departments that are funded from Treasury, so, in fact, it is a net profit going into government. The report also points out—this might interest the member for Vasse—that Aqwest is over-recovering by 7.6 per cent and Busselton Water is over-recovering by 11.7 per cent, and it recommends that both those authorities should reduce their water charges, not increase them, as they are.

The clear observation from this analysis is extremely simple: the McGowan Labor government is happy to bask in the positive benefits of matters outside its control, including the substantial increase in commodity prices that has occurred recently—for example, iron ore going from \$35 up to now about \$77, and, of course —

Ms S.F. McGurk: It's down again.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It will have to go down a long way to get to that, will it not, member? There is also the enormous \$4.7 billion GST windfall from the federal Liberal government. However, the state government's mismanagement of the state economy and its heartless fees and charges increases are causing real harm to the economy and the families of Western Australia. The justifications for those increases are bogus and we all know what it is: it is simply a ruse to cover the government's unfunded election promises, particularly around Metronet. The government has done enough damage to the domestic economy in its first two years in government, and it needs to learn from its mistakes and stop these unnecessary imposts on Western Australian families.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): The Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services.

Ms L. Mettam: Minister?

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Child Protection) [5.18 pm]: That is what I am; that is right. We get to respond to all these things you slam across the chamber.

I am keen to speak to this motion because it riles me that the opposition is trying to establish this case—although I am yet to see it actually established in debate on this motion so far—and condemn the McGowan government for failures in delivering on its election promises, cuts to frontline services, cost-of-living increases and failure to be open and accountable. I am the lead speaker for the government in this debate and I want to address some issues. The portfolios that I have responsibility for—child protection, prevention of family and domestic violence, community services —

[Quorum formed]

Ms S.F. MCGURK: It is astounding that this is the second time that the opposition has called a quorum during private members' business. I do not know whether the opposition understands that if the house does not achieve a quorum, we go home and its private members' business is suspended, so it is not usually considered a particularly smart move, strategically. Nevertheless, the opposition persists.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister, shush!

Ms S.F. MCGURK: As I was saying, I am frustrated because for eight and a half years there was very little proactive action on the part of the Liberal and National Parties in the portfolios that I have responsibility for, particularly in combatting family and domestic violence. At the same time that royal commissions were being conducted in Queensland and especially in Victoria, where there was a very high-profile and in-depth royal commission into domestic violence, and when Rosie Batty, Australian of the Year, rightly brought incredible national focus to the issue of domestic violence in our community, there was for eight and a half years a stunning silence on the part of the Liberal–National government in this state. In fact, famously and memorably, when I asked the then police minister, also the then Minister for Women's Interests, the member for Scarborough, a question about domestic violence services, she said that it was not her responsibility and that she was not across any of the issues in relation to domestic violence.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: Were you asking about my responsibility outside my portfolio? Don't mislead the house.

Ms S.F. MCGURK: That is what she said, notwithstanding that she was the then police minister and Minister for Women's Interests.

Several members interjected.

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

The ACTING SPEAKER: Okay, we have had that bit now. Member for Carine, you do not need to enter the debate, and neither do you, member for Armadale.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine, you have just been called for the fourth time. I am on my feet. You are out of here—you are! I am sorry. I did not look, but you know not to speak when I am on my feet. I will check whether I can withdraw that on the basis that you will now not say one more word. I am informed that it is up to my discretion, if you say one more word, especially when I am on my feet. Let us move on with the debate.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I was drawing attention to the lack of understanding and action on the part of the Liberal and National Parties on family and domestic violence issues and the example of the then Minister for Police; Women's Interests admitting that she had no responsibility for an issue and a number of other failures, particularly by the then Attorney General in this policy area. I understand that the then government did not have a dedicated minister in the area.

The Liberal and National Parties' lack of action on social policy, particularly for domestic and family violence, needs no better illustration than the debate going on in the other place at the moment. We have introduced a bill to make changes to residential tenancy laws that will improve the position of victims of domestic violence. It will make sure that those laws are strengthened and that there is more understanding when victims of domestic violence need to break their tenancy agreements because they are victims and the situation they are in is not their fault.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: That law was brought on for debate at nine o'clock last night. It's been in the other place since June.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I am explaining what those changes are. The bill was debated in this place and one change was proposed, which was a review of the act, and that was accepted by the government in principle as the bill went to the other place. We had an agreement that in the other place a bill would go to the Standing Committee on Legislation to be examined, which it did in due course. The government accepted all the recommendations of the legislation committee and members on the other side of this house gave a commitment that the bill would go through the Legislative Council by the end of today so it could come before this house to ratify any changes before the end of the parliamentary year. Notwithstanding those commitments by the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Liberal and National Parties on the other side of this chamber, we now find that the Liberal and National Parties support further amendments in the Legislative Council that in the government's view will significantly water down that bill and those protections that the bill is seeking to give to victims of family and domestic violence. What good is the commitment given by members of the Liberal and National Parties, particularly in this place, about the passage of bills before the end of the parliamentary year when bills go to the other place and those commitments mean nothing? What sort of party organisation does the opposition run when those commitments mean absolutely nothing?

This morning close to 100 people gathered at Government House, including parliamentary leaders from both sides of Parliament, community leaders, business leaders, service providers, sporting leaders and Indigenous leaders. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition was there representing the Leader of the Opposition. We stood together saying that we reject family and domestic violence, we reject violence against women and we will stand in the 16 days campaign to do whatever we can to stop domestic and family violence. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition did that in the morning, but in the afternoon is allowing her counterparts in the other place to frustrate a bill that would strengthen residential tenancy legislation. It is absolutely shameful. You are a rabble—you are an absolute rabble!

Several members interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: The opposition gave a commitment that that bill would be back here before the end of the parliamentary sitting day today so that we could pass that legislation, but now we are hearing all sorts of excuses. I think one reason that the bill is being frustrated in the other house is that Hon Michael Mischin was a little miffed at the way my cabinet colleague, Bill Johnston, the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations, treated him at a polling booth. I think he believes that a little bit of disrespect was shown to him at a polling booth. That is the level of maturity of people on the other side of this and the other place.

I make no comments about the amendments that are being moved. Maybe they are being moved in good faith; I do not know. I am in here on my feet so I am not a part of those negotiations, but in the view of the commerce minister and in the discussions that have been reported to me, the government cannot support those amendments. They were not flagged in the lead-up to the debate of the Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment (Family Violence) Bill. That is the bone fides of those on the other side of the house, and the rabble they come up with when trying to represent the opposition. The Liberal Party should get its house in order, talk to its members in the other place and get them to support a reasonable bill that will strengthen residential tenancies.

Mr I.C. Blayney interjected.

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Geraldton.

Mr I.C. Blayney: Apologies.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Geraldton. The first time, you get it out. The second time, you get it out. By the fourth time, it is pointless. I gave you leeway. Do not continue.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I wanted to quote one of the stakeholders in the family and domestic violence area, Anne Moore, the CEO of the Lucy Saw Centre and president of the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services. Anne Moore said on ABC Drive in October this year —

We are fortunate that Minister McGurk and the McGowan government have actually got a commitment to domestic violence and clearly they understand fully what the impact of losing this —

The interview was about Keeping Women Safe in their Home funding —

at this very time would mean, because we do have families in desperate need.

So they —

That is, the McGowan state government —

have agreed to prop up this funding in the short term and I absolutely thank them for that. It shows that their commitment is front and centre and [they] really understand the importance of services to families affected by family and domestic violence.

I thank Anne Moore for the generosity of her words to this government. We have worked shoulder to shoulder with the sector on these policy issues, trying to understand its priorities before the election and then moving ahead to implement some of those commitments while in government. That is in contrast to the Liberal–National Parties on the other side, who have failed to stand up when their federal counterparts stopped funding for Keeping Women Safe in their Home. We heard not a murmur, not a peep. We heard not a peep from the opposition when there were cuts to Foodbank. Not a word was spoken in this place from those opposite. We heard not a peep when there were cuts to remote Aboriginal housing. There was not a peep from the National Party at all.

There is still time for opposition members to communicate with their colleagues in the other place, do the right thing and get those residential tenancy changes through before the end of the parliamentary year so that women and their children who need protections in residential tenancies will have the protection of the law and those changes will not be frustrated for more than three months because of the end of the sitting year.

That commitment to consultation with the community sector, the not-for-profit sector, and working with them to understanding their priorities, characterised our activities before the election. We went to them as a team before the March 2017 state election and consulted with them about their priorities and what they wanted from us in government. Through those consultations, in the portfolios of community services and prevention of family and domestic violence, we developed the supporting communities policy and the policy to address high levels of domestic and family violence in our state. People would know that as a result, we have a package that we are in the process of implementing, which includes appointing a dedicated minister for the prevention of family and domestic violence and introducing paid leave for public sector workers, which is now being utilised, as distinct from the Liberal and National Parties in government at a state and federal level, which have resisted providing that sort of support for employees in the public sector and also in the private sector through Fair Work Australia at a federal level.

We committed \$8.3 million to establish two additional women's refuges. Those two projects will commence shortly. We have reinstated and expanded financial counselling services, with an extra \$7.4 million in funding. We committed to do that and we have done it. We have provided state government funding to the RSPCA to support a pets in crisis program. We committed to do that before the election and we have done it. We have joined the national Our Watch program, which will enable the state government to leverage support through partnerships and access research. We committed to do that before the election and we have now done it. We are investing nearly \$1.7 million to expand existing culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse victims of family and domestic violence. We have committed to establishing an additional breathing space and behavioural change services for male perpetrators of domestic violence. Also, through the supporting communities policy, we committed to working with the community services sector to maximise opportunities to deliver quality services by building relationships based on partnership, collaboration and respect. We have established the supporting communities forum to ensure that we not only implement the policies that we took to the election, but we do so in genuine partnership with the not-for-profit sector. The forum convenes four times a year and reports regularly to the Community Safety and Family Support Cabinet Sub Committee. It consists of senior leadership from government, directors general, and 14 leaders from the community services sector, and has worked on important policy areas such as an outcomes framework for tenders in the community services sector and a significant package of change in procurement policies. We have reported to the Parliament before that around \$1.6 billion is procured per annum by the state government in community services. That procurement is now

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]

p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

governed by a policy delivered by the Minister for Finance but put together jointly with the community services sector for five-year default contracts, working towards common reporting frameworks across government agencies and a co-design process. They are the sorts of policies that we are working on with the community services sector. We asked the sector before the election what it wanted out of a state government. It raised a number of those issues. We took those issues to the election. We are now delivering on those election commitments.

We also took an initiative to the election called Target 120, an early intervention juvenile justice policy that we are in the process of putting together and delivering. We have announced that sites will be located in Armadale and Bunbury, and announced funding of \$20.5 million in the 2018 budget to start this program. It is collaborative, targeted and flexible. It is early intervention work and it will provide young juvenile offenders and their families with coordinated and timely access to the services they need. It is estimated that support provided to a young person and their family who have had multiple contacts with justice and other departments costs more than \$2 million over a young person's life. Not only are we hoping that with coordinated, strategic intervention at early points for young offenders, we will see effective outcomes for those young people and hopefully change their life trajectory, but also that we can put the important data analytics work behind that effort to assess the effectiveness of our interventions and prove up the business case that shows that that early intervention is money well spent from a public policy point of view. I thank the members from this side, including the Attorney General and the member for Armadale, who did some of the policy work leading up to the election for Target 120, and also the community members who are very invested in making sure that we bring our best and most innovative social policy applications to those young people who deserve our best efforts.

Another policy that this government took to the election was a commitment to increase the proportion of women on government boards and committees to 50 per cent. We will meet that commitment by the end of 2019. In order to meet that commitment, in September 2017 we launched the OnBoardWA website to enable members of the public to express their interest in sitting on government boards and committees. That has attracted enormous interest from members of the public. I think close to 1 000 people have nominated on that website, about two-thirds of whom are women. The other innovation that we have attached to OnBoardWA is to also make available to the not-for-profit sector and community sector the pool of people who have expressed an interest in contributing their expertise in governance. If a community organisation has a vacancy for a local charity, women's refuge or homeless person's organisation, it can advertise that vacancy to the people who have registered with OnBoardWA and the benefit of that professional expertise can flow back to the not-for-profit sector.

I am very proud as Minister for Women's Interests that women comprise almost 47 per cent of government boards and committees, up from 43 per cent. Of course, the challenge in government is that many of these appointments are not in the government's control. For instance, we have to rely on local governments to nominate people for Development Assessment Panels. Therefore, we are continuing to work very hard with those other nominating organisations. We have also been working very hard to not only talk about the importance of gender equity, but also walk the talk. I am very proud of the commitment we have made towards meeting our election commitment to increase the number of women on boards.

It riles me to hear the other side talk about our failure in delivering on election promises, cuts to frontline services, and cost-of-living increases, in the shrill way we have heard so far and often hear in this place. One of the commitments we made leading up to the election was around budget repair. The Premier was very clear as Leader of the Opposition, and he is very determined now as Premier, along with all members of cabinet, led by the now Treasurer, not to saddle future generations of Western Australians with crippling government debt, to work towards removing the government deficit, and to have responsible financial management. That is important. In fact, this issue came up in the debate earlier about corrective services. The Minister for Corrective Services reminded members on the other side about the cumulative savings that the Liberal-National government had locked into the budget from 2015 to 2019. In corrective services, the cuts to frontline services were in the magnitude of 9.6 per cent, or the equivalent of \$96 million. In the WA Police Force, the percentage was 4.4 per cent, or over \$63 million. That was already booked as savings in the forward estimates in the Liberal-National government's previous budgets. Incredibly, during that debate, members on the other side yelled out and said, "You've had two budgets. You could have corrected that." However, those cuts were already built into the budget. We cannot correct that and also meet our election commitment of budget repair. We simply cannot repair the incredible hole that the former government has left us in. We only need to look at the figures that the former government booked in for accumulated savings. In child protection and family support, which now forms part of the Department of Communities, an eight per cent cut, or over \$55.5 million, has already been booked in savings in the forward estimates; in health, the cut is \$237 million; and in education, the cut is over \$94 million. Therefore, it is really galling that the opposition would say that we need to not only repair the deficit, but also book the savings that it had accumulated in the budget.

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

That particularly frustrates me because of the huge amount of engagement that I get in my portfolios of community services, child protection and family and domestic violence from the not-for-profit sector and community organisations in working jointly with our government to try to address the entrenched disadvantage in these areas. I accept the statistics that the member for Cottesloe outlined about the level of food insecurity in our state and the level of hardship that people face at various times. However, this did not arise overnight in this state. It is incredible to not bring into the frame and analysis of what is happening with household budgets in this state the role of the federal government in providing for low-income households and for working people in the form of family benefits and the like, and, most importantly, for people on fixed incomes. I note that the Western Australian Council of Social Service in meeting the needs of its membership is running a Raise the Rate campaign, as I think its federal counterpart, the Australian Council of Social Service, has done as well. A commitment has been made by the Shorten Labor team to do a proper review of Newstart to see whether people should be able to not only live on Newstart but also apply for work, which is what we want people to be able to do.

The McGowan government understands the hardship that people are experiencing. It understands that it is one thing to address people's immediate needs. The needs of people suffering financial hardship should be responded to with the provision of immediate services, and our government is certainly doing that in family and domestic violence, homelessness, and a range of other services. However, we also need to take a strategic approach to address that disadvantage in the long term. That is why we are using the Supporting Communities Forum to make sure we apply the best thinking to addressing homelessness, for example; that we approach our interventions in a measured and strategic way; that we use evidence-based programs to track the effectiveness of our interventions over time; and that if those interventions are not working, we are prepared to pull back and work with the sector to redesign and recalibrate our effort in a more effective direction.

That is the approach we have taken with both the hardship utility grant scheme and financial counselling. I remember when the previous Liberal-National government cut all financial counselling services in the metropolitan area —

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: It did. It removed it. The member for Scarborough winces. It must be quite painful to think about not only what an incredibly heartless act that was, but also what an incredibly stupid political act that was.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: We reinstated it.

Ms S.F. McGURK: The former government reinstated half the amount, not the full amount. That was after an incredible political backlash. Blind Freddy could see, and the average householder could see, that that was a very short-sighted move on the part of the government. If we assist people when they are starting to experience financial stress, we enable them to keep their car so that they can get to work, keep a roof over their head, keep their kids at the same school and the like. That is why financial counselling is important. We committed to reinstate not just half of it, but all of it, which we have done in the metropolitan area.

One of the other changes that the previous government made—I understand that this was done in consultation with the community sector—was to decouple the references to financial counselling before people were eligible for the hardship utility grant scheme. Previously, to apply for HUGS, people had to go to financial counselling first. When the government reinstated 50 per cent of the funding for financial counselling in the metropolitan area, after the backlash that I referred to, it also decoupled that relationship so that people could go directly to the utility and ask for financial counselling. That enabled the utilities to apply their own criteria for hardship, but that is when we saw an incredible increase in the utilisation of the hardship utility grant scheme. It has taken some reining in now, and the commitment by this government was initially for non-concession cardholders, but, as of next financial year, all applicants for hardship utility assistance will be required to go to financial counselling. I think it is not only an important check of the bona fides of the clients' hardship, but also an opportunity to link them with other services. I note the interest of opposition members to go to the HUGS phone service centre.

Ms A. Sanderson interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Yes, that is right. It felt a little cynical to go out there and talk to people. It might have been a political opportunity that motivated members rather than an attempt to understand those people in hardship. I do not know how many times the member for Cottesloe has been out to Armadale or whether his car blew a gasket on the way there. It must have been a challenging journey for him.

The sort of work that is being done by UnitingCare West, Anglicare and the Financial Counsellors' Association of Western Australia in coming together and having good databases of clients' data and good back-end training for staff and really understanding what is going on with financial hardship in this state is to be commended. As a minister—I know I also speak for my colleagues with ministerial responsibility for some of these areas—I want to work in partnership with those service providers to fully understand what is going on with their clients and to

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]

p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

give people good assistance. The analysis of the financial hardship counselling service centre showed that it was able to link people with not only financial counselling and hardship utility grants, but also other services that they might need, whether that was drug and alcohol services or mental health assistance, so that people could get on their feet. We need to provide a suite of services when people seek assistance and not expect that they can traverse their way through the myriad government and not-for-profit services that might be available.

As I said, I am very proud of the work that we are doing in partnership with the community sector to address those people in the regions, the metropolitan area and rural and remote areas who are experiencing hardship or stress, such as homelessness, domestic violence or financial hardship. Underpinning that approach has been meeting our election commitments. We take those responsibilities very seriously. It has been the McGowan government's modus operandi since taking office in March last year. We understand that we need to bring the budget under control, and we have done that in a careful and thoughtful way while not cutting frontline services. I know that there have not been cuts in frontline services for child protection, police or corrective services. That has not been easy, but it is something that we have committed to do. We will continue to work with the community sector to fulfil our significant election commitments not only on infrastructure and capital spend, but also to ensure that the budget is under control and managed so that we can provide the sorts of supports and services that our community needs and deserves throughout our term in office.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.55 pm]: I was not going to speak on this motion but I feel compelled to do so after listening to the minister's contribution. First of all, I want to address the accusation that the Liberals in the Legislative Council are holding up the Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment (Family Violence) Bill, which will protect victims of family violence. Members opposite forget, conveniently, that this was an election commitment of the Liberal–National government prior to the 2017 election. We said that we would work with the real estate industry on amendments to tenancy laws that would better support victims escaping family violence. The amendments would allow a magistrate dealing with family violence restraining orders to also address matters of residential tenancy. Matters that could be addressed included adding a victim to or removing a victim from a lease, assigning liability for rent and damages—for example, 100 per cent of the cost to the perpetrator instead of requiring a 50–50 split if the tenancy is jointly held—and permitting the changing of locks without having to wait for a landlord's permission, with the requirement that the landlord is provided with a copy of the keys. That was our election commitment. It was supported in the party room. The legislation passed through this place without amendment. The government needs to understand that the Legislative Council is being run in a chaotic fashion. The legislation went from the Assembly to the Council on 28 June.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Let us not start; let us hear it out.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We went into recess and then Parliament resumed, and the legislation was brought forward for debate and referred to a committee of the Legislative Council on 17 October by the Leader of the House in the other place, Hon Sue Ellery. That was not done by the Liberals; that was done by the Leader of the House. The committee report has come back, but the debate has languished. The amendments recommended in the report were not brought on for debate until 9.00 pm last night. Hon Sue Ellery needs to understand that the Liberals have nine members in the Council. The government has 14. That leaves 13 members of the crossbench parties, including the Greens, with whom the minister needs to negotiate. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party member, the Liberal Democrats member and the One Nation members in the other place do not sit in the Liberal Party room. We do not control them. In actual fact, it is to Hon Sue Ellery's benefit that Hon Peter Collier in the other place liaises with the crossbench to get legislation through. Hon Sue Ellery has a bullish way of dealing with people. I will give members an example. Last week the urgent legislation for the National Redress Scheme that the Attorney General brought forward in this place came on for debate in the other place. Hon Robin Scott needed surgery on his shoulder. He had a valid contribution to make to the debate on that legislation, including changing the requirements for a victim being able to access criminal injuries compensation after receiving a payment from the redress scheme. We think that is a really good thing. We were supportive of that, and indeed it was apparent that we would be the only state in Australia that disallowed victims who had received redress payments from accessing criminal injuries compensation. Hon Peter Collier, on behalf of Hon Robin Scott, went to Hon Sue Ellery and asked her to either pair Hon Robin Scott or bring forward the betting legislation so that the house could complete the redress legislation when Hon Robin Scott came back from surgery. He was sick. She said no. She wanted to push the legislation through as a priority. The house brought on the betting legislation, and Hon Michael Mischin and Hon Nick Goiran, at the request of Hon Robin Scott, kept the debate going on clause 1 of that legislation for many hours, and wore the minister down. What did we see as a result of that? We saw the Attorney General understand and appreciate that the amendments Hon Robin Scott, the Liberals and the crossbench in the other

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]

p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

place wanted to make were good amendments. After Hon Sue Ellery argued against these amendments for days, Hon John Quigley accepted the amendments they wanted, and the legislation went through.

That is the sort of time wasting that happens up there because of the bullish behaviour of Hon Sue Ellery. That is the issue that this government has to deal with. It must teach Hon Sue Ellery how to pick up the phone and talk to the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, One Nation and the Liberal Democrat members, and ask what their interest is in this legislation, and what amendments they are proposing. She should ask to work with them and find a way to facilitate this legislation through the Council. Hon Rick Mazza, the fisher and shooter in the other place, had some valid issues with the legislation. We do not control Hon Rick Mazza, but he said to us that he was a democratically elected member of this chamber and he had issues with an aspect of this legislation. Did he have any negotiations with Hon Sue Ellery? No, he did not. Hon Peter Collier has been trying to negotiate with her, and for the information of members, an agreement has been struck between Hon Peter Collier and Hon Sue Ellery. Mind you, the attempt to reach that agreement has come from the opposition to the government, not from the government to the opposition. The opposition has agreed that the legislation will be passed by 3.00 pm tomorrow, so that it can come through this house and become law, so that the minister can make her announcement during the 16 Days in Western Australia to Stop Violence Against Women. We are helping the government with that.

I resent absolutely the government branding the Liberals in the other place as people trying to hold up this legislation, when it was our election commitment anyway. We agreed to it, and facilitated its passage through this house. If the government had prioritised it, why was it not brought on for debate in August, when Parliament resumed? Why not in September or October? Why did the government wait until 9.00 pm in the last sitting week of the Legislative Assembly to prioritise this legislation in the Legislative Council? Do not go blaming us when Hon Sue Ellery's mismanagement of business in the other place causes this legislation to come precariously close to not being passed by the end of the parliamentary year. It is not our problem. We are nine; we do not control the order of business in the other place—the government does. The government can take responsibility for prioritising its own legislation, and stop blaming the Liberals when we have valid concerns, and valid amendments, many of which, I might add, have been picked up by the government and agreed to.

The other issue I want to address is the minister's accusation that the Liberals did nothing on family violence when we were in government. Nothing could be further from the truth. In 2015–16, we committed to the "Freedom from Fear: Working Towards the Elimination of Family and Domestic Violence in Western Australia" action plan, which involved the expansion of services and grassroots coordination with people in the Pilbara and the Kimberley to come up with local community-driven action plans. We passed the Restraining Orders and Related Legislation Amendment (Family Violence) Bill 2016, expanding the definition of family violence to include behaviour that causes fear in the victim, cyberstalking and revenge porn. We ensured that the courts must grant a protection order unless there are special circumstances. We relaxed the rules of evidence to minimise the re-traumatisation of victims during court hearings. We allowed family violence restraining orders to exceed two years. We legislated to give family violence victims notice, and the capacity to be heard, when an offender may be released from prison. We addressed violence against women that harms an unborn child and increased the maximum penalty for unlawful assault causing death from 10 to 20 years' imprisonment. Men who deliberately assault their pregnant wives to cause the baby to miscarry now face stronger penalties because of the actions of the Liberal–National government.

We passed the Sentencing Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, providing strict supervision for serious and violent offenders, including two-year post-sentence supervision orders to enable the supervision of seriously violent criminals, and global positioning system tracking for serious offenders, so that victims and corrective services would know if they are heading in the direction of their victims. We introduced changes to the Bail Act to give a greater voice to victims, including, for the first time in Western Australian courts, a requirement for the courts to take into account the views of the victims when considering whether to release on bail a person accused of a serious offence. We established the first Commissioner for Victims of Crime, and the Victims of Crime Reference Group, which has substantially informed the government's family violence prevention agenda. We significantly increased funding for services to victims, including the child witness service, the victim support service and the family violence intervention service, adding \$3 million over the last four years we were in government.

We improved the justice infrastructure with a massive investment: \$103 million for the David Malcolm Justice Centre; \$52 million for the Carnarvon courthouse; \$41 million for the Kununurra courthouse; \$42 million for the redevelopment of the Kalgoorlie courthouse; and \$5 million for the Fitzroy Crossing courthouse. That allowed for more efficient operation of the courts, and in particular it allowed us to introduce a new family violence list, under which courts could now provide a risk management approach and support more victims. This approach ensures that victim support and other specialties are available at the time cases are listed to provide real-time information on risks and the support required to better protect victims.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]

p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

We invested in new accommodation and support services for women and children escaping violence, including a new metropolitan refuge and associated outreach services in Ellenbrook with the capacity to house larger families. We did that because there was a shocking murder in the electorate of the member for Carine of a woman by her estranged partner on the front verge of her home. That woman could not find refuge from that violent man because there was no refuge that would accept someone with a large family with both male and female children. We provided for that in our term of government. We provided a support service for women with large families, and women with teenage and other sons. Most of the women's refuges at the time would not take any males. We redeveloped and expanded the Wooree Miya women's refuge in the south east metropolitan area for Aboriginal women and children, and created a new 12-room crisis accommodation and support service at Tuart House in Busselton to provide accommodation for up to six families. We continued the funding of the regional family violence outreach services in the Murchison, goldfields, Peel and Pilbara regions, and we commenced the implementation of the five-year, \$3 million "Safer Families, Safer Communities Kimberley Family Violence Regional Plan" to go from 2015 to 2020. This plan was put together by sitting down with the matriarchs in the community and asking them what they needed to keep their families safe from domestic violence. That was how that plan was put together. We also increased support for public sector workers who experience family violence by requiring government agencies to provide compassionate administration of leave and working arrangements. We reviewed the tenancy laws as part of the government's family violence reform plan and we released an options paper at the end of 2016, which I would suggest largely informed the formulation of the legislation that changes the Residential Tenancies Act currently being debated in the other place at the eleventh hour of the second year of the fortieth Parliament in 2018. The government should not say we did nothing.

The other thing we did with police is significantly increase training of officers around family and domestic violence, providing more opportunities and experiential training for police officers dealing with it, because they are the first responders. Members might remember that, I think, in our first term of government we introduced police violence restraining orders that allow police officers to issue a violence restraining order on the spot, compelling a perpetrator away from the family home and leaving the family to remain in situ and safe, and causing the arrest of that individual should he come back to the house and try to offend against the family. We had the domestic violence co-response groups, which have now been dismantled. They were made up of police, child protection workers and the not-for-profit sector and espoused a case management philosophy around family violence. We know that it is often a repetitive thing in families and we work better if we have housing, child protection and police all in the same room talking about how to best manage some of these individuals. I reject outright the minister's assertion that we did nothing in the space of family and domestic violence when we were in government. We made significant legislative changes. We had a significant legislative reform program over our eight years. We invested in our courts and our police. We added 1 050 additional police officers because we know how time-consuming family violence matters are and what a big proportion of police resources they use. We invested in those co-response units to ensure we got the best support for families.

In closing, I remind those ministers opposite that although they may think that their legislation is a priority, they need to make sure that the hapless manager of government business in the other place also understands it is a priority. Making it a priority means listing the legislation for debate at the first opportunity. If the government really wants to get it through so the regulations can be drafted in a specific time frame, it needs to work with the crossbench members as well and ask whether they are proposing any amendments and let the representative know so advice can be sought from the minister. I can say to members in this house that I successfully worked with Hon Donna Faragher in the other place and the Minister for Transport; Planning; Lands. When Minister Saffioti had her strata reform legislation going through, I worked with her, Hon Donna Faragher and the member representing the minister to ensure that there was a way to facilitate the passage of that strata legislation while still having the controversial part that the crossbench had issues with go to the Standing Committee on Legislation. That is what we did. We did that because I made a commitment to Minister Saffioti that we would facilitate the legislation through. I asked Hon Donna Faragher and Hon Peter Collier what I could do to facilitate the passage of the bill, given that we knew the crossbench was unhappy with a chunk of it. For the first time in the other place every clause of the bill was debated except the ones that were referred to the committee. The committee did a short, sharp report. As soon as the report came back to the Council, the amendments that were suggested were adopted and the legislation passed. It went straight through that place and came back here. We did not even consider the amendments, because we communicated and we knew what was in them. We accepted those amendments and the legislation went through. That is what can happen if communication occurs and the minister in charge of the other place understands what a priority for the ministers in this place means, how to facilitate legislation and how to communicate with the crossbench to get the priorities of government through the Parliament in a timely fashion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister for Mines and Petroleum.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations) [6.14 pm]: This time I will be speaking in my capacity as Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations, but I cannot let that

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

nonsense stand. Let me make it clear: I am the minister handling the Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment (Family Violence) Bill 2018. I work in a cooperative way with the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. In fact, the minister did the second reading speech for the bill in this chamber. I am proud of the fact that I work so closely with the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence.

I just want to make a few things clear. That bill went through this chamber in June and there was a commitment that two things would occur. The first was that we agreed with the National Party to insert a review of the act after five years. I gave a copy of the draft amendment to the National Party and, indeed, to the Liberal Party, when the bill was in this chamber. The second was that we had to resolve a few issues with the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia. I met with the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia on, I think, 22 July, and we resolved all the matters. We worked out we could deal with all the matters it had brought up either through regulation or administratively.

The bill then went to the other house. Given that the Liberal Party supported the bill through this house, I expected it would support it in the other house. However, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, who is my representative in the other house, and Hon Sue Ellery found that when they asked the Liberal Party whether it would support the bill with the amendment promised to the National Party to provide a review after five years, Hon Michael Mischin was not prepared to do so. In fact, he said that if the bill was brought on for debate, it would take ages to get through the other house. Let me make it clear that that is why the government agreed to circumvent that delay by sending the bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation. That committee is bipartisan. Not only that, Hon Rick Mazza substituted with another member to be on that committee, so the Liberal Party, the Labor Party and Hon Rick Mazza, as the legislation committee, reviewed the bill. I, as the minister handling the bill, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, as my representative, and Hon Sue Ellery understood from the Liberal Party that that was then going to deal with all the debate. The bill went to that committee and was reviewed. It was a short, sharp review and, as far as we were told by the Liberal Party, that then meant there would be no debate when the bill got back to the chamber. Let us not be dishonest in this place and say that the referral to the committee was somehow some invention of the government. What an embarrassing submission from the member for Scarborough. It is a fabrication and she should know that it is untrue. If she does not, it would show that she is not telling a lie but that she is just incompetent.

The bill went to the committee and came back with a unanimous report. The government has adopted all the recommendations arising from the committee report. We got ready to bring the bill on for debate and, again, we were informed that Hon Michael Mischin was not satisfied and that he wanted to again debate the bill. Then we found yesterday that Hon Rick Mazza has put amendments on the notice paper. There was no debate or discussion with the government. The Liberal Party could sort this out immediately by voting against the amendments. Let me make it clear that unless there is some negotiation in the other house before the vote is taken, which I understand will be at 3.00 pm tomorrow, the government in this chamber will vote those amendments down and it will be up to the Liberal Party to decide where it stands. Does it stand with the victims of domestic violence and is it going to support the government's position or is it going to support delay and obfuscation and stand against victims in favour of perpetrators? That will be the choice of the Leader of the Opposition and every other Liberal member in this chamber. I do not get the Liberal Party. The member for Scarborough said that the Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment (Family Violence) Bill received support in its party room. Why is the Liberal Party voting against it in the upper house? What shambles are members opposite running? Why does the Leader of the Opposition not speak for the Liberal Party? The Liberal Party is about to vote against the legislation in the upper house. That is what an amendment is. It seeks to change the legislation. Not once has any member of the Liberal Party come to me and said why they think the legislation is not satisfactory—not once.

Mr D.C. Nalder: Why did you take so long to put it up?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have explained that. Hon Michael Mischin said that he wanted to —

Mr D.C. Nalder interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: You are a disgrace, member for Bateman.

Mr D.C. Nalder: A disgrace?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes. Do you support victims or not?

Mr D.C. Nalder: Why has it taken so long? You blame us and you are not even putting it through.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, members. It is getting a bit exciting here.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As I said, unfortunately, the member for Bateman had important business elsewhere in the house when I explained. We did not bring it on for debate and referred it to the committee because that was the agreement we had with the Liberal Party to avoid a long debate in the chamber. We did not want it to go to a committee. We agreed to send it to a committee so that on behalf of the Liberal Party —

Mr D.C. Nalder: October.

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: You have to be the most stupid person in this building.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr D.C. NALDER: I beg your pardon! Point of order!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton): Thank you, I ask you to withdraw.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am sorry; I am not quite sure what it was that was unparliamentary. To the extent I said anything unparliamentary, I unreservedly withdraw.

Mr D.C. NALDER: It is inappropriate to refer to another person in this house in the fashion he has and he should be forced to withdraw.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What was it I did? As I say, Acting Speaker, to the extent I have offended the standing orders, I unreservedly apologise and withdraw.

Mr D.C. NALDER: It is not debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Can I ask you to withdraw?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Let me make it clear, for the benefit of the member for Bateman, the bill did not get called on for debate because Hon Michael Mischin said it would take a long time to get through the chamber. Because we had an agreement with the Liberal Party, we referred it to the Standing Committee on Legislation so the debate could take place in the committee. That was the purpose of the referral. It was by agreement with the Liberal Party. When the committee report returned—a unanimous committee report that included Hon Rick Mazza—we agreed to all the recommended amendments arising from the committee. Now, let me make it clear again, the amendments proposed by Rick Mazza were proposed yesterday with no discussion with the government. The problem is not Rick Mazza moving amendments; it is that the Liberal Party will vote for them. Vote against Rick Mazza's amendments because then we will have the numbers. The Liberal Party and the Labor Party can pass the legislation without Hon Rick Mazza's amendments. We have this problem because of the Liberal Party's behaviour. If members opposite want to support victims, they should reject Hon Rick Mazza's amendments, and the legislation can come here tomorrow with the committee amendments and we can agree, and that will be the end of it. Let me make it clear, Hon Rick Mazza's amendments will be rejected by the Labor government and I expect that all the Liberal members will vote with the Labor government and that means those amendments will be rejected and the bill will be returned to the other house. What will members opposite do then? The Liberal Party can short-circuit this today. Tell Hon Rick Mazza that they will not support these badly drafted and unnecessary amendments. This is the challenge for the member for Bateman. Does he support Hon Rick Mazza's amendments because the Liberal Party is the one that makes the decision? They do not get away with it like that. That will never happen. This is about you, member for Bateman. Will you support Rick Mazza's amendments? If you say you will not, that is the end of the discussion. The Liberal Party and the Labor Party will vote against them; that will be 22 votes, so it will be all over. The bill will then come here with the committee amendments supported and we can get it done. If it comes here with Hon Rick Mazza's amendments, we will vote against them and it will be returned to the other house.

Let me make it clear: the idea that somehow this is our fault is a fabrication. It is an inaccurate understanding of the way negotiations happen. We are having this problem today because the Liberal Party did not tell the Labor Party the truth. The Liberal Party and the Labor Party in the upper house, through Hon Sue Ellery and Hon Peter Collier, agreed that the bill would go to the committee inquiry so that all the issues could be ventilated; all the interest groups could make their submissions, as they did. My staff went and watched and listened to what was being said and we took account of everything. The committee reported and we have agreed to every single one of the recommended changes. That is not the problem. The problem is not the referral to the committee; the problem is that the Liberal Party is not trustworthy.

Dr D.J. Honey: You left it to the last minute.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: You cannot be that dumb. Let me say it again. We did not call it on for debate earlier because Hon Michael Mischin indicated that if it came on for debate, it would take up a lot of the chamber's time. Therefore, the leader of the Labor Party in the other house, Hon Sue Ellery, and the Leader of the Liberal Party, Hon Peter Collier, agreed that it should go to a committee to avoid a lengthy debate in the chamber. It went to the committee, the committee reviewed it, took in evidence, got every interest group involved, came along, spoke and formulated recommendations for amendments. Those amendments were recommended by the committee in a unanimous fashion—to Labor, to Liberal and to Hon Rick Mazza. It came back to the chamber, and the government said, "We accept all those amendments." The only reason there is a problem now is because the

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

Liberal Party is not sticking to the deal. The deal agreed between Hon Peter Collier and Hon Sue Ellery was that the committee could deal with it. If I knew at that time that the Liberal Party would not stick to its word, I would not have agreed to it going to the Legislation Committee. I genuinely feel betrayed in this matter. This is an important issue.

Mr D.C. Nalder: You were part of the discussion.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes; of course. I am the relevant bloody minister.

Mr D.C. Nalder: You discussed it with Peter Collier.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No; Hon Sue Ellery discussed it on my behalf. I cannot believe how dumb this is. This is a stupid debate.

Point of Order

Mr D.C. NALDER: He has already been told about referencing other members in this debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton): I did not hear the comment. What was the comment?

Mr D.C. NALDER: He is referring to members on this side as being dumb.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, I am not. I said it was a dumb debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I do not think he referenced anyone specifically; it is a general debate.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Absolutely. Thank you, Acting Speaker.

Mr J.R. Quigley: If the hat fits, wear it.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The Attorney General is interjecting and now actually making assertions about this side of the house. I think it is totally inappropriate.

The ACTING SPEAKER: It is not a point of order.

Mr D.C. NALDER: It is not a point of order?

The ACTING SPEAKER: No.

Mr D.C. NALDER: You can say what you like by interjection about someone on the other side?

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, minister. Are you canvassing my ruling, member for Bateman?

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am seeking clarification as a point of order. If I interject, I can say what I like about other members of this house. Is that confirmation of your point of order?

The ACTING SPEAKER: No, it is not confirmation of my decision. My decision was that it was a general debate and there was no aspersion specifically made to anyone on the opposition. Thank you.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Further to that point of order, the Attorney General said, "If the hat fits, wear it."

The ACTING SPEAKER: That was a general comment. I do not think it was a specific reference to anyone in particular.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Let me make it clear again. This matter does not need to occupy the time of the Legislative Council. It went to the committee because that was the deal we did with the Liberal opposition. There is a problem because the Liberal opposition has not carried through with its deal. Again, I make it clear that we will not accept those amendments in their current form. When the bill gets here, we will vote against them. Let me make that absolutely clear. Those amendments will not pass this chamber; therefore, they will not pass this Parliament. The Liberal Party and the National Party have a choice: do they want to stand with victims of domestic violence or not? If they choose not to stand with the victims, the community will hear about it. That is their decision. Let us get away from this idea that somehow this bill has come on for debate at the last minute because of us. That is not true. It has come on now because the Labor Party agreed with the Liberal Party to send it to a committee so that it did not have to be extensively debated in Parliament. The idea that one cannot take the word of the Liberal Party is going to be a problem. If that is the position of the Liberal Party—that you can do a deal with them, but they will not follow through with the deal—that is a serious problem for the management of the Parliament.

Let me make it clear again: the Liberal Party has a choice. Vote against Rick Mazza's amendments. Let it tell us now that it is going to vote against them, and then everything will be fixed because, as I said, the Liberal Party told us in this chamber that it supported the legislation. No amendments were moved by the Liberal Party in this chamber, and it supported and in fact went on record as supporting the legislation. It was only when it got up in

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

the other place that we found out there was a problem. Who is the leader of the Liberal Party? Is the member for Riverton the leader of the Liberal Party or not? Is he going to stand with the victims and support the government when we vote against those amendments tomorrow, or is he going to support somebody else and vote against the government tomorrow? That is the problem for the Liberal Party. It thinks that when the amendments are voted on tomorrow, that will be the end of the debate; that is only the end of the debate at this stage in that chamber. When those amendments come back here, we will not be supporting them. Let me make that clear again. What is the opposition going to do? Is it going to vote against the victims?

Point of Order

Mr D.C. NALDER: I refer to standing order 94. A member's speech must be relevant to the question under discussion. I look at the motion that is before the house this afternoon in private members' business and state that this speech by the member for Cannington has no relevance whatsoever to the motion before the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton): I would tend to suggest that it is a general debate, but given the general comments the Deputy Leader of the Opposition made in this regard, I think I will give the same latitude to the minister.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker.

I am not going to speak for much longer, but let me make it clear: this is something I feel passionately about. I am fortunate that I did not come from a family that suffered from domestic violence. I am very fortunate in that regard, but not everybody in our community enjoys such fortune. This legislation, which was supported unanimously in this chamber, is about protecting victims. Tomorrow we are going to see the mettle of the Liberal Party, and particularly the mettle of the member for Riverton. Is he prepared to stand by and watch his members in the upper house cause trouble for victims of domestic violence, or is he going to be sympathetic to the victims? That will be a challenge for the Liberal Party. If, tonight or tomorrow—whenever it comes on for a vote—the Liberal Party supports amendments that will make it harder for victims and we have to come back here and vote those amendments down, it is going to be another challenge for the Liberal Party. It is not going to be able to hide behind the petticoats of Hon Peter Collier; it will be opposition members. They are going to be voting on each of those amendments, and what are they going to do? Do they think that just because they vote with Hon Rick Mazza in the upper house that that excuses them from their responsibilities? I am sorry to tell them that it does not.

Dr D.J. Honey: What about the Greens?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Greens are voting with us. If the opposition votes with us, the legislation is through, and then we do not have to deal with these problems. This is a choice for the member for Riverton, and I am looking forward to the member for Riverton showing us what he really thinks. Does he support the victims or is he trying to make it harder for the victims? That is what this is about.

The professional advice of the consumer protection people at the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety is that these amendments are badly formed and will cause trouble for victims. Let us see the mettle of the member for Riverton. I noted the member for Scarborough, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, today at Government House. She was properly acknowledged by the minister, the Premier and the Governor, so let us see the mettle of members opposite. Do they support the government's desire to fix these problems, or are they going to play a political game and dance with the crossbenchers because it suits them politically? It does not matter how we got here; it is where we go next that is going to be the test for the member for Riverton. I am going to be very interested tomorrow to watch how he passes or fails that test.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse) [6.34 pm]: I am very pleased to be able to contribute to this debate and support the motion —

That this house condemns the McGowan government for its failures in delivering on its election promises, cuts to frontline services, cost-of-living increases and failure to be open and accountable to the people of Western Australia in its first two parliamentary years.

In my capacity as opposition spokesperson for tourism, I would like to focus on that portfolio. I draw everyone's attention to comments made by the then Western Australian Labor Leader of the Opposition in the lead-up to the last state election, when he was quoted in the *Bunbury Mail* of 28 February 2017 as saying —

“A McGowan Labor Government will be focused on ensuring tourism is prioritised in everything we do,” he said.

“Our plan for tourism is a real game changer for WA. Tourism is a key component of our plan to diversify our state's economy and create new jobs for Western Australians.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]
p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

“We want to make WA one of the world’s great tourism destinations to provide a boost to our State’s economy ...

He was also quoted in WAMN Perth News as saying —

“We are absolutely committed to working with the tourism industry in WA to make our tourism plan become a reality,”

That could not be further from the truth, when we look at how this government treated the tourism portfolio when it came into office. The tourism industry is such an important industry and it became very much part of the state election campaign. As I said, it was front and centre. The McGowan Labor opposition promised that it would be front and centre but the decisions it has made since coming to office have resulted in something quite different.

To start with, we had the loss of a dedicated CEO of Tourism WA. The government diminished the role of tourism, making it just a bit-part in a mega-department in which the tourism budget was overseen by not one minister but five ministers—five!—all competing for their own budget and all competing for their own sectors and priorities in the areas they represent.

After repeated calls from the tourism industry it is pleasing that a managing director has now been appointed to the tourism role, and that is welcomed. However, it still sits under a director general who has responsibility for five different ministers. The position of managing director of this department is buried in bureaucracy. This is a model that has been tried and tested in other states and it has not worked. The minister is obviously aware of these concerns. I appreciate his understanding of the tourism industry, but the frustration of trying to market a state when he is diminished in his role to just a junior minister of what should be such an important portfolio is limiting the capacity of WA to be able to procure events, deal with airlines and, importantly, market this state.

The second failing in the tourism area, and an important one when we are talking about marketing this state, is the reduction in the overall tourism spend. Again, I go back to what was promised in opposition—a promise to prioritise the tourism portfolio area and a commitment of \$425 million over five years. It is understood that the industry welcomed to a large extent the consistent funding of \$85 million for marketing and tourism events. But what was the trade-off? The trade-off was cutting it from somewhere else. The trade-off was cutting it from other areas in the tourism budget, such as from destination development, royalties for regions funding for Aboriginal tourism, visitor centres and regional tourism. We have not seen a growth in spending and spending commitment by this government. Although it spouted much about marketing the state, we have seen the overall budget for Tourism WA decline. It has declined at a time when tourism in this state is doing it particularly tough. I will focus on that in a moment.

In terms of other policy failings, I must underline what has happened in the migration space, or, importantly, changes to the regional sponsored migration program and also cuts to the state skills list, which has been cut from 178 to 18. When compared with other states such as Queensland and South Australia, which have plenty more skills on their lists, members will see how it has removed incentives for international visitors and students—a lucrative tourism market of visiting friends and relatives. The opposition spoke much about the international education sector in the lead-up to the election, and there was fair reason for that. It is a very lucrative market. I heard the then opposition spokesperson for tourism saying that one international student represents five visits and that the education sector supports 130 000 jobs nationally, with 10 000 jobs in WA. But the McGowan government, particularly, has sent a strong signal to those students that they are not welcome in WA. The flow-on effect of that has been dramatic. There has been a 12 per cent reduction in commencements of international students, which has directly lead to a \$52 million cut in direct economic benefits to WA. But when those figures are calculated against the value of those visitors, according to Tourism Australia, the overall reduction, the overall opportunity lost, is about \$138 million.

We know how valuable this sector is to WA. If student numbers had grown at the same rate as those in the rest of the nation, 2 390 more students would be in WA, paying \$168 million in course fees and \$219 million in living costs. Unfortunately, the story for international education in WA is a similar story to the tourism story generally—that is, that this state is falling behind while every other state is growing. Although there has been a four per cent reduction in enrolments, there has been growth across other states, on average by seven per cent, because every other state recognises the value of the international student sector—a \$22 billion sector to the country and one of the third largest exports. The new Western Australian Premier sent a strong signal, telling them to go elsewhere. What a cost that has been.

The McGowan government recently launched a \$200 million plan. It excluded any KPIs or specific targets, because it is very difficult to sell without offering incentives for students to come to Western Australia. Although only 16 per cent of international students migrate to Western Australia or seek interests in that pursuit following

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

studying here, employability is a key factor when considering which state they will visit. In fact, on my figures, 67 per cent—StudyPerth says 80 per cent—of international students value employability as a key factor when deciding which state to study in. It should be no surprise to anyone in this place that we have missed the mark, we have missed the opportunity and have experienced heavy losses not only in tourism, an important area that underpins higher education and the university sector, but also in how tourism supports our economy through economic development.

I touched on the fact that funds had been cut from, and we have seen the removal of, the Aboriginal Tourism Development Program. The Minister for Tourism said that that industry brings in \$43 million and provides 339 jobs. The program was initiated under the former government to help mentor more than 20 businesses. It enabled and supported them to become more market ready. Research says that this is vitally important when supporting the international visitor market, but also international visitor spend, because it supports our visitors to stay in WA longer. Unfortunately, the funding for that program and the future of that program is still very much uncertain. The industry certainly looks forward to some clarity on what will happen in that area next.

Mr P. Papalia: Who's the industry?

Ms L. METTAM: The people on the ground. Does the minister want me to name names.

Mr P. Papalia: Who is the industry that you are referring to?

Ms L. METTAM: The Aboriginal tourism sector—operators on the ground.

Mr P. Papalia: Who exactly said that to you?

Ms L. METTAM: A number of people, and for fair reason. The program has been very successful.

Mr P. Papalia: No, it hasn't.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, it actually has.

Mr P. Papalia: You attacked us for not getting our share of Aboriginal tourism, and then you claimed that it is a successful program.

Ms L. METTAM: I have named a number of reasons why the minister has not got his act together.

Mr P. Papalia: You cannot have it both ways; it can't be failing and also have such a great program.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, minister.

Ms L. METTAM: This government is failing dismally, particularly when we compare our performance with every other state.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, thank you.

Ms L. METTAM: The international figures only started to decline after the last set of figures that were positive under this government's watch, in June 2017. We saw a decline in tourist numbers after that. In fact, the most recent set of international visitor statistics show that this state has lost revenue to the tune of \$248 million—about a quarter of a billion dollars—over the past 12 months. The number of international visitors has reduced by 1.8 per cent. We have also seen a drop in spending by national visitors. The national visitor statistics underline a regional expender drop of two per cent, or \$157 million.

Mr P. Papalia: The expender dropped, did it?

Ms L. METTAM: That is exactly what I said. The only thing that supported any growth —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, please.

Ms L. METTAM: The performance of the McGowan government in the tourism portfolio over the last 18 months has been nothing but disappointing.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, last time. Please let the member for Vasse speak.

Mr P. Papalia: It's just that she doesn't like tourists. I'm defending tourism.

Ms L. METTAM: The minister is not defending it enough. He cannot do it while he is still a junior minister.

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Madam Acting Speaker, the minister is badgering the speaker and it is inappropriate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton): I would not describe it as badgering, but I would like to hear the minister in silence, thank you, minister.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: I accept the challenge that the minister has in cutting through when he is competing with four other ministers. I accept the challenge that he has when he is unable to deliver on what he set out to achieve because of the Premier's decision to remove incentives for the international education sector, something he talked up big but has failed dismally to deliver. The reason this is an issue and the reason these concerns need to be highlighted by the opposition is that the ultimate cost falls on Western Australians. It falls on the tourism industry, which represents 94 000 jobs in this state, and it affects those businesses that are shutting down. The feedback I have had is that thousands of people are coming out of this sector as a result of the decline that we have seen in the tourism industry. It is a reality.

We can talk up the fact that there has been some national growth in tourism numbers; mind you, that is against heavy growth in other states. If we talk about negativity, that has been underpinned by many investments made by the former government—namely, the former government's investment in Perth Stadium. During the football season this year, 66 000 people travelled to Perth to go to Optus Stadium, as it is now known, to watch football. If we want to talk about positivity, we should look at one of the achievements of the former Barnett government, because it also spent \$66 million. Two Ed Sheeran concerts in March this year attracted 77 000 international and interstate visitors. This was a real highlight of the tourism portfolio and has been a real positive to tourism. It stemmed the tide of negative figures that we saw from the McGowan government. It highlights the value of Optus Stadium and the investment in Optus Stadium. If members want to talk about negativity, they should look at the comments made by the former Labor opposition about Optus Stadium. It wanted it built somewhere else. It did not want to spend as much. It wanted a cheaper option. It was a good thing that the Barnett government took no notice at the time.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L. METTAM: That was a positive. If we look at what was achieved by the former Barnett government, in contrast to the McGowan government, which has clearly seen great failures in tourism, we can look back to 2008 when Perth was known as Dullsville. It was not a modern or vibrant city that was able to market itself to the rest of the world. The former Liberal–National government took on an infrastructure program to provide areas of investment that we could sell to the world. We invested in Elizabeth Quay, Perth Stadium, the Perth City Link, Yagan Square and our regional areas. The Speaker of this house has spoken about the National Anzac Centre. We also invested heavily in marketing.

We talked earlier about how the McGowan government is not competing with other states. We increased our budget by 50 per cent from 2008 to 2017. We put significantly more into marketing this state. We saw a growth in international tourism of 37 per cent between 2008 and 2016, a growth in interstate tourism of 13 per cent and a growth in intrastate tourism of 63 per cent. That is something that we are certainly not seeing now. That is a bit of a recollection of what was undertaken by the former government. Now that we have a McGowan government, we have seen nothing but disappointment. During the past 12 months, we have seen a quarter of a billion dollar loss in international tourism expenditure and a \$157 million loss in national visitor expenditure. I may have been called negative by members on the other side of the house, and it is quite clear that I have been the target of people using the term “negativity”, but if I bring the members back to comments made —

Mr J.N. Carey: You're recognising it. That's good.

Ms L. METTAM: I am just repeating what has been said.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: We are nearly there, everyone. Come on.

Ms L. METTAM: I could refer to the comments made by the former shadow Minister for Tourism about the direct flights between Perth and London. He said —

Like so many deals done by the Liberals, this looks like a dud for the WA taxpayer.

When speaking about Perth Stadium in 2003, Mr McGowan said —

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 28 November 2018]

p8837b-8861a

Dr Mike Nahan; Dr David Honey; Deputy Speaker; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Libby Mettam

“It is significantly more expensive, it is hampered by extremely limited public transport options, inadequate parking options and no capacity to hold big weeknight and Friday night games.

How negative of the then opposition leader about a project that he did not support!

Mrs L.M. Harvey: He was happy to open it.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, he was happy to open it and happy to rely on those national figures but he was also very happy to dump the former CEO of Tourism WA, who locked in many of the events that will be held at the stadium, such as the Bledisloe Cup and the Chelsea game, and did most of the work to promote the stadium not only interstate, but also to the rest of the world.

When in opposition, Labor Party members said that tourism in government has been asleep at the wheel. We have seen failure upon failure in this sector. There was much more negativity. When making an assessment of this government’s performance so far, we can very much underline the fact that it has well and truly missed the mark in delivering on its election commitments and diversifying the economy or putting tourism front and centre. It has diminished the role of tourism in this state to being a junior portfolio. The government has not committed funding in the way that it said it would. Although the government has committed \$425 million to marketing and events, that has been cut from investing in destination development and promoting our regions. Importantly, it has cost the industry dearly, with the loss of jobs from this valuable tourism sector.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
