

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr John Carey; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr David Honey; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman

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**COOK GOVERNMENT — 100 DAYS — PERFORMANCE**

*Motion*

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition)** [4.00 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government for its actions in the first 100 days of Premier Cook's leadership—a leadership marked by government overreach and arrogant dismissal of the concerns of Western Australians, underscoring the urgent need for a change in government.

I can see the Deputy Speaker nodding his head in agreement. We are all looking forward to that change of government.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That was more to carry on; you have fulfilled your obligations.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The concept of the first 100 days goes back to the time of the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the tremendous amount of work that was undertaken in that first 100 days. It has become an accepted measure of the performance of government to look at the first 100 days and to see whether any progress has been made and to measure the success of the government in that time. By implication, if it has not got off to a running start in the first 100 days, probably the next two years are not going to be much better. The motion accepts the concept of looking at the first 100 days. The Cook government was sworn in on 8 June, so that mark was reached in mid-September. It is now timely to look back and examine how the government has performed in the period since then.

What we have seen and what the public has seen is some of the most chaotic and shambolic goings-on in government I think anyone in Western Australia could have imagined. We only have to go back to the time of the reversal, after the opposition made pleas and 30-odd thousand people signed a petition calling for the government to pull back on its Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation that we knew was not going to work. We knew it was going to cause chaos. We knew that the communities were not ready. We implored and begged the government to pull back and to not push the button on the implementation of the legislation on 1 July, yet what did we see? The government ignored the warning and we saw what happened. We saw chaos ensuing across rural and regional areas and in areas just on the outskirts of the city where people have four or five-acre lots, or even smaller half-acre lots, which would be affected by this. Every member who represents people in those types of communities would understand just how upset, disappointed and angry Western Australians were with the Labor government for its tin ear in not listening to the concerns of the public. In many areas, we have seen this sense of crisis. I feel it in the regional areas especially. We are now seeing a crisis happen with the live export situation. I will talk about that a bit further in, but we know that the communities we represent with significant sheep-producing properties, and people like myself and the member for Roe, worry where the sheep are going to find a home. Where are they going to go? We know that the Cook Labor government has done nothing to reassure or assist them. That failure is very stark.

We see the situation with the development of concerns around transparency. We had the extraordinary situation in which the Auditor General spoke out in her *Annual report 2022–2023*, which I have here. The report outlines the Auditor General's concerns around transparency and her ability to report what she knows to Parliament. I will go through that a little bit later as well. We know that the government's actions have led to a situation in which the public does not think that the government believes it is accountable to anybody. The Electoral Amendment Bill was brought in without any consultation with other parties. There was no consideration of working through some of the concerns that others had about the legislation. In fact, there were no briefings for political parties until earlier this week, which was the first time our secretariat got to go through some of the details with the Western Australian Electoral Commission. These are the people who are going to have to work with this information and with the legislation when it comes in, yet it has not happened at all.

I will go back to the situation with the Auditor General. We know that Treasury is responsible for the provision of resources to the Auditor General. That relationship is very important but there also needs to be an arms-length understanding with the Auditor General, who is basically an officer of the Parliament and has a very important role to report to Parliament on matters of transparency. The government introduced the Auditor General Amendment Bill back in 2022, which passed the Parliament. At the time, there was some discussion around the ability for the Auditor General to access information such as cabinet documents, legal privileged information et cetera. In passing the bill, the government put out a press release stating how the new law would improve government accountability and transparency. However, like a lot of things we see with Labor governments, there was a lot of spin but not much substance to what has been provided. At the time the bill was debated, the government claimed that the Auditor General was happy with the arrangements that were being put in place and that consultation had occurred. I wonder at what level those consultations took place because the Auditor General came out and set forth some stark concerns in her report. The Auditor General made those statements on pages 110 and 111 for those who are interested in looking up the sections. I will quote some of them. She said —

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We are concerned that as it stands the Amendment Act —

It is now an act because it has passed the Parliament but it has not yet been proclaimed —

presents issues of legal interpretation and practical application that would impact the Auditor General's independence and relationship with Parliament. We do not believe these issues can be resolved solely through regulations and protocols ...

It continues —

... a number of the other provisions in the Amendment Act are novel, and consequently untested in any Australian jurisdiction so their full practical application and impact are not yet known.

Significantly, a number of amendments relate to changes to the Auditor General's procedural fairness and reporting provisions. These are areas where the existing legislative provisions were working well and the need for amendment had not been demonstrated or reported by successive Auditors General or the Parliament. It is worth highlighting that confidential information, including cabinet documents and legal advice, is routinely accessed during our audits, with successive Auditors General having always responsibly reported in the public interest.

In planning for implementation and working with DPC on protocols, our Office has identified, supported by legal advice ...

I understand that the Auditor General had Senior Counsel go through the implications of the legislation and that advice has led to her concerns about the differences between what we all thought was going to be the result of that bill and what actually may well be in train because of it. We will talk about those issues a little later and about some of the things said in the Parliament at the time that bill was debated by the relevant ministers in consideration in detail and Committee of the Whole. The Auditor General goes on to list some of the problematic provisions that —

- diminish the discretion of the Auditor General to report in the public interest, which is inconsistent with the overarching independence provisions and other clauses in the existing *Auditor General Act 2006*
- are ambiguous and wide-ranging in their drafting in determining material that should be afforded protection under the Amendment Act, creating uncertainty and increasing the risk of material being inappropriately protected, resulting in disputes which may need to be resolved in the courts
- require the Treasurer of the day to be included in procedural fairness processes for all performance audit reports

That takes away some of the independence, if you like, of the auditor from executive government—in this case, the Treasurer. We know that the Treasurer also holds other portfolios. During question time yesterday, there was some interesting discussion around major projects being under the watch of the Department of Transport in its different iterations—the Public Transport Authority et cetera—and that minister's role as Treasurer and having oversight of the state's finances and, apparently, increased oversight or involvement with the reporting of the Auditor General. The Auditor General also said in the report that the provisions —

- are very detailed and bureaucratic, and which we anticipate will create problems in their implementation.

We have been seeking to work with Government to address concerns with the Amendment Act, and to find a way forward with the legislation. We have respectfully suggested that any further deliberations on legislation affecting the operation and effectiveness of the *Auditor General Act 2006* be reviewed by the Joint Audit Committee of the Parliament, which has a specific legislated responsibility at section 48(2) in this regard.

The Auditor General is very polite in expressing her concerns, but I would suggest that that committee needs to report back to Parliament on the veracity of her concerns and the implications of what she has outlined. I expect that the Joint Audit Committee will look closely at those concerns. If it is not going to look at those concerns, I will be writing to the committee to ask whether it will because it is an important matter that needs to be spoken about. This was picked up on by Paul Murray in a lengthy report in *The West Australian* on transparency issues also involving other states —

Spencer makes it clear, very politely, that McGowan—who was Premier and Treasurer—wanted to limit her powers to investigate matters that went to Cabinet.

This happened during the previous government, but the current Premier is the person who will push the trigger, one presumes, on when these changes occur, or at least his government will do so. It is important that the government takes note of what is being said by the auditor at this point. The article continues —

“Concurrent with difficulties encountered in 2022 accessing certain contracts and supporting documents, where claims of Cabinet confidentiality were asserted by departmental officers, a process was initiated

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by the Office to seek legal advice and develop guidance for the public sector to clarify the Auditor General's information access powers," she reported.

"Difficulties"—think about what that means. The article talks about the Auditor General's response to the new legislation claiming it would —

... "enhance transparency, accountability and integrity across government by addressing longstanding concerns about information access."

That was the claim made by the government at that time, but, in fact, it could do the opposite of what was promised because of the changes, if you like, to the view of what can be reported and how, following that legal advice received by the Auditor General. We are concerned. We ask that the Joint Audit Committee of the Parliament examines the concerns very closely because, in my opinion, the viewpoint was different at the time this was discussed in Parliament. Some of those matters were discussed at a recent conference held in this building for the Australasian Study of Parliament Group. They are matters of grave importance for the state to ensure due accountability and so that the Auditor General feels that she has all the necessary functions needed to undertake her work.

I referred to some of those differences of view. The nub of the issue that is being spoken about is found in proposed section 36D(2) of the Auditor General Amendment Bill 2022 —

Despite anything else in this Act, a relevant person must not —

- (a) disclose, or disclose the substance of, confidential material to any person; or
- (b) give any person access to confidential material; or
- (c) disclose, or disclose the substance of, confidential material in any report or communication to Parliament.

At the time, it was the Attorney General who had carriage of that bill in this house, not the Treasurer, and, I think, Hon Sue Ellery was the responsible minister in the other place. The shadow Treasurer, Hon Dr Steve Thomas, asked a parliamentary question around this —

How is the Auditor General expected to give an audit report based on information like cabinet documents that cannot be justified through publication?

The response from Hon Stephen Dawson was in part —

Once any highly sensitive information is provided to the Auditor General, the information may be fully utilised as part of any audit, including informing any audit findings or opinions. However, the information itself may not be further disclosed by the Auditor General in a public report. For example, Auditors General have regularly been given access to cabinet documents under successive governments for the purposes of conducting their functions and have provided audit reports without the publication of this sensitive information. This will continue.

The issue seems to be whether this will continue and those reports will not be published because they have been informed by that sensitive information. In consideration in detail, in this place, I asked the Attorney General who was acting for the Treasurer —

... how is it envisaged that the Auditor General will manage the process of providing a report without the ability to disclose sensitive or confidential information?

The Attorney General answered —

As I said in the second reading speech, the Auditor General will be able to have open access to the documents. The Auditor General can then form an opinion of the government's conduct based on those documents. It is not necessary to publish the text of those documents to make a report. If the Auditor General is denied access to the documents, she cannot do an audit. This way, the Auditor General will be able to complete an audit.

But the question is: to whom can she report and how will that be judged? Making a report to the executive government is not the same thing as making a report to Parliament, yet it looks like that is where the report will need to go. That is the issue that needs to be examined.

The Attorney General went on to say —

Therefore, the Auditor General will be able to give a report even though she will not be given the text of the report.

He also said —

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... the Auditor General will not be able to publish to a third party the contents of restricted or protected material, but ... may aver to the fact that she has sighted and read confidential material. There will be no regulation to prescribe the form of words, but the Auditor General can in a report to the Parliament include a statement that confidential material, or information about the substance of confidential material, has been omitted from the report. Therefore, she could say, as with the example I gave the member earlier —

This is in the particular case that the Attorney General had been involved in —

in the case of the *ex gratia* payment ... that she has sighted confidential information ...

Therefore, there was a pretty clear indication at the time the Auditor General Amendment Bill 2022 was going through the Parliament that that confidential information could inform the report and the report could reach conclusions and be reported as long as it did not repeat the information or reveal the substance of the information itself. The Auditor General now seems to be greatly concerned, given the legal advice that she has had from senior counsel, whether that will actually be put in place. I will finish with Hon Sue Ellery, who was the minister responsible in the Committee of the Whole. She said —

... the Auditor General does not have an automatic right to a whole range of information ...

Previous Auditors General, and this Auditor General, have been aware of material that they could not rely on in those reports. She continues —

But this clause is stating that nothing in the bill prevents the Auditor General from saying, “In reaching the conclusions that I have reached, I also had access to confidential material, which I have not been able to publish.” The clause makes it clear that although the confidential material cannot be published, the Auditor General will be able to indicate publicly that there was confidential material that her office could not publish.

We now see that there was a disagreement between the interpretation of what can and cannot be published. The government needs to urgently review that. The government needs to think about that and have another look at it before the act comes into play. The deliberations of the Auditor General are essential for transparency in Western Australia.

Just after the expiry of the 100 days, the Auditor General released the *Transparency report: Major projects*, which looked at a number of projects that had been prosecuted by this government over the years. The report that the Auditor General wrote includes in its overview the disclosure of cost blowouts and budget overruns in the delivery of the projects. The opposition is frustrated that we were not told—when we have heard from other sources—that there has been cost blowouts in projects. It is not until there is a report through the midyear review or the budget itself or some other regular occurrence that we actually get an idea of those overruns. The continual disclosures under the Electoral Act in no way applies to the Western Australian executive government’s disclosure around the budget and the performance of the ministries in terms of cost and commerce.

In the Auditor General’s overview to the report, she writes that there has not yet been progress on her previous recommendations for regular and accessible public reporting on the costs and time performance of individual projects. Public information remains static and disparate, making it difficult to understand how projects are progressing and when the benefits they are designed to deliver will be available to the community.

The need for transparency on some of those projects is quite clearly laid out by the Auditor General. The report examined 20 projects and many of them had cost overruns. The worst offenders seemed to be four projects: Metronet, the Morley–Ellenbrook line, the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, Tonkin Highway Gap and Tonkin Highway stage 3 extension. All those projects happen to fall under the purview of the Minister for Transport who is also the Treasurer.

In the future, under the changes to the act, the Treasurer will have a role in those performance reports. That is quite concerning when the Treasurer is the transport minister and has responsibility for such a vast number of projects. The few projects, which I just read out in the report, combined have cost overruns of \$1.5 billion, and three quarters of the cost overruns of all 20 projects are in the Treasurer’s other portfolio. It is quite concerning when we see that many overruns. That represents about 25 per cent of the expected surplus for the state, which is being chewed up in cost overruns. There is a real issue with transparency going forward, and we are not seeing anything from this government that will alleviate that.

We know that the number of qualified audit opinions have not abated under this government, and we have had a very late reporting from many of the departments. I will go back to the issue that involved the Auditor General, and remind the house of the function of the Office of the Auditor General. The Office of the Auditor General supports the Auditor General in auditing the finances and activities of Western Australia’s state and local government entities. The Parliament, as the representative to the people of Western Australia, is the Office of the Auditor General’s key client. The Auditor General reports directly to Parliament, not a government minister. This independence and

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freedom from influence or interference is the cornerstone of a public sector audit. I again refer to the concern that that independence and freedom may not be the case going forward, and that certain classes of reports will have to go to the executive government rather than the Parliament and performance audits may go under the eye of the Treasurer. Again, we have those concerns and they must be looked at.

Earlier I mentioned some other issues that we wanted to speak about. One of those issues was the Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation and its future. The Aboriginal Heritage Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2023 has passed in this house and is currently in the Legislative Council. In the meantime, people have nowhere to go if they need to make an application to deal with matters about Aboriginal heritage. There are no options for them to use at the moment, which is quite concerning. The member for Cottesloe and I, and our upper house members in the South West Region, Hon Louise Kingston and Hon Dr Steve Thomas, were recently at an event in Margaret River where we talked about the aftermath of the Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation and what the future concerns for the communities will be. There is a great deal of concern in regional areas about the ability to use and continue to use water and to have access to what is known as riparian rights, which is the ability to use the water in the creeks and springs on one's property. Due to looming prosecutions, the increase in knowledge and the increase in the number of listed sites that will one day find themselves back on the register, there is a great deal of concern in my communities about how they can interact with those waterways going forward. That is an area that will need to be clarified by the government to enable the industry to continue to do things that it has done for nearly 200 years in some of those waters. There is uncertainty that needs to be cleared up in that area.

I spoke earlier about live export. We have heard that the government supports live export. I was at the Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA state conference last Thursday. The Minister for Agriculture and Food was there, and exhibited a great deal of passion when it was time to defend her interactions with Canberra on live sheep export. In fact, she had taken the time to make a PowerPoint presentation, detailing all the times she had talked about that issue in the media. However, there is a difference between saying things in the media and actually contacting Canberra and talking to the federal government. I put in a freedom of information application to find out what communications had taken place between the minister's office and Canberra over the six-week period after the initial panel consultations on live sheep export took place in Western Australia. The amount of communication over that six-week period between the Western Australian Minister for Agriculture and Food and her federal counterpart, Hon Murray Watt—all the texts, messages, emails and letters—came to zero. There had been no communication. If that is defending Western Australia's livestock industry, I would have to say it is a very, very weak defence.

I saw that and thought, "That can't be right. We've got to expand the time line beyond that six weeks and see whether there has been any communication, ever." It does not look like there has been a lot of communication between our state Minister for Agriculture and Food and the federal minister. We know that this is a federal responsibility, but we also know that the state government has a role in representing the interests of Western Australia in Canberra. The Premier is the minister responsible for our relationship with the federal government. We have been told that the government has been working hard for Western Australian farmers, but all we can see is that it has done nothing. There has been no interaction or communication.

I read a report the other day about a farmer with 600 prime breeding Merinos who was looking to give them away rather than having to freight them from his property because of the cost involved. In fact, during question time one of my constituents sent me a WhatsApp message with an image of his latest return from the sale of his sheep, and it was woeful. He said that he did not know how he was going to get to the other side of his situation.

We have been calling for the government to get out there and start looking at what is needed. There is a looming crisis—in fact, there is a crisis now—in the Western Australian sheep industry, but we have a minister who seems to be denying that the government has any responsibility for it. We have a Premier who says, "Oh, that's just the normal price cycle." We have asked him questions in this place and that is the response we have been getting. This government does not really care about regional Western Australia. It makes a lot of nice promises about it and talks a lot about how important the regions are and how it has members who represent the regions, yet in every field we see the government failing regional people and industries, which really are the lifeblood of the state.

This is not to denigrate the people of the city of Perth, but it is not because of the efforts of the metro area that Western Australia produced \$270 billion of goods in a year; that is actually the output from our regional communities, yet those communities feel under threat in a range of areas. Other members will talk about some of the issues around the oil and gas sector, the approvals situation and the threat to future industries, which has already been outlined. Urgent talks have been taking place with Indonesia because it is concerned about supply. For the first time I can remember, Western Australia is seen as a place of considerable sovereign risk; a place that people are thinking twice about investing in, for a whole range of reasons. But many of those reasons come back to the decisions of Labor governments, and the Cook Labor government is shaping up, after its first 100 days, as one of the worst we have ever seen.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [4.35 pm]: I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government for its actions in the first 100 days of Premier Cook's leadership—a leadership marked by government overreach and arrogant dismissal of the concerns of Western Australians, underscoring the urgent need for a change in government.

This government exemplifies the same old tired and arrogant patterns; new leader, same mistakes. The government's overreach and clear disregard for Western Australians is deeply troubling. Despite the outcry, this government remains deaf to the voices of communities across Western Australia, underscoring the urgent need for a change of government. This is clearly a motion worthy of support in respect of a range of portfolios, but especially health.

When Premier Cook was Minister for Health from 2017 to 2021 he left the health system in a state of crisis, following years of underinvestment. This is a Premier who, in opposition, referred to 1 000 hours of ambulance ramping over a month a “horror story” and made a commitment to fix it, stating that he would put patients first. What did we see in the first five months of 2017? There were 2 946 hours of ramping—almost 3 000 hours! Compare that with 21 000 hours over the first five months of 2023. That is a 600 per cent increase since the now Premier referred to the ambulance ramping crisis when in opposition. The shocking total for last year was 66 000 hours; that is a far cry from putting patients first.

The government has enjoyed a \$17 billion surplus over the last three years. It has had the capacity to make meaningful investments into fixing the health system, but what has it done? In its first six years, it spent \$1.8 billion on health infrastructure and \$14.8 billion on transport—a clear example of the underinvestment we have seen in health. The Labor government's priorities are wrong, and it is no wonder we have such issues with our health system. It is no surprise that the trust Western Australians once placed in our health system has steadily eroded under this government's watch. We have understaffed hospitals and demoralised health workers, particularly nurses, who are seriously overworked and are continually being asked to do more with less. We have seen crisis after crisis and nothing but lame excuses and cover-ups from this government.

One of the first undertakings this government made in 2017 was to commission the Langouant report into all government services. That report was scathing about many projects that cost over \$1 million that did not have a proper business case. This government said that it could do better. It said it would set a better standard of transparency—a gold-standard level—but what we have seen is very far from that promise, particularly over the last few weeks. Last week, a letter was obtained under freedom of information legislation. It was written in July 2022 by South Metropolitan Health Service CEO Paul Forden to top executives in the Department of Health. It expressed concern that the medi-hotel's private operator Aegis Health's business case had been approved without assessment or input by the hospital's operator—that is, the South Metropolitan Health Service. Concern was raised that Fiona Stanley and Fremantle Hospitals did not have enough patients to fill the scope of the business case put forward by Aegis for the medi-hotel. The business case outlined 80 beds, when only 40—half—were required. It was absolutely staggering to see that business case. The Cook government had basically written a blank cheque for beds that could not be filled. That is according not to the opposition, but to the government's own hospital operator. It is a \$55 million four-year deal with a private operator. No robust business case was submitted by the South Metropolitan Health Service, and it clearly does not pass the gold standard of transparency that this government talked about and carried on about in the lead-up to the 2017 election.

Further, in 2022, there had been a surge of about 85 per cent in eating disorder cases. It was suggested by the hotel operator that the medi-hotel could be used as an eating disorder facility to fill the extra beds, which would require adjustments to the business case. This came at the same time the Labor government had dropped the ball on federal funding for an eating disorder facility at Peel. It is another example of this government not putting patients first. It ignored the best clinical advice from its own hospital operator ahead of the private operator's business case, which was put together without any consultation with the hospital operator about demand across the hospital system. The hotel operator did not suggest that the number of beds be cut, but that the beds could be put to better use for demand in other areas, such as eating disorders. It also raised concerns and questions about the decision on the women's and babies' hospital, its additional patients, and to what extent they had been factored in for the use of this facility.

I move to the women's and babies' hospital. Moving the \$1.8 billion women's and babies' hospital to Murdoch is a disaster in waiting. The business case does not support the government's decision to abandon plans to co-locate the new women's and babies' hospital with Perth Children's Hospital at Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre precinct in favour of the Fiona Stanley Hospital site. The move will mean that babies will have to be transferred 20 kilometres along a busy freeway to the specialist neonatal ICU, which will contribute to poorer neurological outcomes. University of Western Australia Professor Karen Simmer, who is a former director of neonatal ICU and the Newborn Emergency Transport Service at King Edward Memorial Hospital, stated —

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“Twenty kilometres for the mothers, for the greatly sick babies, is a long way on the freeway, especially in peak hour traffic,” ...

“The point of the uproar from me and senior clinicians is if King Edward were to be moved to Fiona Stanley Hospital, the risk of death and disability for the very small children that we care for will be increased, and their families need to be aware of this.”

It should be up to the new Premier to stand by what he believes. When the Premier was the Minister for Health, he said —

It is obviously a fairly complex piece of work, because although we are moving a hospital to a constrained site, in addition we are moving it onto a site that already has an operational hospital, including Perth Children’s Hospital. It will be a difficult project, but it is one that we need to do.

Since 2004, the Reid report and every review of health infrastructure undertaken in this state has recommended QEII as the appropriate site. Even the McGowan government’s own sustainable health review recommended the QEII site because of that tri-location. The site at QEII is vitally important because of its closeness and the fact that it is co-located with an adult facility and the paediatric hospital. Just because it is challenging does not mean that this site should not be pursued in the best interests of our youngest and most vulnerable patients. Placing the hospital at Murdoch will mean that Western Australia will be the only state in the country that does not have a tri-located facility and, in the words of the Australian Medical Association, it means that as a state we will not be able to say that this facility is world class.

The current Minister for Health has turned a deaf ear to a chorus of medical professionals begging her to reverse the decision to place the hospital at Murdoch. Somehow, this government seems to know more and know better, and it continues an extraordinary approach of ignoring the best clinical advice.

I turn to some of the more recent news that has come out. The annual report from the Child and Adolescent Health Service that has been released revealed that there were 25 severity assessment code 1 clinical incidents reported at Perth Children’s Hospital for the year, with two resulting in serious harm. The report also highlighted that six children had died in our hospitals last year because of errors in care and not their underlying conditions. What did our Premier have to say about this issue this morning when he was asked about those tragedies? He said it was not bad because it was the same as two years ago, which was an incredibly insensitive comment. We know that we have extraordinarily dedicated health workers who are under immense pressure, being asked to do more with less, being asked to do double and triple shifts in our hospital system, and this is highlighted in the CAHS annual report, which was tabled in Parliament yesterday, which stated that —

Increasing demand for CDS services continues to impact on the timeliness of assessment and intervention services, with the number of referrals increasing 52 per cent over the last decade and no major increase in funding to match the increasing demand.

That spells out what this government’s priorities are not, and they are certainly not meeting that significant demand for these services.

The Mental Health Advocacy Service annual report revealed that it investigated four cases involving the sexual safety of kids receiving inpatient treatment in the last 12 months. It also reported that the number of serious issues in mental health facilities had increased by 75 per cent compared with the year before, yet it struggles with funding from this government. The service stated in its annual report that resourcing and unfunded costs, such as pay increases for advocates, together with increased demand had created—I quote—an “existential threat” to the organisation.

These reports come in the wake of last week’s shocking rape allegations at ward 5A in Perth Children’s Hospital. It has taken about two years for the alleged incident to come to light because of a brave family, and certainly not the Cook Labor government. This family resorted to significant lengths to get answers about that unfathomable incident—an unthinkable incident—which took place in January 2022. When this was revealed, our Premier was once again missing in action for a week, unavailable to provide answers for the family, or reassurance to a wider public who have lost faith in our health system. The Minister for Health responded to the media story by advising that the family had been repeatedly contacted by senior health administrators or senior administrators. The family has absolutely refuted this claim. The family understandably trusted our health system to provide support at our flagship hospital for their daughter, who was suicidal following an alleged sexual assault three months earlier. Why did PCH initially refuse to hand over to the family the CCTV footage from the night of the incident?

Tragically, the parallels between the way this distressing incident played out and was managed and the surrounding tragedy of Aishwarya Aswath at PCH are unavoidable. The parents of Aishwarya Aswath had to fight every step of the way to get information about that tragic incident, in which a girl waited two hours too long to receive help at the Perth Children’s Hospital emergency department. Again, there was a refusal to provide an honest account

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of what happened, to cover up the truth. The annual reports tabled yesterday also revealed that the dedicated supernumerary resuscitation team, which we were advised last year was in place—until the Minister for Health had to correct the record earlier this year—is still not in place. A key recommendation in response to that tragedy at Perth Children’s Hospital is still not in place. The father of Aishwarya Aswath has reignited calls for a royal commission into the health system, saying, “I see a royal commission as the only way to avoid such tragic incidents. Western Australians should have access to a safe, transparent and accountable health system.” We also saw another heartbreaking story at Perth Children’s Hospital over the last weekend.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Ms L. METTAM:** A suicidal 13-year-old boy’s family took extraordinary lengths to get help for their son by showing CCTV footage in a desperate bid to secure health treatment for him. When he was finally admitted to ward 5A, he was attacked by another patient. These cases highlight the mental health crisis in our state and the lengths parents must go to seek help for their vulnerable children. Following news breaking at the time of the appalling alleged sexual incident at ward 5A, the Premier and the health minister went to ground and were unavailable to answer questions for a week. Considering the significance of this, and that the Premier was the Minister for Health in the lead-up to such a distressing alleged act, at the very least our Premier should have made himself available to explain and ensure that the family—almost two years on—had the information that they so desperately required. It is a systemic failure by this government, which has let this girl and her family down.

Nursing staff work incredibly hard with young patients, and the two-page document provided falls well short of answering the questions about why nurses locked themselves away for three hours and why they were not supported. Two years on, we still do not know with any real clarity why the government has not more urgently addressed the three outstanding recommendations. Our Premier believes that the government acted swiftly. We say it has not. By its own report, this ward is still not deemed safe almost two years on, which does not indicate swift action by this government at all. The government sets a very low bar when it comes to delivering on issues which should be a priority. It is disturbing that we have seen other tragic events managed in the same way. It follows the tragic incidents of Aishwarya Aswath and Kate Savage. Meron Savage said last week that she had huge concerns with ward 5A, because it was mixed gender and patients were unable to lock their doors. I quote —

There were obviously other patients that were very disturbed—Kate was very disturbed. The patients could at least have the ability to lock other patients out of the room.

Staff would obviously need keys that open everything immediately but I’m sure there are ways for patients to be able to close their doors to keep other patients out while still allowing staff to get in.

That is a pretty reasonable request. Western Australian parents need assurance that if they take their child to our state’s flagship hospital for care in ward 5A, that they will be cared for and kept safe. Almost two years on, that is still an outstanding recommendation. The trust has undeniably been damaged, and it is up to this government to restore it. What safety measures have been implemented for patients and the hardworking staff in a very challenging environment? Following the death of Aishwarya Aswath in 2021, Premier Cook and the health minister have repeatedly insisted that the staffing shortage was not a contributing factor. He was proved incorrect by a coronial inquiry. How can Western Australians be reassured when the Labor government has a track record of providing false information about staffing and are now withholding information regarding the Chief Psychiatrist’s report? As I have stated, I have been contacted by people in the health profession in particular, who have real concerns about this incident. They are also asking why a redacted version of the Chief Psychiatrist’s report could not be provided, as it has been in other cases.

We saw multiple reviews into the tragic death of Aishwarya Aswath in 2021, stating the urgent need for a dedicated supernumerary resuscitation team in the emergency department at PCH. It was one of 30 recommendations made after Aishwarya’s death. When questioned in June, the Premier said while he expected the recommendations to continue to be implemented, it was not a tick-and-flick exercise. Only 18 of those recommendations have been implemented, and last check, the dedicated resuscitation team was not one of them. This was also confirmed in yesterday’s Child and Adolescent Health Service report. It is amazing that this is still on the to-do list of the Cook Labor government. As I have said, this government has failed in a number of areas. It has failed to deliver when it comes to properly resourcing our hospital system and clearly failed in gold-standard transparency. I finish with elective surgery and emergency department presentations, which our Premier apparently boasted were a positive for this government.

The Child and Adolescent Health Service 2022–23 annual report highlights the concerning blowout in elective surgery wait times for CAHS. Lengthy delays can lead to long-term behavioural and developmental delays. The number of category 1 patients waiting more than 30 days has doubled in the past year. Almost 30 per cent of children waiting for category 2 surgery have waited more than 90 days, and 40 per cent of children are waiting more than a year for category 3 surgery. With emergency department wait times, only one in three triaged category 3



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patients is seen within the recommended 30 minutes, and fewer than half the triaged category 4 patients are seen within the recommended hour. I could go on; there is plenty of content on the health portfolio. Clearly, this government has not much to boast about in health delivery.

As I stated, when in opposition, this Premier called 1 000 hours of ramping in a month a horror story, and he stated that he would put patients first. However, we have seen something quite different. In the first five months of 2017, the figure was just under 3 000 hours versus 21 000 hours in the first five months of this year. That measure alone points to a hospital system under pressure. A number of reports yesterday pointed to the extraordinary pressures with elective surgery, the child and adolescent mental health service and the way this government makes decisions, including just going ahead with a women's and babies' hospital, despite clinical advice that suggests its location will lead to death and disability for our youngest and most vulnerable patients.

I will leave my comments there. Quite clearly, this government does not prioritise the issues that mean the most to Western Australians.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [5.01 pm]: I too rise to support the Leader of the Opposition's motion, which states —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government for its actions in the first 100 days of Premier Cook's leadership—a leadership marked by government overreach and arrogant dismissal of the concerns of Western Australians, underscoring the urgent need for a change in government.

There is an urgent need for a change in government, and I think the people of Western Australia are starting to realise it. No doubt, the people of regional Western Australia have well and truly realised it, and now people in the Perth metropolitan region are starting to realise that. The interactions I have had with them recently spell out their disquiet at what has happened in the first 100 days of the Cook government. The member for Vasse summed it up well. It was ironic to hear the Premier say yesterday how great it is that ambulance ramping is around 3 800 hours when, as the member for Vasse said a minute ago, he considered it a horror story when it was 1 000 hours under the previous government. That sums it up; he is grasping at straws. Ambulance ramping has dropped from more than 6 000 hours to 3 800 hours, and it is a great story. That highlights the way this Premier is now operating.

Following on from what the Leader of the Opposition said, I will start with the Auditor General's 2022–23 annual report, which sums it up. The report contains some very disturbing comments from the Auditor General. I admire the Auditor General. Apart from the opposition, she seems to be the only other person in Western Australia trying to hold this government to account. She is doing a great job. She is not frightened to come out with the truth about what is happening with this government and its lack of transparency and lack of integrity. I looked at some of the information that has been supplied. In the report, the Auditor General refers to the Auditor General Amendment Act 2022 and details that were generally not present in the second reading speech nor consideration in detail. In the *Hansard* record of debate on the bill, the Attorney General repeatedly said that the bill's formation was done in cooperation with the Auditor General. If the premise during the debate was to reassure the opposition and, therefore, the public that all was well with that bill, that there was nothing to see here and that the Auditor General was closely advised on the bill, why did the Auditor General use her annual report to raise serious concerns about the bill? The Auditor General states in the annual report —

However, a number of the other provisions in the Amendment Act are novel, and consequently untested in any Australian jurisdiction so their full practical application and impact are not yet known.

Those are not the words of someone who is fully involved in the formation of the bill. The annual report states further that the Office of the Auditor General has identified—supported by legal advice, I might add—that certain provisions are problematic. The report states that some of those —

- diminish the discretion of the Auditor General to report in the public interest ...
- are ambiguous and wide-ranging in their drafting in determining material that should be afforded protection under the Amendment Act, creating uncertainty and increasing the risk of material being inappropriately protected, resulting in disputes which may need to be resolved in the courts
- require the Treasurer of the day to be included in procedural fairness processes for all performance audit reports

To be honest, some of those comments are very concerning. I recall the Attorney General introducing the bill and saying that the McGowan government continues to improve and champion accountability, transparency and integrity across government. The electoral bill that we have been debating today refers to transparency and integrity and then opens the door for the union movement to just walk right through—that is the increase in transparency and integrity! The Attorney General said the same thing in his second reading speech: it would be great. The Auditor General would

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have more access to cabinet documents, and the government had been liaising with her. Why then is she raising these comments in her 2022–23 annual report, with legal advice backing them up?

That explains it in a nutshell. We saw the lack of transparency and accountability during the debate of some of the COVID-19 bills that were rushed through. The Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation in November 2021 was “urgent, urgent”. The government needed to get it through. What happened? Regulations came along 18 months later. They were brought in at four o’clock on the Thursday before Easter Friday, hoping that the journalists had gone down the pub. Why was it so urgent that it had to be brought on in November 2021, giving the opposition no time to have a briefing or talk to stakeholders? This is the track record of this government. It is a real credit to the Auditor General that she has picked up some of these elements and identified some of the shortcomings of the Cook government.

There are alarm bells about the lack of accountability when things go wrong. I have pointed out the health department situation. The Premier said that it is great that ambulance ramping is back to 3 800 hours, even though he said that it was a total horror story when it was at 1 000 hours under the previous government. I am still scratching my head over the decision to shift the site of the women’s and babies’ hospital—against all clinical advice. I know that the Premier, the Deputy Premier and all the rest have to fall in behind what the then Premier and the Minister for Health said at the time, but I have real concerns because every piece of clinical advice that we are hearing seems to be saying that that is not the right way to go. Aside from the parking issues and all the rest of it at the Fiona Stanley Hospital site, all the clinical advice about the health of those young babies is saying that it should be located at the original site. There has been no transparency. It was just an arbitrary decision. The former Premier and the health minister just said that it was going to be shifted, with very little backup from any clinician. Members can understand why the people of Western Australia have real questions.

Of course, there is also the electoral reform, which had the Attorney General rubbing his hands together. I have said it today and I will say it again: even though the former Premier said that it was not on the agenda, as soon as the Attorney General returned to office in March 2021, he started writing the legislation on the first night. He is loving it. Of course, now regional representation will drop and regional members will have to travel thousands and thousands of kilometres. The Acting Speaker (Ms A.E. Kent) knows how difficult it is and the challenges involved. We have some massive electorates out there. Of course, there will be no relief because there will be less and less representation. My electorate is 5 912 times the size of the member for Mount Lawley’s electorate, but now that the boundaries have been redrawn, it looks as though it will be about 7 500 times the size of his electorate. These are the challenges.

The people of Western Australia are waking up to the government. The people of regional Western Australia realise that 60 to 65 per cent of the state’s income is actually derived from regional Western Australia, but the representation nowhere near reflects that. This is the challenge. It is quite upsetting. We are getting so much feedback from our regional constituents. They are awake to the Cook government, and they are certainly not impressed with its first 100 days.

I think about the backflip on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021, the way it was put through the Parliament and the way that the regulations came out. As I said on the Thursday prior to Easter Friday, the government tried to slip it through under the cover of darkness. That sums up this government: “Let’s slide it through and hope no-one notices.” I can tell members that the people of Western Australia noticed. We saw 700 people at a rally about that legislation. I was at the first consultation meeting in Esperance with 600 or 700 other people. The group stretched right out the door for 60 or 70 metres down the road. They were frightened at the government’s lack of transparency, accountability and integrity.

The federal Labor government and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese have basically created division throughout Australia, and this state government has created division with that bill. Two Labor governments have created division and now there is a lot of repair work to be done. There is no other way. We have a cost-of-living crisis and housing and homelessness issues throughout Australia, and both these governments have created division that is going to take a long time to repair. To be honest, it is quite upsetting. It does not pass the pub test. Obviously, the people of Australia will have their say on Saturday, but that is a separate issue. I am talking about this government. I am sure that the Prime Minister phoned Premier Cook and said, “Drop the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act like a hot potato because this is causing grief to my referendum.”

That was the opportunity, member for Cottesloe, for Premier Cook to say, “Okay; you drop the live export ban.” The federal minister on the eastern seaboard has absolutely messed up WA farmers. We have seen what has happened. We have seen confidence drop right out of the live sheep market. We saw an advertisement this morning from someone in Bridgetown who is offering 600 lambs for free. They are not even going to sell them for a dollar, because the cost of transport to the saleyards, the commission costs and the agent’s fees mean that they would go backwards. They are giving 600 sheep away for free. Last year, those sheep would have been worth anywhere between \$60 and

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\$120 each. This is what has happened. We have lost the confidence of the WA sheep market. We have had no leadership from this Premier. We have had no leadership or support from the Minister for Agriculture and Food in the other chamber.

The other week, when I asked the Premier what he thought about the lack of confidence in the market and so on, he started quoting figures of how many cents a kilogram the sheep were selling for a year or two ago and how many cents a kilogram they are selling for now. He is absolutely out of touch with what is going on at the coalface. I would be more than happy if the Premier came down to the Katanning saleyards, looked at what is going on and talked to some farmers at the coalface. He should not listen to Murray Watt in Canberra, who is driven by animal activists, when he says that his government took this to a federal election and it has a mandate for it. He barely even mentioned it at his first federal election. At the second election, it was raised by the animal activists 10 days before the election, yet he says that it has a mandate because the federal Labor Party took it to the election. It would not have even brought it up if the animal activists had not brought it up.

This is the stuff that Western Australian farmers are dealing with. We have an eastern states–centric agriculture minister and federal government that have absolutely no understanding of what is happening at the coalface. As I said, confidence has dropped out of the market. It is very upsetting to just about everyone in the regions. We cannot see an end in sight while we have such an arrogant and obstinate federal government. This was an opportunity for our leadership in Western Australia. Premier Cook had the opportunity in his first 100 days to stand up and be counted, and to pick up the phone and say, “This is not good enough. We need some support in Western Australia.”

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** This is an important industry that is worth \$130 million and provides 3 500 jobs. We have not seen it. On *Country Hour* the other day, the Minister for Agriculture and Food was asked whether she thought the proposed ban on live export by sea had anything to do with the devastating drop in sheep prices. What was her reply? It was “I don’t know.” That was her reply. That is the sort of leadership we are getting in the sheep industry. This was the opportunity for the Premier, who has been in office for over 100 days, to stand up and be counted on behalf of Western Australians.

I am glad that the Minister for Transport is in the chamber. I am still worried about the standard of roads in Western Australia. We have 175 000 kilometres of roads in Western Australia. Main Roads Western Australia is responsible for nearly 18 000 kilometres. The Shire of Esperance maintains 4 000 kilometres of road. It does a fantastic job. The Main Roads website shows that the regional road safety program attracted \$827 million to improve safety on 8 500 kilometres of roads since 2020. That is good. Obviously, it does not come anywhere near the funding for our Metronet projects. I want to point out some of the imbalances in funding. Funding for the Yanchep shared path pedestrian and bikes program is \$531 million; for the Tonkin Highway shared path, it is \$290 million; and for the Leach Highway shared path, it is \$93 million. We have three pedestrian and bicycle paths matching the entire road safety budget.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** That’s complete rubbish. That’s just invented.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Madam Acting Speaker —

**Mr J.N. Carey** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Ministers.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** We have three projects —

Several members interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I have a point of order. I would like to hear from the member for Roe. The other members can make a contribution later. At the moment, the member for Roe has the floor, and I would like to be able to hear his contribution.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent):** There is no point of order. Are you taking interjections, member for Roe?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Not really, thanks, Madam Acting Speaker.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Not really—okay. Maybe less baiting then.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I have some important figures here that I want to get out there.

**Mr J.N. Carey** interjected.

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**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** We have three pedestrian and bicycle path projects that match the entire road safety budget for 18 000 kilometres of regional roads. I just wanted to point that out. It is an interesting fact.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Ministers!

Several members interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Then we —

**Mr J.N. Carey** interjected.

*Point of Order*

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

**Mr J.N. Carey:** That is misleading the Parliament.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent):** Thank you, minister. Points of order have to be heard in silence.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Again, we cannot hear the member for Roe because of the interjections from the Minister for Housing and his support group over there. I ask that the member for Roe be allowed to make his contribution.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** I have a point of order. I believe that the member for Roe has misled the Parliament with data. I would seek your guidance on that.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Housing, I am advised that misleading the Parliament is a serious allegation that has to have more substance behind it. It is not appropriate to be used within the debate. Please continue, member for Roe.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I would like to point out that this information came from the Main Roads website, to provide further clarity. I am trying to point out some of the comparisons. Of course, we know that Metronet is a very large project. We fully understand that. We know that the Bunbury Outer Ring Road is a massive project that started at somewhere in the order of, from memory, around \$700 million and is well over \$1 billion and rising. Regardless of that, these are some of the concerns I think the Auditor General has reported in some of the transparency reports. Geraldton Health Campus is another one. These are the things that are concerning the people of Western Australia—the massive cost overruns of the Cook government in its first 100 days. I want to gradually wind up. I started with the Auditor General, and I want to finish with a quote from the Auditor General.

The latest *2023 Transparency report: Major projects* states —

Although there have been developments in the planning, governance and reporting on major projects since our first report, there has been no progress on our recommendation for regular and accessible public reporting on the status, and cost and time performance of major projects.

... public reporting on the cost, time and status of projects is inconsistent and not consolidated.

This is where the alarm bells are ringing. The Auditor General has picked it up—lack of transparency and lack of integrity is the language used. It is hard not to be disappointed, but do not be alarmed. Infrastructure Western Australia was much more excited about providing high-quality robust advice to the Premier, just not to the taxpayers, evidently. I want to finish by reminding members of a quote from their previous leader in 2018. He said —

My government will continue to strengthen governance, accountability, transparency and the focus on the key economic and social benefits of government decisions when dealing with taxpayers' money.

I can assure members that the evidence is to the contrary. The Auditor General is right on top of it. The people of Western Australia need to be worried about the first 100 days of the Cook government and however many few days there are remaining.

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [5.27 pm]:** Here we have a rabble pretending to be an opposition. I want to go directly to the comments of the member for Roe. He said that there was a shared path and it cost \$500 million. He said that he got that information from a Main Roads website. What disgraceful behaviour. When he was challenged, he obfuscated. He got it wrong. He made a mistake. Maybe it was \$50 million or \$5 million. It was not \$500 million. When the debate is finished, prior to the adjournment, the member needs to seek the call and apologise. He is required to correct the record at the first available moment. He

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made a mistake. The figures he quoted were not true. I do not know who gave that information to him but he did not get those figures from a website. Somebody gave them to him, and the person who gave them to him messed up. That is what happened. Whoever gave him the information was wrong.

The alternative is to table the document for the balance of the day so that we can read it. It is simply not true. The information used in the member's speech was wrong. He needs to apologise and correct the record at the first available moment. That will be just before the Leader of the House adjourns the house tonight, just before 7.00 pm. That is his responsibility as a member of Parliament. He is obliged to tell the truth in this place. If a member makes a mistake, as I have done in the past, they are obliged to stand up and explain that they made a mistake and correct the record. I have done that in the past when I have made a mistake. The member has an obligation to do that. The member wants to be a minister in a future government and he has made a silly mistake like that. Surely he would have looked at it and thought that there is no way in the world that a shared path would cost \$500 million! It is just so blatantly ridiculous. The whole —

**Mr J.N. Carey:** We are only spending \$300 million on all bike lanes!

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** It's part of the Yanchep program.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** No, no; that is not correct. You are obfuscating again. You were simply making stuff up on the go because you realised you stuffed up. You made a mistake. You have got an apology to make. You need to correct the record and explain that you exaggerated it and got it wrong. If you are saying the entire rail extension, which includes a shared path, cost \$500 million, that is possible. I do not know the cost, but there are two things about that —

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** That's what I was —

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** No, no, no. Do not rewrite history.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** *Hansard* will not lie. *Hansard* is clear.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order, Minister for Housing!

**Mr J.N. Carey:** You said "total shared pathway". It is disgraceful. You have done this before.

*Point of Order*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I am sure you are on top of it, Acting Speaker. The Minister for Energy is making his point pretty clearly, but at the same time, the Minister for Planning is joining in and piling on. I can barely make out the words of the Minister for Energy because of the interjections of his own ministerial colleague.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent):** There is no point of order. Can we please refrain from these interjections? You have made your point, minister, whether the member wants to wait for *Hansard* or just apologise before the end of the debate.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Whether he is an honourable man is a decision for him. If he does not correct the record, we all know where he sits on the honourable scale. He came in here and talked about accountability. I am going to go to accountability in a second, but let us confront the situation here. I have had the member screaming across the chamber at me while I am making a point, inviting the interjections from the Minister for Housing. The member for Cottesloe did not object to the obfuscation and rewriting of history by the member for Roe but to the strong words from the Minister for Housing. Is that not interesting! That is typical of the rabble. There are 514 days to go until election day. Members opposite have no policies. It is a policy-free zone. There are no policies anywhere. If we go to their website, there is nothing. They cannot tell us one thing that they would do in government; there is not one policy. What action is there? What difference would they make if they were in government? They criticise our budget surplus. They did it in this debate and said that the budget surplus is too big. What level of budget surplus would they have? They should tell us the number that they will have for their budget surplus. Last financial year, our budget surplus was \$5.1 billion. What should it have been? Sorry; I forgot to say that I am not the lead speaker. Tell us what the number should be. Members opposite cannot do this. They talk about accountability. Where is their accountability? What number should the budget surplus be? Although our debt is lower than it was when we came to government, they complain that debt is too high. What will the debt figure be for them in government? I make this point to members opposite: debt cannot be repaid unless the budget is in surplus. If the budget is not in surplus, the debt goes up. It is called mathematics. If we are talking about accountability, let us talk about mathematics. It is mathematically impossible to repay debt without running a surplus.

The member talked about the Auditor General and the new legislation that is coming in. I will quote *Hansard* of the Legislative Council on 22 November 2022.

I will explain my quote in a moment —

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The Auditor General's letter, which we will get to in committee stage, also asks for a few bits of clarification. Minister, there is certainly no condemnation of the bill in the letter. I think I can comfortably provide the minister with a copy of it. If I can read it in, surely I can provide the minister with a copy of it.

...

We will have a situation in which the Auditor General will make a report based on information, and they may well have greater access to cabinet-in-confidence documents and others than they had previously, but they cannot necessarily tell the Parliament, of whom they are an officer, what the information was that leads them to the conclusion they make. That is something that we will have to look at, probably in the clause 1 debate, to make sure that we are dealing with that particular issue.

That member then voted for the legislation. Who was that? It was the shadow Treasurer, Hon Dr Steve Thomas. The Leader of the Opposition came in here and quoted a letter from the Auditor General and did not realise that the Auditor General had made her position clear to the opposition prior to the vote on the legislation, and the opposition nonetheless voted in favour of the legislation because it believed it to be an improvement. Now he is using comments from the Auditor General to criticise the bill that members opposite supported in the Parliament and their shadow Treasurer said was an improvement for access to information for the Auditor General. Talk about a rabble! Talk about accountability. There is a word for people who say one thing and then say something that is 180 degrees opposite the next time they talk on the same topic, but it is not parliamentary to say it, so I cannot use it.

That brings to me another question. If the Liberal-Nationals win the election, will Hon Dr Steve Thomas be the Treasurer of the state of Western Australia? Is he the person members opposite want to be Treasurer or is he just a stopgap while those members are in opposition? Are they going to move the Treasury portfolio to the Legislative Council for the first time in the state's history? The other day, the Leader of the Opposition thought it was offensive that a woman had two portfolios.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** That is a remark that is completely erroneous. I never made any such imputation about the gender of the Treasurer; Minister for Transport. It was actually the member for Cannington who made that reference, not the member for Moore. I want that remark withdrawn, and withdrawn now.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** Why is it an issue for me and not previous Treasurers who were male?

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Can we get a ruling? I am not making submissions.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent):** Are you prepared to —

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** No, I am not going to withdraw because it is not unparliamentary.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I will seek some advice.

**Mr R.S. Love:** It's false.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** It's not false.

**Mr R.S. Love:** It's false. Check the record. We could go through the blues. It's false.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** On the point of order, I point out that the Treasurer is a woman. If the member agrees that he made that criticism of the Treasurer —

**Mr R.S. Love:** That's not what you said.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Yes, that is right. That by definition means that it was a woman he was criticising because the Treasurer is a woman. I am not debating. I am making submissions on the point of order. It is simply a fact.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. Please continue with the debate.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** As I say, the member made a criticism of this woman. He has tried to say that he was not making a criticism of this woman, but the Treasurer is a woman, so that is what he did. He came in here and said that this woman could not do two portfolios.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I did not use those words.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** I never said you did!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. Minister, please continue with the debate.

*Debate Resumed*

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr John Carey; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr David Honey; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman

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**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** We are talking about accountability. When the member opposite is confronted with his own actions, he runs away.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I did not make that statement.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** This is an argument. It is not a point of order.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** It is a point of order.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** No, it's not.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I have been accused of making a statement that I did not make. I ask the member to withdraw that.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Please refrain from drawing the opposition into the argument. There is no point of order. Please continue, minister.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** As I say, I was describing exactly what happened in question time yesterday with the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Moore. I am not trying to confront the Acting Speaker's suggestions; I am just making clear exactly what happened. I know that the member for Moore is upset about what he did yesterday, but that is not our fault.

*Point of Order*

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The minister is making incorrect statements. I was sitting here yesterday. The member for Moore made no suggestion about gender.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you. There is no point of order, but I remind the Minister for Energy, yet again.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** The real question here is about accountability. If the government changes, who will be the Treasurer? Tell me who it will be! Is the opposition saying that the people of Western Australia should not be taken into the opposition's secret dealings and backroom shenanigans that are going on in choosing who will be the Treasurer? Will it be Hon Dr Steve Thomas—or are members opposite too ashamed to tell us who it will be? Having criticised our Treasurer, are members opposite going to, for the first time in the state's history, move the Treasury portfolio to the upper house? Is that their proposal? Tell us! Why are members opposite hiding this issue? Are members opposite saying that the Treasurer will be someone who is not even in Parliament? Is that what they are saying? Are members opposite saying that someone who has never faced the people of the state will become Treasurer? Is that what they are saying or are they hiding this? Why is it that members opposite will not tell the community the truth about this matter? Why will members opposite not front up and explain themselves? Who will be the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs? It will not be Hon Peter Collier because he is retiring from Parliament.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Police? Corrective services?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Who will be the Minister for Corrective Services or Police? Hon Peter Collier is retiring from Parliament.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** The Attorney General?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Who will be the Attorney General? Hon Nick Goiran is the only lawyer, as I understand, in the Parliament from the other side of politics. Will members opposite make Hon Nick Goiran the Attorney General? Is that their plan? Will members opposite make Hon Nick Goiran, the only lawyer continuing in the Parliament from the Liberals and Nationals WA, the Attorney General? Is that their plan or are they too ashamed to tell us that that is their plan? Is that why they will not explain this here? Is that why they will not be accountable? Is that the idea?

Indeed, who will attend the leaders' debate with the current Premier? There can be only one other person at the leaders' debate because it is only the people who are competing to be Premier; it cannot be some random person who walks into the debate studio. Who will attend the leaders' debate? Will it be the Leader of the Opposition? Members would think that that would be the easiest question in the world. There is only one Leader of the Opposition. Every time there has been a TV debate, going back for 40 years, the debate is between the sitting Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, but, apparently, this time that is not going to happen. Apparently, it is going to be the leader of the junior partner in the coalition. The member for Vasse is going to attend the leaders' debate, not the Leader of the Opposition! That is the plan. Talk about accountability! Where is the accountability?

When are members opposite going to tell us who the Premier will be if the people choose the other side of Parliament to lead them? Are there any people not currently in the Parliament who will be a minister? This is an important

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question. Talk about accountability! We do not even know the names of the people members opposite intend to put into cabinet. We have not had any chance to hold them to account here in Parliament.

**Mr D.A.E. Scaife:** Is Hon Nick Goiran going to be a minister?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** He clearly is going to be the Attorney General because he is the only lawyer in a coalition party that will be in Parliament after the election! These are serious questions. What does the Leader of the Opposition do? He hides from these serious questions. He is happy to confront the woman who is doing such a great job as Treasurer of the state of Western Australia, but he is not prepared to confront his own responsibilities to the community. This is a real question of accountability. Talk about accountability; let us see it!

Who will be the Minister for Mines and Petroleum? I would argue that it is one of the most critical portfolios in the state. Again, the current shadow Minister for Mines and Petroleum is retiring from the Parliament at the next election—so tell us: who will be responsible for 136 000 jobs and \$240 billion of exports? Why are we not able to confront members opposite to ask them the detailed questions and examine their policy, their perspective and their mettle?

**Ms C.M. Tonkin:** What policy?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Indeed! Why are members opposite hiding whom they will propose to be minister? Why are members opposite not telling the public any of this information? What is it that they are embarrassed about that will not let them explain and be accountable to the community? Why is it that the Leader of the Opposition just sits there saying nothing? I suppose it is because he does nothing, stands for nothing and means nothing.

What we do in this Parliament is a serious business. It is not for the flippant disregard for facts, such as what we saw from the member for Roe, and it is not for hiding the truth, as we are seeing from the Leader of the Opposition. It is a major change to the arrangements of government to move the Treasurer to the Legislative Council. This house is the chamber that controls money bills. Only this chamber is entitled to introduce taxation bills or spending bills. The whole idea that the Treasurer would be in the other chamber is abhorrent and should not be considered, yet that is the proposal from the Leader of the Opposition, unless he is hiding the old switcheroo at the last minute. There are just 514 days to go, and the Leader of the Opposition cannot answer simple questions.

I make myself available to the media on a constant basis. People ask me questions constantly. I go to estimates. I do questions on notice. I do questions in the chamber, not that the opposition often asks me questions. But where is the accountability from the opposition? Why are members opposite hiding these fundamental issues? What is it that they are embarrassed about? Why are they not telling us that Hon Nick Goiran is the only person they can put up as Attorney General? Why is it that they have not explained that? It is fundamental to what we are doing here. I cannot believe that the Leader of the Opposition thinks that he can slide through without accountability, transparency or openness and without explaining and engaging with the community. The National Party's behaviour is deceitful—there is no question about that—as is the Liberal Party's behaviour. The Liberal Party is a participant in the National Party's deceit, and it cannot continue. This is the time for accountability to start. There are 514 days to go.

Another question that has never been talked about is: what is the process for the costings of the election commitments of the Liberal Party and National Party and what accountability is there on how they intend to spend the money? They have criticised the state government's capital works program; what will their capital works program look like? Which projects currently in the budget will be cancelled by an incoming Liberal–National government? Will they cancel the investment we are making in remote Aboriginal communities? Will they cancel the investment we are making in battery energy storage systems and wind farms? Is that what they will cancel? Which bit of our program will they cancel? Will they cancel the upgrades to regional roads that we have funded? Will they cancel the regional economic development grants made for regional Western Australians? Are these the things that they will do? Will they cancel the money that we are investing in the transition for the people of Collie? Is that what they will cancel?

Why are members opposite not being honest? Why are they not telling us the truth? Why are they not open and up-front with everybody? Why are they not accountable? Why are they hiding all this information? What is wrong with members opposite that they cannot be honest with people? This is a serious question. As I say, members opposite are a rabble pretending to be an opposition. Opposition is hard work. I know; I did it for eight and a half years. The Treasurer went through it as well. I spent five years as a shadow minister. It is hard work. The member has to actually get out and do things and come up with fresh ideas. Tell me, what is the one action, new policy or area of expenditure that the opposition will do that we are not doing? He can then tell us the things that will be cancelled to pay for that. That is called accountability, honesty and hard work, Leader of the Opposition.

What is going on here is nonsense. We found the opposition out, and so did the community at the last election. This is why it is unfit to govern. It was unfit in 2017 when it lost government and it was unfit in 2021. The community saw that, which is why the opposition was completely crushed and there are six of them in this chamber compared



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with 53 Labor people. Where is the variety exemplified by this Labor caucus? Where is the broad cross-section of the community reflected here? The opposition needs to be accountable and honest and do real work instead of taking cheap shots and making dishonest attacks and sexist remarks. It is time for the opposition to do its job and tell us the truth: Who is going to be the Treasurer? Who is going to be the Attorney General? Who is going to participate in debate with the current Premier when it comes to the election? There are 514 days until then. It is not that long. It will go in a blink. It is time for the opposition to be honest.

**Ms C.M. Tonkin:** What are their policies?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** They have no policies. There is no hope.

**MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [5.51 pm]:** Thanks for that, minister. I am not going to try to compete with the minister, because I actually rose to support this motion. I thought some of what I incurred early on in my first few months of Parliament was offensive in lots of ways and out of line. I found some attacks made on me that were politicised to be —

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Offensive?

**Ms M. BEARD:** Offensive, yes.

Today I will highlight some things regarding accountability. I have been travelling around the region for the last three months and there have been some things highlighted to me by people with a regional perspective. After the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021, people felt that they were not heard and there was not consultation at the level that they expected. Unintended consequences came out of that, which is often the theme the further we go from Perth.

It is difficult to consult outside Perth. I will touch on the electoral boundaries. It is interesting that the Attorney General says that he understands one vote, one value, but is that really fair and equitable for people who live in the middle of nowhere? They cannot even get to their member's office. They are 1 000 kilometres from their member's office, not to mention that the member may not get there more than once a year, depending on where they are. The Attorney General works in a 160-square-kilometre patch. He could ride a bike around it. When talking about accountability, it is the case in lots of regional seats, such as mine and the member for Moore's, that people feel they are not cared for and do not have the opportunity to have the same representation that people in smaller seats in the metro area have. I do not know whether members can imagine what it would be like to never see some of the people in their electorate. It is really difficult. The member for Kimberley would understand.

On the weekend, I went to Tom Price. I travelled 1 500 kilometres to go up to Tom Price and return the next day. It is a really difficult task. I think putting these boundaries in and making the electorates bigger will not look after the people in those electorates. It is just geographically impossible to be able to service those people to the same level that people in smaller areas are.

We have gone through and looked at some of the health issues that people in the regions are still dealing with. On the weekend, I had people raise questions about what was happening with the Tom Price Hospital; they are still waiting for something to happen. I then went on to Paraburdoo. I do not know whether anyone has been to Paraburdoo Hospital—it is atrocious. It is falling down, and nothing is happening there either. People are still waiting for something to happen at the Meekatharra Hospital. These health services are really important to these areas. As these areas grow, especially in Meekatharra where mining is increasing, we need to get these projects happening. People are actually losing faith that they will ever happen.

I think the Minister for Transport would know about the Wiluna–Meekatharra road. I am not sure whether she saw the media release that went out on 2 October. The Shires of Wiluna and Meekatharra put forward a petition that went through to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. It was noted, but did not get up. The committee advice stated that the issues were being adequately dealt with by the relevant authorities. In reaching its decision, the committee did not request these shires to provide any further information or comment to support their submissions.

The media statement from the Shires of Meekatharra and Wiluna referred to the Minister for Transport and noted —

... she “recognizes the increased use of the road by heavy vehicles due to increased mining activity and the impact this increased use is having on the unsealed section of the road network”. In doing so, she also acknowledges that “the condition of the unsealed section of the road is rapidly deteriorating due to this increased heavy vehicle usage”. Is this statement and admission not enough to highlight the urgency of the matter?

**Ms R. Saffioti** interjected.

**Ms M. BEARD:** I know the minister thinks it is funny, but people have actually died on this road. This has been in the making since 2016, when money was allocated —

**Ms R. Saffioti:** Seriously, you should go back to your pub.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 11 October 2023]

p5306b-5332a

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr John Carey; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr David Honey; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman

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**Ms M. BEARD:** I beg your pardon?

**Ms R. Saffioti:** Honestly, I wasn't laughing, and don't claim that.

**Ms M. BEARD:** Well, you looked like it.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** That was disgusting, again! You guys just think you can do whatever you like.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, minister.

**Ms M. BEARD:** Another issue that the councils have raised is that work on a five-kilometre section of road west of Roslyn Hill is scheduled to commence later this year. Their suggestion was to maximise the opportunity to use students, and that it would be more relevant and less costly if the whole 124 kilometres of roadworks was undertaken in one go. It would involve 12 to 18 months of meaningful and continued engagement as opposed to short-term projects of 10 to 12 weeks, which loses continuity.

According to these shires, maintenance grading continues at a cost of approximately \$30 000 a day, which equates to approximately \$600 000 a month or \$6 million a year. If this is to continue—assuming that we will get that road done—it would save a lot of money in the long term. It remains the only unsealed state highway in WA. This is something that those shires will continue to push for.

The other issue relates to the patient assisted travel scheme. People are signing a petition about that. People are increasingly struggling to afford health services in the regions and, with fuel subsidies as they are, to actually make it to their appointments. A lot of people receiving a pension are finding that they have to cancel appointments because they cannot afford to travel the distances they need to without more support than they already receive. I hope that is something that the government will look at. I know that the Minister for Health has told me the idea is to get people treatment closer to where they live. Until such time as that happens, we need to find a way to make it easier for and take the pressure off these people. I have spoken to seniors who are actually not going to dental and specialist appointments because they just cannot afford it. That is not ideal, as is the case with maternity services as well.

The issue of mental health is increasingly a problem in the regions. I understand that it is a federal government issue, but I urge the state government to support and lobby its federal counterparts regarding the 88-day working holiday visa. This is really something that people in the regions above the twenty-sixth parallel are extremely stressed about. Without that working holiday visa and the 88-day extension that the backpackers and travellers enjoy now, there will potentially be huge issues with staffing in the north, particularly in tourism and agriculture.

Those industries really rely on the 88-day extensions to get those people into the regions. If that changes when the policy is released, it will be a problem. I urge the government to take a closer look at that if it has the ability. I hope it can do something about that because I get constant feedback from people concerned about their planning.

I turn to tourism. Some areas are doing well and others are not. Turning to infrastructure, there is the workers accommodation in Kalbarri. The workers accommodation in Coral Bay is a significant issue and it has been for a long time. It continues to be a significant issue. There are other issues such as roads. Access to air services and connectivity are other problems in that space. The Daniel Ricciardo program is fantastic, and I welcome it; however, there was a lot of negative feedback because he did not visit Carnarvon. People were extremely disappointed about that. That is something to take on board. I am sure the government has already heard about that.

Another thing that people have been pushing for is a youth safe house or a youth accommodation centre. I understand it has been put forward and is in the pipeline. There is a desperate need. There is one in Geraldton and one in Bunbury, and various groups in Carnarvon need that to happen. They need to bring something online as soon as they can that will give them wraparound services as well, so they can cater for disengaged kids and young people who need support and help.

The last thing I want to touch on are the issues of domestic violence on my patch. I understand it is everywhere, but there is only one women's refuge in the Gascoyne and it is full. There is a desperate need for people not to have to return. There is no transitional housing attached to that refuge so when people leave it, they return to where they came from, which is often a big problem for them. There is also no safe house for men suffering domestic violence, which is also an issue. If they want to leave a situation, they have nowhere to go, which then exacerbates it.

I know my colleague wants to contribute to this debate so, in summary, I want to touch on the fact that population retention is becoming a problem in some areas because we lack services and facilities. The health system is in dire need in many places. When it comes to the government meeting its promises, I suggest that some of what the Minister for Energy spoke about is a pretty hard pill to swallow given what has not happened in the regions.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe)** [6.02 pm]: I also rise to make a contribution to this important motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. It has been a fascinating debate so far with some fascinating interjections. The Minister

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for Energy came in with his little spray, and the rhetorical questions he asked were completely nonsensical. We will deal with that in the fullness of time.

When the new Premier came on board, there was a hope that we would see a change in the style of leadership because before we had a profoundly arrogant Premier who thought he could do what he liked and did what he liked. I am sure that many members here know the current Premier better than I do, but I think he is regarded as a pretty even-tempered person and, it is fair to say, a more considered person. But, unfortunately, although we might reflect on personal characteristics, they have not resulted in any significant improvement. In fact, I would say that under this new Premier and ministerial team we have seen a continuation of the worst features of the previous Premier. We can be frustrated or irritated by that in this place, but the worst outcome is the negative impact it is having on the community of Western Australia. I have said it before: the continuing hallmark of this government is that it is about spin. I give the government top marks. I have said it before and I say it again: if there is one thing I give the government top marks for it is spin. The Minister of Transport has opened every Metronet station about 20 times even though there are still no trains running. There are lots of glossy photo opportunities for the Minister of Transport and other ministers. We see failures just dismissed. The complete failure to deliver on capital projects is dismissed and everyone else but the minister is blamed.

Turning to the Premier's performance, there was the debacle—it was a debacle—of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. We had the byplay of the Leader of the Opposition raising the spectre of whether the state received any pressure to remove the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. We have heard in this place strident denials from the minister and others, but I can certainly say that the media and others were pretty clear that there was enormous pressure on this government. It came on. I suspect all government members were getting calls. Any federal member was getting calls on that. I have seen a number of independent commentators, not partisan commentators, state that that debacle is said by many to be one of the principal reasons that the Voice referendum will fail. For all the hurt that causes, that is what is believed at the national level. I was stunned when I went to a function —

**Ms C.M. Rowe:** Don't talk about the Voice in this place. You have blood on your hands.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** That is offensive; the member is better than that.

I went to a conference on small business in Melbourne four or five weeks ago, and every person I spoke to at that event could tell me about Western Australia's debacle of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. That is a fact. That was the Premier sticking his jaw out despite people expressing concerns. Despite members on this side outlining very clearly their concerns about the bill, the Premier stuck his jaw out, and suddenly, at the eleventh hour, with the new regulations being promulgated and the act coming into effect, within five weeks, that turned around. Talking about being held accountable, the Premier has to be held accountable for the way he conducted himself in that debate. I refer to the absolutely offensive characterisation of the opposition returning to its vomit and so on. How appalling it was to use that sort of terminology. I said at the time that it did not befit the Premier. Again, I think the Premier is better than that, but I suspect he was driven to say that out of frustration at the poor performance of his own side. It was certainly an unnecessary reaction to the opposition. The job of the opposition is very clear. It is fascinating that according to the Minister for Energy, apparently the opposition has to outline every position that will be held by everyone at the next election. We have to know exactly what the budgetary position will be. We have to know every single detail. That has never been done by the Labor Party. It did release some costings on Metronet. It was \$3 billion, was it not, Minister for Transport? What are we up to now? We are up to \$12 billion. The minister did a good job on that! With some relatively minor scope changes the figure has crept from \$3 billion to \$12 billion.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The minister can use offensive statements. Again, the minister has the capacity to do better, but he chooses not to. That is unfortunate, but, again, it is a hallmark of the government. The Premier was asked to apologise for those comments, which he should have. Today we heard the Minister for Energy exhorting the member for Moore to correct a fact. We said it was only proper that the Premier should apologise for his remarks. He stuck his jaw out and refused to apologise. That is uncharacteristic and really unfortunate. We hoped that this government would insist on higher standards of transparency. As I have said many times, this is the least transparent government in the history of Western Australia. I say that quite openly. I think it is very easy to justify. The government is so arrogant that it thinks it does not have to provide information. Why? It acts so justified and righteous in everything it does that it thinks it does not have to be held to account for what it does. Time and again, we get smart alec hairsplitting answers, no answer at all, or, for freedom of information requests, we get back blank pages with just the joining words of any information. It is as transparent as mud.

Why is that important? Imagine being a minister and having the opposition ask questions about something that perhaps the minister is not too proud of or thinks they could have done better. Maybe some information, numbers or costings are a bit embarrassing and they might feel a bit embarrassed about them. Equally, surely there is a recognition at a higher level that good government is about transparency and sharing information so that we can

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hold the government accountable. We take the good with the bad. There are plenty of good things the government can talk about, but it is also accountable for that information.

We see that secrecy again and again. We have seen it again with the exposure of that awful incident at Perth Children's Hospital; it has been covered over the last couple of days by the opposition. Why did it come to light? It came to light because it was exposed by the media. The minister did not come forward and say, "Look, there has been this terrible thing." Do rotten things happen? As a keen minister, I am sure the Minister for Police has things happen. Nearly all police officers do the right thing all the time. Some of them do the wrong thing occasionally, and we do not think that the minister has to be personally accountable for any individual failure by any member who works for a government department, but the minister is accountable for the follow-up and accountable for implementing changes, corrections to procedures and being open with the public by saying, "Look this happened; we're really sorry it happened. We're dealing with the families, we're dealing the people affected, but we're going to do better by changing these things." Instead we had zip. The government stayed schtum on it. The government did not say a word, hoping that no-one would realise that any of that had happened. That is the hallmark of the government. It just wants to hide stuff and hope it goes away. As I said, it thinks it is beyond accountability. The government acts righteous and justified in everything it does. It believes all its actions have such a noble aspect to them that it is not accountable at all. The government has absolutely failed at being transparent and accountable.

One of the things we ought to look at when analysing the performance of this Premier's first 100 days, and also this government heading well into its seventh year, is what is better under this government? What aspect of people's lives has improved under this government? If we look across the board, we can see that the government is obsessed with spin. How many journalists does it have working up in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet now? It was 110 and then it brought another 50 on for COVID. I did not hear that any of them had gone. Estimates this year will be interesting to see how many journalists are employed in ministerial offices and in the DPC. It has its 24/7 intelligence unit listed, monitoring tweets and things by opposition members, hurriedly feeding them off to ministers. Government members have a good number on their side.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** A conspiracy!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** It is not a conspiracy.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ministers!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** We can have hysteria on the other side, but I can tell members that it is deadly serious.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** You just make stuff up.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Oh, come on.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Cottesloe, you are inviting interjection by engaging.

**Mr J.N. Carey** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister for Housing! Please desist from interrupting the member whilst he is contributing to the debate.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** We will get on to the Minister for Housing in a bit, because one of the things this Premier should be dealing with is the performance, or the lack of performance, by ministers. What did we see yesterday? We saw what I would describe as a pathetically childish exercise by the Minister for Planning, thinking he could come in here and cleverly try to wedge something between the Leader of the Liberal Party and me on planning matters. This minister has utterly and totally failed in every measurable aspect of his portfolio. I tell members at the outset that I am absolutely proud to sit in this chamber next to the Leader of the Liberal Party. I am absolutely proud to sit there.

Several members interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I do not think the member for Cottesloe can be heard because of the interjections. I ask that you allow him to continue.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order, but I do feel a bit sorry for Hansard who is trying to capture this, so if we could keep interjections down from the government side, that would be appreciated.

*Debate Resumed*

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 11 October 2023]

p5306b-5332a

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr John Carey; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr David Honey; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman

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**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I am absolutely proud to sit next to the Leader of the Liberal Party, and I will tell members why. The Leader of the Liberal Party will not be a lickspittle to developers like the Minister for Planning is. The Leader of the Liberal Party will stand up for her communities and for proper planning in Western Australia. That is what she is doing. She will not be bullied by the developers that the government is bullied by. She will not dance on the end of their string and do whatever they tell her to do whenever they tell her to do it. She is going to stand up for the communities that we represent, including my community. I tell members another thing: I will do that too. If members think I will be cowed by some childish action by the Minister for Planning with a Dorothy Dixier during question time, he is absolutely mistaken.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** You support more red tape for housing. You are living in another reality!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** You are absolutely mistaken, minister.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Point of order, Deputy Speaker.

**Mr J.N. Carey** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, points of order will be heard in silence.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I really believe that the member for Cottesloe was trying to make a contribution to the debate but he is not being allowed to do so.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. There is no point of order. I agree with you that he is trying to make a contribution, but he is inviting significant interjection through his choice of language. We will try to manage that as best we can.

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** As I said, the Leader of the Liberal Party and I are of one mind. We care about the amenity of communities. We care about communities having a say in planning decisions and not being ridden roughshod over by this minister and this minister's processes. We hear that the minister seeks to go even further to remove communities from having a say. The minister may think it is clever and he may get a pat on the back from the developers when he goes along to the functions. They ring him up and say, "Boy, you really stuck it to him today. You're sticking up for us. Good on you, minister. Hang on. By the way ...". We will wait until the next dinner. I feel sorry for the member for Nedlands because the people who live in Nedlands, Churchlands, Carine, Bayswater, Bassendean and Mt Lawley are not so flash on the government's changes. They might not be turning up to the \$3 000 and \$5 000-a-head ministerial dinners and functions, but they are the people who will vote government members out of office at the next election, and it will be the minister's fault. After the next election, go to those —

**Mr J.N. Carey:** You're a hypocrite. You go to openings with Paul Blackburne and you grovel. You are a disgrace. You're such a hypocrite. You're a gross hypocrite. You sit in the front row grovelling.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, minister!

*Point of Order*

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Sorry, I just cannot hear. If you could just ask the minister to tone it down.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes, minister.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** He is asking for interjections.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** He is not asking for interjections, but he is seeking interjections by the way he is presenting his contribution to the debate. Member for Cottesloe, carry on.

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

The minister can tell those members when they lose their seats at the next election, "Don't worry. I got a good pat on the back from the various developers who come and intimidate the government and get it to do whatever they want." Whatever the developers want, they get. For four years we have been hearing from the government about its commitment to tackle the housing crisis and particularly about the public housing supply, yet it has substantially failed to deliver. What is the substitute for action and performance by this government? It is announcements about sums of money. I have said before that I reckon if all the announced money was stacked into bricks of hundred dollar bills, the government could probably build more houses with the announced dollars than it has actually built in response to the housing crisis. I will go through this in some detail. It is always clear that the government is only about the spin, an announcement and a photo with a hard-hat and fluoro vest on. If we look at the announced money of \$2.2 billion for 330 000 houses, we can see that it is \$700 000 per house delivered.

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**Mr J.N. Carey:** No, that's wrong. You're wrong.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The announcement was \$2.2 billion for 330 000 houses. That is \$700 000 per house delivered.

In my electorate in north Fremantle, St Patrick's is building a facility for homeless women. It is an excellent facility. I have been there and visited it. I think the Minister for Transport may have facilitated that when she was the minister by giving them use of some land that was part of the rail reserve. I thank the government for that. Those homes are being built for a bit over \$200 000 per house. I think it is \$230 000 per house. Admittedly, they are single-residency units, so they cost more. The truth is that the private sector and the mining industry build homes—I am talking about emergency housing and housing that has to be built quickly—at a fraction of the cost that the government builds housing. Despite the government's failure to deliver so far, it is adding more promises that there will be more funding. It is growing its headline promise to deliver 4 000 homes but it is simply not delivering anywhere near the number that it promised. Over four years of promises, we have crossed the threshold and the government has probably constructed more social housing than it sold when it came into government.

[Member's time extended.]

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** If the government is building 1 000 homes every four years, it will be 12 years before the government delivers 3 000 homes. Tragically, it is looking like that. I want to contrast that with the performance of the previous government. Ministers and members come into this place and talk about the performance of the previous Liberal–National government. What was its record? The last Liberal–National government delivered some 10 000 affordable homes in eight years—10 000 affordable homes in eight years. This government will not deliver even half that number.

**Mr J.N. Carey** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** For goodness sake! Why does the minister not listen? He might learn something. That will give him an aspiration in life.

**Mr J.N. Carey** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr J.N. Carey:** You're a disgrace—anti-social housing.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** This will give the minister an aspiration in life. I will talk about social housing in a minute.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** You're a joke.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Oh, come on!

**Mr J.N. Carey:** You don't want it in your neighbourhood. Want it in Mosman Park? Get it out.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** It is a shame the minister does not listen to what I say in this place because I welcomed him approving the development in Mosman Park; it is quite the opposite of what the minister said.

We delivered some 1 250 homes per annum. That is around eight times more than the government has delivered in its wasted six years to date. A shortage of money is not the government's issue. The government's inability to deliver homes is its issue. We proved that it could be done. We built over 8 000 new social housing homes to assist low-income people into housing. That is what we delivered—8 000 new social homes during our term. This government will deliver a fraction of that during its time in government. We built 670 new homes in Aboriginal communities. We know the truth. The government's record is worse because of the houses that it sold at the start of its term, which I am sure the government thought was a clever idea at the time. The government has simply failed to deliver and pales in comparison with the former Liberal–National government in delivering those houses. It is certainly a badge of shame that this Labor government has, I would say, the worst performance for public housing of any post-war government. The minister will go out and make more and more announcements, but, as I have indicated very clearly, effectively, this government has a year and a half to go and will not deliver what is needed. The public is aware of it. The government may have been able to sit there and hide behind the former Premier. There is no doubt that the former Premier had a considerable public reputation that hid the failures of the government, but now its failures are exposed for all to see. The ministers have to start doing their work and deliver, not promote spin. The credibility gulf between spin and reality has also been on display on the workers accommodation plan for Kalbarri. The Kalbarri plan, according to the government, was to house workers to do work on housing following the impact of cyclone Seroja. How long ago was that?

**Mr R.S. Love:** Two and a half years.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** It was two and a half years ago. It was more than a year after cyclone Seroja struck that the government announced it had chosen Petra Westkey as the successful proponent to build and operate the workers accommodation at Kalbarri. Disappointingly for the people in the area, in August, the minister announced that the government had stopped negotiations with that company. It appears that the company ran into problems. I do not

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blame the government for the company's failure. However, it beggars belief that the government has been negotiating for a year on a fairly simple project. Numerous mining companies have built larger facilities on their operations in that time. How can the mining companies do it but the government is simply unable to deliver and execute? The minister then came out with a bit of spin to try to justify his failure to deliver it. He announced recently, on 28 August, that the state government's commitment was to make suitable land available, not to deliver workers accommodation. He was saying that he had not really failed because all he was doing was making suitable land available. That is patently not the case. When the minister made his first statement, he said that the government was delivering workers accommodation, not just providing the land. Trying to spin that now as simply providing land is a nonsense. The tragedy of this is that we still do not have that workers accommodation. Kalbarri is still struggling with that.

It is clear that the Premier does not have full confidence in the Minister for Planning. I happened to read the recent notice to the Governor on ministerial portfolio sharing between the Treasurer and the Minister for Planning; Lands, and what did I see? All market-led proposals will be done by the Treasurer and not by the Minister for Planning; Lands. As I have said before in this place, I know that the Treasurer is a very hardworking minister; she is Treasurer, Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport. With the Premier giving the market-led proposals to the Treasurer and not the Minister for Planning, it shows that he does not have confidence in the Minister for Planning to manage them. Given his performance in the housing portfolio, is it any wonder that that is the case? The minister has had a stellar performance in approving land to be developed by developers for apartments for millionaires in my electorate and nearby electorates, but when it comes to delivering the critical affordable housing that other members in this place need, including backbenchers, this government has completely failed.

There is too much to cover, unfortunately. I remember having a conversation with the Minister for Planning; Housing back when he was a parliamentary secretary. I was very concerned about the degradation of building standards and the provision of adequate setbacks and green areas when new areas are built, but I was reassured by the parliamentary secretary as he was then. He had a real belief that we needed adequate standards that maintained amenity for the community. In fact, the government spent a number of years developing better standards to ensure that we looked after the amenity of those areas, so that people were not just put in Lego-style boxes with absolutely no green areas, no access to parks and no setbacks on paths for trees and so on. What did we see? The minister brought in new rules for medium-density development. Even though there had been three or more years of consultation on this, within a few days of the property developers getting on the phone, the minister simply backed down and cancelled all of it. This primarily affected people in lower cost housing. All those people have been abandoned by this Labor government. The Labor government is world class on spin but absolutely appalling on performance. In the areas of planning and housing, it has abandoned the public of Western Australia in favour of a handful of property developers who sustain the Labor Party with donations. That is the reality and shame of it. It is an absolute disgrace. The government cares more about a handful of property developers than the people of Western Australia. People in the suburbs of Nedlands, Churchlands, Carine, Bayswater, Bassendean and Mt Lawley are affected by the government's egregious planning policy.

**MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Deputy Premier)** [6.34 pm]: I understand that it is the late Wednesday afternoon Liberal–National Parties rant, when their members just stand up, make unfounded accusations and outrageous claims, and mislead the Parliament. We are getting closer to an election and it is time for these parties to actually outline their policies. We just heard the member for Cottesloe make some outrageous claims, like he always does. He seems to have an unhealthy obsession with the member for Perth, the Minister for Planning.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** You have an unhealthy obsession with me. Did you listen to question time yesterday?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** He has an unhealthy obsession with the Minister for Planning.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** He has a fixation.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** A fixation! The member for Cottesloe made some outrageous accusations. The question is: what is the Liberal Party's policy on planning? My understanding is that the Liberal Party will bring in third-party appeals. That means that if someone wants to develop a property they own and someone down the road objects to what is being developed, even though they do not have any direct interest, they will be able to appeal that planning decision. That is my understanding of what the member for Cottesloe —

**Dr D.J. Honey:** You make it up as you go along.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** That is what the member for Cottesloe has said.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** I didn't say that.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** That is what he has said.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** No, I haven't.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** He said it the other day, and today.

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**Dr D.J. Honey:** You verballed me, as you always do.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** That is what he said. Does the member for Cottesloe not support third-party appeals? Everything he said today was about making sure that other people in the community can object to developments. That is what he said.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I never interjected on the member for Cottesloe. He said that he wants third-party appeals. That is his policy.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** No, I haven't. Why would you make it up?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Members of the Liberal Party come in here and talk about property rights. The position of the Liberal and National Parties is that people who own land should have their rights restricted if someone down the road is concerned about their development, like they do in New South Wales. That is their position: third-party appeals.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** You know it's untrue.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Everything the member for Cottesloe said today is that everyone around the area should have the right to object and appeal. That is what he said.

*Point of Order*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I have a point of order.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Under which standing order?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I do not have to. We just had the Minister for Energy give a lecture to the member for Moore, saying that he had made an incorrect statement and that he should correct it. Here we have the minister —

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Point of order.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** You cannot do a point of order during the point of order.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes, he can.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The member is entering into debate. He has not referred to a standing order. Therefore, there is no point of order.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** In response to your point of order, Leader of the House, there is no point of order because he is getting to the point of order. Members actually do not need to identify a particular standing order. Carry on with your point of order, member for Cottesloe.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The minister stated that she is quoting a statement that I made during my presentation, which is utterly false. I did not make that statement.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order. Carry on, Deputy Premier.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** The member for Cottesloe just stood up for 30 minutes and said that the government is too pro-development and they are going to be anti-development. I stood up to reiterate that and I was somehow misleading the Parliament! I know that the Liberal Party is anti-development. I know that it will bring more red tape into the system. I know that it will block housing opportunities in this state. That is its position. Be proud of it. The member for Cottesloe should not go to the Paul Blackburne opening and sit in the front row with champagne and say what a great development it is. That is what he did, sitting there with a champagne or walking around saying, "What a great development." The member said he does not like new housing developments. He does not like apartment buildings. Be proud of that.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** I have not said that either.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** That is his position. The member believes that other people can block someone's property rights. What he is doing is completely contrary to everything he argued in relation to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill. There he was attacking the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on the issue of property rights, but he is saying that if someone lives five houses down and their view is impacted, they can object. That is what he will do. He is going to hold up property developments around the place. That is his position.

Talking about fundraisers, these guys are just hypocrites. I have seen the invites to the property sector: "Come and listen to Tjorn Sibma talk about how great the party is on red tape." That is what the Liberal Party is doing. As if all these people do not tell us that fundraisers are going on for the party. Liberal Party members are complete hypocrites. The member should stand and say that he will bring in third-party appeals and get rid of the special pathway and



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development assessment panels. Is that the member's position? The member cannot have a go at us and then be too gutless to say what his position is. My reading of what he said about third-party appeals and DAPs is that he will abolish DAPs and abolish the significant developments pathway. The Liberal and National Parties will deliver less housing in WA and erode people's property rights. The biggest erosion of property rights in the state will happen under them if they follow through with their commitments.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I mean honestly—this guy. Like I was saying, I feel sorry for the member for Cottesloe sometimes in the dining room and in the afternoon tea room because no-one talks to him, but then he comes in here and he makes me angry and I do not feel sorry for him anymore. It is just bad. He is very pleasant out there in the corridor. We all know it. He says, "Hi; how are you going?" It is very nice. But the member comes in here and basically alleges all these awful things. The member said there are no trains running. I mean, go and check out Bayswater, Lakelands, High Wycombe and Redcliffe stations.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Mark Andrews from my office wants to thank you. He uses that train station. He reckons it's brilliant.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Yes; the new Bayswater train station is absolutely brilliant. I see there has been a bit of scope change on Metronet. I think we went from four level crossing removals to 15 and we had new stations and new projects. The member can stand up and, like I was saying, criticise and whatever, but the feedback I get from normal people—I hang out with a lot of normal people—is that they are pretty impressed with what we are doing and the infrastructure we are delivering. They are shocked by the standard and the fact that we are delivering in such a tough time.

But, anyway, as I said, the member for Cottesloe has an unhealthy obsession with the Minister for Planning and wants a complete erosion of property rights. He thinks people should not be able to develop their own block even though the aspiration of many people, such as mum-and-dad investors, is to develop and get ahead in life. The member wants to reject that. That is fine. The Liberal Party still wants to have its little fundraisers as if we do not know.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** In his electorate office.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Yes, in his electorate office. Then they say, "Oh, Libby said they're not going to do that. They're not going to do what the member for Cottesloe said." We are constantly hearing that.

Like I said, the member for Moore yesterday did, I believe, go over the line. As we know, a number of former Treasurers held different portfolios. The former member for Vasse had a lot of extracurricular activities and held a number of portfolios, as we know. He had transport and Treasury and I never heard anything from those people on the other side about that. Former member Mike Nahan was the Treasurer and Minister for Energy.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** And Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We had on our side the former member for Victoria Park, who was Treasurer and Minister for Energy.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** We had the Premier.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We had the Premier who was also the Treasurer. But to come in here and say that this Auditor General's report, which was released last Monday, has a go about that is wrong. Again, members opposite come in here and mislead the place by referring to the Auditor General's report and saying that it had a go at the fact that I have got a couple of portfolios. That is wrong. The Auditor General's report states —

... our high-level review of controls for four projects did not identify any significant issues. All entities were able to provide reasonable and substantiated explanations of cost and time variations when requested.

The conclusion was pretty good. There was a request to have further updates, and, if possible, we would do that but for the number of projects that we have. We have requirements to report asset investment two times a year—that is, during the midyear review and the budget. That is probably more than any private company has to do for something as significant as investment. Members opposite do not come in here and explain why I cannot have more portfolios and others can. The only difference is that I am a woman; that is the only difference.

**Mr R.S. Love:** That's not true.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I am trying to understand why it is okay for —

**Mr R.S. Love:** Do you want an answer, or is it rhetorical?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** No, because do you know what? You have to be held to account for what you say. The Leader of the Opposition came in here—his party has always been so precious—and attacked me for having a couple of portfolios. How is that different from previous ministers? There is only one difference, and it is quite obvious. What about the big-spending energy portfolio? How could Hon Ben Wyatt have both the Treasury and energy portfolios?

**Dr A.D. Buti:** And Aboriginal affairs.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** He also had the Aboriginal affairs portfolio. I never heard the Leader of the Opposition say that about Hon Ben Wyatt. When we hold the Leader of the Opposition to account, he jumps up with points of order. The Leader of the Opposition claimed in here that the Auditor General's report said things that it does not. This report is no different from some claims before about more regular updating, which Treasury said it was examining. The fact is that we outline any updates at the midyear review and during the budget.

I have to comment on what the member for Roe said. He said that we are spending as much on three principal shared paths as we are for the entire regional road spend in the state. If that is not one of the most stupid things I have ever heard in this place, I do not know what is. As the Minister for Energy said, the member should stand up and apologise. He obviously got bad notes, and that happens to people sometimes! The member is from regional WA and he can see that we have roadworks everywhere. He talked about the Bunbury Outer Ring Road. I am trying to find which three PSPs are costing half a billion dollars because I would like to know what type of paving we are using on those suckers! The member said that we are spending more on three PSPs than we are on regional roads, and he then claimed that the Bunbury Outer Ring Road is costing too much—honestly!

As members know, I have a lot of critical thoughts. It is one of my strengths. I was in opposition for eight and a half years, and if I had come into private members' business with this motion, I would have been embarrassed. It is about research. It is about getting some lines of attack. This whole thing is just like, "You guys think you're too good, and we're going to cut you down to size." For two and a half hours, that is what we have heard. That is the entire extent of the opposition's argument. Members opposite said: how is WA different? WA is very different nowadays. We have 125 000 more jobs. We have near full employment. We have the finances in place. We are not having to increase electricity prices by 25 per cent per annum, as happened under the previous government. We have not sold assets. We have not sold Western Power.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** You sold Landgate.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** No, we did not. Under members opposite, Western Power would have been sold, the Water Corporation would probably have been sold, and the ports would all have been done.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Look at the TAFE increase!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We did not increase TAFE fees by 4 000 per cent, or whatever it was. It was ridiculous.

**Mr P. Papalia:** It was 500 per cent.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** It was an increase of 500 per cent. We actually slashed those fees and made it more affordable for young people to go to TAFE. That is what we are doing. We are supporting more housing diversity. I know that is something members opposite do not like. They do not like housing diversity. They do not think people should be able to rent. According to the member for Cottesloe, there is something bad about renters. Apparently, they are all evil people. If someone has one bedroom and is a renter, that is even worse!

**Mr J.N. Carey:** He hates apartments and housing diversity. Get it out of Mosman Park!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** He does not like housing diversity.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** He drinks champagne; sits in the front row.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Yes, he sat there for the Paul Blackburne opening—fantastic!

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Who sits there drinking \$1 000 bottles of red wine?

**Mr J.N. Carey:** You're at the events, mate. Tell us!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Honestly, like I said, I do not know if the member for Cottesloe will be here through the next election. I know that they are all after his seat, because it is a good one, and occasionally I see some of those people who want his seat. There are quite a few out there who want his seat! As I said, I feel sorry for him in the afternoon tea room, but then he comes in here and he has an unhealthy obsession with the member for Perth.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** I'll get him a T-shirt with my face on it!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I would close my blinds at night if I were you!

The Leader of the Nationals WA came in here and claimed that I cannot do more than one portfolio, and claimed that the Auditor General's report stated that too, which is false. He makes claims about accountability. Members should remember that when we won government, I wrote to the then Leader of the Opposition to ask for the release of the business case for the Forrestfield–Airport Link.

**Mr P. Papalia:** We're still waiting on that!

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr John Carey; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr David Honey; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman

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**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I am still waiting for it. The opposition said that because it was attached to a cabinet submission, I could not get a copy of the business case for the Forrestfield–Airport Link, even though it was under construction and the contract had been signed. I still cannot get it, even though we have finished it! Those guys believe cabinet-in-confidence is so important that they will not release a document that is 10 years old, after the project is finished. They would not release the business case for the Perth Freight Link, even after we got rid of it and it did not exist. There could not have been any commercial-in-confidence because the contract was dead. They would not release the documents. That is appalling. For eight and a half years, as if they came in and volunteered information! As if, when we made freedom of information requests, they just gave us information! As if that happened! Their governance was all over the place. They had two cabinet systems, a Treasury that could not believe what it had to deal with, no accountability, and a Liberal–National Party that operated two forms of government. I know that members opposite are trying to figure out what they are going to do at the next election. There is the member for Moore.

**Mr P. Papalia:** He’s enjoying the trappings!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** The member for Moore is enjoying the densely populated areas. He wants to veer into those areas. We see it occasionally; he lands in a densely populated area and then removes himself again. He claims that we are not spending enough on regional roads.

**Mr P. Papalia:** It’s 40 years of work in four years!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Again, the National Party had total control of billions of dollars in the royalties for regions fund. Former Premier Colin Barnett gave the National Party RforR and said, “Here, you guys; go off and do this. This is the cost of government.”

The agreement struck between then Premier Colin Barnett and National Party leader Brendon Grylls was that the Nationals got the royalties for regions fund. It was a never-ending fund of cash. The Premier said, “You do what you want with it.” Do members know what? He never built any roads. Sorry, member for North West Central. In that eight and a half years, Wiluna and Meekatharra could have been done if she had been there. The former government never delivered it. It was in power for eight and a half years and never did it. Here we are investing a record amount in regional road safety and local government roads. We announced the new Western Australian Local Government Association agreement of \$1.38 billion, which is a record in the local government funding agreement. Look at our Main Roads spend in the regions versus the metro area. In the Liberal Party’s last year of government in 2016–17, it spent \$639 million on regional roads from the Main Roads budget. This year, it is \$1.5 billion. Can I give those numbers again? It was \$639 million in 2016–17, which was 46 per cent of total road funding. Now it is \$1.5 billion and it is 56 per cent of the total.

We spend the majority of our road funding in regional Western Australia. Let us look at Main Roads spending by region. Across all regions, per person, we have nearly trebled, sometimes doubled, the amount of road spend. What the opposition says does not ring true. That is across the state, including transport infrastructure everywhere—the Tanami, the Outback Way and Cape Leveque, which we did. Of course, we have Great Northern Highway and the great work that is happening in the Fitzroy. Let us take the Fitzroy as an example. The opposition spokesperson for I do not know what because he keeps claiming it is transport—the one from up north—has been criticising the workers in the Kimberley for about six months. We have now said we are going to open it and he is trying to claim credit for it. People think you guys are a joke. As we said, they have no policies. They come in here and it is like “Have a go day”. It is all, “You guys are too cocky; we’ll cut you down to size because we’re really good. And we will make stuff up about you.” They do not do any proper research, and when they do, they claim we are spending more on three principal shared paths than we are on the entire regional roads budget. It is incredible stuff.

I have not even had the ability to go through the first 100 days of all we have done. There were cost-of-living credits. We have the new C-class locally made trains. We have big batteries to help the decarbonisation of our system. We have reached our job targets. We have the AAA credit rating back. I think that was in the first week! It was the AAA credit rating that members opposite lost because they were financially irresponsible. They nearly bankrupted the state. I think people remember that. I think people remember the fact that they increased electricity prices time and again. They wanted to privatise their assets. They failed to deliver in key areas. They did not care about transport costs for Western Australians, whether it was public transport or airfare affordability.

We are doing all of that, together with improving our health services, delivering on housing supply and continuing the rollout of our education programs and new schools across all areas. We are also boosting tourism and diversifying the economy. That is all the work we are doing. As I said, in my portfolio alone we brought back rail manufacturing. The opposition left that industry in the rubbish bin when it closed the Midland railyards. That sector is creating jobs. We can look at the Kimberley and how many Aboriginal workers are coming back into Main Roads maintenance. After the opposition privatised it, all those Aboriginal people lost their jobs. We have programs to help people get licences, giving them new opportunities all across the state.

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 11 October 2023]

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Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr John Carey; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr David Honey; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman

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The Nationals WA turned their back on regional WA. Nationals members go to those shows, all dressed up in the same matching shirts, pants and hats, and have nice marquees and bumper stickers. They put their bumper stickers on TransWA buses! They stuck those big “Royalties for Regions” stickers on TransWA buses; we are getting them off, do not worry about that! They go around those shows. They sold Westrail freight, they closed down rail lines, and they failed to invest in roads, which people really care about. They let airfares get to incredible levels and never subsidised flights for regional Western Australians. They constantly do that. Now the Nationals do not know whether they are a densely populated area party or a regional party. It is a nothing party; it has no policies.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

*House adjourned at 7.00 pm*

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