

**APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) RECURRENT 2013–14 BILL 2013**  
**APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) CAPITAL 2013–14 BILL 2013**

*Second Reading — Cognate Debate*

Resumed from 14 August.

**MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler)** [11.04 am]: In my reply to the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2013–14 Bill 2013 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2013–14 Bill 2013 in response to the budget, I wish to refer to a couple of issues. The branch-out point is the page in the budget papers that reveals that the Law Reform Commission is to be diminished in power—it is to be effectively rolled into the Department of the Attorney General and become just another working group within that department. The Law Reform Commission was instigated in 1972 by an act of this Parliament to be an independent commission to review the development of law in Western Australia, to receive submissions from any Western Australian into the development of law or the requirement to delete obsolete laws, and to receive references from the Attorney General. Now it will simply become a working group within the Department of the Attorney General and the Attorney General will hold real power over it. It will no longer have a separate budget, which was about \$875 000. The Attorney General will be able to turn off any project of the Law Reform Commission simply by refusing to allocate any funding to it or to permit any expenditure within his department in relation to any project the commission wants to undertake. We have seen how the Attorney General uses the purse strings to frustrate the development of law in Western Australia. There was no clearer example of that than the run-in he had with the learned Chief Justice of Western Australia—I do not think it is putting it too high to say that. The learned Chief Justice, who controls access to the courts, had decided to follow the Victorian example and give Western Australians more access to the courts by video streaming live certain select cases in Western Australia, so that people in Western Australia would become more educated as to the process of the law. He had proposed that the first case to be streamed live would be the Rayney appeal, a case on which Western Australian taxpayers have spent millions of dollars in both the prosecution of Mr Rayney over the murder of his former wife, for which he was duly acquitted, and in relation to the appeal itself, which required the importation of judges from the eastern states. There has been tremendous public interest in the case and the Chief Justice intended to video stream that live. It would not have had any effect on the appellant lawyers who were appearing before the court, and there was a modest cost involved. Because it did not fit within the Attorney General's view of how a court should be run or what access should be granted to a court, the Attorney General, after the whole project had been developed by the Chief Justice in liaison with the Department of the Attorney General, just turned off the funding tap. There we have it. He will now control the Law Reform Commission as such because it will operate as a working group within his own department.

One issue that has been discussed in the media recently is not only the accountability of many government agencies, as set out by the learned Chief Justice in the annual Whitmore lecture given in Sydney on 1 August 2013—I will come to the CCC and the Whitmore lecture—but also the whole notion of second or subsequent appeals by convicted persons. The measure of a society is often the measure of the quality of justice within that society. We look at Russia and Third World countries and the first thing we look down our noses at is the types of justice they deliver to their citizens. If a country delivers a substandard system of justice, that reflects upon the reputation of that country. We are fortunate in Australia that by and large we have a very stable and high quality justice system with very high quality judicial officers and members of the legal profession. However, in Australia we have seen a number of cases in which the process of prosecution of our citizens has been less than fair. I have previously alluded to the Mallard case. We have before the public eye at the moment the case of Austic, which I recently referred to in this Parliament. I want to make my stand on the Austic case quite clear: I do not know whether Mr Austic is guilty or innocent. It is no function of a member of this Parliament to either undermine a jury's verdict or pass an opinion upon the guilt or innocence of another citizen. We are a Parliament; that is the province of the court. Mr Austic has been found guilty by a unanimous verdict of a jury. I am not here to say that Mr Austic is innocent, but I am here as the shadow Attorney General to question the process and the process of appeals. That is a proper function of an Attorney General, a shadow Attorney General or, indeed, any member of this chamber. One aspect of that case was that on the Friday following the murder on Sunday, 7 December 2007, the police diary of one of the policemen reveals that he found a packet of cigarettes on a table on the back verandah of a house. That cigarette packet was photographed and that was presented to the jury. It contained, as I have previously said, a smudge of the deceased's blood that was proven by DNA.

Another DVD that was not presented to the jury and was not fleshed out in court, or even mentioned in court, was of a video made by forensic officers on the previous day that showed the same table with a date stamp on the video on the Thursday. Indeed, the forensic officers' notes indicated that they were in the house making the video on that day that showed the same table—the day before—but without the cigarette packet. This was raised

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 15 August 2013]

p3545c-3562a

Mr John Quigley; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr David Templeman; Mr John Day; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Mia Davies; Mr John McGrath

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in a petition, as I said last week, by His Excellency the Governor of Western Australia in his former capacity as a leading Australian jurist and in his capacity as Mr McCusker, QC, AO.

This raises a question as to whether Mr Austic was afforded a fair trial. As I have previously said, when this petition was presented I believe it was the statutory duty of the Commissioner of Police, the Minister for Police and the Attorney General to refer it to the CCC as required by the legislation under circumstances of possible misconduct. That did not happen, and I referred it. The CCC has conducted one of those long-running investigations.

[Quorum formed.]

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** There is no doubt that during the course of the investigation, the police might come up with an innocent explanation about the conflict in the photographic evidence, but that is not the question. Even if the police come up with an innocent explanation and the CCC finds that there was no impropriety involved, that still does not answer the question—the only body that can answer is the Western Australian Court of Appeal—and that question is this: that by withholding in the insufficient disclosure of the forensic video showing no cigarette packet, was the accused person afforded a fair trial? My estimation of the answer to that question would be no, given that I was present in the High Court during the arguing of the Mallard case and as the justices put it, “Did the withholding of the evidence offer him a fair chance of acquittal?” The answer to that in this particular case and in this context might be, yes, irrespective of whether there is impropriety involved or not or whether the CCC can find an innocent explanation. The only people that can answer whether that would have affected the jury’s verdict, firstly, is the Court of Appeal of the High Court of Australia and, secondly, a jury upon retrial.

It is not the Corruption and Crime Commission’s remit to answer the question of whether the non-disclosure of the forensic videotape showing no cigarette packet constitutes a mistrial; the only body that can answer that question is the Court of Appeal, and that is why I say this matter should be referred back to the Court of Appeal as soon as possible—without in any way, I repeat, asserting the guilt or innocence of Mr Austic. As a matter of law, it should go back to the CCC urgently.

These are the sort of matters—as I have also said in the media—that show it is time to take this discretion away from the Attorney General, to take the politics out of criminal appeals and to come up with legislation similar to that in South Australia; that is, for second or subsequent appeals, there be an application for special leave to the Court of Appeal itself. It is these sorts of issues that the Law Reform Commission could look at and come up with actual recommendations independent of government. But now the government has wiped out the Law Reform Commission. When the Law Reform Commission was chaired by the learned Chief Justice it looked at the accountability of agencies and commissions created by this Parliament of Western Australia and came up with some suggestions for reform. The Attorney General of the day welcomed that report which gave some heart to the learned Chief Justice that there was going to be some forward motion. He referred to that in his 2013 Whitmore Lecture.

It is very important to say that the Chief Justice has belled the cat. This Parliament has created a number of commissions and given them enormous powers—power of entry, power to require citizens to answer questions, power to make findings against citizens and agencies—but at times with arguably insufficient accountability themselves. We know that since the 2010 amendments to the Public Sector Management Act, the Public Sector Commissioner can proceed to make inquiries with the power of a royal commissioner, as happened recently with the Katanning Hostel sexual abuse disaster, and bushfires down south and in the eastern suburbs. These inquiries were conducted under the Public Sector Management Act, whereas they were conducted in other states via the vehicle of a royal commission. There is a big difference between inquiries held by a royal commission and inquiries conducted under the Public Sector Management Act—most notably, that a royal commission is conducted openly, transparently and with a good body of law that makes them accountable to the courts. There has been a royal commission into sexual abuse in New South Wales and there is currently a federal one looking into that subject, as well as the royal commission into bushfires in Victoria; whereas in Western Australia, we have secret Public Sector Commission inquiries run at which witnesses are told not to discuss their evidence with people outside the commission, or even that they have given evidence. The Public Sector Commission is not really accountable to this Parliament in any meaningful way. Indeed, the learned Chief Justice in his Whitmore Lecture delivered on 1 August 2013—I have arranged to email a copy of this important paper to every member of Parliament, and I urge members to take the time to read it—noted that a number of these commissions have come along to this Parliament and, when questions have been asked by parliamentary committees, the commissions have stood the committees up and declined to answer the questions on very problematic legal advice. They have now banded together in what they call an Integrity Coordinating Group; one of the objectives of which is to facilitate the transfer of information between the various commissions. Although these commissions may not be prepared to share or provide information to this Parliament that seeks to hold them accountable, they use their enormous powers to gather information from citizens or agencies and then share that

between the Public Sector Commission, the Corruption and Crime Commission, the Ombudsman and suchlike. Without any legislative framework, they have decided to get together in what they call an Integrity Coordinating Group.

As the Chief Justice notes with concern, in a paper given to that group by the Ombudsman of Western Australia, the Ombudsman says that they can now regard themselves as the “fourth arm of government”. There has been this rearrangement of the constitutional arrangements of Western Australia, not by an act of Parliament but by very powerful commissions getting together and declaring themselves the fourth arm of government, which is accountable to no-one. We, as have all citizens of Western Australia who went through basic social and legal units at school, have been brought up to believe that there are three arms of government: the Parliament, the judiciary and the executive. The executive is responsible to the Parliament; Parliament’s laws can be questioned by the courts, each independent of each other, and there is tension and accountability between these three that keeps our democracy on track. I refer to the learned Chief Justice’s comments in this paper, which I urge all members to read. He recalls that he went to an Anglican boys’ school and at chapel they used to say a prayer, “Lord, save us from a hasty assurance that we are wiser than our fathers”. He was recalling this prayer when thinking of the creation of this fourth estate, created not by the Parliament, not by the courts and not by our democracy and therefore the people of Western Australia, but by bodies that this Parliament created. No-one is suggesting that we do not want an Ombudsman, a Corruption and Crime Commission or a Freedom of Information Commission, or that there should not be a Public Service Commissioner with some powers. The learned Chief Justice has expressed his grave concerns that these bodies have banded together and called themselves the Integrity Coordinating Group and then declared themselves the fourth arm of government.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** I quote from page 39 of the Chief Justice’s address —

It is, however, of some concern to me that these statutory agencies have banded together to promulgate definitions of conduct and standards of behaviour which are separate and distinct from the language used in the statutes creating their agencies, and which defines their separate jurisdictions. This concern is illustrated by the distinction which the WA Ombudsman has drawn between matters which he describes as poor administration, and matters which go to issues of integrity. In the former category he places:

“The failure to give reasons, honest mistakes, otherwise honest, but simply inadequate administrative practice or even well intentioned, but ultimately misconceived practices of the executive that all might be characterised as undesirable, but not matters that necessarily lack integrity.”

To the extent that it is possible to glean from this language a distinction between conduct which merely constitutes maladministration, and conduct which demonstrates a lack of integrity, it is not a distinction which draws any support from the language of the statute creating the office of Ombudsman.

I refer to the ICG not for the purpose of exposing its statements and activities to detailed scrutiny. My purpose is broader. This paper is a response to various suggestions made over the last 10 years or so to the effect that various statutory agencies with different functions and responsibilities should be collectively regarded as a fourth arm of government, united in the discharge of a shared responsibility. It appears to me that there may be significant dangers in this proposition, including the risk of distraction from the specific language used by the Parliament in conferring functions upon each agency, and in defining the standards to be applied and observed by each agency.

I ask all members, when they receive by email a copy of this thoughtful paper, that they read it because it goes straight to the heart of our constitutional arrangements in Western Australia.

I return to the case of Scott Austic, for example. The CCC is looking at a matter that may involve police misconduct or the police might come up with an innocent explanation for why a cigarette packet was not evident on the table when the video was made by the forensic branch on the Thursday, but it was there in the photograph taken by detectives on the Friday and placed before the jury. It is not the CCC’s remit; it does not have the warrant to determine whether that constituted the denial of a fair trial to the accused. The only people who can answer that question are the learned Chief Justice and his fellow justices sitting in the Court of Appeal of Western Australia. I urge the Attorney General to remit the case back there as a matter of urgency.

I return now to other line items in the budget. I cannot find the sticker at the moment that has the words “fully costed, fully funded” in relation to what the government said going into the last election campaign, but it made fully costed, fully funded promises. One of the jokes is that it said there would be night courts in Western Australia and that these night courts would run at night to quickly deal with people who were arrested overnight

and thereby expedite the process of justice. Indeed, a very well equipped courthouse has been established within the new police complex in Roe Street. The problem is that no funding has been provided to place a magistrate or judge in this courthouse to run it. The government has simply said that it would replicate in the new complex the East Perth courthouse and run a night court.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** We could do it in our spare time!

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** Yes. A huge amount of public money has been spent on constructing this courthouse, but when we look in the budget, no funds are provided to run it. If a magistrate is to sit in a night court, a magistrate or judge would need to be taken away from the Central Law Courts, which would deplete the bench there. The night court will require at least an extra judicial officer or two, extra prosecutors and extra duty lawyers, all of which come at great expense.

A huge amount of money has been spent constructing the court, and what is said to be a “fully costed, fully funded” election promise is referred to on page 577 of the budget, which states —

The Department is investigating the establishment of after-hours Magistrates Court sittings to deal with bail and remand decisions, as well as to fast track traffic and impoundment matters.

This fully costed, fully funded election promise turns out to be a mere investigation by the Department of the Attorney General. The public was hopelessly misled in this regard.

I have dealt with the Law Reform Commission. I return now to the budget insofar as it affects my electorate of Butler. What a disgrace! It turned out as I predicted and as has been reported in the *Wanneroo Times* and the *Yanchep Sun City News*. Leading into the election the government established a community working group, which was chaired by the member for Ocean Reef, on the extension of the Mitchell Freeway north of Burns Beach Road to decide how far it should go and what ancillary roads should be constructed. That created in the public’s mind the perception that work on the extension of the Mitchell Freeway was right on the cusp.

*Statement by Acting Speaker*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney):** Members, we will shortly be interrupted by the emergency evacuation familiarisation exercise. I would like to remind you that no action is required by members and that no physical evacuation of the building is necessary. We just have to pause proceedings.

**Mr J.R. Quigley:** I hope my speech has not brought on this emergency proceeding!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** It has not happened yet. We just have to wait for it to happen—and do not panic!

[Interruption.]

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** A community working group chaired by the member for Ocean Reef kept the community busy; it put articles in the paper and raised the expectation that work would commence on the northern extension of the Mitchell Freeway. At the time, I said it was just a talkfest to distract the community going into the election. What do we see in the budget papers now? Over the next few years there is no money immediately allocated for any construction works on the freeway. We see \$1 million, \$1 million and \$4 million, but it is not until the forward estimates in 2014–15 that we see \$24 million, and in 2015–16, \$127 million. There are promises for future expenditure, but what do we know about these forward estimates? Minister after minister has come forward in the last week to say that these forward estimates are not government commitments; they are only guesstimates and there are future cabinet decisions to be made. The Minister for Energy, in response to the issue of rising electricity prices, told us not to believe what we read in the forward estimates because they are just figures; it is not a cabinet lockdown. The Minister for Water told us not to believe what we read in the forward estimates, because that is all subject to future cabinet decision. The government has put off any promise of substantial work on the extension of Mitchell Freeway until just before the next election. The people of my electorate are entitled to be bitterly disappointed that bulldozers are not moving in and this much-needed extension is not happening now. It was just a promise thrown down in front of the electorate before the last election and there was no intention of an immediate start on this freeway. We will go into this during the estimates hearing, but it is absolutely clear from the forward estimates.

The other way out of my electorate is down Wanneroo Road. Flynn Drive is now used as a major exit point for heavy vehicles out of East Wanneroo, and after a dreadful traffic accident on the corner of Flynn Drive and Wanneroo Road two years ago in which an elderly person from the retirement village lost his life, the Minister for Transport at the time, the member for Vasse and now Treasurer, promised that he would allocate funds to put traffic lights there. He said that because Wanneroo Road would be dualled that section of Wanneroo Road would be realigned and traffic lights would be put at that spot. That has not happened in two years and not one dollar is

**Extract from Hansard**

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p3545c-3562a

Mr John Quigley; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr David Templeman; Mr John Day; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Mia Davies; Mr John McGrath

---

allocated to it in this budget. We know that two years ago Indian Ocean Drive was opened, and that brings all the traffic down the coast road and straight onto Wanneroo Road. When it gets to the junction with Hester Avenue, there is a traffic explosion. As there is no freeway in my electorate—the freeway does not come near my electorate yet, although it has the fastest growing population in Perth—the traffic either has to bank up on Marmion Avenue and wait until it gets to Burns Beach Road and then turn left to get to the top of the freeway, or traffic travelling in a south-easterly direction has to go up Hester Avenue and then turn right at the new set of traffic lights onto Wanneroo Road, which has a speed limit of 90 kilometres an hour. Tourist and heavy traffic comes barrelling down the Indian Ocean Drive, and then there is a single lane. There is not one dollar in the budget for the widening of Wanneroo Road south of Hester Avenue.

Finally, it is bedlam around Clarkson train station, which is the northernmost train station. Parking around the station is hopeless because all the people from the north of Clarkson—Merriwa, Ridgewood, Butler, all the way up to Yanchep and Two Rocks—who wish to catch the train have to park at the Clarkson train station. I get inundated with people complaining about getting parking tickets because they cannot get into the car park at the station and have to park on the surrounding roads. What do we know about this? We know that the government will now charge these people \$2 a day, or \$480 to \$500 a year, on top of their public transport bill. We know the train line will be extended north to what was the Brighton train station, and we know that by the time it opens it will have taken six years to lay seven kilometres of track. In five years the Labor government built a track, including an underground tunnel, from Perth to Mandurah. This government has put the electorate of Butler into the slow lane on both the freeway and the railway. Not only has the government put Butler in the slow lane and has cancelled the Butler station, which had hectares of land at the top of Lukin Drive for a huge car park, betraying the people of Butler, but it has renamed the Brighton station, which was to be at the Brighton shopping centre as a walk on, walk off station, as Butler, so it can say it has built the Butler station. We know also that the government has leased a small area of Satterley Corporation land for a car park. It will be bedlam there with car parking, and there is no relief in the budget.

**MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen)** [11.40 am]: I suspect that these days the Premier wakes up every morning and, in the words of former British Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home, reflects, “There are two problems in my life—the political ones are insoluble and the economic ones are incomprehensible.” There is certainly much to talk about with the economic problems in this budget. I intend to highlight some of the impacts that the budget will have on my diverse range of shadow portfolios, to discuss how the budget will affect my electorate and, finally, to reflect on the budget process and its deficiencies and suggest an alternative model for decision making for capital expenditure in local communities.

I want to refer to a budget decision made under the *1984*-esque sounding heading “Program Rationalisation”; that is, the abolition of the Equal Opportunity Commission’s substantive equality unit. The Equal Opportunity Commission comes under the Attorney General’s portfolio. Savings of \$1.5 million will be garnered from the abolition of the commission’s substantive equality unit. This unit is focused on preventing systemic race discrimination by assisting public sector organisations assess their service delivery so fair outcomes can be achieved for all Western Australians. It was created as a result of Premier Gallop’s anti-racism task force with the aim of ensuring that every Western Australian experiences favourable and equal outcomes when dealing with agencies. Page 600 of budget paper No 2 states —

A number of government departments are now implementing substantive equality policies. A range of services is also being delivered by the not-for-profit sector in partnership with government, including contractual requirements for implementation of the policy.

That is the rationale for abolishing the unit. Yet on the same page, which I think is slightly inconsistent, it states —

There is an increasing level of requests for rights based education for new and emerging communities in Western Australia relating in particular to discrimination on the grounds of race, disability and age (youth).

This suggests that there is an ongoing incidence of racism and discrimination, which would lead to the conclusion that the unit’s role, although working in the public sector, continues to be much needed. We should be mindful that at a pre-state election forum, attended by Deputy Premier Kim Hames, who was representing the Minister for Multicultural Interests, he was specifically asked about the Barnett government’s commitment to substantive equality. He confirmed that the Barnett government maintained its commitment to substantive equality. By abolishing the unit, we can interpret that that commitment either was not communicated to the Attorney General or was another broken promise.

Under the heading “Fiscal Action Plan” in the Treasurer’s speech, it was noted that a \$4 000-a-year public school tuition fee for children of 457 visa holders will be introduced to partly cover the costs of educating these

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 15 August 2013]

p3545c-3562a

Mr John Quigley; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr David Templeman; Mr John Day; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Mia Davies; Mr John McGrath

---

children. I note that on radio yesterday the Premier indicated that how the scheme will operate is yet to be finalised. I also appreciate that similar schemes work in some other states. However, I sound a warning. Subclass 457 visa holders are not a homogenous group with equal capacity to pay—not all are highly paid professionals. Despite protestations to the contrary, we know that 457 visa holders have been brought to Western Australia to work below award wages or in semi or non-skilled occupations. For some, the impost of \$4 000 will be simply beyond reach.

Several heritage issues arise from the budget. The first appears to be the lack of any provision for the so-called \$8 million revolving fund specifically promised in the Liberal Party's election policy. Is this a broken or deferred promise? The policy commits the Liberal Party to allocate \$8 million over the next four years to establish a heritage revolving fund to activate underutilised or idle state or local government heritage property through conservation and adaptive re-use. It may well be that no moneys have been allocated this year because of the indeterminate amount of moneys required to compensate the lessees of Florence Hummerston house, which has been moved 100 metres or so as part of the Elizabeth Quay project. Last month in *The West Australian* Gareth Parker reported —

The Barnett Government has paid the owners of a popular Perth Chinese restaurant at least \$5 million to close its doors.

And the bill to taxpayers will rise once compensation negotiations arising from the Government's decision to tear down the Grand Palace restaurant's former home—the heritage-listed Florence Hummerston kiosk on the Perth Esplanade ...

The article goes on to report that the \$5 million was an advance payment. The lessees had a 10-year lease with three 10-year options, so the lease contained no break provisions. The lessees had an exclusive option to exercise each of their 10-year options, which would take the tenancy through to 2044. The sum of \$5 million is a drop in the ocean; it is only an interim payment. For that reason, I asked a question of the minister, which I received the answer to earlier this month. I asked: Have those negotiations concluded? If not, why not? If so, what was the total sum paid to the lessees? The minister answered earlier this month by stating —

Negotiations are ongoing and expected to conclude in 2013.

We can only speculate how large this payout figure will be. How can expenditure of \$174 million for Elizabeth Quay in this financial year could be included in the budget with any degree of certainty when this payout has not been taken into account?

The third issue relating to heritage is one of those sleepers that appears in the notes in the budget. Note 1 on page 847 states —

The decrease in income is related to the 2013–14 launch of the Heritage Advisory Service model, which places the engagement of consultants to provide heritage advice and support to local governments and their communities directly with local governments, rather than being contracted and reimbursed through the Council.

This appears to be straight-out cost shifting to local government. It is yet another example of what is euphemistically called program rationalisation, placing a further cost burden on local government.

Next, I believe that the Minister for Emergency Services held a press conference this morning. The Liberal Party committed to provide \$12.3 million for improved fire crew protection for Department of Fire and Emergency Services vehicles across the state. When we look in the budget, we will not find that figure within "Fire and Emergency Services" but on page 220 of budget paper No 3 under royalties for regions. It seems to me that Minister Francis should not have been out there playing with his hose this morning; he should have invited the Minister for Regional Development along, because the money was allocated from royalties for regions. The bottom line is that 667 appliances or trucks need safety equipment and modification upgrades. This year, \$4 million is allocated, which leads to the conclusion that this fire season, over 400 vehicles will not have the appropriate level of protection for crews. They will not be fully compliant with best practice safety protections.

I also note an allocation in the budget papers for the introduction of presumptive cancer legislation. It is not provided for the 2014–15 year, even though I anticipate the legislation will be passed relatively soon.

The emergency services levy was increased another 7.3 per cent, which is an overall increase of a total of more than 40 per cent during the time Premier Barnett has been in government. As previously noted, while revenue from the ESL is increasing significantly each year, the government's contribution is decreasing. Even more telling will be when we can ascertain how many households will now fall within the maximum payment under the ESL.

**Extract from Hansard**

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p3545c-3562a

Mr John Quigley; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr David Templeman; Mr John Day; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Mia Davies; Mr John McGrath

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I turn to bushfire suppression. It is worth noting that there is no provision in the Department of Parks and Wildlife budget allocation for additional fire management officers, despite a report on succession planning being given to the Minister for Environment in February 2012. The report found that fire suppression personnel were under-resourced and at breaking point and that succession planning needed to be undertaken as a matter of urgency. Likewise, the forward estimates do not contain any moneys whatsoever under “Bushfire Suppression”, despite acknowledging the altered fire regimes and increased risk, especially in the south west. I had expected that following the tragic death of Department of Environment and Conservation firefighter Wendy Bearfoot at Two Peoples Bay last November, provision would have been made for enhanced fire protection initiatives, but they are simply not there. Instead, the government is going to place Department of Parks and Wildlife firefighters at risk, even though it has prepared evidence for the coronial inquest that indicates, despite an affirmative duty on the department, that the vehicles are not safe. The government should not wait until the findings of the inquest are handed down, which may well be some time away.

I am pleased to see that the security rebate for seniors is being retained; however, I note that there is no reference to it in the out years, so I anticipate that it will be abolished as soon as next year. The failure of the government to act on the seniors identification card issue is particularly disappointing. The lack of such an ID card continues to marginalise seniors and means that conducting a range of official and business transactions is highly problematic for those who no longer have a driver’s licence.

I am particularly pleased that special provision has been made in the health budget for palliative care; however, I have not assessed whether the quantum is adequate. I note in this context that \$14 million was committed in 2008 to establish a palliative services project fund, but in fact that was deferred until June 2013. Likewise, the increase of funds into medical research is overdue. We have world-calibre researchers and we must ensure that they can continue their valuable work.

In that regard, I would like to digress for a minute to mention a program that requires a contribution from the state government for research funding. The Australian Imaging Biomarkers and Lifestyle Flagship Study of Ageing, more commonly known as the AIBL, is a study to discover which biomarkers, cognitive characteristics and health and lifestyle factors determine subsequent development of symptomatic Alzheimer’s disease. It is the largest study of its kind in Australia—a prospective longitudinal study of cognition. It is a large-scale cohort study with over 1 100 participants. The AIBL has a multidisciplinary approach with four research streams—namely, cognitive, imaging, biomarkers and lifestyle. It focuses on early detection towards lifestyle interventions.

*Quorum*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Mr Acting Speaker, I call your attention to the state of the house. I again ask the question: where is the Treasurer?

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney):** A quorum is not present, ring the bells.

[Quorum formed.]

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I ask for clarification. When a bill is being debated in this house, it is customary for the minister responsible to be in the house or indeed be in the Parliament. Is there any provision for me to ask through you, Mr Acting Speaker, whether in fact the Treasurer is here in the Parliament to attend the house to listen to the debate for which he is the minister responsible?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I make the point that it is obviously desirable that the minister responsible for any bill is in the chamber for the debate. The budget debate is wide ranging and goes on for an extended period.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Is he in the Parliament?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** We will seek to ascertain that. He also has many responsibilities in the transport and fisheries portfolios. I suspect he is in the building and probably attending a meeting on one issue or another, but we will seek to find that out. He has been here for most of the debate, I believe. I do not think there is a point of order, but we undertake to do that.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney):** Thank you, Leader of the House. Member for Mandurah, there is nothing apparently in the standing orders that enables us to find out whether a member is in the Parliament.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I move that we adjourn this debate and bring on the Dog Amendment Bill.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member, it is up to the member for Girrawheen to finish her speech. I ask the member for Girrawheen to continue.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 15 August 2013]

p3545c-3562a

Mr John Quigley; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr David Templeman; Mr John Day; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Mia Davies; Mr John McGrath

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*Debate Resumed*

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I can say that I am already pretty offended that the Treasurer never answers my letters and I have to content myself with a policy officer or the erstwhile chief of staff answering my letters. I am also very disappointed that the Treasurer is not here hanging on my every word.

I was talking about the Australian Imaging Biomarkers and Lifestyle Flagship Study of Ageing and indicate that —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I indicate that the research is conducted at two centres; 40 per cent in Perth, Western Australia —

**Mr P.T. Miles** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo!

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Mr Acting Speaker, I call on your intervention. The member for Wanneroo never has anything sensible to say and I am not going to entertain his interjections.

Forty per cent of the research is undertaken in Western Australia and 60 per cent in Melbourne. As I noted, it is multidisciplinary research and it is a collaboration between Edith Cowan University, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Austin Health, the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health and the National Ageing Research Institute.

**Mr P.T. Miles:** Are you on page 2 or page 3 of your notes?

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I am sorry, member for Wanneroo; I am not able to memorise all of that and I want to get it right.

The AIBL information from this ageing cohort —

**Mr P.T. Miles** interjected.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I suggest the member for Wanneroo listens; he has many ageing —

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo, I will have to call you if you continue to interrupt.

Member, I understand you recently had surgery. There is provision in the standing orders for you to stay seated and speak if you wish to.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** No; thanks very much, Mr Acting Speaker.

The AIBL information will be very important in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of current approaches to aged-care and mental health services and it will enable governments at all levels to formulate policies. Australian innovation in medical technology services also has the potential, as the Deputy Premier will be aware, to create new economic activity and potentially generate new income from foreign investment or through the export of technology products or services.

At six and a half years' duration, this study is now garnering increased support and industry interest, including investment of \$7.5 million from such giants in the pharmaceutical and medical area as GE Healthcare, Bayer, Merck, Pfizer, Eli Lilly, the United States Department of Defense, Avid Radiopharmaceuticals, the Alzheimer's Association of the United States and Cogstate.

The AIBL funding from the Science and Industry Endowment Fund expires in 2013 and the partners need to secure new funds to underpin new cohort studies for the next three years. Since the Minister for Health is in the chamber, I strongly endorse that he makes some inquiries with a view to seeing whether it is appropriate for the state government to fund it. Having a strong research community provides unique opportunities to attract career researchers to Western Australia and further develop our reputation as a destination for those wishing to develop a biomedical research career.

There are some other determinations in the budget I will now focus on. The member for Collie–Preston last night raised the decision, under that lovely title of “Program Rationalisation”, under which the Department of the Premier and Cabinet intends to find savings of \$5.3 million through a revised parliamentary electorate offices relocation and refurbishment program, reduction in staff and changes to vehicle leasing, travel and leave management policies.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I mention this not out of venal self-interest. After all, it affects every member of this Parliament, and I am sure that this unfortunate development has been mentioned in all party rooms. I need to put on the record that this will reduce services to our constituents and the community. This edict from the director general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is extraordinary in light of the fact that it is Parliament that is the employer of electorate staff, and it fails to acknowledge the massive increase and volume of work in electorate offices. Every member knows that with the advent of email, there has been a huge increase in the number of inquiries. I am concerned that this will impact on the health and safety of electorate staff. I raise my objection to it. I can cope, but it raises the question of whether we can continue to provide the level of service to our constituents that they deserve and is appropriate to provide.

The government holds the Girrawheen electorate in such contempt that it did not even bother to make any promises specific to my electorate. Broader promises impact on my electorate, and these are things such as police numbers, congestion and increases in taxes and charges. Of concern, I have received many complaints about massive rises in the electricity price and the rationalisation that the Minister for Transport has foreshadowed in relation to public transport routes. Girrawheen is already very badly serviced by public transport, and further rationalising of feeder bus routes to Warwick or Greenwood train stations, for example, are simply unacceptable. In their place is the so-called light rail to Balga. Although Balga was formerly in my electorate, and I have great affection for the suburb, I am prepared to say that all roads do not lead to Balga. One wonders what will happen for those who live north of Balga in terms of providing light rail services. The budget also fails to acknowledge that the crying need for public transport in Western Australia is more east–west routes. I do not think that putting in another north–south route is the solution.

The next matter is something I have mentioned every year and is a recurring theme; that is, the failure to develop land at Hainsworth Primary School. The Minister for Housing wrote to constituents recently in what was an incomprehensible letter. There is still no timeframe for that development, which involves 93 lots within 15 kilometres of the CBD. Frankly, I am disappointed that in the meantime it is a site for antisocial behaviour and is in some disarray and disrepair. I would like the minister to personally come out and look at that site and to expedite its development.

As a general observation, I think the budget process this year has assumed the proportions of a high farce. The public have been treated as being stupid. It is incredibly cynical and broken promises are just waved away. It contains a number of deferred expenditures of such proportions that makes token expenditure this year almost meaningless. The government, which previously eschewed forward estimates as not having any value, now is asking us to place our reliance on the figures in those forward estimates. In many cases, timeframes have blown out, and, as has incrementally happened over the past few years, fewer explanations are given in the budget, and things that are still not finalised are being presented as a *fait accompli*. One such measure I mentioned earlier is the tax on 457 visa holders; that program is yet to be developed. The reduction in the capacity of electorate offices is another matter still subject to discussions, yet the savings in the budget are treated as a *fait accompli*.

The Premier has boasted that there are no glossy publications in this budget. The reason for that is there is nothing much to boast about. As we drill down in the estimates committee next week, where the time has been reduced, we will see that there has been a real sleight of hand and much of the money coming from royalties for regions should be coming from consolidated revenue. I use as an example the \$12.3 million that should be used to upgrade the safety features of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and local brigade appliances and trucks. As I said earlier, there are hints at program rationalisation across all areas in the budget, but we are yet to know what much of those program rationalisations will be. It is a *1984*-esque expression and is somewhat ominous.

The timing of the budget is cynical also. It has been produced to coincide right in the middle of when the state government presumed a federal election would be held, and that was seen as a distraction. We must remember that this is a returning government; it is not a new government, so the rationale for producing a budget in August rather than May is somewhat perplexing.

Finally, I raise the fact that in opposition, we are frequently accused of criticising without suggesting positive alternatives. I want to canvass a process that I believe could be deployed at a community level to assist in sound decisions being made about priorities. Our constituents are not stupid. They readily understand that not everything can be achieved immediately. They understand that priorities must be allocated. The process of participatory budgeting, which I will outline shortly, will give some positive and objective ways of assessing what priorities are most meaningful for our constituents.

I am referring to a process of democratic deliberation decision-making and a kind of participatory democracy that originated in Brazil.

**Mr P.T. Miles** interjected.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** The member for Wanneroo might learn something.

It allows citizens to identify, discuss and prioritise spending projects and give some power to make real decisions about how money is spent. When it is taken seriously, it is based on mutual trust, local benefits, and local governments and citizens can benefit equally. It has also been found that this kind of process increases citizens' willingness to pay taxes.

It follows several basic steps. Community members identify spending priorities and then select budget delegates. Budget delegates develop specific spending proposals in collaboration with experts. Community members then vote on the proposals to fund, and then the city or institution, depending on the level of government at which it is deployed, implements the top proposals.

A comprehensive study has been undertaken by the World Bank into eight municipalities in Brazil where this process has occurred over a decade, and it has analysed the successes and failures of participatory budgeting. They have found that it results in more equitable public spending, greater government transparency and accountability, increased levels of public participation, especially by marginalised and poor residents and democratic and citizenship learning. The World Bank also suggested that it would lead to direct improvements in facilities, certainly in the town where this was first used, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. It indicated over a decade that sewerage and water connections increased from 75 per cent of households to 98 per cent, and the number of schools was similarly quadrupled in the time this process was undertaken. It indicated that the number of participants in this process had increased significantly. For example, the health and education budget increased from 13 per cent in 1985 to almost 40 per cent in 1996 and the share of the participatory budget in the total budget increased from 17 per cent to 21 per cent. All of this leads to improved conditions and noticeable improvement in accessibility and quality of the various public welfare amenities with more than 140 municipalities in Brazil adopting this form of budgeting.

It also has been adopted in parts of Europe, Asia, Africa and North America. A village in India serves as the epitome of the process. It was deplete of water, education and basic needs for life at one point but is now self-sufficient with a high per capita income. It has even been adopted in Chicago at a ward level. Those members who saw the terrific HBO series *Boss* will know that the allocation of funds was always the right of either the mayor or aldermen and there were high levels of corruption, so it is good to see that even in somewhere like Chicago, with its particular reputation, that people want to take part in the decision-making process about the allocation of funds.

In its review, the World Bank paper that I referred to points out that the lack of representation of extremely poor people and youth as one of the shortcomings. It also observes that people are less likely to participate once their demands have been met.

In conclusion, this budget can be characterised as broken; it does not implement many promises, and many election promises have been broken or deferred already. The level of cynicism is extraordinary. There is a lack of transparency and, worse still, a lack of understanding as to how this budget and many of the decisions in it adversely affect ordinary Western Australians.

Frankly, it is evidence that this government simply does not care. In the words of Dr Seuss —

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,  
nothing is going to get better.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Central Wheatbelt.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Mr Acting Speaker —

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I have given the call to the member for —

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I clearly have the call and clearly there has been collusion, because you know that I intend to move that we adjourn this debate because the Treasurer is not in the Parliament. The Treasurer, who is responsible for this bill, is not in the Parliament.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz):** This is not the time for this speech. It is a point of order.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Mr Acting Speaker, I am seeking the call.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I gave the call to the member for Central Wheatbelt. Member for Mandurah, you cannot adjourn the debate because you have already spoken. Standing orders do not allow you to do that, so I give the call to the member for Central Wheatbelt. There is no point of order.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 15 August 2013]

p3545c-3562a

Mr John Quigley; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr David Templeman; Mr John Day; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Mia Davies; Mr John McGrath

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I think the member moved to suspend standing orders in order to allow this.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** No.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am sure that is what he was attempting to do. In any event, I watched you and you clearly saw the member for Mandurah first, prior to seeing any other member rise, and you chose to ignore his request for the call. I request that you explain, firstly, why that might be and, secondly, why the Treasurer of the state is not here for the budget debate.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I will quickly address this point of order. I was well aware that the member for Mandurah was going to try to move that again, and I was also aware that the member for Central Wheatbelt wanted the call. I have two eyes and I was looking with both. The member for Central Wheatbelt, while being more attractive than the member for Mandurah —

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Your own leader told you to do it!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah, I call you to order. That is not appropriate. The member for Central Wheatbelt was clearly on her feet before —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I call the member for Mandurah to order for the first time.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** I think it is the second time now.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I will make it twice, thank you! I was watching the member for Central Wheatbelt very closely and she was definitely on her feet before the member for Mandurah, so I give the call to the member for Central Wheatbelt.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I have a further point of order, Mr Acting Speaker. I refer to your ruling just now and I heard what you said. I am looking in the standing orders, and your exact words were that you gave the call to the member for Central Wheatbelt because you found her more attractive.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** No, that is a—no; I did not.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I can only quote what the Acting Speaker said. I am wondering where in the standing orders that is a ground for deciding who receives the call. If you did not say that, Mr Acting Speaker, you can indicate that to the house because we will examine the record and the video as to what you said.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Further to that doubtful point of order, may I remind members that it is not appropriate to canvass the ruling of a Speaker. Can I also remind members that the convention of this house in a debate is that if a member has spoken on one side, the call will generally go to the other side, and alternate. That is the convention.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah!

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** The convention is that the Treasurer is here for the budget! That is the point and you are trying to shield him.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah!

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Where is he? We have been asking all morning where he is. You're trying to shield him! Where is he?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah! You are now called for the third time.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** That is the convention in the house—every member knows that.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** While you are on your feet, explain why the Treasurer isn't here.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Kwinana!

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** The Treasurer is opening a new port facility in Port Hedland and he will be here at question time.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** And that is outrageous. He has no pair; he was told there was no pair available.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah!

**Mr D.A. Templeman** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah, I call you to order!

**Mr D.A. Templeman** interjected.

*Suspension of Member*

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah, standing order 48 reads —

A member whose conduct has made it necessary for the Speaker to formally call that member to order more than three times in the course of one sitting for a significant breach of the rules may, by order and at the discretion of the Speaker, be suspended from the service of the Assembly until the adjournment of that sitting.

[The member for Mandurah left the chamber.]

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! On the point of order that the Leader of the Opposition raised regarding my comment, I made the comment that while the member for Central Wheatbelt may be more attractive than the member for Mandurah, I was watching both very closely. That is what I said and I think the record will advocate that. I give the call now to the member for Central Wheatbelt.

*Debate Resumed*

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order!

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Kwinana!

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Parliamentary Secretary)** [12.19 pm]: I am delighted there is such interest in how the recent budget will impact on the seat of Central Wheatbelt. I think that I actually did get the call. I am a finely tuned athlete, as my colleagues would know, and I was on my feet very quickly to get your attention.

I will spend some time today talking about the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2013–14 Bill 2013 and Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2013–14 Bill 2013 and some of the initiatives that will deliver some improved services and infrastructure to the electorate of Central Wheatbelt. A range of initiatives in this state budget will deliver positive outcomes in the communities that I am very proud to represent. There is \$1.38 billion appropriated into the royalties for regions program this financial year. We will continue with many of the programs that have already started to deliver some great outcomes. We took to the recent state election campaign a number of new initiatives that had a focus on agriculture, key infrastructure development, and support for initiatives that will drive economic investment and development at local, state and federal levels. Balancing that hard infrastructure and economic development agenda, we will also invest in social capital to make regional communities liveable.

Clearly, we are delighted to be back in government with the opportunity to deliver another four years of royalties for regions. Our regional development program is, without doubt, the envy of every other state in Australia. This billion-dollar-a-year investment scheme focuses the government's attention on the regions. To me, its existence demonstrates an ongoing and serious commitment by the state government to regional Western Australia to develop our prosperity, growth and sustainability across all regions, towns and cities. A billion dollars a year is a significant amount of money. The first speech that I made in this house noted that fact. I said that \$1 billion a year leveraged against other funding sources from local and federal governments, and from the private sector, is even more significant. That is the opportunity that royalties for regions presents this state.

There are significant challenges ahead in WA. We are a vast state and we have a rapidly growing population. There are more people accessing our health services, our road infrastructure—there are more cars on our roads—and there is more demand for energy. All of those issues have been canvassed in this place many times over. This rapid and unrelenting growth—it is not projected; it is actual because it is happening right now—is a challenge for the government now and it will most certainly be a challenge into the future. Royalties for regions is not designed to be the panacea for all these challenges but it gives regional Western Australians a great foundation to work from. In the past four years we have started to tackle some of these fairly major issues.

The member for Albany is intently hanging off every word. I am delighted he is still here to listen to what I have to say about the central wheatbelt.

A member interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz):** Member for Albany, you are not in your seat. You are not allowed to speak.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It is unfortunate that he cannot respond!

I would like to spend some time talking about the initiatives that are making a difference, or will make a difference, in the central wheatbelt. Our team in government remains committed to the delivery of the policy because we see a bright future for agriculture in this state. I was delighted that we had a focus on agriculture going into the state election. Obviously, the economy of the Central Wheatbelt electorate and the surrounding electorates are underpinned by a sustainable agricultural sector into the future. The sum of \$300 million will be invested in agriculture over and above the normal consolidated revenue budget for the Department of Agriculture and Food. We are starting with \$16 million in this financial year. It is the biggest investment in agriculture we have seen for many years, if ever. This sector has underpinned the state's economy for many years. Over the past 10 years we have seen an increase in contributions from the mining sector, but the agricultural sector has been there and it has been a constant source of prosperity and support to our economy for many years. With the right investment, we can develop opportunities that exist in this sector and capitalise on the extensive expertise and knowledge in the industry to grow it even further.

The investment package the National Party took to the state election was around research and development, opening up new markets, improving infrastructure to support the efficient movement of product to port, and a range of other initiatives that will impact on the bottom line of our farming businesses and the agricultural sector. It is all about driving profitability into the sector. Much of the policy is geared towards the medium to long-term future of the sector. We are not shying away from that. It is important that we keep an eye to the future and that we work with people in the sector who have a positive view and can see a positive future. We must take advantage of the opportunities presented to us by neighbours on our doorstep, with growing populations in Asia and the like.

The Nationals identified five key areas to the future prosperity of this sector. The first is research and development. In the previous four years of government there was an investment in this space in the central wheatbelt through the New Genes for New Environments and the Managed Environment Facility in Merredin for research into genetically modified and conventional crops. Through this agricultural policy and the commitment we have made in this budget, we propose a further funding injection into the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre, or AEGIC, to recognise that Western Australia is the nation's leading grain producer and we are a major grain-growing state. Growers in the central wheatbelt obviously make a huge contribution towards that statistic.

The policy also committed to provide \$20 million in grants for grower groups to develop research and development opportunities. Although the detail of this is yet to be finalised, I see great value in this particular part of the policy. I know that many farmers of my generation prefer to be members of their local grower groups, focusing their effort and their limited time on issues that are relevant to their businesses and outcomes in their part of the world. The value in supporting these groups, while partnering with the Department of Agriculture and Food WA and other research centres, is that we do not duplicate the effort. It will deliver some fantastic outcomes. They are grassroots organisations that are very valuable and deserve our support.

As a member in the other place and now as the member for Central Wheatbelt, I have had the opportunity to attend functions and meetings with groups such as the Facey Group and the Liebe Group. Groups in the electorate such as the Corrigin Farm Improvement Group and the Nangeenan Group will continue to play a very important part in the future of this industry. Importantly, these groups, despite some of the challenges, remain relatively positive about the industry's future and are willing to work hard to improve the profitability in their own individual businesses.

The National Party also campaigned to invest an additional \$10 million to assist growers to manage risk better. While I acknowledge that there are some families and businesses doing it tough in my electorate due to successive poor seasonal conditions, I would like to put on record that contrary to the member for Eyre's implications yesterday in this place, I do not think there are "basket case" farmers. I think there are businesses under pressure but I do not think the answer is to provide them with access to additional debt if there is a limited likelihood they will be in a position to repay it. When the member for Eyre spoke of the industry not wanting a handout but a hand-up, I point to the \$300 million investment we are making in agriculture and say this is it—that is exactly what this policy is. It is about putting in place initiatives and mechanisms to improve the profitability of the agricultural sector. I will not be a part of peddling false hope or support a policy that has been proven again and again to be unsuccessful. Twenty years of science says that providing low-interest loans or subsidies to farming businesses does not assist in growing the profitability of the sector and keeping people involved in that part of the world. To be a compassionate government would require supporting people who are

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 15 August 2013]

p3545c-3562a

Mr John Quigley; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr David Templeman; Mr John Day; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Mia Davies; Mr John McGrath

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in genuine hardship. The \$25 000 grants were a good start. I did not agree with the equity parameters that were put around that policy and the eligibility criteria. I raised that with the Minister for Agriculture and Food. I was pleased to see a top-up into those grants because I had a number of representations from people in businesses in my electorate saying that they felt they were in equal hardship to some of their neighbours but because of the cut-off and the first in, first served policy they would not be able to receive much-needed funding to get through this very difficult year.

This government's investment into regional health services and infrastructure is creating real and positive change. I want to spend a little time talking about this. I have had quite a lot to do with the rollout of the southern inland health initiative. I can see it delivering some fantastic outcomes for the people in my electorate. The sum of \$565 million will go into the southern inland health initiative around a number of different streams including telehealth; upgrades to hospital infrastructure; incentives for doctors to work in regional areas, particularly the wheatbelt; aged care solutions; and primary health teams, which involves nurse practitioners and aged care assessors.

I want to take time today to talk about a case study that has been developed off the back of the introduction of a nurse practitioner into the eastern wheatbelt. Sometimes these are the sorts of stories that do not get highlighted because we quite often spend a lot of time talking about our major infrastructure investments. This one in particular is really important, so bear with me. I will quote from a case study that was presented to the National Rural Health Conference called "A Leg to Stand On—Bill's story". The case study was received from Laura Black, who is the primary health nurse practitioner in the eastern wheatbelt as part of the Southern Inland Health Initiative. The case study states —

Bill is a 62 year old man living in a small Eastern Wheatbelt town. He is married and lives with his wife who is very supportive and caring. They are both actively involved in the community. Their children are grown up and live in Perth. He still works full time in his own business and his work involves a lot of daily driving. Bill's wife encouraged him to self-refer to the NP PH as he felt:

- helpless, out of control and depressed
- marital relations were strained as a result.

...

Bill presented with:

- A 14 year history of Type II diabetes ...
- ... intractable neuropathic pain in his right foot following three partial amputations ...
- Low iron which requires investigation.
- Smokes 30 or more cigarettes per day.
- Gastro-Oesophageal Reflux Disorder ...

**Dr G.G. Jacobs:** GORD.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Thank you very much, member for Eyre. This nurse practitioner, who was working alongside the general practitioner in the town, actually negotiated with two tertiary hospitals in Perth to transfer care from one hospital to the other where specialist services were available. The case study continues —

Bill is now under the care of an Endocrinologist who reviews his medication regime and Bill is plotting his daily dietary intake and blood glucose levels.

...

The PH NP undertook telephone liaisons with Pain Consultants for advice and faxed prescriptions for pain medications as there were no physical appointments available. ...

Bill's pain ratings reduced to 4/10 from his original rating of 16/10. His depression and lack of sleep have resolved. Bill and his wife are beginning to enjoy their relationship and their lives again.

...

The PH NP linked Bill with a General Practitioner in another town in the District. The General Practitioner is two hours' drive away, but arrangements have been made for alternate consults to be made using Telehealth videoconferencing ...

That is something we also introduced under the Southern Inland Health Initiative for support during consultations. Bill has given a testimonial to the change this has made to his life. When I was talking to Laura she said that this couple, who do not particularly want to be identified, are a very important part of their small community, and that the loss of Bill from his community would have had huge ramifications not only personally for the family but also for the broader town in general. Bill said in his testimonial —

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 15 August 2013]

p3545c-3562a

Mr John Quigley; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr David Templeman; Mr John Day; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Mia Davies; Mr John McGrath

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‘To whom it may concern.

I would like to make comment on the recent introduction of the Nurse Practitioner service to the Eastern Wheatbelt, in particular the Yilgarn Shire.

We, the people of the bush, feel like the forgotten people because it’s so hard to access services. Because progressive governments save money by cutting services to the bush.

In my case, I was in extreme pain after a partial foot amputation and had been, for six or seven months, having to drive 400 km one way to Perth Nedlands Hospital to be told ‘Here take a couple of sleeping pills you will be OK’.

Then early this year 2012 along comes a Nurse Practitioner service and straight away things begin to change, new doors start to open. We are seeing a new doctor ... that’s a breath of fresh air. They arrange appointments at another hospital. Things start to happen. Within a month, hardly any pain and my foot is starting to heal, and I know lots of other people that are benefiting too. We can’t live without them.’

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Good story.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** That actually makes me feel incredibly proud to be part of the team that has delivered \$565 million into a health system that was described as blatantly bloody unsafe prior to the 2008 state election by somebody who worked in the government health system.

Moving on to aged care, we are often a target in the central wheatbelt. My local governments are used as an example to promote why local government amalgamation should be undertaken in the country, because we should be able to achieve better efficiencies and outcomes for our communities by having larger councils. Because the central wheatbelt does have a large number of local governments, it is often the target of that. The initiative I would like to spend some time talking about today to test some of those misapprehensions is the work being done by the Central East Aged Care Alliance to provide solutions to aged care in the region. When I first rose in this house I spoke about the importance of looking after the people who have contributed to our community over a great deal of time. There is nothing worse than a person having to move away from their friends and family at a time when they should be enjoying all of that because there are simply not the facilities to support them in their older age. CEACA is made up of the Shires of Bruce Rock, Kellerberrin, Koorda, Merredin, Mount Marshall, Muckinbudin, Nungarin, Trayning, Westonia, Wyalkatchem and Yilgarn, Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt, which is the commonwealth’s representative body, and the Wheatbelt Development Commission. A report has been delivered by the alliance after extensive consultation. According to the executive summary of the “Central East Wheatbelt Aged Support and Care Regional Solution/s” report, it was —

... commissioned to set clear direction to develop and implement infrastructure and service level solutions to address the need for accommodation, services and facilities for older persons living in the Central Eastern Wheatbelt sub-region.

The report was developed following significant consultation and research phases and indicated that people want to remain in their local community as they age and that they want to maintain their independence for as long as possible. It was developed along the same lines as some of the policy settings of the federal government, such as around ageing in place—ageing for as long as people can in their own home—and was built around the fact that there should be the development of aged-friendly communities, a focus on the development of older persons’ housing, a broadening of community aged care and a reshaping of residential aged care. There are some fantastic facilities in the central wheatbelt and we are building on those through royalties for regions. The Dryandra Residential and Community Care facility in Kellerberrin is one that we are expanding to provide high-end aged care. This report says that people want to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. This is an example of how our councils are working together to come up with a solution.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The councils will be working to have this program funded into the future. They have my full support in doing so, because it is an innovative way to access funding from not only royalties for regions, which, as we have said, is not the panacea for everything, but also the federal government and the private sector.

There are a range of other initiatives within the health sector. The Rural Practice Pathway program is again being funded, we have topped up the patient assisted travel scheme and there is funding for St John Ambulance. I get regular representations from our ambulance volunteers that they are under pressure and are having to do more and more non-urgent transfers. There is funding in this program to identify some of that and to streamline some of those processes so that our volunteers will continue to want to participate in providing emergency services but

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 15 August 2013]

p3545c-3562a

Mr John Quigley; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr David Templeman; Mr John Day; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Mia Davies; Mr John McGrath

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without pressure being put on them to do day-to-day non-urgent patient transfers. While I am on that point, one of the new initiatives we have introduced under this budget is the emergency services volunteer fuel card. For our emergency services groups, of which there are around 7 000 organisations —

**Mr B.J. Grylls:** There are 700.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** There are 700; I had an extra “0”. Thank you, Minister for Regional Development. We are providing a \$2 000 fuel card to support these voluntary emergency services groups. We recognise that these volunteers put a lot of their own time and effort into making sure that our communities are safe, and hopefully this will ease the pressure on their pockets just a little.

The final thing I would like to spend some time talking about is education. I am very pleased to see that we have continued to invest in our public schools in regional WA. In the central wheatbelt we have had considerable investment into Northam Senior High School. In this financial year \$8 million will be invested in upgrading facilities at that school. Northam is a major regional centre in my electorate. We have done planning over the last two years. We are now at the point at which we are about to see the realisation of a new performing arts, visual arts, media and music facility, which has also been designed so that the broader community can access it. We are not putting infrastructure into the school solely for the use of the student body; it will also open up these new facilities for the town of Northam and the surrounding areas. I think that is a fantastic outcome for the community. This model of investment, which is bringing the community into the school and making it the centre of the community, is really positive and important. Building those partnerships will deliver some great outcomes for that school community. It will also play a strong attraction and retention role for teachers, who will want to be part of these new facilities as they will be able to offer those specialist courses. We have already had an investment in a trade training centre in Northam, which has a focus on hospitality. Along with some investment in the Northam Residential College into the future, we have got a really good structure developing in both Merredin and Northam as the two regional centres for the central wheatbelt to give students in that region a good pathway to higher education. It is critical that our regional students can access a quality education close to home. Close to home for many students in regional WA is not five minutes down the road. They have to travel considerable distances. We must have good quality student accommodation in our residential colleges, as we provide in Merredin. I will be working with the Minister for Education to make sure we can double that again because there is demand in Merredin for more beds at the Merredin residential college. I am really excited that parents are starting to see the benefits of sending their kids to public schools in our part of the world.

I refer now to Muresk. The Minister for Training and I were at Muresk on Tuesday morning to announce up to \$10 million available now to further develop course offerings in the agriculture sector to continue to develop Muresk as a centre for agricultural excellence. It will be a multi-tenanted facility, and that will include the C.Y. O’Connor training body and we hope other recognised training organisations and businesses that see the value in utilising the magnificent infrastructure at Muresk to develop a strong and prosperous training centre for the agriculture sector. Anyone who has not visited that campus should go and see it; it is fantastic infrastructure just outside the metropolitan area and there is real opportunity there.

I refer quickly to small business. I am very pleased that, alongside agriculture, without doubt, the small business sector underpins the Central Wheatbelt electorate’s economy. A number of initiatives will support this sector, including a new initiative we campaigned on to boost the Buy Local provisions for the state government. I have been impressed with the passion and determination of this sector—particularly in the eastern wheatbelt with the Wheatbelt Business Network—to raise the bar, to engage with our ministers and with government and to advocate the changes that will deliver real and positive outcomes for its members. In the Central Wheatbelt, government is quite often the biggest source of tenders. It makes sense to me that if we spend hard-earned taxpayers’ dollars, we pass on the benefits and have local businesses tender for works, take on tenders and create employment in local economies. We need to create as many opportunities as possible for our local businesses to participate. Only last week I met with a very successful business owner in Northam, who had some fantastic ideas about how we can achieve this. I look forward to seeing that initiative being rolled out. I know the businesses in my electorate will be watching with keen interest to see how that can positively impact on them.

Tourism is also a pretty important part of the electorate. Members might be interested to know that after the Kimberley, the Central Wheatbelt is the most visited region in Western Australia. Our proximity to Perth makes it ideal for weekend getaways and for our caravan population. There are beautiful wildflower and pioneer drives through the electorate. Like the member for Moore, I welcome two initiatives that will support and enhance tourism in the regions. We campaigned on supporting our regional visitor centres with an investment of \$2.9 million over three years. I am a member of the Avon Valley Tourism Board, so I know how hard our tourism operators work to try to attract visitors and to offer a quality product. Whether it is providing

accommodation, entertainment, food or travel arrangements, any support we provide to them to promote the region and attract potential visitors will deliver a dividend for the entire community and the local economy. Hon Terry Redman was particularly passionate about this initiative given the part of the world he comes from, but I can tell members that we in the wheatbelt are just as excited. I also look forward to seeing that roll out.

Some announcements were made on the caravan and camping initiative, which is particularly exciting. There are caravan parks in every single one of our communities. People driving along the Northam–Goomalling pioneer pathway—what is called the “top road” on the way to Merredin—would struggle to avoid seeing caravan parks full to the brim, particularly those in Goomalling. It must be the centre everyone knows to stop at before they reach the outer metropolitan area. Anything we can do to support that entire network across the state and to improve the visitor experience will be welcomed. I look forward also to seeing that roll out. With the visitor centre funding, the regional events scheme funding and the caravan and camping funding, we are doing a great deal to try to entice people to holiday at home in this state. That is what it is all about.

The last issue I want to talk about is swimming pools.

A member interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It is a fantastic initiative and was warmly welcomed in the electorate when it was announced. Supporting and maintaining swimming pools in small local government areas is incredibly expensive. They run at a loss. In many cases, shires cannot make money from them. The relevant local governments have received \$3 000 a year from the federal government, but this funding has never been cost-of-living indexed and has never been increased. If we think about the importance of these community pools, particularly to the communities in the wheatbelt and the north west of the state, they have health benefits as well as sporting, wellbeing and community development outcomes. This initiative will provide all local governments that have a public pool with an annual grant of up to \$30 000 per aquatic centre for maintenance and upgrading of the pool infrastructure. On Monday night, Hon Terry Redman and I attended the Leisure Institute of WA Annual Conference dinner. LIWA is the representative body, and it was very excited. We are not talking about huge amounts of money; it is a small investment, but operators will be able to maintain and enhance the experience and offer a fantastic outcome for their community. In my communities, Royal Life Saving WA conducts swimming lessons to ensure our children are waterwise. It is the centre for the local swimming club, and it also provides an opportunity for injury rehabilitation and general exercise. As I said before, the health benefits in the north west of the state are fundamental. I am very proud of this little policy because it was originally put to me by one of the pool managers in the Central Wheatbelt and we have seen it through, and I am very happy to roll that out.

I could touch on other initiatives today, but I think the value of royalties for regions is clear for our regional communities in a budget that has been reasonably tough. We need to still focus on communities that drive economic development and underpin the state’s economy; that, to me, is incredibly important. We should not retract funding to the metropolitan area, but maintain the development of our state as a whole—that is what royalties for regions allows us to do. We do it in a responsible way to ensure, as part of government, that we meet our AAA credit rating imperatives. As the member for Central Wheatbelt, I think our electorate has welcomed the initiatives that continue to be rolled out, and the new initiatives that have been announced in this state budget, which I commend to the house.

**MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth — Parliamentary Secretary)** [12.47 pm]: In the couple of minutes remaining, I will inform the house that I would like to begin my contribution on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2013–14 Bill 2013 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2013–14 Bill 2013 by talking about the racing industry. It is good that the Minister for Racing and Gaming is in the chamber. We all know that the racing industry is a significant contributor to state revenue, not just through the taxes that the government collects on wagering but also the large number of people employed directly across the three codes and in associated industries. Some statistics produced by Racing and Wagering Western Australia late last year indicate that the industry contributes \$594.6 million in value-adding to the WA economy. Racing activities across the state sustain 6 737 full-time equivalent jobs. This is the third highest attended sport in Western Australia. Therefore, the racing industry is very important to the state of Western Australia.

Members who follow the sport of kings might or might not be aware that last week a Wednesday meeting at Belmont Park had to be cancelled when a section of the track was deemed unsafe for racing. This is estimated to have cost the industry about \$900 000 in betting turnover. That is not direct income, but the industry would have received income from taxes on that betting turnover. It would also have had a spin-off for all the people who did not work that day. It would then have had some impact on the economy because if people do not earn wages, they do not go out and spend. That was disappointing for the industry and, thankfully, races were run on the Saturday. For the interest of members, Belmont Park is recognised as possibly the best wet weather tack in the

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country. For a long time now, despite heavy rain falling on the day before the meeting or on the day of the meeting, the track has stacked up very well. Eventually, turf tracks have to be dug up and re-laid, and Belmont has not been re-turfed for something like 30 years, which is a long time for a grass track to maintain and put up with the heavy traffic at race meetings, with horses pounding around the course. This is a safety issue that costs a lot of money for the racing industry to maintain.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 3576.]