

**McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — JOB CREATION**

*Motion*

**MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Leader of the Opposition)** [4.10 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the do-nothing McGowan Labor government for failing to start any major job-creating projects by the end of three years in government, leading to lost jobs and ongoing domestic recession.

The opposition is moving this motion today because we have watched this hapless administration lurch from crisis to crisis over the past three years. We have seen grandiose promises made and an inability of this government to deliver on those commitments, so we bring this motion to the house. Everybody knows that the Premier, who has made himself the minister responsible for jobs, was elected on the basis of and came to government promising a jobs bonanza. We have seen the exact opposite. More than 32 000 Western Australians are looking for a job and more than 143 000 Western Australians are underemployed—that is 143 000 Western Australians who want more work. Those people are underemployed in either part-time or casual jobs, and they cannot get a loan, even if they did want to buy into the housing market. There are 225 000 Western Australians looking for a job or wanting more work. To put that into context, 15 per cent of the Western Australian workforce is either out of work or wants more work.

It is little wonder that Western Australians are struggling. They are feeling worse off under this McGowan Labor government. If we ask people in the community whether they are better off now than they were in March 2017, resoundingly, they are saying, “No, we’re not.” This data reflects the sentiment that the opposition hears in the community as we get out and about in the suburbs of Western Australia. Since November last year, over 21 500 full-time jobs have been lost. The decisions and economic management of this McGowan Labor government have caused this problem.

The latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that the state’s domestic economy is in recession. Last year, the state’s domestic economy declined by 1.2 per cent. Gross domestic product in 2018–19 recorded the slowest growth of any state in the nation. The number of apprenticeships and traineeships has gone backwards over the last 12 months under this government. I will read these figures out: in 2017–18, there were 19 391 apprenticeship and trainee commencements, with 12 169 completions. In 2018–19, that number fell to 18 554 commencements and 11 271 completions. That represents a four per cent decline in commencements and a 7.4 per cent decline in completions. As at June 2018, 31 783 Western Australians were in training. In June 2019, that figure had fallen to 29 571. That represents a seven per cent decline in the number of Western Australians availing themselves of training in this state. In 2017–18, there were 124 145 course enrolments; in 2018–19, that was down to 120 702 enrolments. That represents a 2.75 per cent decline in the number of Western Australians enrolling in training. It is no wonder we saw the McGowan Labor government respond by halving the cost of TAFE fees—it needs to resurrect the training system. TAFEs will have to start laying people off if they do not get a boost to these enrolment figures. It is hard to countenance that we could have such a rapid decline at a time when we have high unemployment and underemployment and would ordinarily expect people to avail themselves of training.

We know the issue with apprentices is that businesses cannot afford to take them on. I have nephews who are looking for work and want to get a job as an apprentice. A couple of them were quite excited about the McGowan Labor government’s promise to employ, I think, 100 apprentices at Western Power every year. I cannot remember what the commitment was, but I know it has not been delivered, and Western Power has taken on only 52 apprentices. The state government has control over these opportunities for apprentices to find employment within the government, and it has not delivered.

The biggest issue for this government is the mismanagement of its infrastructure program. The government came in on the promise of a massive infrastructure investment. We heard it ad nauseam—Metronet this; Metronet that; Metronet the other. We are going to have the Byford line; the Yanchep rail line; the Thornlie–Cockburn line; and the Forrestfield–Airport Link, which was started under the former government but rebadged by this government as Metronet. None of these rail projects have had an inch of rail laid—none of them. We keep getting media releases ad nauseam about the staging of the Metronet program. We get an announcement about the naming of the tunnel boring machines, a sign going up and a sod turning, but no real work is occurring and no jobs are being created.

We will have a problem in this state. As it has taken so long to get even one Metronet project started, the skilled workforce and labour force have all gone to the east coast, where the governments of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria are getting their acts together and getting projects started. When the Metronet projects come online, whenever that happens—at the rate the Byford rail is going, we will not see a train until sometime in 2030, when perhaps the workforce on the east coast may become available—if the government actually commences any of these rail projects within the next 12 months, it will be in a labour hire pricing war with the east coast because the skilled workforce has disappeared from Western Australia.

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The government promised to extend Tonkin Highway from Thomas Road to the South Western Highway. Despite receiving funding of \$253 million from the federal Liberal government, this government has not committed any money to that project, so nothing has happened. After three years, as I have said, not one single inch of track has been laid on the Cockburn–Thornlie, Yanchep or Ellenbrook rail lines, and there are no contracts for their construction. The government has not even submitted a business case to Infrastructure Australia for the Ellenbrook rail line. The list of projects that this government has failed to deliver goes on: the Albany ring-road, no construction contract awarded; the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, no construction contract awarded; the Mandurah train station car park, no construction contract awarded; the Midland train station, no business case; Karnup train station, no business case; Claremont station, no construction contract awarded; railcar manufacturing, no construction contract awarded; the Denny Avenue level crossing removal, no construction awarded; and Caledonian Avenue, no construction contract awarded.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Watch this space!

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Thank you for the interjection, member for Armadale. We have been watching this space for three years. We were watching it for three years and nothing happened. There was no construction contract awarded. Several members interjected.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale! Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the first time.

*Point of Order*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The member continued to interject even when I raised a point of order and he continued to interject even when you had already spoken, Madam Acting Speaker.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton):** Thank you.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** The member for Armadale referred to the member for Cottesloe as a goon and I would like him to withdraw that, please.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton):** Thank you, member for Armadale. I did not hear that. Did you make that comment?

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** No! Did you make that comment?

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** No! I ask you to withdraw.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

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

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale, sit down! I ask you, please, to withdraw.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Withdraw what?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale, could I ask you, please, to withdraw the term that you used.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I withdraw that term.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you. I appreciate it.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** It is a little bit tetchy over there today—a little bit hyped up.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, members!

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I realise this is difficult for members to hear because they are getting feedback from their constituencies that nothing has happened. The federal government has given the government all this money. Scott Morrison is bankrolling the state for construction projects, for job-creating major infrastructure projects. The government is sitting on a pot of gold. The money is being banked and it is helping the bottom line, but it is not

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helping the economy. It is not creating jobs in the state. It is not creating economic activity while it is sitting in the bank account. That is the problem that the government has. Again, I am going to read out that list of projects for which no construction contract has been awarded: the Albany ring-road; the Bunbury Outer Ring Road; the Mandurah train station car park; Claremont station; railcar manufacturing; the Denny Avenue level crossing removal; and Caledonian Avenue, Oak Street and Wharf Street. There have been no business cases yet for the Midland or Karnup train stations.

This state is moving at a glacial pace at a time when we need a government that has some get-up-and-go to get these projects out of the ground and get the jobs flowing into the economy. The economic mismanagement of this government is causing the hurt out there. Its fiscal policy is okay but its management of the economy is appalling. We are in our seventh quarter of domestic recession. The government should go out into the community and tell those 120 000 households that are in —

**Mr S.A. Millman:** I think “negative equity” is the term.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** — negative equity that it is doing a good job in economic management. It should tell the 141 000 households out there in mortgage stress that it is doing a good job of running this economy. It should go out and tell the 82 000 Western Australians who are out of work and looking for work—they have no job—that it is doing a good job managing this economy. It should go out and tell the 225 000 Western Australians who are looking for a job and want more work that it is doing a good job managing this economy. Does the government know that that message is not resonating with people? When people hear the government bragging about all the federal funding it is getting for the infrastructure projects and they cannot see those projects getting started, it makes them white with fury. The government then jacks up household fees and charges by \$850 a household at a time when they are already hurting and they already have problems. It should go and tell them that it is doing a good job managing the economy. I dare the government to tell them it is doing a good job when people cannot even pay their mortgage.

I dare the government to tell people that it is doing a good job when they are fronting up to food banks in record numbers because they cannot feed their families. The government should tell that to the St Vincent de Paul Society that for the first time in its history is getting calls for help from small business owners who cannot put food on the table or sell their houses because they are worth nothing, because they are backing up the investment in their businesses. They do not want to sack any more people because there are none left to sack and they cannot put food on the table. The government should go and defend its economic decisions and its management of this economy. It should go out there and tell people it is doing a good job. I can tell the government now that those people are white with fury. They know there is money sitting in the bank and they know that the government cannot get these projects started.

In every portfolio, we see problems with this government. It is a litany of broken promises. Whatever happened to medihotels? One was supposed to be at St John of God Murdoch Hospital, one at Joondalup Health Campus and one at Royal Perth Hospital, but not one single bed is going to be available in this term of government. In fact, after three years, construction on the medihotels has not even started. Surely it is a small and simple job to get one medihotel started. How hard can it be? The private sector seems to be able to construct medical centres without any problem. How hard is it to build just one medihotel? The government should deliver just one election commitment, one promise out of three, and build a medihotel at Joondalup Health Campus, which is desperately under-resourced.

Joondalup Health Campus is a whopping big broken election commitment. It is another broken promise. The only contribution made to this project is \$158 million that was provided by the federal coalition government. There was a \$158 million commitment to extend Joondalup hospital and provide much-needed services to the people in the northern corridor. I care about that because many of my relatives live in that northern corridor and they rely on Joondalup Health Campus for their emergency calls. Many of our constituents up there rely on Joondalup Health Campus for mental health treatment and services. The emergency department is under the pump. People want the medihotel built to take some pressure off the ED, but what they want most is the promised commitment. The citizens of Joondalup and the northern suburbs voted for this McGowan Labor government because it promised to put money on the table to expand Joondalup Health Campus. The citizens of the districts of Moore and Pearce also voted for a federal coalition government because of a promise to expand Joondalup Health Campus. The federal government has put its money on the table, but who is not coming to the party? I can tell members that it is this McGowan Labor government. It has not adequately explained why that commitment appears to now be off the table.

An investment needs to be made in Peel Health Campus and I know that my good friend the member for Dawesville will talk at length about this. We need to upgrade that facility. There is a growing population down there, and the demands of that region are particularly acute because of the demographics. A lot of older Australians and seniors live in that Dawesville–Mandurah catchment, and they have moved down there in droves because of the lifestyle. As people get older, their health needs become more complex and demanding. That is why we need to have better services that grow with the increasing population and the ageing population, but Peel Health Campus gets nothing at all from this government.

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The failure to deliver on infrastructure projects is costing tens of thousands of jobs at a time when everybody in this chamber agrees that jobs are desperately needed. The Premier made himself the minister directly responsible for jobs—that is how important it is—yet the jobs are going begging because the government will not start the infrastructure projects. Some of the government's policies have hurt the economy and cost jobs. The government has backflipped on some of these policies, thankfully. The first act this Premier made when he came to government, at the midnight hour on 17 March 2017, was to write to the Prime Minister and say, "Remove Western Australia from the regional migration status." What did that do? It immediately sent a message to international students that Western Australia was no longer competitive with the other states. International students have paid good money to Western Australian institutions for their educational qualifications. We all know that when they get to the end of their degree, diploma or certificate IV, or whatever it might be, they want to work for a couple of years to embed the skills that they have been taught. When the government removed Perth from the regional migration scheme, it shut the door in their face. Thankfully, the government backflipped on that decision. However, that has caused damage to not only our international student sector, but also the creation of jobs in this state. We know that for every international student, four jobs are created. We know also that international students are important for tourism. For every international student, this state gets 1.5 visits a year. We only need to look at the tourism figures for this state. Had it not been for the investment of the former Barnett government in infrastructure like the Perth Stadium, the tourism figures would have fallen off the cliff. Every single member on the government benches opposed that stadium when in opposition. They said it was a poor investment, and in the wrong place. They complained bitterly during the entire construction of that stadium, notwithstanding the jobs that were created. It was, and still is, a job-creating project. The football matches and other events that are held at the stadium have helped generate tourism activity.

I digress. The second nail in the coffin of the international student sector was the introduction of the foreign investor tax into our property market. This is a time of falling property prices, when a record number of households are in negative equity and a record number of households are in mortgage stress. Why on earth would the government want to introduce a new tax at a time when the property market is in freefall? The government is saying to prospective property purchasers for international students, first of all, "Don't come here. We want to take your money for your educational qualification, but we don't want to let you work here. No, that's not for us in WA." It is also saying that if they want to buy a property in Western Australia, just a modest home in the suburbs, at the median house price, they will have to pay \$50 000 more for that privilege. At a time when the property market is short on demand, the government is sending away prospective customers. We have talked to people who work in the international property market sector and deal with international students. One business owner told me that his business went from a turnover of \$66 million a year to zero. What could \$66 million do in our property market to help rescue some of the people who are hanging on by their fingernails because of the circumstances in which they find themselves due to the decisions of this government?

I turn now to the construction sector. The government cut the first home owner grant boost. That took away money from people who want to enter the housing market, at a time when the housing market was desperate to get any sort of activity. Under this government, there has been a \$850 a year cost-of-living increase. The government made two failed attempts to introduce a gold tax. We know from modelling in the gold sector that when a new tax is introduced, the first thing that goes is the opportunity for exploration. That amounts to job losses. We knew that would happen. We knew that some of the more marginal mines would have to close if that tax was brought in. That is why we opposed the government's two failed attempts to introduce a gold tax. The government has increased payroll tax. This state lost the space agency. The list goes on.

I now want to go to some of the decisions that this government has made to try to provide some stimulus to the housing sector. My colleague the member for Bateman, who is unfortunately not well today, has been explaining in a very clear and concise fashion the issues with our domestic economy. He laid out a plan. He suggested some ideas, in fact, for what could be done to stimulate the economy and try to get out of this seven-quarter domestic recession. One of those ideas was stamp duty relief. The government's response on stamp duty relief has caused considerable disruption in the construction sector. It was an ill thought out and hastily put together plan. The government may have done some polling—or it may not—and it found out how desperate people are. This is the problem when we do policy on the run. I remember that the Treasurer said that the midyear review was supposed to be just a tweaking and updating of the budget to basically adjust for changing conditions, or words to that effect. We are now seeing with the midyear review that the government is on an absolute spending spree, desperately trying to stop the cycle of recession that we are in. However, the government has done that in an ill-conceived way. It has not thought through the consequences.

I want to read from a letter from the Property Council of Australia, the Master Builders Association of Western Australia, the Urban Development Institute of Australia, the Housing Industry Association, and the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia. The letter is headed "WA State Government Off the Plan Duty Rebate Scheme". The letter states in part —

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... we write to you to draw attention to some possible unintended consequences where jobs may be compromised due to the application of the 75% rebate to apartments that are sold off-the-plan only.

The reason this government came up with the 75 per cent rebate for apartments sold off the plan is that it was trying to get, by stealth, a reversal of its foreign investor tax. We know that. However, the government has fallen flat on this face. I will read from the letter —

... in Western Australia there are approximately 121 active apartment developments, in a sample of 105 of these developments (87%) there are:

Existing stock: 1,377 apartments in WA that are built but not yet sold

Pipeline stock: 1,265 apartments under construction and not yet sold

The source of those figures was Urbis.

The letter continues —

As a combined industry group, we have heard the concerns of members who are holding stock in the abovementioned categories. The level of concern varies between our membership groups, and therefore the aim of this joint letter is to respectfully inform the Government of this situation and advise on what we have jointly identified to be effective amendments.

The first unintended consequence of the rebate scheme is that rather than bringing housing demand forward, thereby stimulating development and jobs at this current time, it will cause significant delay.

Those industry bodies are saying that it will cost jobs in the construction sector. The Treasurer said on radio that the sector has got it wrong when it talks about his policy for a 75 per cent stamp duty rebate for apartments sold off the plan. I mean, who was the architect of that policy? Who should take responsibility? The reason the government released that policy was to try to bring construction forward, et cetera. The government said it did that in response to the industry. What kind of modelling did Treasury do on that? The Treasurer has now accused the industry, which put together the policy that he funded, of not knowing its business, not knowing what it is doing and not knowing what it is asking. Who signs the cheques? The Treasurer and the Premier are responsible for introducing a policy that will delay construction, prevent the creation of jobs, and cause even more chaos in the apartment sector. That is because all the existing stock, and all the stock currently under construction—all those apartments that have not yet been sold—will now not be sold because they are not price competitive when it comes to stamp duty. It is ridiculous. We identified that at the time. What did the government say? It said that the opposition was always negative and was always whinging and whining. No; we were right! We said that it would introduce a distortion into the market and create these problems. Industry has now said, “Actually, the opposition was right; the behaviour of consumers in the apartment market exactly reflects what it said was going to happen. Could you please change the policy?” Who is steering the ship? Who is making the decisions? Who is running this economy? Who is trying to manage this economy? It is pretty clear that it is not the government!

In concluding my remarks, I want to go back to the beginning. The Premier came to government having made enormous promises to the people of Western Australia. A week or maybe even just a couple of days before we went to the polls, I said in a radio interview that the one thing for which the Labor Party had not been held to account was how it would fund all its election commitments. That was pretty apparent. There were thousands of commitments, with a very heavy focus on the Metronet rail construction program. The federal government came to Labor’s aid and bailed it out. Good on it. I applaud Scott Morrison and the Western Australian federal Liberals, who lobbied very hard and managed to bring funding for these infrastructure programs into the bank that the Treasurer now controls. However, that money is just sitting there. Industry is telling us that there is around a nine-month lag before any construction will commence. Because of that gap, skilled workers have fled to the east coast or other countries. They cannot wait nine months. They have nine months’ worth of providing for their families to deal with. They need employment, but they are not getting it here because of the economic decisions and mismanagement of this government and its inability to get these projects off the ground. We are going to celebrate—I might even crack open a bottle of champagne—on the very first day that some rail is actually laid in this state. I am pretty confident that it is highly likely that that will be after March 2021.

If the performance of this government continues in this way, with negative equity, mortgage stress, its failure to get projects off the ground, and its failure to listen to the community about the cost-of-living hurt it has caused it or to the St Vincent de Paul Society and Foodbank Western Australia about the number of families that cannot put food on the table every week, it will be good news for us, but do we really want the Western Australian community to go through so much pain before the March 2021 election? No, we do not. The government should bring the projects forward. It should get in some expertise. It should get in somebody who can actually get these projects started. Maybe it should separate out a couple of projects. If I were running the Metronet program, I would want to prove to the community that I could achieve something. Why not construct the Yanchep line? All that is needed is some simple legislation. The corridor is already there. It is a very simple project that would cause no disruption.

The government should prove that it can start a project and actually put down some rail in this state. That is what we are asking the government to do for the sake of our community. It needs to create jobs. It should give my nieces and nephews an opportunity for employment so that I do not lose them to the east coast or London. I have one niece who is a nurse and who is probably going to go to the United Kingdom to work. That is a great opportunity for her, but what a shame that when she is first establishing her skills in nursing, there is no opportunity for her to do so in Western Australia. Had the government delivered its commitment to expand the Joondalup Health Campus, she could probably have gotten a job there. Had any of the medihotels got off the ground, she might have been able to get a job in one of them, but those opportunities are lost to our nursing graduates because this government cannot get its act together and will not fulfil its commitments.

With those concluding remarks, I say that the government should get something started for the sake of the state. It needs to get the money flowing through the economy. It needs to stop making disastrous decisions, such as its decisions on the regional migration scheme and to introduce new taxes when the economy was in recession. It needs to stop making these disastrous decisions. It needs to take its foot off the infrastructure hose and get the state moving. That is what Labor promised to do for the community of Western Australia, but that is what this government has utterly failed to deliver.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse)** [4.45 pm]: I rise to support this motion, which reads —

That this house condemns the do-nothing McGowan Labor government for failing to start any major job-creating projects by the end of three years in government, leading to lost jobs and ongoing domestic recession.

Although members on this side of the house are very keen to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, we do so with a heavy heart and with sadness that we are in this position in the first place. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, since coming to office, the state Labor government has received significant funding from the federal government for its transport infrastructure spend. A media statement sent out by the Premier of this state and Christian Porter, the federal member for Pearce, referred to the almost \$14 billion in federal funding that has been invested in transport infrastructure in this state. The issues with the transport infrastructure projects and their slow delivery have nothing to do with a lack of funding or support from the Morrison federal government.

In supporting this motion, I note that I received an email just today from somebody about Labor's promise to deliver new railcars for the *Australind* train service and to maintain that service. I will read from the email that I received from a local in Harvey. I think the member for Bunbury may have also received a copy of this email a couple of days ago. It reads —

The *Australind* was due in Harvey at 6.31am this morning, it didn't arrive until 6.55am with approximately 12 people waiting in Harvey.

Apparently the cause was mechanical failure in Brunswick Junction.

The train will be out of service from Perth to Bunbury this morning and presumably Bunbury to Perth this afternoon and will be replaced by buses.

Could someone please pass this information on to Mark and Rita.

I am doing that here today, Joe. I had a follow-up email from Joe, who said that he had been —

... disappointed to learn of the ongoing mechanical issues with the *Australind* service.

Many people rely on the service to commute to work and attend medical appointments, especially the elderly and disabled and those who are unable to drive.

The elderly and disabled are the people who are most inconvenienced.

I have observed first hand the discomfort they experience in having to use the replacement bus service which is cramped and not suitable for them to travel for up to 3 hours.

It is totally unacceptable to have to wait 3 years for a reliable service between Perth and Bunbury.

Of course, I am pointing to the election commitment that was made in 2017 by the McGowan Labor opposition that the existing *Australind* service would be maintained and enhanced. That was stated by the incoming member for Bunbury. The commitment included new railcars and \$30 million for a revitalised train service. The people of Bunbury and the south west region did not expect what the slow delivery of this commitment would mean. The *Australind* service has now been out of service for 88 days since Labor came to government in 2017, and 77 of those days were over the past 12 months. It is just not good enough that the people of the south west will have to wait another three years to see the *Australind* replaced, given that they rely on this service. As my constituent from Bunbury pointed out, so many vulnerable people in the region have —

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**Mr D.T. Punch** interjected.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I look forward to the member for Bunbury's contribution afterwards.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** What did you promise before the election?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms L. METTAM:** What have you delivered?

*Point of Order*

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** The member for Vasse has said she does not want interjections. We have been listening to this debate in silence.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton):** That is not a point of order. The member did not say that. I was waiting to get that indication from the member.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms L. METTAM:** I will continue without interjections, but it is fair to point out that we were talking about what was promised and what has been delivered. What this government has delivered has been nothing short of disappointing, particularly for the people of Bunbury and the south west. How extraordinary to think that after we have seen this train service break down 77 times in 12 months, there is an expectation for the people to wait a little—in fact, a lot—longer, three years longer. Labor was very comfortable in opposition—possibly too comfortable in opposition—because it is still looking backwards and acting like it is in opposition. We are seeking for this government to deliver on its promises and support the people of Western Australia, which includes the people of regional WA, who rely heavily on this service. We know that there is always a challenge in delivering public transport for regional areas. We do not get the same number of people on the rail network as we do in the city. The challenges are very different.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Ms L. METTAM:** We are seeing very vulnerable people —

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Ms L. METTAM:** There is a gaggle over there. I am not accepting interjections.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister, the member is not taking interjections, please.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Sport and Recreation, please.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I would like to quote from an article in the *South Western Times* appropriately titled “I think I can, I think I can”, of Thursday, 21 November. It states —

The Australind train is the little engine that can't.

Passengers on the 31-year-old Bunbury to Perth service experienced yet another mechanical fault earlier this month.

...

In the past year the train has spent 77 days out of operation—more than a fifth of its time.

I think the point I am making is a pretty fair one. When an election commitment was made to the people of Bunbury and the south west that a service would be maintained and enhanced and that there would be new railcars, it was a fair expectation that that would happen within a timely time frame. I think that is a fair expectation. There is plenty more content to cover in this debate, so I will move on.

Earlier this week, the Minister for Transport and the Premier released a statement on Yanchep rail, announcing that NEWest Alliance was named as the preferred proponent. What is quite clear about this announcement is that there is no contract for the works, which are now set to start in 2020. It highlights once again that the Metronet project is failing to meet the time line that was promised when WA Labor was in opposition. It follows a range of other delays to Metronet time lines. The expected deadline for completion of the Forrestfield–Airport Link was 2020. We have seen secrecy and safety issues, and now we are looking at a late completion date of 2021. As I stated, work on the Yanchep rail extension is not starting this year, quite clearly, but contracts are yet to be awarded in 2020 and the same applies to the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. The Ellenbrook railway line has federal funding sitting there. We have had three budgets and we are yet to see a state government commitment to the Ellenbrook railway line, although it is a signature project of the McGowan government. Instead of seeing construction start this year, contracts are yet to be awarded and we are looking at 2021 or 2022.

Mrs Liza Harvey; Dr David Honey; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mr Donald Punch; Mr Simon Millman

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A commitment was made to deliver the railcars in 2020, but it is quite clear that that commitment has changed. I refer to a Metronet project WA railcar program. In November 2018, we were told that the delivery of the first new trains, known as the C-series, was due to begin in 2021, and the additional 24 trains are expected to be delivered afterwards. A media statement only several months later updated that announcement. A year later, the time line has now blown out to 2022. Why is this important? The Leader of the Opposition has spoken about why this is important. It is important not only because of the expectation that the government would meet its election promises, but also for job creation. The government promised that Metronet would deliver about 10 000 jobs in this state. If we add up the jobs for the Thornlie–Cockburn, Yanchep, Morley–Ellenbrook and Byford lines, it is 10 000 jobs. If we add to that the Roe 8 and Roe 9 project, a project that was cancelled when this government came to office, 20 000 jobs are on hold in this state. The Roe 8 and 9 project had a federal funding contingency commitment of \$1.2 billion sitting there, which would address the congestion issues in the south metro area and provide some important road safety outcomes for those communities, which have been largely ignored by this government.

I go back to what Labor had promised, which is in contrast with the delays that I have highlighted. Again, concerns were obviously raised about what track of rail would be delivered under this government. I point to where it all began—that is, WA Labor’s policy document on local jobs and local content, which states —

- ***A McGowan Labor Government will drive job creation through a continuous infrastructure development such as METRONET***

...

The certainty provided by METRONET will ensure businesses have the confidence to make investments, create jobs and employ trainees and apprentices.

Given what we have highlighted so far, most projects are late. It creates some contrast with what was promised. As opposed to continuous infrastructure, we are three years into this government and we are still quite a way off seeing a track of rail laid.

Another point that is worthy of highlighting in this document is what it states about local jobs and local content. It commences —

A McGowan Labor Government is committed to ensuring that the money spent by the WA Government wherever possible is used to support local businesses and create new jobs for Western Australians.

It also stated —

Introducing a process supported by legislation, all government agencies will be required to include local content as a key criterion ...

Known as the Western Australian Industry Participation Plan ...

There is reference to the jobs bill, which was introduced into Parliament.

The people of Western Australia are not silly. The Liberal opposition joined with the Nationals in raising concerns about that gap between what was promised and what was delivered. Concerns were raised about this so-called jobs bill, but we do not need to spell out the inadequacies of what was delivered. It is for everyone to see in the *Busselton–Dunsborough Mail*; it was possibly in the *Bunbury Herald* as well. An article by Jesinta Burton dated 13 November titled “Calls for local content goal” about the Bunbury Outer Ring Road project stated —

The concerns were voiced during an employment forum for the project in Bunbury, led by project director Mark Hazebroek.

Concerns were raised by the Bunbury Geographe Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Apprentice and Traineeship Company. It continued —

Bunbury–Geographe Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Rob Skipsey echoed Mr Liaros’ sentiments and insisted the region had the capacity to support the project.

Under the *WA Jobs Act 2017*, ‘local industry’ is defined as “suppliers of goods produced, or services provided, in WA, another state, a territory or New Zealand”—a definition consistent with the national procurement agreement.

Those organisations went on to raise concerns and state that it is absolutely crucial that genuine local content is delivered for this project.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Ms L. METTAM:** Although there is much talk about local jobs and local content, this side of the house looks forward to seeing that in motion. There are genuine concerns about these local content promises, given that



**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 27 November 2019]

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community groups such as the Bunbury Geographe Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Apprentice and Traineeship Company are also raising concerns about what those pre-2017 election commitments were.

When talking about some of the delays we have seen under this government, I think it is fair to talk about one of the only rail projects that is taking place in this state at the moment—the Forrestfield–Airport Link. When it comes to rail, the only rail project that is progressing in this state is a project initiated by the former Liberal–National government, with support and funding from a federal Liberal government. Although that project was initiated in 2016 and was on track to be completed by 2020, this is another example of a project that has been bungled in its delivery through the mismanagement of the McGowan Labor government.

A number of safety issues with this project have already been well documented in the media. I will read through a few of them. In November 2017, WorkSafe Western Australia issued an improvement notice to confirm all pipe brackets and frames were fit for purpose. In July 2018, a 26-year-old New Zealand man was left in a critical condition after being struck by a flailing hose. In September 2018, the Public Transport Authority identified multiple safety breaches and a failure to take action. On 27 November 2018, the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union led a protest outside the Redcliffe office of Salini Impregilo. Under this Labor government in December 2018, the completion date was pushed back from 2020 to 2021 due to flooding and a sinkhole. The government says the budget will remain unchanged. That raises other questions, of course. In March 2019, contaminated sand was discovered. The cost estimate is \$300 million as a result of that. In April 2019, a former tunnel worker claimed that he and two colleagues suffered the bends while in hyperbaric mode beneath the ground. A second former worker confirmed those allegations. In May 2019, 500 metres of heavy piping in the airport tunnel collapsed. This had been predicted and the union had demanded the replacement of all brackets in the tunnel.

It is fair to say there have been significant issues associated with this project under this government's watch. I quote from a PerthNow article from last September. A PTA officer stated —

The lives of tunnel workers on the Forrestfield Airport Link have been put in danger by repeated safety breaches.

Documents obtained under Freedom of Information laws reveal pipes being worked on were not tagged or locked, posing electrocution and other potentially fatal hazards ...

“All breaches were reported to the (head contractor's) relevant staff including safety officers (but) no adequate corrective and preventative actions have been implemented by personnel.” ...

That was a pretty damning comment from a PTA officer regarding that particular project.

Given the significant number of concerns that have been raised about the Forrestfield–Airport Link project, it is only reasonable and fair that the opposition has asked a great number of questions about it. We have asked questions on notice in this house and the upper house. I will quote from a question without notice asked on 22 March 2018 in the other place. The Leader of the Opposition, Hon Peter Collier, MLC, asked —

I refer to the Metronet task force chaired by the Minister for Transport ...

- (1) Was the issue of tunnel borer Grace ceasing boring discussed at that meeting?
- (2) Were minutes of the meeting taken?
- (3) If yes to (2), will the minister table those minutes; and, if not, why not?

The Minister for Transport refused to answer questions about the minutes of the Metronet meeting related to the Forrestfield–Airport Link and all of those safety issues, which are not just of concern to us as opposition members but obviously to a great number of families and the community of WA, given the level of concern and the level of hold-up on this project. Although a non-response was given, we have since pursued a copy of those minutes. The question was actually referred to the Office of the Auditor General. The Auditor General ended up making a decision on the lack of transparency by the minister in relation to this issue. I will read from that decision of the Auditor General —

The decision by the Minister for Transport, the Hon Rita Saffioti MLA, not to provide Parliament with minutes of the METRONET Taskforce meeting held on 27 February 2018 was not reasonable and therefore not appropriate as parts of the minutes were not Cabinet-in-confidence and could have been provided.

The ruling by the Auditor General is quite clear that there is no reason for such a level of secrecy as we are seeing from this government. There is clearly something to hide on this issue. That those safety issues have obviously been of concern to people working on the project and their families is of state interest, and it is concerning that even though there has been a ruling by the Auditor General that the minutes were not cabinet-in-confidence and could have been provided, there has been no transparency on the part of the minister since then to provide that

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information, even though we have pursued this issue and tried to get that information by asking numerous questions through the parliamentary process. We have also pursued this important matter through freedom of information processes, and it is somewhat pleasing that the Information Commissioner is now investigating this matter of the Minister for Transport's reluctance to be transparent and provide documentation that, as the Auditor General has ruled, is not cabinet-in-confidence and, therefore, could be provided.

What an unprecedented effort this is to cover up information, and what a contrast this is with the findings of the Langoulant report and the commitment of this government to gold standard transparency. I will read from the Langoulant report. Recommendation 6, which has since been ignored, states —

Information about Government programs and projects should be open for scrutiny. Based on shared principles, the Government should develop a transparency framework for reporting details of major projects. The framework must require continuous disclosure.

It is quite clear that this government and this minister have gone in the opposite direction, because when we have asked further questions about the minutes of those meetings, the response has been that the Metronet task force is now a subcommittee of the Expenditure Review Committee of cabinet. It is quite extraordinary that the government has now established a new subcommittee to hide all the information on these Metronet projects such as the Forrestfield–Airport Link, which has been dogged by safety issues and secrecy. We know that the Huawei \$206 million contract did not go through cabinet. The fact that the government is now creating a subcommittee of cabinet to hide information behind is in great contrast with the Langoulant report and the Premier's commitment to gold standard transparency—something that we have not seen much of. It is dearly missing from this government.

That is just another example of the efforts made by this government to delay and fail to deliver. It illustrates the massive concerns that members on this side have, and also the concerns in the community. It also raises a concern that the government is investing heavily not only in cover-ups, but also in spin. We know that starting next year there will be a propaganda campaign to explain why so little progress has been made on these signature Metronet projects, with so many delays. The Forrestfield–Airport Link construction that was meant to start in 2020 is now late. The Thornlie–Cockburn link, the Yanchep extension, the Ellenbrook rail line and the new railcars are all late in delivery. They have been well supported by the federal Liberal government, which has invested over \$13 billion in infrastructure. There are no more excuses.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe)** [5.15 pm]: I rise to support the motion that this house condemns the do-nothing McGowan Labor government for failing to start any major job-creating projects by the end of three years in government, leading to lost jobs and ongoing domestic recession. I heard a quote the other day that resonated with me. The former Premier apparently said that the Labor Party was very good at opposition but very poor in government. He no doubt had plenty of opportunity to observe that in his 27 years in this Parliament. If the government continues down its current trajectory, it will shortly be returning to what it is good at. Given the panic we have seen in the faces of government members over the past few weeks, I think members opposite have done their polling. The members for Kalamunda and Burns Beach are gone. They are not even here; they are not turning up, are they? Members should look at the electoral pendulum and go down that red list.

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** There is nothing of relevance in the contribution of the member for Cottesloe.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S.J. Price):** That is not a point of order, but the member will refer back to the motion.

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Thank you very much, Mr Acting Speaker. I am spot on the motion. As I said, this government is certainly good at opposition, but not so good in government. It was an interesting exercise coming into Parliament. It was clear to me that the government had only one idea in its head.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I will tell you what, member for Collie–Preston; your government has no idea about Collie.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister, I call you to order for the second time.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The government has no idea about Collie, because it is going to kill Collie. I know that the member is highly regarded and respected in Collie, and by many members in this place, but what a tragedy it is that the government is undermining his great legacy for the Labor Party in that seat. I reckon there will be pretty stiff competition in the Liberal Party from members putting their hands up for that seat at the next election. If the member for Collie–Preston is still there, it may be different, but the government is killing his chances of seeing a Labor colleague fill that seat after him.

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When I came into this Parliament one year ago, it was one year into the government's term, and it was clear that it had only one policy objective, and that was Metronet. I am not going to reiterate the comments of the member for Vasse, but I think she did an outstanding job articulating the complete failure of the Labor government to deliver on anything. I can see that in the next election campaign we will have bush with maybe a patch of land cleared and a great big sign with glossy pictures that look like something out of *The Jetsons* with a futuristic station. However, as far as we can see, there will be just bush, members. I will tell members what: there will be a conga line of Labor members. They love the hard hats and the fluoro vests. All the hopeful members will be lined up in front of this big, flash sign. However, we will not see railway stations, railway lines or any tracks.

**Mrs A.K. Hayden** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Do not look. If we see cleared land, I think we will be doing well.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** We will not see any of that.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** As the member for Vasse outlined in excellent and detailed fashion—what a pleasure it is to have the member for Vasse as a colleague on this side of the house—not one project has been started; none. All we hear about is delays. My Lord, those rail carriages are taking a long time to get here are they not? They are taking an enormous amount of time. I tell members what —

**Mr D.T. Punch** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Bunbury, I have warned you.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I think it might be the third term before we see them come through because they keep getting delayed and delayed. There are lots of plans, lots of press releases and lots of turning up to Liberal-initiated projects in their fluoro vests and hard hats. They must get them on special from Aldi. But, boy, there are lots of them around. There is a lot of turning up and claiming them as Labor Party achievements but not a lot of delivering Labor projects.

It has been interesting coming into this place. Even three years into the term of this government, I hear all this backward-looking talk. This is a serious matter. There is the horrendous issue of the embezzlement of public funds by Paul Whyte, the man who was promoted by the Treasurer even though the Treasurer had said the person was not doing his job properly and the government's answer was to say, "Oh, well, nine years ago a study was done." It was nine years ago. The government is great at looking back. That would have made a difference but no, the Treasurer promoted that person and he carried out the most egregious embezzlement of public funds we have probably seen in the history of this state. Members opposite love to look back and talk about the previous government doing this and not doing that. I think it is worthwhile looking back.

One thing I can say since coming into this place is that I am immensely proud of the achievements of the last government. Almost 500 000 people migrated to this state in the two terms of the last government—equal to the population of Tasmania. Every single kid who came into this state had a classroom to go to. They had a seat at the desk and a teacher in their classroom. Every single person in this state could go to a hospital bed and we saw the transformation of hospitals in this state. There are 61 new and upgraded health facilities and hospitals, including Fiona Stanley Hospital and Midland Public Hospital. What a triumph Midland hospital is as a public-private partnership. It is an outstanding achievement of the previous government. Seventy-seven new schools were built. Members opposite can dream because their government will not get close to building a fraction of that number in any term it has in office. There are 1 050 more police, 10 new emergency service facilities and 96 new train carriages. That is something for members opposite to dream about because their government has delivered none, and it does not look as though it will.

The previous government started work on the Forrestfield-Airport Link, built the train line to Butler, put in 342 kilometres of bike paths and 1 342 kilometres of state roads. I could go on and on. There is a book of the achievements of the previous government.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Is that over nine years?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The book of this government's achievements will be the thinnest book in the history of the state.

As I said, members opposite love looking back and going back over history. They love saying what it was like then, but they should start to reflect on their own history. If we had gone back to three-year terms, members opposite would be facing an election. What could we say this Labor government has done? It has talked big, moaned and complained a lot about the past but delivered nothing for this state. In fact, its record is worse than delivering

nothing for this state because this Labor government has destroyed the state's domestic economy. It has sat back, happy and said, "We've got into in government; we're finally here. Look, the iron ore price is taking off and other mineral prices are taking off; we are sweet. The economy will take off. There is nothing we will have to do. In fact, do you know what? This is the time we will smash the economy and belt households with increased fees and charges. This is a time we will belt overseas buyers who are coming in and underwriting the apartment industry in the state. It is when we will slow everything down in the state economy because it will just happen for us; we can kick back and be happy." Over its first three budgets, this government increased fees and charges by \$850.

I refer to the enormous hard work done by Dean Smith to resolve the GST issue along with his federal Liberal colleagues, the people who have done the hard work. The Labor Party was sitting there saying, "Oh, yes, we did this; the Premier did it." What an absolute joke. What a farce. He made no contribution. It was through the hard yards done in particular by Dean Smith and the other federal Liberal colleagues from Western Australia. They were rewarded and recognised because at the last state election, the number of votes in every seat went up despite the dishonest campaign run by the Labor Party. The people of Western Australia can see through the rubbish and spin that this government puts out. As I said a little earlier today—it is worth repeating because I do not think members opposite take this to heart, I really do not; otherwise, members opposite would be holding their frontbench and ministers to account for their lack of performance in this state—there are 82 200 Western Australians unemployed, a 15.6 per cent underutilisation rate and 14 per cent youth unemployment. This is an absolute crisis that the government is ignoring just as it is ignoring the homeless issue in Perth and the tragedy and heartbreak of people doing it tough on the streets, just as it is ignoring the problem with people who are convicted paedophiles taking care of children. The government says that a report will be delivered next year. The government is ignoring the state of our economy. There are small business failures with an 18 per cent reduction in small businesses.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Maybe the Minister for Mines and Petroleum should take note. I know he is doing his bit, but he should give some advice to the Minister for Small Business. There has been an 18 per cent reduction in the number of small businesses, with 30 000 businesses having closed since 2017. It is heartbreaking for those families. Dwelling values are down and the number of seasonally adjusted building approvals has decreased. Construction in Western Australia has trended down for six quarters. Here is a government "getting on with the job and committing to projects"! More than one in six WA mortgage holders owe more than the value of their home, approximately 125 000 homes are in negative equity and approximately one in five home owners are suffering mortgage stress. Of the 20 top suburbs in Australia for mortgage defaults, 12 are in Western Australia and personal insolvencies have risen to 13 per cent and are rising. I could go on. That is a direct result of what this government has not done but, more shamefully, what this government has done.

The state government has increased charges by \$850 when house prices are going down and people are losing their jobs. The Minister for Mines and Petroleum will know that all the major miners are downsizing. BHP does not intend to have any substantial growth. It intends only to have replacement projects for its mines. Its focus is on reducing costs.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** That is absolutely true, minister. It is a quote in *The West Australian* from the new CEO. The minister should have a look at it and he will see it there in black and white. I am happy to send him a copy.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Ask the member for Kalgoorlie. Nickel West is currently exploring in his electorate for new nickel projects. He knows that. Nickel West is exploring in his electorate.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I am happy to send the minister a copy of the press release from BHP's new CEO.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** You're an oxygen thief.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Can I say that this is another skill the government is good at: personal abuse, as the Minister for Mines and Petroleum has just shown. That is disappointing; I know the minister is better than that, but it is a sign of a panicked government. The other day we saw —

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The other day when the shadow Treasurer was explaining in forensic detail why the government's 75 per cent rebate on stamp duty and its effectively complete rebate on the foreign buyers duty were disasters that would harm the industry, instead of listening and taking note, the Treasurer was screaming out "Buffoon!" across the chamber. This is a government in crisis and a government that is panicking and does not actually know what to do. The Leader of the Opposition has gone through the folly and absolute stupidity of removing Perth from the regional migration scheme and, more particularly, restricting the skilled migration occupation list, purely to appease

some union mates. That is all it was done for, and what has it done? It has harmed the economy and students coming into the state.

We have seen important projects being delayed and stopped. The member for Vasse was certainly hot on this issue. I refer to a WAtoday article by Hannah Barry from October 2018 headed “Failure to launch: How a major WA infrastructure project was grounded”. It states —

If it was on track, the Busselton Margaret River Regional Airport would have launched new flights to the eastern states last month.

What has happened? The do-nothing government has cancelled the project. There was money in the budget for this job-creating project, but this government killed it.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Bunbury! Member for Darling Range!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I turn now to the seven per cent foreign investor surcharge. Again, it was pointed out in considerable detail at the time that this would harm the industry. Anyone who has any idea about the WA property industry, particularly the apartment industry, knew that. New starts were underwritten mostly by foreign buyers buying off the plan. Local buyers are less inclined to buy off the plan; they can go and look at something and buy it. The government was told what would happen but denied it. Even when we pressed the government and said, “For goodness sake, please reverse this”, and the Leader of the Opposition pleaded with the government to reverse it, the government stuck its chin out. The Treasurer sat there saying, “Nothing to see here; no problem.”

The government did some polling about five weeks ago. When it got the results back, it realised that if things were to continue the way they were going, it was going to go back to the Tonkin era of being a one-term government, so it panicked and introduced the 75 per cent rebate. What did we see on that? A foreign buyer buying a \$700 000 unit is going to get a \$50 000 rebate, while a local couple buying a unit will get, I think, \$23 000; I will stand corrected, but it is about half the rebate amount.

What did that really do? It smashed proposed construction projects that had actually been approved. I was talking to one of the major builders in this state who had a contractor who is one of the contractors who builds these apartments, and he has had three projects cancelled under him. This is someone who is actually out there, employing people. He had actually put people on the books because they were going to start. Do members know what has happened? Those three projects have all been stopped. That builder is now in major difficulties because he had tooled up, spent his money and engaged in those projects, but now he has had to sack people and is fighting for survival.

The shadow Treasurer pointed out in very clear detail how foolhardy that move was. It is an absolute disgrace. Why? It is because it takes at least three years, if not four, to get a project up. In fact, it is possibly longer, depending on approval delays. Those projects were approved and going ahead. They had been given the green light for construction, but the builders realised that nobody was going to buy any of the additional units past the ones that people had already bought off the plan because they could not get the rebate. They could not start building so that more people could buy off the plan. They effectively wanted to get 100 per cent buying off the plan before they started. It has actually caused unemployment.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I can say that there is trouble in paradise. We have heard so many times in this place about the Urban Development Institute of Australia; it is there, standing arm in arm with the government. We saw Paul Blackburne standing there with his arm around the shoulders of the Treasurer, saying what a wonderful job the government had done. Paul Blackburne is a pretty smart cookie, and he has figured that he is going to do pretty well out of this. The only trouble is that he has bashed the rest of his colleagues who had projects already approved. As I said, there is trouble in paradise. The government may find it a bit hard to fill the seats for the \$2 000 and \$3 000-a-head dinners with ministers that it has advertised. It may find that if property people attend, they are not going to cheer the government on and say what a good job it is doing; they are going to give it an earful from the start to the end, because the government has destroyed their industry with this utterly stupid rebate scheme. In the first place, the government put a seven per cent levy on the buyers, and in the second place, it has come in with this panicked reaction of a 75 per cent rebate, including the rebate on the seven per cent foreign buyers levy.

I refer now to an excellent WAtoday article by Nathan Hondros from 26 November 2019. He is a journalist who actually digs in and does some real reporting work in this state. The article states —

The property industry has warned the state government’s plan to kickstart WA’s construction sector by paying stamp duty rebates to investors buying off-the-plan apartments might “compromise jobs”.

**Extract from Hansard**

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I can tell members that it has not just compromised jobs; it has cost jobs. It has already cost jobs in the sector because people have already been sacked from projects that they were staffing up for. Those people have already been sacked, so it has cost jobs. There is trouble in paradise; suddenly the love affair is not quite there. The article continues —

But in an interview with Gareth Parker on 6PR this morning, the treasurer said the property industry expected the government ... “to react to every demand that comes across their desk”.

“But I have to say, it’s a never ending supply of demands from these guys,” Mr Wyatt said.

It sounds like things are not going too well. If members opposite want to understand how an economy really works and how these projects really work, I am happy to tell them, but there is only so much time in the day. I recommend they go and read Nathan Hondros’ article, because it is a good explanation of the government’s absolute stupidity. As I have said in this place before, I rate the Treasurer; I think he typically makes a fair effort to try to do things right, but he is hamstrung by a heap of his colleagues. This is what happens when governments panic. This is what happens when the government looks at the polling and goes, “Hang on; the seat of Armadale’s starting to look a bit marginal!”

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** It is not too late to come over to this side, member!

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** We would respect the member’s extreme talent and qualifications, unlike the members on his own side.

Let us look at the government’s decision on Roe 8. We have a fantastic project that the federal government has money in a bucket for—\$1.2 billion—and we know there is more money available. We know that that project is critical for the state. Let us ignore freight through the port for a little while; that project is critical for the state because we will see a 50 per cent increase in general traffic on southern suburban roads over the next 10 years. That project was mostly going to take that traffic off Leach Highway and South Street. It was going to take trucks off those roads and make the life of truck drivers a bit more liveable. However, because the government is not going ahead with that project, we will have traffic chaos. That was an absolutely ridiculous decision by this government, for a bit of virtue signalling, and with a desperate hope—we have seen this a bit from this government—to reprise the last election campaign, which worked so well, so let us do it again. The government is setting up all its little things around the place —

**Mrs A.K. Hayden:** A groundhog day!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Yes, it had a groundhog day, so it will run that same campaign again. The public of Western Australia is awake to the government. It is awake to the fact that the government is not delivering what it promised to the people of Western Australia.

As I said, we told the government what would happen in this state with the stamp duty reduction. We warned it. We implored it not to do it. But the government went ahead with that, and it has had a predictable outcome for this state.

We are told that this is the can-do government. I have covered this a bit, but I think this is really worth talking about. One of the cornerstones of this economy is major projects, particularly major mining projects. Those projects need environmental and water approvals to occur in a reasonable time. However, what do we see with those approval times? Let us look at water approvals for high and medium-risk projects. In 2016–17, it took 75 days for a medium-risk approval. It now takes 133 days. That is a 58 per cent increase. Under the previous government, it took 57 days for a high-risk approval. It now takes 213 days. This is a critical approval that needs to go ahead before any major mining project can take place. The approval time just to get a water licence has quadrupled, and I am not talking about all the other approvals. Tell me, members—I am all ears—how an approval time blowout of almost 400 per cent to get a water approval licence will help this economy.

I turn to the efficiency indicators for the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation. The average cost per plan, report or guidance document to support water planning, allocation and optimisation has increased from \$256 000 to \$358 000. That is a \$101 000 increase. Tell me, members, how that will help more projects to get started in Western Australia. The average cost per hour of scientific support for water planning has increased from \$197 an hour in 2016–17 to \$218 an hour in 2018–19. That is a \$21 an hour increase. This government has made the machinery-of-government changes. It says that it is a lean and mean government. But there has been a more than 10 per cent increase in the hourly cost of those approvals.

I can go through so much, and there are only so many hours in the day to go through it. The average cost of native vegetation clearing permits has increased from \$7 600 in 2016–17 to \$40 000 in 2018–19. Tell me, members, how that will help projects to get going in this state. There has been a massive blowout. I have spent a fair bit of time talking to different people in the resource industry about these issues. They are extremely disturbed about the

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government's lack of performance and the time it takes to get approvals. The Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia is quite happy to put pen to paper and be quoted on this. It talks about delays and increased level of assessment for Environmental Protection Act part IV assessments, and delays and issues with conditions, and over-assessment, for Environmental Protection Act part V works approvals. We have talked about water.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** The member for Churchlands.

**MR S.K. L'ESTRANGE (Churchlands)** [5.44 pm]: I would like add to the member for Cottesloe's comments in this debate. I think what we have here is a —

*Point of Order*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Mr Acting Speaker, I am not quite sure. You gave the call to the member for Churchlands while the member for Cottesloe was still on his feet. I am not quite sure what the basis of that decision was, and I would appreciate a clear understanding, because clearly I am confused.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange:** What is the point of order?

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S.J. Price):** The point of order is about the decision. The member for Churchlands got up whilst the member for Cottesloe was on his feet and still speaking; he had not finished his remarks. I thought that the member for Churchlands was going to raise a point of order, possibly around a quorum or something. Therefore, the member for Cottesloe still has the call, unless the member for Churchlands reiterates a point of order. The member for Cottesloe.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I have got the call. I appreciate that.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Mr Acting Speaker, on a point of order, because, clearly, your ruling must be correct —

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I thought that was the rule. I am more than happy to defer to the member for Churchlands. The clock is showing two minutes.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** That is correct, yes.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** If I can just seek some clarification, Mr Acting Speaker. The member for Cottesloe was finishing and sitting down.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** He wasn't sitting down.

Several members interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Can I have my point of order heard in silence?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members! The point of order will be heard in silence.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I appreciate that the member for Cannington was looking down at his papers, as he is doing now, so he cannot comment on what the member for Cottesloe was doing. I note that the member for Cottesloe was sitting down and the member for Churchlands stood up. What is the basis for the decision?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I will explain it again. I may have misspoken previously. The member for Cottesloe had two minutes left on his time allocated for this debate. The member for Churchlands stood up whilst the member for Cottesloe was still speaking. Normally when that happens, it is to raise a point of order, so I said, "The member for Churchlands", expecting him to raise a point of order, not to conclude the member for Cottesloe's time. If the member for Churchlands is not going to raise a point of order —

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I am, thank you.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** He is going to raise a point of order.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Thank you. It is on what you are saying, Mr Acting Speaker. I thought the member for Cottesloe was sitting down, so I sought the call.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Yes. Thank you. It is not a point of order. The member for Churchlands has the call— sorry, the member for Cottesloe.

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Thank you. Can I say the redistribution almost gave me Churchlands, but I just missed out.

I would like to use these two minutes, because there is a lot to go through. Talk about killing the economy in this state! In January, the Minister for Water announced, to great fanfare, that he was going to do a 10 per cent reduction in groundwater allocations.

*Point of Order*

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** Mr Acting Speaker, when a member is on their feet, are other members meant to take their seat and not remain standing?

**Extract from Hansard**

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**The ACTING SPEAKER:** It is not a point of order. Members are allowed to stand. The member is actually standing to the side of his seat. Members are just not allowed to congregate in the alleyways.

*Debate Resumed*

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** It does make me feel special.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, everyone! I am standing. You sit.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** As I said, I have so much material to go through. Can I say it is disappointing. I had hoped that I would not have only 30 minutes to speak on this topic, because I passionately care about Western Australia and I passionately care about the good citizens of this state. It breaks my heart when I go into the city and other built-up areas and I see people who do not have jobs and have lost hope. I congratulate the member for Carine, who has done an outstanding job of raising this issue and bringing it to the attention of the government, which is clearly oblivious to it. The Minister for Water —

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members! Sit, when I stand. Thank you.

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Mr Acting Speaker, I have a diagnosed knee condition, and I need to stand for a few minutes.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S.J. Price):** If that is the case, go for a wander if you would like to move out of the chamber.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** The member for Bunbury is out of his seat.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange:** Mr Speaker, I have a back problem!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, if you want to carry on in this way, we can waste all the time in the world that you want.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The member for Bunbury is obviously playing silly buggers now.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I ask him to withdraw that last statement about him having an illness. He is obviously misleading the house about his ability to stand.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Carine, there is no point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** I have a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** No more points of order. Member for Cottesloe.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** The member for Carine used unparliamentary language. I ask him to withdraw the word “bugger”; I think it is unparliamentary.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S.J. Price):** Sorry, member for Girrawheen; I did not hear that. Can you say it again?

**Mr S.A. Millman:** He said that he was playing silly buggers. Ask him to withdraw.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Is the word “bugger” unparliamentary or not?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. This do-nothing McGowan government has destroyed horticulture —

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** I have a point of order in relation to an unparliamentary remark about my status. If required, I can hobble out to my car and provide the Parliament with a copy of my MRI.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S.J. Price):** Thank you, member for Bunbury. However, the advice I have been given is that it is not unparliamentary. That is why I made the remarks that I made. Member for Cottesloe.

*Debate Resumed*



Mrs Liza Harvey; Dr David Honey; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mr Donald Punch; Mr Simon Millman

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**Dr D.J. HONEY:** This do-nothing McGowan government has absolutely destroyed the horticultural industry in north Wanneroo.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange:** Mr Acting Speaker! You can't beat that!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I give the call to the member for Churchlands.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE (Churchlands)** [5.51 pm]: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. The opposition is grateful to the Acting Speaker for giving us an opportunity to continue to talk about this do-nothing, no-projects, no-jobs, useless government!

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That is what we are here to debate today. The member for Kalgoorlie knows that the government is useless. In fact, the only people on the other side of the chamber who are worthy of a seat on the front bench are the members for Kimberley and Armadale.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The member for Girrawheen tried hard during the recent debate, so we could probably look at promoting her as well. Those members fight for their communities.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members to my right!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** But they get frustrated all the time by the fact that this is a do-nothing, no-projects, no-jobs government. In fact, that should be the slogan for this government going into the 2021 election. What is the Labor Party going to do for you? It will do nothing. That is what the government is all about—nothing!

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** For those members who are new to this place, the last time Labor was in government—the member for Collie–Preston will know this—there was a massive project by the Inpex Corporation that was worth billions and billions of dollars to the economy of Western Australia. It was a massive project. What did Inpex do?

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** In 2011!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** It decided to build a 900-kilometre pipeline to Darwin.

**Mr S.A. Millman:** When?

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** In 2011.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Cannington! Member for Mount Lawley!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The member for Mount Lawley and the Minister for Mines and Petroleum chirp on and on and say that it was in 2011.

**Mr S.A. Millman** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mount Lawley!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The member for Cottesloe and I sat down with the vice-president of Inpex in Tokyo, who was the president of the project in Western Australia at the time, and he clarified for us, to our faces, in person, that “the reason that project was lost to Western Australia and went to Darwin was because of the Labor government.” Is that true, member for Cottesloe?

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Absolutely; face to face.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** It is a true story.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** That's rubbish!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Is the Minister for Mines and Petroleum saying that we are lying?

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Yes.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Is he saying that he did not tell us that?

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** I'm saying that you're lying, yes.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I ask the Minister for Mines and Petroleum to withdraw.

**Extract from Hansard**

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**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Mr Acting Speaker, that is unparliamentary language, and I also ask him to withdraw it.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S.J. Price):** Member for Cannington, it is unparliamentary.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** If it is unparliamentary language, I withdraw.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That is the calibre of the member for Cannington—when he is wrong, he calls us liars.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** I'm not wrong!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That is what he just did.

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The member for Balcatta is getting involved now! I remind the member for Balcatta that in around 2007 or 2008, the Labor government could not grip onto the Inpex project and could not nail it or land it for the people of Western Australia. When I was a new backbencher sitting in about the position that the member for Armadale sits today, I said to members, "Do you know what the Labor government was like in that period?" The member for Kimberley will know of the little geckoes that stick onto walls up in the Kimberley. They are beautiful little creatures with big googly eyes. They are cute. They stick to walls. Members opposite are like that. They are paralysed. They are stuck to the wall. If we turn on the light, they all just freeze and their eyes goggle up. They go, "What do we do now?" It reminds me of some advice I was given by a former Premier, who said, "The thing with Labor is that it is very, very effective in opposition, but it's useless in government." True to form, that is Labor's performance to date in three years of government—it is absolutely useless!

The key aspect of the motion that I want to focus on today is the last bit, where it says "leading to lost jobs and ongoing domestic recession". That is happening on this government's watch. Labor promised the people of Western Australia that it would grow jobs. It promised them that it would turn around the domestic economy because it said that the former Liberal–National government had failed. That is the promise that Labor took to the election. It also promised that to help that happen, it would implement its own fiscal policy objectives, one of which was to reduce taxes so that Western Australians would have more money in their pockets to spend in local towns in the Kimberley or in areas such as Armadale and Girrawheen. The idea was that this would generate jobs in small businesses like small sandwich bars and small fishing tackle shops, one of which the Leader of the Opposition has. But what did Labor do? Within weeks of getting into government and taking on the front benches, it turned back that fiscal tax-reduction policy and decided to increase taxes. It did not do it once; it did it five or six times in its first year to 18 months in government. It kept increasing taxes. Every time the commentariat out there would say, "Hang on a second; didn't you say there'd be no new taxes and no increases to taxes when you win government?", the answer that came back was, "Well, look at the state of the books. It's worse than we thought." Do members remember the government saying in its first year that the situation was worse than the Great Depression? That was a good way of getting a domestic recession back on foot! Telling people that they were in a worse situation than the Great Depression encouraged people to invest in small businesses and grow jobs! Labor accused us of talking down the economy when the Premier himself, in his first year in office, kept on banging on that we were in the greatest recession of all time, caused somewhat by the former Liberal–National government. What a load of rubbish!

Labor spent the next three years pretty much opening or running projects that were put in place and established by the Liberal–National government. The only project it went to the election saying that it would build was Metronet. Have we seen one piece of rail line laid? I am not talking about previous projects; I am talking about in the time that Labor has been in government. Have we seen any? We have seen none.

Do members remember the Premier's jobs bill? That was the cornerstone economic-policy bill of the new Labor government in Western Australia. Do members remember the night that we sat here and scrutinised the bill with the Premier? He had no idea what was in that bill. It was his cornerstone bill. He fumbled around on that table in the middle. He had no idea what was in his own bill. We said to the Premier, "Do you realise that when you say that it must be local content and local jobs, under the definition in the agreement between all the states, the commonwealth and New Zealand, "local content" means any of the states and New Zealand?"

**Mr D.T. Punch:** Local content for you is Malaysia!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** We did not go in to that 2017 election saying that we were going to build a second-rate bridge; we went into that election saying we were going to build an outstanding bridge. The Labor government took it over. By the way, its cost blowouts on that were astronomical. The Labor government did not even follow through with the architecture and design of the bridge properly. The government thinks it is a great bridge; good on it, but it could have been a lot better.

**Mr D.T. Punch** interjected.

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

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Can I just say —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members! Member for Bicton, member for Mount Lawley and member for Bunbury, thank you.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Can I just say that the government did not do a good enough job on that bridge. We all know that. It had cost blowouts left right and centre. I would like to see the breakdown of that bridge. I would love the government to find it and show me where that steel came from, where it was manufactured and where any prefab work was done. I would love the government to give me the breakdown on that, because I reckon a fair bit of it was not from Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I am happy to be proven wrong by the member for Bunbury and the member for Bicton. They can get the information for me and table it in Parliament, and we will go through it in detail and look at just how much local content there was.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Hang on, member for Bunbury! You are calling people, Mr Acting Speaker. I am sitting because you are calling.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Bunbury, I call you for the first time. Member for Bicton!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. Can I say, for someone with a dodgy knee, the member for Bunbury sprang up pretty quickly just then. I tell members what, he must be on steroids sitting in the chamber right now, the way he jumped to his feet. He was faster than a three-year-old's jack-in-the-box right then. He was very fast indeed.

I will go to some statistics of the domestic recession that the government has not been able to turn around or correct. They are pretty damning of the Labor Party's term in government so far—very damning indeed. In fact, there is a 5.7 per cent unemployment trend, which has been higher than the national rate for 52 months in a row. This is a Premier, Treasurer and a government that say they are growing jobs. Yes, but for 52 months in a row our unemployment rate has been above the national average, so the government has not turned it around. Not only has the government not turned it around, in all its time in government, it has hovered between 5.7 per cent and 6.3 per cent. In fact, I think the month after the Labor Party won office it was sitting at 5.8 per cent. The only pat on the back that the government can really give itself is for a reduction of 0.1 per cent, but the unemployment rate got as high as 6.3 per cent during that time. The government is claiming a victory of reducing the unemployment rate from 6.3 per cent during its term to what it is today at around 5.7 per cent. That is what the government is doing. It is all about spin, and the spin simply does not wash.

**Mr D.T. Punch** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Yes, member for Bunbury. This government is all about spin.

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I thank you for getting some decorum back in the chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker, because the member for Girrawheen was starting to get a bit untidy just then. It was most uncharacteristic of the member for Girrawheen, who normally holds a fair degree of decorum when sitting in the chair as an Acting Speaker.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Perhaps it is best not to bait them. Just continue on with your debate, member.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I was quite disappointed with her performance just then.

We have 82 162 people unemployed. The trend has been up one per cent since April 2017, and yet the Premier said he has created jobs. How has the government created all these jobs when the trend is up since it took office? I do not get the maths on that. Clearly, the Premier does not either. He is creating a new maths; it is McGowan maths, which is a new sort of maths that the government creates and preaches. We have 141 766 underemployed, and the trend is up 5.1 per cent on the last year. That is a situation we are dealing with. We are dealing with unemployment as a serious issue in Western Australia, and this government has done everything in its power to make it worse, not to make it better. When it comes to reflecting on the former government, the former government had large projects underway. When that mining construction boom wound itself down and went from construction into production, thankfully we had some major infrastructure projects going on in the Perth metropolitan area and

through the royalties for region scheme in the regions that helped the tradies in Western Australia stay and work in Western Australia. When the Labor Party came to government, what did it do?

**Mr D.T. Punch** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** What did the member for Bunbury do? The member for Bunbury was like one of those little geckos stuck on the walls of the tropical Kimberley or the Northern Territory saying, "We have won government, what do we do now?" We could see the little thought bubble coming out of the little gecko's face going, "Will anybody see me? What am I doing?" They had no idea. As a result of that, what have we seen? We have seen net interstate migration fall for Western Australia. In fact, our statistics for the March quarter were 1 142; and in December 2018, 2 542; in September 2018, 1 744; in June 2018, 2 597; and in March 2018, 2 620. That is the pattern of this government. We are losing people. Do members know who those people are? Those people are our tradies. Those people are our young professionals coming out of university with professional qualifications who are leaving this state in droves because they have lost faith in the Labor government. That is what they are doing. I just compare us, what is going on in the state of Western Australia, with what is going on some of the other states. Let us look at Queensland. Queensland's interstate migration figure is positive 5 175. For the December 2018 quarter, it was positive 7 213; for the September 2018 quarter, it was positive 5 020; and for the June 2018 quarter, it was positive 5 861. What about Victoria? In March 2019, it was positive 3 518; in December 2018, it was positive 3 645; in September 2018, it was positive 2 599; and in June 2018, it was positive 3 018. What does that tell us? It tells us that this government is doing something wrong and those states are doing something right. That is what it tells us.

If the government wants to get the economy back on track, its fiscal policy is one thing, but it mucked it up because it said it was going to reduce taxes to increase aggregate demand in the economy and it did not. The government has raised taxes, which contracted aggregate demand in the economy and sent all these people east. The government's fiscal policy is damaged and its jobs policy is damaged because the Jobs Bill it wrote does not work and there is no evidence from three years in power to demonstrate that the government has the economy on any semblance of an upper trajectory. It is on a downward trajectory because of the government's policies. The member for Cottesloe and the Leader of the Opposition have outlined those things, as has the member for Vasse. They have outlined a number of those issues that the government has failed on and continues to fail on. As long as the government stays in denial, all the Labor Party is really demonstrating is that it is holding true to that old saying that it is good in opposition, but useless in government, because in government it comes under paralysis. It just freezes and decides that the way it will get out of the paralysis is to spin nonsense and hope that the people of Western Australia will believe it.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Excuse me, member, are you taking interjections?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** No, not from the member for Cannington, because he is quite rude.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I thank the minister.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** At least I'm not an idiot like you.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** There we go again. Point taken.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, you will withdraw that.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I withdraw.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I appreciate your protection, Deputy Speaker.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** This man has half the brain of a donkey.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, I call you for the first time, but, I suspect, probably not the last.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Thank you, Deputy Speaker, because it is really becoming a rabble over there; it really is.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I seek your counsel, Deputy Speaker. Would the minister be required to withdraw?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes, please withdraw the other comment.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I withdraw. He does not have half the brain of a donkey.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, you are getting very close to a second call. Please, enough.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I withdraw.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Let us just get on with this. There are five minutes.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I am absolutely happy to get on with this, I am trying to get on with this, but with these rude interjections all the time it is difficult.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Go ahead, member, or I will sit you down.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Donkeys are actually quite useful, they can carry things, but sucking geckos stuck to walls in paralysis do not achieve much at all, I can tell members now.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I think you just made a ruling about naming people or calling people names that relate to insects, animals or any other thing around here, and it always has been unparliamentary in this house to be comparing people with animals. I have listened to it, but when it goes one way, I think it should go back the other.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, member. Your point is taken, but it is not a point of order. I do not think that reference to a gecko is particularly rude, but we were running close to the mark with some of the other comments. Please continue, member, you do not have long to go. Speak quickly.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I seek an extension.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** You're a lizard!

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, I call you for the third time. Do you want to go home?

**Mr M.P. Murray:** No—U2.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, you are on three calls and you will be going shortly. Please.

*Point of Order*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Acting Speaker, I am not trying to canvass your ruling, but I want to understand: as I understand it, a gecko is a lizard and we are being called geckos. Until the minister raised an objection, no-one had raised any objection to that. You said that calling somebody a gecko was not inconsistent with the standing orders. I am just trying to clarify —

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Would you like me to explain?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Yes. I would appreciate it.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I was not objecting to the use of a small reptile in this place. I was objecting to the interjection and telling the member that it is not appropriate. Please continue.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** It is wonderful to have a Deputy Speaker who is sensible in this place and who can hold —

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Sorry, member, did you want an extension?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I already asked for one.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I have not granted it yet.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Sorry.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Granted.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** So that I can continue to hold this government to account for its failings over the last three years, let us move on after that interesting conversation about animals and fauna. We found that although Western Australia is achieving a one per cent population growth in this state, it is only natural—it is a natural population growth. It is not from skilled people choosing to come to this state and grow the state. Not only will we have a skills shortage if the government does manage to turn around this economy, but we are giving all our skills away. That trade shortage will hurt the economy of Western Australia if, by some miracle, that side of the chamber is able to get aggregate demand back on the right track in Perth and regional Western Australia.

Another aspect of the economy in which the government has failed is the housing sector. Government members all know that. They all know that the way people value their homes is that the equity that they have built up in their home is their wealth. For the majority of Western Australians, the basis of their wealth is the equity in their

home. As has been pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Cottesloe and the member for Vasse, if people end up with negative equity in their homes, it means they have no net wealth. All they have is debt. They will be running scared. They will not go out and buy an investment property or have that restaurant meal once a week that they would like to take. They will not take that holiday in the south west that they would like to take. They will be worried, because if they have negative equity in their home and the economy continues to go down under this government, there is a chance that they might not have a job. Over the three years of this government, the unemployment rate has gone from 5.7 per cent to 6.3 per cent and back to 5.8 per cent to whatever it is—so that has not gone anywhere. We have over 100 000 people underemployed and over 80 000 people unemployed. People are worried about their jobs. Will those people feel confident to spend in the economy? Of course not. If the government does not tackle the demand side economics of the economy of Western Australia and get people spending again, nothing will start moving again.

One thing in the government's kitbag that the government has promised is Metronet. The Minister for Transport goes on about the Yanchep line that has been paid for by the commonwealth, and the Ellenbrook line, which is all great—but not one bit of rail has been laid yet. There is not one job yet. It is not happening. It has been promised, but until those jobs start to happen, the money is not going to start flowing, the multiplier is not going to take an effect through the economy, and it will not improve the demand side.

When we compare what is happening in Western Australia with what is going on in the other states, it is no wonder that we have net migration going in the wrong direction. The other states have huge projects underway. These guys like liquid-papering out "Victoria" on a number of policies and bringing them to this place and throwing them on the table and saying they are the government's new wonderful policies. It has just liquid-papered out "Victoria" and called it WA, and away it goes. The one thing that this government has not focused on is how to get genuine infrastructure projects off the ground with private sector and commonwealth support that can genuinely stop the flow of our skilled workforce going east. The government has not been able to turn it around. The member for Warnbro is shaking his head. He is not in his chair, so he cannot comment. If he was in his chair, he probably could. The member for Warnbro made the point today that the government is trying to get all these shipbuilding projects for Henderson, and I hope he lands them. That is why the federal Liberals in Western Australia are working so hard to try to get those projects to Western Australia, because they get it. They get that if we can get more contract work to Western Australia, it means more tradies in work and fewer of them going east. They get it. But the government has to deliver as well. It has to stop being a one-trick pony. It cannot just be all about Metronet. I know those guys opposite quoted a tweet I did some time ago that said they need more in their kitbag than Metronet if they are going to try to turn this economy around.

**Mrs A.K. Hayden:** We haven't even got that yet.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The member for Darling Range is quite right. These are big issues. In the housing market in Western Australia, the median house values in Perth are less than they are in Hobart, Tasmania. The median cost of a house in Perth is less than the median cost of a house in Hobart. A former Premier once quipped that Tasmania is a national park. We have this massive industry and the mining and oil and gas sector going on, which is the only thing, by the way, propping up our economy. If we did not have that, we would be in real trouble. We know that this mob is kind of almost being arm-twisted by the Environmental Protection Authority and whatever. The fact is we need good infrastructure projects brought forward to help generate jobs, which will help generate income flow in our economy, which will help generate income for the government. Once the economy starts moving, the government's stamp duty receipts will start going up. The government has demonstrated time and again that its efforts in those types of policies are going in the other direction.

There are no better examples than the examples already presented, such as the regional migration scheme backed up by a seven per cent surcharge tax on foreign investors. What does that do to foreign investors? They all go east because there is no net benefit for them to buy an off-the-plan apartment or existing apartment here. There is no point. We held an advantage over the apartment market in Australia before the government introduced that tax. Once that tax came in, foreign buyers said that there was no advantage anymore and that they would go and buy in the east. That is what they did. We know that was a recent backflip. It was a flawed policy in itself, but it was a backflip on the impact that the government's tax policy was having on foreign investment, so it did that stamp duty change for off-the-plan projects. Of course, that helped turn around the foreign investor side but it offended and upset many in the housing and unit construction sector because it, basically, picked a winner and meant the others were losers. Those people who were already constructing those apartments or had excess supply of completed apartments were not picked up in that stamp duty concession, so they lost. The government stalled that whole market. Sure, it achieved an outcome with a "behind-the-scenes, sneaky-sneaky; let's try to turn around this seven per cent surcharge" mistake, which it was. "Let's create another mistake while we do it." That is consistent with the government's policy development over the last three years. It consistently makes calls, often on the run and without proper consultation, that come under enormous scrutiny from the sectors that are impacted and

involved, and then the government tries to do a backflip. It seems like a lifetime ago, but we saw it with the Perth Modern School debacle, when the government rushed to get the Subiaco school afoot. Basically, that entire policy was drafted up over a weekend when the government started getting massive backlash from the Perth Modern School community.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** The new school in the western suburbs?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I am referring to the backflip that the government had to do under pressure at the time, because the new school that the government was going to do was a high-rise building in Northbridge. That went down like a lead balloon. That was the government's plan, if I remember rightly. The government was going to turn Perth Modern into a normal general intake school, so that community got really upset. The government had the City Beach high school site ready to go, with classrooms already there, "But, no; we can't do that as that was a Liberal policy. We couldn't be seen to be doing that. That would be flying the white flag, wouldn't it?" The government has gone ahead. Good on you! The government has built that school and we know it, and the community is grateful that it is at least building something. In 2025, that school will be at capacity, and the government will be back at square one anyway. That is what it is doing so, hopefully, all those kids will be able to get public transport there and get off the bus, but we will wait and see. Let us wait and see how that goes; time will tell. One of the really interesting things about infrastructure spending is that I think the Victorian Treasurer said sometime this year that Victoria had \$107.3 billion in existing and planned infrastructure spending. I know that quote came under some scrutiny in the papers in Victoria, but it was \$107.3 billion over there. I think Queensland has a \$49.5 billion infrastructure program for the next four years.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The member for Girrawheen has piped up about debt. I would like to know how much debt the government has paid off. The shadow Treasurer has highlighted in this place on several occasions that the income coming into the government coffers is substantially more than it was for the former Liberal-National government. How much of that is the government actually using to pay down debt? It would be well worth having a look at those figures to see how that is going. If that is what the member for Girrawheen is saying the government is doing, that is great, but let us see it—let us see the debt coming down. At the same time, the government still needs to implement policies that will attract tradespeople—or stem the flow of tradespeople from Western Australia to the east coast—so that they can get over here and get involved in projects and building that will keep them here so that they can spend on the local economy and help the economy get out of the mire; otherwise, the domestic recession will deepen.

What is the government's plan for getting us out of this situation? I have not heard it yet. Other than Metronet, what is the government's plan? Median house prices are now below those of Hobart. I know of no massive infrastructure projects. If the government is saying that it does not want the state to go into more debt, what is its plan to get the commonwealth or the private sector involved? Does it have a plan there? Does the government have any policies about encouraging private investment to grow tourism projects in particular? Does it have any ideas? No. I am not calling members of the government individually little sucking geckos, but the analogy is the gecko on the wall. Members will remember that analogy—they just freeze when you turn the light on and do nothing. It is like paralysis. That was the analogy. We are not hearing a plan and we are the people who are focused on trying to hear and understand it. How are the people of Western Australia going to know what the plan is if we do not know? The government does not tell anyone. I do not think it has one. It is a reactive government that reacts to problems. It creates problems, reacts to the problems, and then spins some yarns and puts out some ads and media releases when it has a meeting. That is all it seems to do. It does not have a grand plan that communicates to the people of Western Australia what they can expect from the government over its four-year term or building towards a 10-year plan. We have not seen any of it.

One of the issues for the Western Australia economy is the lack of diversification. Prior to the last election, Labor members talked about diversification as being a major issue prior, but they have done nothing about it in government. If we look at economies such as Victoria, we will see that its gross state product grew three per cent faster than the gross domestic product of 1.9 per cent. Healthcare and social assistance spending was up 11.3 per cent. Construction was up by 4.7 per cent. Financial and insurance services were up by 3.3 per cent. What has the government been doing in that space? Nothing! It has not been doing anything. But we are in a time zone which could really do something with some of those services for people in our neighbouring nations, who could probably jump on a plane and benefit from some tourism aspects linked to those services. Queensland is a big mining state like us but its growth in education as gross value added was 2.6 per cent, whereas we know that international students coming to Perth left and went east. They were not welcome and that is how they felt. These are the big issues. If the government does not start demonstrating that it has a vision for the state and for jobs for Western Australia that is tangible and will stem the flow of the skilled workforce of Western Australia going east, and does not focus on paying

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down debt, as the member for Girrawheen said, so we can see it, whilst it attracts investment to grow our state, we will not see a plan, and the people of Western Australia will not see that plan. That is the problem and why this motion has been brought forward. It is a reminder. We are condemning the government for being a do-nothing McGowan Labor government. It has failed to act on getting things done. It is that simple.

**MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury)** [6.24 pm]: I was really looking forward to following the member for Cottesloe. Last time I followed him we talked about his favourite restaurant and its lack of ability to get a chef. I pointed out that that was a consequence of the training cutbacks that the previous government put in. Clearly, his favourite dish must be a soufflé, because there was absolutely nothing in his contribution. I was glad that the member for Churchlands stood up because once we read the member for Churchlands' contribution in *Hansard* I think we will find that it was nothing but allegory and a wild expose of the living habits of the gecko. There was not a lot of substance in there either.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Certainly no facts!

**MR D.T. PUNCH:** Yes, certainly no facts. I will come to the member for Vasse and the Leader of the Opposition shortly as well. This is a motion that really detracts from the role of an opposition, which is to constructively criticise and attack the government's policies.

*Point of Order*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** The member does not have the correct allocation of time. He is the lead speaker. He should have 60 minutes.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** He didn't indicate that.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I am making the point that as the lead speaker he should have 60 minutes.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Are you the lead speaker, member?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** We will adjust things. Go ahead.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange:** I hope you've got a few notes.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** I do not need notes when I follow the member for Churchlands.

I have looked at this motion and it mentions the government failing to start any major job-creating projects. We have heard a lot about spin, but I can tell members opposite that I got up very early this morning to attend Parliament. As I drove up Kwinana Freeway, what did I see? I saw heaps of people out there working. I saw trucks moving and infrastructure being built. When I drive back to Bunbury tomorrow night, I will drive past the Kemerton Industrial Park, which has attracted major private sector investment with a major infrastructure component from this state government. It is built and operating. When I drive into Bunbury, I will see cranes. I do not think I saw a crane from 2008 to 2017, but there are cranes and activity in Bunbury. This is one of those motions that singularly fails to pass the pub test, because anywhere in Perth people can see evidence of infrastructure projects from this government that are underway, employing people and doing things to take this state forward. It is a ridiculous motion. It comes from an opposition that did not create a single job in its last term of government—not only that, it left us with a legacy of debt.

I know that the member for Cottesloe does not like history—in fact, no members opposite like history. When we came into government we had a forward estimates position that was rapidly tracking up to forty thousand million dollars of debt. The first thing we had to do as a government was to bring the state's finances under control and, at the same time, ramp up our major agenda of creating jobs for everyday Western Australians here in WA. "Here in WA" is the missing link. I know the number of contracts that went overseas and to the eastern states under the previous government. I think the member for Vasse made reference to the railcars that the previous government provided. Where did they come from, members?

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Brisbane!

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** It was Brisbane in Queensland! There was no commitment to jobs here. The member for Cottesloe might laugh on his way out, but this is serious business, because we have people who are doing it tough and need jobs here in WA, people who are changing careers and need access to training, and young people who need jobs based on quality training. What did the previous government do? Nothing. It ripped the guts out of training. I remind members that it put up training fees at a time when state final demand was in negative territory. It ripped the guts out of training, but in 2013–14 state final demand was minus 1.3 per cent. In 2014–15 it was minus 2.2 per cent, in 2015–16 it was minus 4.7 per cent, and in 2016–17 it was minus 7.1 per cent, and the member for Churchlands talks to us about economic management!



**Ms M.M. Quirk:** He usually talks a lot about lizards!

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** He did talk a lot about lizards. He might be up for an ecology award at some point!

I was listening with care to the Leader of the Opposition. A Leader of the Opposition has to be out there driving the agenda forward. They have to impassion the members who are sitting behind them. They all looked bored stiff, unfortunately, throughout the Leader of the Opposition's presentation. A lot of members were looking at their iPhones or reading their notes. For a fundamentally important motion that the Leader of the Opposition was supposed to put forward today, not a skerrick of interest was shown by opposition members sitting behind her. It really came home to me today how the Leader of the Opposition does not really have an eye for detail. She is pretty good on generalities, but I think her interview this morning on ABC radio really pinpointed this issue about the detail. I picked up on the medihotel. I know our health minister is very keen on medihotels. The Leader of the Opposition made reference to medihotels taking the pressure off our emergency departments. They do not have anything to do with emergency departments; they are post-discharge care. Our urgent care clinics are about taking pressure off emergency departments, and that is what we are doing.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup** interjected.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** The shadow spokesperson for Health needs to brief the Leader of the Opposition more effectively because she was clearly not briefed on that!

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Dawesville, I call you for the —

**Mr P. Papalia:** Third time.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** No—first time. That was surprising; but go ahead, member for Bunbury.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** All that talk of geckos and the green tie just set him off!

There was a really important and significant gap in the Leader of the Opposition's contribution —

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Just one?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** There were quite a few, but this is something that is particularly close to my heart. I am surprised that members of the National Party were represented by only one member on this. I could be corrected—I will read *Hansard* carefully—but I do not think regional WA was mentioned once in the Leader of the Opposition's contribution. Regional WA is a beneficiary from this government of a major expansion of infrastructure development. Not one mention of that was made by the Leader of the Opposition. I think the Leader of the Opposition is firmly focused on the metropolitan area and has just delegated any thoughts of regional Western Australia to the National Party. No National Party members were here. The Leader of the Opposition's contribution did not include regional WA.

Then we went on to the member for Vasse's contribution. As soon as the member for Vasse stood up, the Leader of the Opposition disappeared. I am not sure what was behind that. Quite a few other members seemed to drop off and we were rapidly down to about half of the opposition's numbers—there were about five members here. The member for Vasse raised a number of issues about local content, and referred to the outer ring-road. This was an interesting one because, member for Vasse, I recently attended the launch of the pre-works for the dualling of Bussell Highway. These are important foundation works, funded by the state government ahead of any contribution by the federal government at this stage, to get the project moving, to get people working and to show that we are committed to doing that work. Guess where the labour comes from? It comes from the member for Vasse's electorate. A local company is running that project. That highlights their ability to do local jobs.

At the same time as that is happening, our incredibly hardworking Minister for Transport is fast-tracking the outer ring-road. She has called for expressions of interest from lead contractors. She has started the process of getting those lead contractors engaged with local contractors and subcontractors to see who can provide a contribution to that project with landscaping, concreting, bridgework, foundations and electrical work—the list goes on. It is a major project. I can tell members opposite that people are very excited about that project not only in my electorate, but also in the electorates of the member for Murray–Wellington and the member for Collie–Preston. Those two examples, together with the examples given by the Leader of the Opposition, highlight how little substance there was in the contributions of members opposite on this motion. They skimmed over the facts and skimmed over the detail. In fact, as I was watching, I formed a view that every time there was a serious policy analysis to be contributed, members opposite reached for a newspaper article. Nathan Hondros is a pretty good contributor. It seemed to me that all the policy advice that went into the opposition's comments to support this motion was simply a reproduction of what might be printed as opinion pieces in various newspapers or whatever. The contributions were pretty disappointing.

I actually did not get anything out of the member for Cottesloe's contribution. There seemed to be a lot of waffling about polls and about what we should and should not be doing, but in terms of a singular analysis of the infrastructure that is rolling out across the whole of Western Australia, there was not a lot from the member for Cottesloe.

I want to give a few examples of some of the projects that this government has underway, which are directly supporting local content. Before I do that, the Minister for Tourism is sitting in here. I want to congratulate the Minister for Tourism, who has absolutely turned around the state's tourism prospects. Direct flights from overseas are coming into Perth, bringing happy holiday-makers, who are distributing throughout Perth and into the regions. We are seeing them in my electorate, Minister for Tourism. There has been an 18 per cent increase in visitation numbers in the Bunbury area. I am sure that a lot of visitors are also going into the Vasse area. I must say that I was in Busselton on Sunday.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Twenty-six per cent.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Twenty-six per cent. I was in Busselton on Sunday. A lot of comparisons are made between Bunbury and Busselton. Busselton's main street was absolutely dead on its feet. Bunbury's main street was thriving, and that is the benefit of having active local members!

That takes me back to another point I wanted to make about the Bunbury Outer Ring Road. Does the member for Vasse support the Bunbury Outer Ring Road?

**Ms L. Mettam:** Of course I do.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Does the member support the route and the alignment? Was that a yes?

**Ms L. Mettam:** About the alignment?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Yes—the route; the plan. Does she want it to move forward?

**Ms L. Mettam:** I certainly want to get it moving. A lot of concern has been raised about it in the community.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** But she still wants to get it moving.

**Ms L. Mettam:** Of course.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Does the member think it should just go through the Environmental Protection Authority process and then get on with it?

**Ms L. Mettam:** What is the member struggling with locally? What does the member for Bunbury need help with?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** No; I do not need any help. I just want to point out that the opposition is very quick to have a go at that project but is —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Bunbury and member for Vasse, I appreciate that you are not responding; you should not respond. This is not a debate, member, unless you are asking —

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** I stand corrected, Deputy Speaker.

I recall the Leader of the National Party coming down and criticising our hardworking Minister for Transport over the outer ring-road and about alignment issues, but she failed to mention that the National Party had lobbed a petition into this place calling for the original alignment through the southern corridor to be retained. All this duplicity goes on over these projects. On the one hand, the opposition really wants to get them going and see them happen, but, on the other hand, if there is an opportunity to stir up the community, it will.

I now want to talk about Bunbury prison. That was a \$24 million build. When Labor came to office, there was gross overcrowding in prisons and a hazy notion that a new prison would be built, but not a single dollar could be found to fund it. This government got on with the job. It planned it and built it, based on an expansion of our existing prison estate and not having to develop new prison estates. We looked for the value-for-money option and arrived at an intelligent solution. That prison was built with 90 per cent local content, member for Vasse. More importantly, it has led to 61 new permanent jobs in the south west. That is one example of a very good accomplishment by this government that is achieving value for money.

I can go on. A new step-up, step-down facility is being built in Bunbury. I remember that was promised in 2013 by the former Liberal–National government. In 2017, just before the state election, the same promise was recycled. It had not been built; it had not moved an inch! We got into government, the tenders were let and that project is now well on its way to completion. Part of the argument coming from members opposite is that they expected us to start laying railway lines on 12 March 2017. That is the basis of their argument. There is no recognition of the fundamental principles for rolling out a project, such as financing, business case development, detailed planning, approvals, tendering, making sure we are getting value for money and, importantly, making sure that we maximise

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local content. Then we come back to the micro levels. We know that tradespeople are doing it tough and we know that there needs to be a stream of work going out, so what did this responsive McGowan Labor government do? It put money directly into schools to fund school maintenance, and directly into hospitals to fund hospital maintenance to get the money into the hands of subcontractors or contractors and directly support our traders.

I want to talk a little about the *Australind* because I know that it is close to the member for Vasse's heart. Has the member for Vasse travelled on the *Australind* recently at all? Sorry, Deputy Speaker. I did travel on the *Australind*, and it was a very enjoyable trip. The interesting thing with the member for Vasse's contribution is that she mentioned that it had been out of service for 77 days so far this year. Interestingly, 74 of those days were entirely attributable to the severe corrosion that was present in every single railcar.

**Mr P. Papalia:** It does not happen overnight.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Yes. That corrosion was discovered under this government's watch. Those trains were built in Bassendean; I am sure members would be interested in that. Good Western Australian workmanship had carried them all the way through, but the previous government did not give a stiff about the *Australind*; it was not even on its radar. In fact, at the last election it had no commitment in relation to the *Australind* or rail travel. Corrosion does not happen in an instant, and because this corrosion was quite severe, it was clear that the motor carriages and the compartments were at risk of falling apart and letting the engines drop. The couplings at the end of the carriages were severely corroded, with the potential to pull the carriage through. The government, the Minister for Transport and the Public Transport Authority made the decision that it was a public safety risk and those trains needed to go off the line and be repaired properly. They have been practically rebuilt. Since they have been rebuilt, when we take out the corrosion issues and look at our maintenance of those trains, compared with what the previous government did, our record is incredibly good. The member for Vasse was very selective in what she said. Our election commitment was that we would improve the *Australind* service. We started with improving the train stations, and that work is underway. I was at North Dandalup train station a few months ago when that work started. We also said quite clearly that our election commitment was about building a new rail industry and building trains in Western Australia. We were not going to try to find cheap off-the-shelf options out of China, Indonesia, India or any other overseas country. I am sure they are very good trains for those areas, but we wanted to make sure that we built them here and provided jobs and traineeships for people in WA. We wanted the work done right so that when the trains are built they will last for another 30 years. During the next 30 years of a Labor government, we will make sure that they are fully maintained.

I want to speak very briefly about the potential for regional arts in our regions.

**MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley)** [6.43 pm]: The member for Bunbury raised the issue of regional and cultural arts, and I would like to take him up on that point, because there is nothing we have seen quite so good as the investment of the McGowan Labor government in creative and cultural industries. Before I get to that, I commend the member for Bunbury for his excellent contribution. One of the things about the member's contribution that I was impressed with is that having listened to all the contributions from members opposite, he was able to discern some narrative of an argument. As I sat here and listened, it occurred to me that this was the most turgid, incoherent and paradoxical argument that has ever been presented in this Parliament. These people opposite are completely ill-prepared for government. They have no idea what they stand for, they have no idea what they are talking about, they have no idea how to manage the economy and there are barely any of them left to participate in this debate.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** Allow us to participate then, member.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** Member for Dawesville, in 473 days it will all be over for you, so you do not have to worry.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** Because we will be in government. With your margin, I am not sure you should be speaking.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** Mate, it is better than yours.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members! Please, it is not a yelling match across at each other. If you wish to take interjections, just let me know.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** We will see how we go, Deputy Speaker. The member for Vasse's motion was —

That this house condemns the do-nothing McGowan Labor government for failing to start any major job-creating projects ...

Yet, she went off on a folly of her own wandering through the long grass about freedom of information applications. She barely mentioned jobs in her contribution, whatsoever. The only conclusion that I could draw from the member's inability to prosecute an argument about jobs is that there is no substance to this argument, or alternatively, that the Liberals do not know how to prosecute this argument properly. I suspect that the Liberal Party cannot prosecute its argument properly because it has such a shocking record on jobs. Look at the thousands and thousands of jobs that have been created in just the first term, not even the first three-quarters, of the McGowan Labor government.

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Compare that with no net new jobs created during the last term of the Barnett government; it has no credibility on this issue. It has zero credibility. Then we have this inconsistent, incoherent philosophical approach and on one hand, members opposite say that they should not pay down debt, they should spend all the money as quickly as they can, and then they say, "But we're the responsible fiscal managers. We're the responsible financial managers".

The contribution from the member for Cottesloe was insane in its temerity. All he did in his contribution to this place is talk down Western Australia. He criticised the activist McGowan Labor government for getting on with the job of trying to create jobs and stimulate economic activity, and at the same time, he stands there as a representative of the people of Western Australia, as a person with a sacred obligation to try to contribute to the betterment of this state, and told this whole chamber just how bad it is. Shame on the member for Cottesloe. That was entirely the wrong thing to do, and somebody of his experience should know better than to do that. There was no meaningful contribution from any of the members opposite.

The next problem I have is the blatant hypocrisy of the Liberal Party these days. It criticises our revenue raising measures and says that we are a hard taxing government.

**Mr I.C. Blayney:** Privatising.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** The member for Geraldton, I will take that interjection. Is the privatisation of Western Power still Nationals WA policy? If he is not prepared to answer the question, that is weak, but that is fine.

*Point of Order*

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** The member for Mount Lawley continues to encourage members of the opposition to engage with him in a debate, which, as you know, we are not able to do, and then he decides to chastise us and call members weak when they cannot, and they abide by the standing orders. I ask you to pull him into line.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** Pull me into line?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Would you just wait for me to respond, please.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** I beg your pardon, Deputy Speaker.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That was not a point of order. The member said he would take the interjection from the member for Geraldton, and the member for Geraldton responded accordingly. I am sorry. Continue, member for Mount Lawley.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** No Labor government will commit to the privatisation of Western Power. We were so proud to take that policy to the 2017 election. It is such a fundamental part of what we stood for, because we knew that with responsible fiscal management we would be able to restore the finances of Western Australia without having to resort to the privatisation of crucial, critical public utility infrastructure. What about other revenue raising measures? This is what the Liberal Party had to say on land tax. Gareth Parker wrote a fantastic article on 19 February 2016, titled "Liberals in revolt on land tax". It states —

WA Liberal MPs in blue-ribbon seats are being hit by complaints from angry supporters who vow they will never again vote for the party because of the impact of land tax hikes handed down in last year's State Budget.

That was February 2016. The member for Riverton, in the article from Gareth Parker, promised to ameliorate it. The former member for Mount Lawley, Mr Sutherland, was clear in his condemnation of the Liberal government for not doing anything about land tax. He wrote to the Treasurer about land tax, saying that it was a major problem. Having been mollified by the former Treasurer, the former member for Mount Lawley was then dismayed when, in May 2016, the member for Riverton handed down the budget. It was designed to collect an extra \$836 million over the forward estimates. It was reported —

... Mt Lawley Liberal MLA Michael Sutherland said land tax hikes had been "too sudden and too much".

"I'm disappointed ...

"I don't believe that it's the catalyst for a spill, but there are a lot of backbenchers and ministers (who are unhappy)."

Unfortunately, some of those backbenchers and ministers who were unhappy are no longer with us because in March 2017 the community of Western Australia voted overwhelmingly to reject the highest taxing, high spending, high debt-driving Barnett–Harvey–Nalder government and send it into opposition, including Rasputin in the back room pulling the strings.

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 27 November 2019]

p9461a-9489a

Mrs Liza Harvey; Dr David Honey; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mr Donald Punch; Mr Simon Millman

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**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member, if you are going to refer to members in the house, you should refer to them by their name and title.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** I was not referring to any member.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Okay. Just someone.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** I would not want it to be suggested that an imputation is contained in what I was saying. Far be it for me to cast aspersions.

A member interjected.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** The member for Rasputin.

**Mr I.C. Blayney:** Who is Rasputin?

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** That is another pointless interjection from the member for Geraldton. I invited an interjection from the member for Geraldton previously and, once again, he has demonstrated that perhaps it was not worth the effort.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** You are very aggressive today, member for Mount Lawley.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** I was astounded. The only contribution that made any sense was made by the member for Churchlands. I was astounded to sit here and listen to each of the opposition members stand up and give the most incoherent and inconsistent contributions to this debate. They were completely unfounded on any philosophical basis. I always thought that the Liberal Party had a solid philosophical identity. I sat here and listened to their contributions, and I was infuriated by the fact that the Liberal Party has abandoned all of that and it does not know what it stands for anymore. The only conclusion I can draw from that is that unless and until it knows what it stands for, it will not be ready for government. It does not know what it stands for, it is irresponsible, it talks down the economy, it talks down our state, it has jeopardised our full-cycle docking of submarines and it has no idea how the economy works.

The Leader of the Opposition stood up and said that the McGowan government is not doing anything and we do not have any plans in order to create jobs or stimulate the economy. That was her statement, or words to that effect. In the next breath, she listed seriatim the Albany ring-road, the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, the Mandurah train station car park, railcar manufacturing, the removal of the level crossing at Caledonian Avenue in Maylands, close to my electorate, Midland train station, Karnup train station, the Yanchep extension, the Byford train line and the Ellenbrook train line. If that is not a plan, I do not know what is. That was a comprehensive list of significant infrastructure projects that the McGowan Labor government is spending money on. Then the Liberal Party had the audacity to lecture us on hospitals. I was astounded by the fact that it would even dare go there on a day when John Holland is suing the state government for \$300 million for its shockingly botched Perth Children's Hospital project. There was asbestos in the roof and lead in the water. What does the Liberal Party want to do? It wants to tell us to rush all our projects. Do members opposite know what happens when we rush projects?

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** It is exactly what happened in the Perth Children's Hospital, member for Vasse. We know very well, exactly as the member for Bunbury eloquently articulated and spelt out for all members in this chamber, that if those projects are rushed, we end up making mistakes. We will not make the same mistakes made by the Liberal government. We will learn from the lessons of history and we will make sure that a sober, responsible, professional government delivers for all people in Western Australia. Furthermore, we will not stand by and talk down the economy.

In fact, I look at what is going on in Mount Lawley right now. I look at the work that has been put into our small businesses by the Minister for Small Business. The member for Churchlands said that the tourism minister had done nothing. I do not know how many times I have sat here and listened to the Minister for Tourism say that he has been to one place to talk about direct flights, he has been to another place to talk about direct flights and to yet another place to talk about direct flights. All I can see is the corollary of all that hard work and effort now starting to drive tourism numbers. I am here to talk up Western Australia because I am sick of listening to those opposite talking it down. It is a disgrace. I do not know why they do it. I always thought that they would be proud of the achievements of Western Australia.

One of the areas where we are starting to see vibrancy return as a result of the excellent efforts of the McGowan Labor government is due in no small part to the calm, responsible environment of stability that we now bring and responsible economic management, which has been reflected by the international ratings agencies restoring our credit rating. There is always more work to do. If there is more work to be done, the only government I would trust

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to do that work is the McGowan Labor government, because it is the only government with the runs on the board and the demonstrated commitment to fiscal responsibility and economic planning to ensure that Western Australia benefits. The legacy of debt and deficit, job destruction and economic and state recession that was left to us by the directionless wreckers of the Liberal Party is an absolute disgrace.

I turn to Beaufort Street. I will tell members why I am confident that the financial management of the McGowan Labor government is creating an environment in which the broader economy can now start to flourish. In today's *WA Today*, David Prestipino wrote an article headed "Beaufort's back alright: Signs of life on Mount Lawley retail strip". As the member for Mount Lawley, nothing could give me greater pride. It states —

The retail malaise that crippled business on Beaufort Street appears to be lifting, as an old favourite returns and new offerings open on the strip.

Clarence's restaurant ... will reopen on Monday at its old premises ...

Two doors down ... Five Bar has been brought back to life, now that Mack Daddy's New York Slice has been granted a liquor licence and expanded their operation.

General manager Charlotte Boon ... said the decision to stay in Mount Lawley was easy as Beaufort Street was a hotspot for foodies.

"We've always loved the atmosphere here, the great selection of bars and restaurants and how close it is to the city. It was never really even a question of us looking anywhere else," she said.

The pizzeria will now seat 100, hire 10 new staff ...

That is new local jobs being created in my neighbourhood —

... providing top-quality cocktails, with eight beers also now on tap as well as gluten-free and vegan pizzas.

But wait, there is more. It continues —

Mack Daddy's old lease has already been snapped up too, with Medellin Cafe to open soon with a focus on Colombian food, drinks and coffee.

...

The vacancy next to the perennially thriving Must Wine Bar has also been filled, with Huxtaburger set to open this weekend ...

Mayor Emma Cole from the City of Vincent was reported as saying —

"The Alexander Building on the corner of Walcott Street is undergoing a redevelopment and early next year construction will start on the very green Baltinas mixed-use development, which will bring more residents and opportunities to the area," ...

It is not confined to just the City of Vincent. If we move north of Walcott Street into the City of Stirling, we find that —

New Fashion boutique Weekends, across the road from Hemisphere, has thrived since opening in August, while the plaudits continue to be served at cute French bistro Le Rebelle.

Members can see the environment in which small businesses start to flourish, so they have the confidence to invest, with their entrepreneurialism and the courage to get out there and make a difference. That environment is now coming to the fore thanks to the sensible stewardship of the WA economy by the McGowan Labor government. In addition to the fantastic infrastructure projects that are coming down the pipeline, we have all the great initiatives in our creative industries. As members would know —

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** Take your time, member.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** The opposition has no more speakers. It is running out of speakers.

The McGowan government is committed to creating jobs growth and economic diversification in the state, promoting new technologies and the knowledge economy. WA's creative workforce is integral to the knowledge economy and drives growth in other industries, such as tourism and information communication technologies, and it leverages our creative talent to create more job opportunities in these related sectors. When we look at Beaufort Street in the seat of Mount Lawley, and the wonderful institutions that we have, such as the Astor Theatre, the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and the Edith Cowan University campus in Mt Lawley, we can see that it is a hub of creative activity. Just outside Mt Lawley, we have the new Museum project. It is another example of how this government is delivering on local jobs and content. About 3 300 jobs are being created, and local contractors are already on site contributing to and stimulating the economy.

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**Mr A. Krsticevic:** What did you have to do with that?

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** I do not understand why the member for Carine persists in talking down Western Australia.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

*House adjourned at 7.00 pm*

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