



# Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION  
2022

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 19 May 2022

# Legislative Assembly

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**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** took the chair at 9.00 am, acknowledged country and read prayers.

## PAPER TABLED

A paper was tabled and ordered to lie upon the table of the house.

### SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE GRANTS

*Statement by Minister for Small Business*

**MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Small Business)** [9.01 am]: I would like to bring to the attention of the house some recent changes made by the McGowan government to the small business assistance grants. As I have previously advised the house, in February the state government announced a \$67 million level 1 COVID-19 business assistance package, and more recently a \$72 million package for businesses impacted by level 2 public health and social measures, taking the total committed to COVID-19 business support to almost \$1.7 billion over the past two years. The level 1 package includes \$42 million in rent relief assistance and the level 2 package includes a \$66.8 million small business hardship grants program.

Last month, a revision and expansion of the small business hardship grants program was announced. Two tiers of grants are now available to businesses that have experienced a decrease in turnover for a consecutive two-week period between 1 January and 30 April this year. This reduced the required decrease in turnover from 50 per cent to 40 per cent and 30 per cent for the two tiers. This means that a very significant number of additional small businesses will now be eligible for this grant. An alternative period in 2021 may also be used if the business was not operating at that time or it provides an inaccurate representation of the business's financial situation. Under the new financial assistance grants, more businesses will be able to qualify and they will now be eligible for up to \$50 000 each. In more good news, for businesses that have already received a payment for this program and are now eligible for a higher payment according to the new settings, this extra money will be automatically deposited into their nominated bank account and there will be no need for them to reapply. For those business owners who are uncertain about whether they qualify for the assistance grants or would like help with their application form, I encourage them to contact the Small Business Development Corporation on 13 31 40 and speak to one of its highly qualified business advisers or visit their website at [smallbusiness.wa.gov.au](http://smallbusiness.wa.gov.au)

The changes to the small business assistance grants are further proof that the McGowan government recognises the importance of small businesses in employing hundreds of thousands of Western Australians and creating lively and vibrant communities and diverse economies.

### CORONAVIRUS — OPEN CAPTIONS

*Statement by Minister for Disability Services*

**MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Disability Services)** [9.04 am]: I am pleased to update the house today on the Premier's recent commitment for all future COVID-19 television advertisements related to public health or emergency information to be supported by open captions. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Western Australian government has aimed to deliver accessible and clear public health information at all times. This includes providing closed captions on our digital audiovisual materials and, as we are all familiar with, providing Auslan interpreters at Western Australian government media conferences. Unlike closed captions, which can be turned on or off by the viewer and are provided by television broadcasters, open captions are always in view and cannot be turned off. Providing open captions will ensure that all deaf and hard-of-hearing people can access important information in times of crisis and that the information can be conveyed to viewers who may have muted the audio on their television.

As members will be aware, on 3 December 2020 the WA government launched *A Western Australia for everyone: State disability strategy 2020–2030* outlining our commitment to building inclusive communities that support and empower people with disability. Ensuring WA government messaging is accessible to all members of the community is consistent with the principles of the strategy.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Barry MacKinnon, president of the Deafness Council of Western Australia, for his advocacy in this area. I was able to meet with Mr MacKinnon yesterday to thank him personally for his work on this issue and for his ongoing support for Western Australians who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is great to see that Mr MacKinnon and his colleagues at the Deafness Council of Western Australia are promoting this initiative nationally as best practice in public service announcements.

### HOME INDEMNITY INSURANCE

*Grievance*

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [9.06 am]: I grieve today to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Commerce on behalf of Western Australian residents who have had their home building

dreams shattered. Home indemnity insurance sets out to protect the home owner against financial loss when a builder cannot complete contracted work or meet a valid claim for defective or unsatisfactory work because the builder has died, disappeared, become insolvent or had their licence cancelled. The builder is required to take out home indemnity insurance prior to starting residential building work valued at over \$20 000. The Economic Regulation Authority's 2013 report titled *Inquiry into Western Australia's home indemnity insurance arrangements* detailed the two products that Home Indemnity Insurance offers to consumers: construction period insurance and warranty period insurance. There is a desperate lack of information and clarity in this space. The ERA report referenced information asymmetries and the limited ability of consumers to make reasonably informed choices about the risks they take on when building a house. This is well illustrated in the following two case studies.

Tiarna and Joel Nouwland opted to build their home in Gabbadah, which is 80 kilometres north of Perth. They signed a fixed-price Housing Industry Association contract for \$410 000 on 15 March 2021. In September, the builder—Home Innovation Builders—reached plate height and then work ground to a halt, apparently due to a lack of timber. The timber merchant Colli delivered \$33 000 worth of roofing timber to site in February 2022 but re-entered the site without the Nouwland's permission and took back the timber when it realised the builder was facing financial difficulty.

As a first-time builder, Mrs Nouwland says she had much to learn. Bank payments to the builder were not in step with the progress of the build. Her builder has been paid \$209 000 of the \$410 000 total, which is about 51 per cent of the funds, with just 30 per cent of the work completed. The 2013 ERA report cautions that builders at risk of insolvency often try to push forward payments to increase cash flows. Home Innovation Builders went into liquidation on 11 April, just days after another Perth builder New Sensation Homes went down. It took Mrs Nouwland eight months to get a copy of the certificate of insurance from her builder, a document the builder should have provided before a deposit was paid or work started. The certificate lists a declared contract price of \$410 280, which was used to calculate the premiums. There is no mention of a \$100 000 HII cap. Tiarna was shocked to discover the maximum post-excess insurance payout was to be \$99 500. Quotes to finish the build range from \$470 000 to \$570 000 and Tiarna says the cost of the roofing timber alone has increased 24 per cent since February. She submitted four quotes to QBE a month ago so that she could make a construction period insurance claim but has not yet received her HII payout.

The massive shortfall in insurance funds leaves the Nouwland family with no way of finding an extra \$270 000 to finish the build and with nowhere to go. The bank will not let them proceed as owner builders and the family of six have had no option but to sell their shell of a home. They face the prospect of winter in the shed that was to be their temporary home while they built. This is deeply distressing because Tiarna and her children suffer from asthma, are prone to croup and one child has special needs. Concerned that other home owners are oblivious to the maximum HII insurance payable, Tiarna started a petition calling for better protection for home owners.

Bec McGarry and partner Dwayne Clements signed a building contract with builder Highgrove Developments in October 2014 for \$499 850. When their bank paid the builder the practical completion payment two years later, their five by two home in Lower Chittering was littered with numerous cases of defective workmanship, including structural issues. The quote to have the defects rectified was a staggering \$503 000. Their builder later went into liquidation. They made a warranty claim with QBE Insurance. Like Tiarna, Ms McGarry presumed that the HII certificate of insurance meant she had coverage that would fund work to fix the defects and was incredulous and angry when she got only a \$99 500 payout. Numerous emails sent to ministers and the Premier more than three years ago by Bec McGarry were met with a common response. The then director general of the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, David Smith, on 21 January 2019 said it was clear that the current maximum claim payout of \$100 000 was insufficient to cover all losses and that the state government was reviewing the HII scheme in Western Australia. On 3 May 2019, the Premier said that the HII scheme was currently under review and that DMIRS was developing reform proposals for the government's consideration.

Referring to HII, the then Minister for Commerce, Bill Johnston, said in this place on 29 November 2018 —

This home indemnity insurance is a major issue. I bet that members will hear further from me about additional reforms that will be needed in that space.

The much-mentioned HII review has seen no action and no review of the Home Building Contracts Act 1991 is scheduled. Contrary to promised reforms, we have not heard about it again from the minister. It seems there has been no review. Had the minister acted and increased the level of insurance in line with present-day building costs, the situation of my constituents and many more home builders with shattered dreams would not be so dire. In comparing maximum payout figures in other states, we see that in New South Wales home owners can claim a maximum of \$340 000; Victorians, \$300 000; Queensland residents, \$200 000; and South Australians, \$150 000. Western Australia needs to catch up. The 2013 Economic Regulation Authority report quoted average construction costs for a WA home at \$250 000. Australian Bureau of Statistics data for the 12 months to March 2022 notes that figure had climbed to \$316 000. Perth's median house price is now around \$622 000. Building prices have gone through the roof, placing undue pressure on builders and consumers as the current budget papers make clear —

An increasing incidence of builders failing has the potential to test the capacity of the Home Indemnity Insurance Scheme ...

There is an urgent need for action before other home owners get caught in the utterly distressing situation of my constituents, with a partially completed home and no means of finishing it. Are the six members of the Nouwland family of Gabbadah to spend this winter freezing in an uninsulated shed, when this whole debacle is no fault of their own? Meanwhile, the balance of the special purpose home indemnity insurance reinsurance account is more than \$64 million. Why can a small portion of these funds not be used for ex gratia payments for home owners most recently impacted by builders who have gone into liquidation? Home owners would have had the clarity and the information and access to a more realistic level of insurance had the minister conducted a review as promised.

Parliamentary secretary, I call on your government and the Minister for Commerce to act immediately to provide greater information and clarity in the home indemnity insurance space. Home owners are not aware of the \$100 000 cap. I call on the parliamentary secretary to act where others before her have not, and urgently review the maximum home indemnity insurance available to reflect current building costs and the indemnity levels on offer in other states. I would ask that if the government can offer any help, perhaps it could provide an ex gratia payment for my constituents who have found themselves basically and practically underinsured through no fault of their own.

**MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary)** [9.13 am]: I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for raising this important matter. I congratulate him for his advocacy on behalf of his constituents and for bringing these important issues to Parliament. As the member is aware, the minister is paired on official business, and he gives his apologies. As such, I provide this statement with advice from the department in response.

The *Final report — Inquiry into Western Australia's home indemnity insurance arrangements* was released in 2013 by the Economic Regulation Authority. The ERA's recommendations were aimed at making the provision of home indemnity insurance commercially attractive for private insurers to underwrite at their risk. The recommendations included splitting the provision of non-completion cover from the six-year warranty period to create two separate insurance products, including reducing the period of warranty cover from six years to three years. Following the release of the ERA report, market testing occurred three times. These were unsuccessful in attracting a private insurer. There is no private insurer appetite for underwriting home indemnity insurance, and decreasing the period of defects warranty cover to three years is not favoured by the government.

There is a national market failure for home indemnity insurance due to it being a consumer protection mechanism rather than a traditional insurance product. The government is examining the feasibility and implications of increasing the maximum payout. As with all insurance products, many other implications need to be considered, such as the flow-on effects to premiums to fund it, and housing affordability. Building industry stability is a key priority for this government as it means fewer insolvencies and fewer problems for home owners.

The McGowan government recently announced in the state budget a series of measures to help stabilise the building industry. Those measures include a \$30 million financial relief scheme to assist head contractors with rising costs on Department of Finance and Department of Communities projects; the Premier writing to major banks urging them to adopt a flexible approach to progress payments and cashflow support for WA builders; the inclusion of rise-and-fall provisions in future government contracts, when appropriate, to reduce the risk for tendering builders; and revising time frames on a range of government projects to better account for current market conditions. Other measures include the creation of a new Department of Communities pre-qualification panel to include small and medium-sized builders to pre-qualify to price future projects; a targeted \$1.5 million overseas marketing campaign to attract building and construction workers to WA; and extending the time frame for building bonus grant applicants to commence construction—that is, substantial earthworks—from 18 months to 30 months from signing a contract, with foundations to be laid by 30 April 2024.

The Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety's building and energy website contains further information about what home indemnity insurance covers. Under the Home Building Contracts Act 1991, builders are required to take out a policy of home indemnity insurance on behalf of the clients before they can start residential building work exceeding \$20 000 in value. Home indemnity insurance is to insure the owner and any successors in title from financial loss in the form of loss of a deposit, non-completion of a home or any defects within six years of practical completion, or if a builder dies or disappears or becomes insolvent. The current maximum amount that may be claimed under home indemnity insurance is \$20 000 for a loss of deposit or up to \$100 000 in total towards the construction or rectification of defects.

The government has requested the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety's building and energy unit to run an education campaign for consumers to raise awareness about the current protections available under the existing laws and a step-by-step process on how consumers can access home indemnity insurance. The member for Moore is encouraged to raise this issue—I am sure he will—in both estimates hearings and on the minister's return to Parliament.

#### **BROOKLAND GREENS — CANNING VALE**

##### *Grievance*

**MR T.J. HEALY (Southern River — Parliamentary Secretary)** [9.18 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Lands about a call from my Canning Vale and Brookland Greens community for Landgate to name our local park

Brookland Greens. In 2019–20, Gosnells councillors at a council workshop approved a change of the park name to Sandringham Park, also known in our systems as reserve 44848, lot 3010, plan 51244. At the time, despite being very hardworking councillors, they did not consider a need to consult or discuss with the community, which led to the council submitting a name change to Landgate for the park that we ask to be corrected today. I have been a councillor for this area and I have been a state member of Parliament for the Brookland Greens community for a while, and I continue to work closely with the Brookland Greens community in Canning Vale and with all the local councillors and the council executive. Council has now written to Landgate requesting that the park name be changed again, but this time to Brookland Greens.

The history is that the park had never actually been named Brookland Greens, but that was the name of the estate some 20 years ago. The developer installed many beautiful rustic-style coloured Brookland Greens signs around the park so that we, myself included, and the majority of Canning Vale, simply knew the park as Brookland Greens. It was only after the council requested the name change to Sandringham Park, and then the council's decision to replace all signage that said Brookland Greens, that most of us found out that our park had never actually been called Brookland Greens. The council, seeking to be of help, sought to update park signage as a priority, but inadvertently further frustrated the community of Brookland Greens by seeking to remove that signage and replace it with blue-and-green signs.

I believe that all our local residents appreciate the work that the City of Gosnells council does in maintaining our parks and services in the community, but many were frustrated at the council's desire to change signs when there were some community concerns about how park amenities, bins and footpaths had not been upgraded. The residents recently presented a petition to council asking for this name change to Brookland Greens, but I acknowledge that many residents remember that only a few years ago those same residents presented a petition to Gosnells council asking for more gym equipment in this park. They all pay a higher special area rate, so they requested more gym equipment, but the council instead decided to build a barbecue, which was not received well by residents. Since then, some residents are sceptical about raising petitions and matters with their council, but I want all residents of my community to know that they should continue to work very, very closely with our council, and with our councillors and team, because they do an amazing job. We are very lucky to have some amazing Gosnells councillors and council staff, and I know that when our community continues to engage with them well, we will always get great results.

I would particularly like to mention Councillor Williamson and Councillor Hort, who, when this matter came to council, had already resolved and moved motions that if the minister is able to assist us today with the name of our park, the council will not change the local signage, which I think is a fantastic move. I think that will be received well by my community. Going forward, I strongly encourage all residents to send their suggestions for park maintenance and park amenities in writing directly to [council@gosnells.wa.gov.au](mailto:council@gosnells.wa.gov.au) after they have raised this with the Gosnells councillors, to ensure that everyone's queries are responded to. I am always more than happy to be included in correspondence to assist the council and community.

I acknowledge the fantastic Brookland Green Ratepayers and Residents Association, particularly our new president Chris Langford; Tash Olde, our secretary; and Maxine Dashwood, who is now a member but also a great leader, and I guess patron saint of the Brookland Green Ratepayers and Residents Association. I would like to thank its executive for the development of the community petition and the movement to get this done. The minister's assistance in this matter as the minister responsible for Landgate will assist the council, me and our community in Brookland Greens. We, the community of Canning Vale and Brookland Greens, ask today that our park be named Brookland Greens.

**MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Lands)** [9.23 am]: It is my pleasure to accept this grievance. First of all, I want to acknowledge the hard work and advocacy of the member for Southern River in raising this issue with me. He has an incredible tenacity to focus on detail to engage his local community. I used to share an office with him and I know well the number of phone calls he made in his direct engagement with the community. In fact, I do not think anyone else beats him in engaging local communities. I have never seen someone call so many local residents. That was probably reflected in him receiving one of the largest swings at the last state election.

I know that naming is really important. Some people may be dismissive about this, but as a former mayor and now as the Minister for Local Government; Lands, I know just how important names can be to local communities, whether it is a park, a road or even a suburb. I know the power of local community organisations and town teams and what they do. They have a sense of ownership over a place, a park or a precinct and this is incredibly important. The Canning Vale community, particularly the Brookland Green Ratepayers and Residents Association, is passionate about Brookland Greens as a name. I want to recognise the residents organisation's passionate, consistent, ongoing advocacy and sense of care for that park. We want to see more of this and we want to see local governments help facilitate this.

Regarding the actual name change process, for members who are not familiar, this is handled through Landgate. Naming requests are routinely handled under delegation by the agency from me, unless they are contentious or matters of state significance. Landgate applies the policy and standards for geographical naming in Western Australia, which is nationally consistent and states that any renaming must include evidence of a compelling reason to change.

Renaming proposals are generated by the local government, which has a role to play in gathering the evidence, assessing the application, engaging with Landgate to highlight potential issues, undertaking broad consultation, and submitting a report and recommendation to council. Then, if endorsed by its council, the local government submits a proposal to Landgate for approval. This is why local government is critical. I think local government should take an open, considered approach to these matters, recognising that people can be very passionate about a name change on both sides. Some people can argue and advocate for a name change and there can be other people who say, “No, I like the current name for these particular reasons.” We should never underestimate that. In fact, if we speak to local members here, they will say that that is often one of the big challenges.

I am pleased to say that in this case, with the powerful advocacy of the local community group, Landgate has approved the name change to Brookland Greens. This is a positive story of how a local member who works incredibly hard with his local community and a residents organisation that clearly has care, love and a sense of community have been able to make this positive change. This is the kind of story that we want to see in our local community, whereby local community organisations are facilitated and assisted. Ultimately, in this case, based on the evidence before us, this is the right decision. That will not always happen. Sometimes groups can push a particular issue when there is not enough evidence or it may cause confusion. That happens more in relation to suburb naming when there is contention and can create confusion, so we have to look at the evidence, but in this case it is clear with the renaming of the park that there is enough evidence to rename it Brookland Greens. Congratulations again to the local member and congratulations in particular to the Brookland Green Ratepayers and Residents Association for its advocacy and hard work. I want to thank the association. Its hard work has paid off and I am very pleased that Landgate has approved this name change.

### **BUSSELTON MARGARET RIVER AIRPORT — BUSSELTON–MELBOURNE SERVICE**

#### *Grievance*

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party)** [9.29 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Regional Development, and I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for taking it. My grievance underlines the importance of diversifying our economy, supporting tourism and ensuring that the flights between Busselton Margaret River Airport and Melbourne have the best chance to succeed. As the member may be aware, Jetstar began a direct service between Melbourne and Busselton last month, after originally announcing that the route would commence in 2019 and then postponing it several times due to border closures. The service now flies three times a week and has reported 96 per cent capacity for the first month, with future bookings for next month at around the same level. It is fantastic news for a region that is dependent on interstate and international visitors and for the businesses that have endured significant losses during the past two years of the pandemic. The new route represents an exciting opportunity for the south west and broader tourism sector and is expected to bring more than 60 000 visitors to the region over the next three years to generate \$40 million for the local WA economy.

The airport also supports 24 fly-in fly-out flights a week, with another two services a week anticipated within the next couple of months. I am advised that the number of FIFO passengers alone has grown by 50 per cent in the last two years, from 26 861 in 2019–20 to 40 400 passengers in 2020–21. However, despite the growth in popularity of the new tourist route, it is disappointing to hear reports that the lack of an adequate terminal facility has resulted in significant delays in check-in and turnaround times and is compromising the visitor experience. The current terminal was not built with the intention of servicing high volumes and is now too small to be able to deal with the increased volume of passengers. One visitor from Melbourne, coming to see family, reported that her return flight to Melbourne was delayed for three hours as the airport was too small to cope with the turnaround. I understand that the secure departure lounge reaches capacity at 150 passengers, and temporary dongas are being purchased to expand the area. However, at present, security screening of passengers is suspended when the secure departure lounge reaches capacity, which has flow-on delays when boarding passengers. Essentially, boarding has to begin before everyone has been through the security screening as there is not enough room. The size of the baggage system is very constrained, and I understand that this is also affecting aircraft turnaround times. The car park area is also already at capacity, as the number of bays were reduced when the state government directed the city to undertake a value-optimisation review of the project. The city is now planning for an additional 250 bays at a cost of \$1 million to ratepayers. This is a project that the city has had to fight for every step of the way, and it is disappointing that the McGowan government has seemingly attempted to thwart it at every step of the way.

As the member may be aware, the previous Liberal–National government committed a total of \$59.7 million for the airport project, with \$45.9 million from the state government’s royalties for regions program, \$10 million from the Department of Transport, \$3.5 million from the City of Busselton and \$300 000 from the South West Development Commission. The project was supposed to include the purchase of land, the lengthening and widening of the runway and the expansion of the car park and terminal to enable the airport to cater for direct interstate aviation services.

As a project, it is a game changer representing significant opportunities for the south west region and tourism in the state. Unfortunately, after being elected, the McGowan government proceeded to undermine this project by removing it from the two-year tourism strategy; withdrawing funds from the airport expansion as part of a so-called

optimisation review that delayed the project by 12 months; removing Tourism WA from airline engagement; and withholding funds for the terminal until an airline was committed to the route. It is a credit to the City of Busselton that it was able to work with Jetstar to commit to the Melbourne–Busselton route. However, this was still not enough, with the McGowan government then seeking a three-year trial of this route before committing any funds to the terminal upgrade. This is despite the comments of Gareth Evans, Jetstar’s chief executive, that the flight was very much a permanent route and said —

“Hopefully with the strengths of bookings we will be able to grow the route beyond the three-a-week we are initially looking to operate.”

The contrast between the McGowan government and the industry could not be more stark. The former Minister for Tourism Paul Papalia told journalists that they had been sold a “pup” when it came to this project, and the Minister for Regional Development asked her department for answers on how to “unpick” this project, as revealed in FOI documents. The government then delayed the development of the runway and withdrew the funds dedicated to a terminal upgrade. This short-sighted decision is now impacting both tourism and FIFO markets that use the airport. I appeal to the government to reconsider withholding the funds for this terminal and work with the City of Busselton to support a short-term and more permanent solution before the valuable opportunities to grow and develop both tourism and these mining groups are compromised any further. I thank the parliamentary secretary for taking this grievance.

**MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary)** [9.35 am]: I thank member for Vasse for her grievance, and I respond on behalf of the Minister for Regional Development in the other place. I know that this matter is very, very important to the minister, so I want to start with a little bit of background for the purpose of a bit of balance, I suppose.

There is no doubt that the McGowan government is committed to the south west and is investing in infrastructure projects right across the south west that grow the economy and create local jobs. In fact, the state has invested more than \$47 million in the development of the Busselton Margaret River Airport. This is a significant investment of taxpayer dollars. The South West Development Commission and Tourism WA worked closely with the City of Busselton to take the project from business case to development and then to securing an airline service. The three-year agreement between Jetstar and the City of Busselton provides three government-assisted return services a week. After several delays due to COVID, the Minister for Regional Development, the Deputy Premier and, I believe, the member for Vasse were onsite to celebrate the very important milestone of the inaugural Jetstar flight between Melbourne and Busselton on 6 April—only some six weeks ago.

The state worked closely with the city and Jetstar to ensure that appropriate airport and terminal facilities were in place for the inaugural service. This included a new arrivals hall and modifications to the departure terminal. For the first time, visitors are flying directly into the region from the east coast, and that is fantastic. This is a game changer for the region and something that we genuinely hope continues, becomes commercially sustainable and expands. I am advised that passenger loads have been above 85 per cent in both directions and forward-bookings are looking positive. This is a great start, but we need to remember that the service has been in operation for only six weeks. The service will need at least 12 to 18 months to see whether it can operate sustainably beyond the initial three-year period without an ongoing subsidy by way of taxpayer funds.

The City of Busselton has been developing fly-in fly-out closed charters, which have been commercially positive for the city. At present, 24 services a week operate to the north west on behalf of several resources companies, and it is likely that that will increase to 30 services a week in the near future. The city is promoting this to the resources sector and it is the city’s responsibility to ensure that the FIFO services do not compromise the scheduled passenger services.

In relation to the member’s concerns regarding terminal capacity, can I say this: we acknowledge that the check-in process is temporarily constrained and the South West Development Commission and the city have been working with the ground handler, Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association, to make improvements to terminal operations. The items under consideration include the expansion of the departures hall to accommodate a full Airbus A320, which fits 186 passengers, where all passengers can be seated and out of the weather. This will enable all check-in passengers to be processed through the security and held in the departures area prior to boarding the aircraft. I am also advised that this expansion will occur in the coming weeks. There will be a new baggage-injector belt to increase the efficiency of baggage handling at check-ins, primarily for oversize items, pre-checked-in and disabled passengers. Passenger flow at check-ins will be improved. Changes will be made to the departure baggage belt to improve efficiency in handling, mainly for oversize baggage items. Additional facilities will be provided for ground handler staff to improve their efficiency on the airside—for example, separate male and female toilets and personal change facilities. Discussions will be held with Jetstar to consider increasing the aircraft turnaround from 35 minutes to a minimum of 45 minutes to relieve some of the pressure on ground handlers.

I am advised that the South West Development Commission is in regular contact with Jetstar and the City of Busselton, and we are not aware of any negative feedback since the Jetstar services commenced. This is a new service and any new air service will take time to fully bed down. There are bound to be operational issues that require minor modifications to facilities. I am advised that very good progress is being made and all parties are cooperating.

It is important to remember that we have just three services per week and these are government-assisted flights. As the minister has indicated right from the get-go, once we have established the sustainability of these flights and reviewed the prospects for any further routes or intensification of the existing route, we could consider further terminal works and the case for further investment of taxpayers' dollars. It is something we could start to look at in the second half of next year. Certainly, a review after six weeks is not the way to decide how to spend taxpayers' money.

I would like to acknowledge the continuing efforts of all those involved, particularly the South West Development Commission, Tourism Western Australia, the City of Busselton and Jetstar. It is really exciting that through the McGowan government's work we now have direct flights from the east coast. As the member indicated, early indications are really, really promising. It is a game changer for the region and the government is very interested and very committed to making sure that this initiative succeeds and expands so that tourism and access to one of the best assets in Western Australia continues. In summary, I would like to thank the member for Vasse for the grievance and her continuing advocacy for her area. Thank you.

### PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

#### *Fifth Report — Budget briefing 2022–23 — Tabling*

**Mrs L.M. O'Malley** presented the fifth report of the Public Accounts Committee titled *Budget briefing 2022–23*.

[See paper [1138](#).]

### APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2022–23) BILL 2022 APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2022–23) BILL 2022

#### *Second Reading — Cognate Debate*

Resumed from 18 May.

**MS L. DALTON (Geraldton)** [9.42 am]: I rise to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022. I want to start by saying that the McGowan Labor government has shown so much love for Geraldton and the midwest that I am nearly blushing! I am absolutely overwhelmed by the love shown to Geraldton and I just want say keep it coming!

**Mrs L.A. Munday**: Your red jacket matches your blush.

**Ms L. DALTON**: Yes, it does a little bit.

Looking through the budget on Thursday I was thrilled to see so many of the projects that my community and I had been advocating for made it through the Treasury process. A few weeks ago when the Minister for Health, Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, visited Geraldton to announce the additional funding of \$49.4 million to the Geraldton Health Campus redevelopment project, you could not wipe the smile from my face. This extra funding brings the total cost of the major upgrade to the hospital to \$122.7 million. At that announcement the joy of the local nurses, doctors and staff, many of whom I know, was palpable. This project has been in the forefront of people's minds for some time. The people of Geraldton and the midwest have been let down by previous governments' promises. Unlike members opposite, I live in Geraldton, and my family lives there, too, so I think I speak from a place of authority, knowing the history and the facts, when I talk about the long line of past and current Liberal–National members of state and federal Parliaments who have made promises about the Geraldton hospital that they have not been able to deliver. But we are delivering!

After talking to the project team at the WA Country Health Service, I can understand why the hospital redevelopment has to be approached in stages. It is a huge body of work that to be completed needs to be staged in a way that will have as little disruption as possible to the day-to-day business of the hospital. The first stage was completed in June 2021. It was a reconfigured main entry and the redesign and expansion of car parking. We welcome funding for the second stage that will include an expanded emergency department, a new intensive care unit and improved amenities to ensure patients continue to receive quality care close to home. As part of the redevelopment we will also have an integrated mental health service, which is something quite close to my heart, and inpatient and short-stay units.

The redevelopment of Geraldton Health Campus is the single biggest investment in this facility since the Gallop government redeveloped the hospital back in the early 2000s. The hospital provides great care for our community, and this is an extensive and welcome upgrade to complement that care. Geraldton has, and will have into the future, a regional hospital with terrific doctors, nurses and other staff, delivering excellent care for regional people.

I am proud to say that Geraldton is a progressive, forward-thinking city, with individuals, businesses and groups making exciting contributions and enhancements. I have always said that budgets affect everyone. They are not just about business; they are about people. Last Friday morning, along with many others from our community, I attended our state budget breakfast. We had the pleasure to have Hon Rita Saffioti, Minister for Transport; Planning; Ports as a special guest. Everyone who attended the breakfast welcomed the opportunity to speak with the minister and were very pleased with the wonderful announcement of \$332 million for a major upgrade to Geraldton port to



cater to increased demands, including a new berth with ship loading and material handling infrastructure. Having been on the Mid West Ports Authority board for a couple of years and involved with the port maximisation plan, I can fully understand the magnitude of this investment. The port is the jewel in the crown of the midwest. It is the beating heart of Geraldton. I love to see the ships coming into the port and leaving again. Some days it looks like they are right on the main street; it is absolutely incredible to see.

The port maximisation project will be executed over four years, bringing forward the investment anticipated by the *Port of Geraldton master plan*. It will allow the Mid West Ports Authority to increase trade from 15 million tonnes per annum to 25 million tonnes per annum by 2026. This new trade is expected to be from 11 new customers and will be a diverse product mix, supported through a combination of de-bottlenecking and new economic infrastructure within the existing port footprint. The project is expected to create more than 2 700 jobs during construction, along with indirect jobs and opportunities for local subcontractors. This is great news for people in my electorate. This project will enable greater trade and is critical to enable growth in the region, providing an export path for new projects and commodities.

The McGowan Labor government is committed to setting up Geraldton and the midwest for the long term, with part of its record \$12 billion investment in regional infrastructure across the state so far diversifying the economy and creating jobs. We have already seen significant investment in Geraldton to create local jobs, support the local economy and improve health and education. Projects underway as part of this pipeline of works include the Central Regional TAFE campus visual arts upgrades, which have just been completed and I have been invited to have a look through; the Geraldton basketball stadium upgrades, which will provide extra courts and facilities for more families to enjoy; \$10 million towards the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park program; social housing investment, including for refurbishments and new builds; a \$9 million investment towards the renewal and revitalisation of Spalding; and maintenance works to local schools such as Champion Bay Senior High School, Geraldton Senior High School and Rangeway Primary School, just to name a few.

We have also committed to supporting development of the Oakajee strategic industrial area, with \$7.5 million of funding to develop road access to establish a renewable hydrogen hub in the midwest. We will also continue to advocate for federal funding to support our midwest clean hydrogen hub, which will leverage state government funding to support the construction of renewable energy infrastructure.

I would now like to go back to the significant investment of the social housing economic recovery package. I had the absolutely great opportunity to have the Minister for Housing; Homelessness, Hon John Carey, in Geraldton a couple of weeks ago to announce the opening of six recently refurbished units that will form part of a new pilot housing program for the homeless in the city. These units had been previously vacant but were refurbished and brought back online, and I have to say that they look absolutely fabulous. What a great program this is. It will provide housing and intensive wraparound supports to vulnerable members of the Geraldton community, including several rough sleepers.

The program will run in partnership between the local Department of Communities team and the ICARE drug and alcohol support service. I want to commend both these teams for their fantastic efforts in establishing this program. The ICARE team has been working with the residents for many months and is helping them transition into their new homes. I was really pleased to also provide the ICARE team with a \$200 Kmart voucher for the residents of each of the units so that they could, with the ICARE team's support, purchase homewares, such as cutlery, rugs, kettles et cetera, to support them in moving into their new homes. On the day I was there, a couple of different people had donated second-hand goods and some beds and mattresses had arrived through our midwest disaster relief program, but it touched me to think that it would be really nice for these people to have something new, because for a long time they had been rough sleeping and had not lived in their own home. I thought it would be a really nice experience for them to go to Kmart or the local Mitchell and Brown Retravisation with the ICARE team and purchase a kettle, some rugs and new cutlery, just as we all would do when we move into a new home.

To break the cycle of homelessness, we know that we need to combine housing with intensive supports, and that is what this program is all about. To be there and to see the absolute joy on the faces of the new residents was one of the highlights so far for me as the member for Geraldton. Some of these people have been sleeping rough for many years and have never had a home of their own. One of the participants and I went to the same school, but we were a couple of years apart, so we reintroduced ourselves, and this had a huge impact on me. This is investment in social change and improving people's lives. This is real, important stuff and I am really proud to be part of a government that gets it. These six units are just a small snapshot of the significant investment and work happening in and around Geraldton, all focused on boosting the availability of social housing. Around 50 properties in the city either are undergoing or will undergo refurbishment to bring them back into stock and provide a significant boost in the availability of housing, as well as provide us with more options to support vulnerable people in Geraldton, including those sleeping rough.

One of the biggest issues facing regional centres such as Geraldton is the limited connectivity it has to the north of the state. Over the past 12 months, I have met with many businesses and they have raised the lack of this service with me. I have also met with the CEO of the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ms Joanne Fabling, who discussed a broad range of concerns, such as driver fatigue, travel costs and time, as well as the risk to the

midwest that some businesses may have to relocate out of the region for better connectivity options. Members can imagine that I was pleased that the McGowan Labor government could also see these issues and listened to regional Western Australians. The commitment of over \$4 million in the 2022–23 state budget to support an expansion of the inter-regional flight network operated by Aviair to increase air connectivity and passenger capacity across the midwest, Pilbara and Kimberley is exactly what we have been advocating for for so long. The new Geraldton link will significantly reduce travel times between Geraldton and the Pilbara, with many small businesses and FIFO travellers in Geraldton currently travelling to the Pilbara via Perth. In addition, Aviair's plans to upgrade planes on the network from nine-seater to 70-seater aircraft will allow more passengers and freight to be transported throughout the regions and help improve airfare affordability. The expansion of the inter-regional flight network to include Geraldton will allow more regional residents to travel between the midwest and the northern regions. It really will be a game changer for the regions, because services like these are crucial for jobs, visiting family, business opportunities and supporting government and medical services. This is a great opportunity that will create more jobs within our region and keep businesses in the midwest. This investment is a further commitment by the McGowan government to enable better access to affordable air services for regional residents. I would really like to congratulate the CEO of the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ms Joanne Fabling, for her good work collaborating with Aviair and working with me to advocate for this project.

Overall, this budget is delivering for WA and, I am particularly pleased to say, for the midwest. The love for Geraldton is very, very evident. WA's strong financial position gives the state budget the capacity to invest a record \$2.5 billion in health and mental health, ensuring that all Western Australians, no matter where they live, receive quality health care, as well as a record \$12 billion in regional infrastructure and \$4.2 billion for the royalties for regions program, which will continue to deliver key regional projects and services to regional communities. Yes, the McGowan government has shown a lot of love for Geraldton, and I am proud to commend the bills to the house.

**MS E.L. HAMILTON (Joondalup)** [9.57 am]: I rise to make a contribution to debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022 following the McGowan government's sixth budget—a budget that delivers for Joondalup and Western Australia. I am proud to be part of the McGowan Labor government and I am proud of the budget that our Premier and Treasurer has handed down. As the member for Joondalup, I am privileged to speak on the budget over the past six years. It is an honour and a privilege to represent locals living in Heathridge, Ocean Reef, Edgewater, Connolly, Joondalup, Iluka and Currabmine. We have seen a significant level of investment over the years that is continuing to grow Joondalup, a beautiful part of the world, with a pristine coastline and a wonderful sense of community. It is inherently a Labor budget that provides much-needed relief for families and invests in our healthcare system, all the while paying down the debt that the Liberals and Nationals WA left us. It is a budget that is investing in our state for our kids and grandkids. It is investing in WA in the areas that matter—health and mental health, education and training, the prevention of family and domestic violence, climate change, infrastructure, and boosting support for our most vulnerable.

We are easing cost-of-living pressures by delivering a one-off \$400 credit for all WA households on their residential electricity bill. This is on top of having already delivered a \$600 credit in 2020. It will provide the average household with a month of bill relief, and I know how much of a difference this will make to so many households in Joondalup. After the last credit was delivered, I heard many stories detailing how much of a positive impact it had on the household budget. This year is the third year that fees and charges are being kept below the consumer price index, and the 2022–23 budget is the second time that government fees and charges have fallen. We have well and truly turned the finances of the state around. The state's books are in great condition because we have reversed the waste and neglect of the Liberals and Nationals. We are paying down Barnett's debt while delivering record investments across the board. A \$33.9 billion investment in WA's infrastructure, schools and health system will deliver for our community. This never happened under those opposite. When in office, the Liberals and Nationals consistently raised fees and charges. Not a day went by when they did not find a way to squeeze another dollar out of the WA public. This is yet another budget that has been handed down in the midst of the global pandemic, at a time when families and small businesses have been doing it tough. However, we have seen strong, decisive leadership from our Premier that has kept us safe and our economy strong.

Western Australia is a global leader in the way in which we have handled COVID-19, and we are the powerhouse of the nation. We have one of the strongest economies in the world, with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, and a high workforce participation rate. COVID-19 has been challenging for years now; it is being felt everywhere, and I know that Joondalup locals are not immune. But I also know that we are resilient. We have continued in the face of adversity and we are coming through what is often termed "COVID normal" with a new-found positivity and sense of community.

Our government is also addressing very real concerns about the personal cost of vigilance against COVID-19 in our community. That is why we have delivered free rapid antigen tests to every WA household. WA is the only state in the nation with a comprehensive free RAT program. My office has distributed 2 000 RAT tests to the Joondalup community. The initial 1 000 went to community organisations that support the most vulnerable in our community, and a further 1 000 have been made available for residents to collect from my office.

This year's budget truly delivers on the McGowan Labor government's commitment to create diverse local jobs across the state. A diverse and multifaceted economy is key to our future strength and prosperity, and the \$1.3 billion investment into diversifying WA's economy is a massive step towards delivering a stronger future for our state.

There are a number of areas I want to focus on today and issues that are very important to my constituents, and I will start with health. This budget is delivering the biggest ever investment in the WA public health system by any government in Western Australia's history, with a further record \$2.5 billion investment in health and mental health. That brings new investment to \$5.7 billion since the last budget was handed down in September last year. This Labor government understands how important it is to invest in high-quality, accessible health care close to home, and we are delivering.

Locally, our Joondalup Health Campus is the major hospital servicing the northern corridor, and it is undergoing a major expansion—and rightfully so, given that our region is one of the fastest-growing regions in Australia and the campus's emergency department is one of the busiest in the country. The major upgrade and expansion of the Joondalup Health Campus is critical for our northern suburbs communities. Health matters to my community, and locals have an expectation that they can receive quality health care close to home. That is what we are delivering under the strong leadership of our new Minister for Health, Amber-Jade Sanderson. The new Minister for Health was in Joondalup with me just last week to open the new Joondalup breast screening clinic—a state-of-the-art facility that will make a massive difference to the lives of women in Joondalup.

Investment in our health infrastructure locally continues to take place, and ensuring that we were able to deliver on our stroke unit back in 2019 ahead of the major works is something that I am proud of. In addition to the stroke unit, I, along with my parliamentary colleagues Sabine Winton and Margaret Quirk, have championed a new palliative care unit for the northern suburbs. Not only has that been delivered; it is now fully operational, having opened at the end of last year. We visited the site shortly after its opening and it is an asset to our health system. Speaking to staff members Tish Morrison and Dr Ellie Knight as we were taken around the facility, we could see that many patients have access to their own courtyards or views into the beautiful landscaped gardens. The new 10-bed palliative care unit ensures that loved ones can receive the care they need at the end of life at a location that is easily accessible by families and friends.

The McGowan government is committed to investing in our health care infrastructure and services in WA. I recently wrote a seventieth birthday card to a local constituent, Latha. Latha is the primary carer for her husband, who has Parkinson's disease. She wrote to me outlining how grateful she was for the support and medical treatment provided to her husband across WA's specialist and general health care system, including at Joondalup Health Campus.

In this year's budget, there is investment in the Joondalup Health Campus as it moves into phase 2 of its \$256.7 million upgrade. There is a massive injection of resources and additional facilities, including a new mental health building; 12 emergency department beds; 90 inpatient beds; six coronary care beds; a new theatre; a cardiac catheterisation laboratory; a behavioural assessment urgent care clinic; auxiliary facilities; and increased more free-flowing parking. The additional emergency department beds are already operational and are taking patients. I note that these beds operate as part of the influenza-like illness unit, and allow for safely treating COVID-19-positive patients and others with infectious diseases. Additional resources to allow for the safe treatment of those with COVID-19 or other infectious diseases will be so important moving forward.

This also includes the construction of a new behavioural assessment urgent care clinic that will ensure that patients who are behaviourally affected by alcohol or drugs can be assessed safely without entering the main ED, which will improve patient flow through the provision of specialist inpatient beds. I was recently at the site with the Minister for Health, and it was great to see the significant progress being made on the construction of the expanded car parking facilities that will free up space for additional construction.

The 2022–23 budget will deliver \$252 million to improve access to emergency care in WA, and I know from firsthand experience that this has been well received by our community. There are pressures on our EDs across the country and here in WA. Our government is delivering the real investment, resources and staff needed to improve EDs across the state. This reform package is made up of 17 initiatives to deliver better care. Centrally, the reform package will deliver a 24/7 registered nurse at 15 ED waiting rooms across the state. The reform package also includes funding to support those with complex needs who often require external support and accommodation to exit the hospital system. This will free up considerable resources within the system.

The package also includes funding for the emergency access response program that will identify solutions for long-term improvements at EDs to reduce ramping. The government is delivering better access to emergency health care in a measured and considered way by delivering immediate programs to reduce the strain on EDs, while planning for future, long-term reform. It is a shame that the federal Liberal government's continued neglect of the NDIS and the aged-care system means that many patients with complex needs will end up in EDs instead of receiving care within an established support network. The federal government must do better and invest in the NDIS and the aged-care system. I hope that on Saturday we have a change of government and, with that, a change of focus and investment for better outcomes for those accessing the NDIS and properly addressing the aged-care crisis.

This year's budget sees significant funding for mental health. Mental health challenges facing our communities—Joondalup is not immune—are something we have unfortunately been aware of and that I hear about when I am out and about. Now more than ever, we need to ensure that our health system can continue to support children and young people who need access to mental health support. In Joondalup, we already have the mental health observation area at the Joondalup Health Campus—a 10-bed specialist unit next door to the main emergency department. This provides care to people presenting with psychiatric disorders in a more clinically appropriate environment. That facility is improving hospital-level clinical care for those impacted with mental health issues, and it is important that we continue to look at early intervention and other mental health management options without the need for hospital presentation.

This government is delivering a record \$1.3 billion investment into our mental health system. I have spoken about this in the house before, and I have heard about young primary school-age children presenting to hospitals with severe mental health issues. We need for these families to be able to receive the necessary support close to home in Joondalup, and this funding will address that. The funding includes an additional \$181 million to fund new, expanded mental health services, and \$47.3 million to support the rapid implementation of the Ministerial Taskforce into Public Mental Health Services for Infants, Children and Adolescents Aged 0–18 Years in Western Australia. The McGowan government will implement all 32 recommendations of the ministerial task force's final report, which means that the WA Child and Adolescent Health Service will be radically reshaped to ensure better outcomes for children and families.

Services around the world are dealing with an increased volume of children struggling with mental illness. Children are presenting younger and often with more complexity. In WA, approximately 14 per cent of kids up to 17 years of age experience a mental health concern. This new suite of reforms will keep more children out of hospitals and provide better support for families. The reforms will also include a wideranging expansion of processes and available support to increase early intervention and appropriate clinical and non-clinical support.

Each and every time I speak about the health system I give a massive shout-out and thankyou to the wonderful staff in our health system. I extend my thanks to those at the Joondalup Health Campus in particular. The hospital is one of the largest employers in my electorate, with 70 per cent of the staff who work there living locally. They are a key part of our community and the one that I represent, and without them turning up every day in the face of adversity during the pandemic, we would not be where we are now, so thank you.

I applaud this year's budget's investment in the TAFE and training system. This budget will provide the single largest capital works investment of \$216 million for state-of-the-art facilities at WA TAFEs, which is proof of the government's commitment to deliver high-quality training close to home. There will be an investment in the North Metropolitan TAFE in Joondalup, including \$20.4 million for a specialist light automotive training workshop at the McLarty Avenue campus. That investment into this infrastructure will cater for emerging automotive information and communication technologies. Maintaining cutting-edge training opportunities is essential for a strong future for WA, and the government's investment into TAFE is a clear demonstration of the power of Labor governments. Labor governments invest in TAFE and training—the skills of the future—unlike our colleagues opposite. After years of Liberal–National government neglect, the Labor government is making TAFE more accessible than ever. Our Lower Fees, Local Skills program is keeping TAFE fees affordable for families. Free courses and an expanded program of short courses means that it has never been easier to pick up a new skill or to change industry. This helps to ensure that our community has the flexibility to learn something new in our rapidly changing world.

The government's investment in TAFE is paying off. Enrolments have grown to a record 150 000 places for apprentices and trainees, which is up 31 per cent since last year. This record investment in TAFE and training is driven by serious investment in and attention to TAFE. It is delivering the skills that WA needs to secure a stronger future. A quarter of my electorate is under the age of 25 so ensuring training opportunities locally is fundamental.

The skills and training opportunities in Joondalup are not limited just to TAFE. There are many great education and training providers in Joondalup, and it is home to the top-tier Joondalup learning precinct, which includes Edith Cowan University, North Metropolitan TAFE, the Western Australian Police Academy and the Quadrangle, which is home to Edith Cowan College and Electrical Group Training.

The government understands the opportunities offered by rapidly growing and evolving digital industries, including those in cybersecurity. Joondalup is already making its mark as a centre for cybersecurity research, and engagement and employment opportunities. Cybersecurity is a rapidly growing industry and it will shape our local economy. The Australian cybersecurity industry is expected to be worth \$6 billion within the next 10 years, and 1.8 million jobs in the cyber industry are expected to be created in Australia over the next five years. This budget invests an additional \$400 million into the WA government's digital capability fund, bringing the total investment to over \$900 million. This funding will be used to transform the IT infrastructure of the government and bolster the cybersecurity capabilities of the state. This is a significant investment that will transform the ways in which people interact with government agencies through improved digital services. It will also support local cyber and IT providers across the state.

A promising partnership between Edith Cowan University and the WA government that is delivering real results is the WA AustCyber Innovation Hub, which received \$1 million from the McGowan government's new industries fund. The innovation hub is a collaboration between ECU, AustCyber and the City of Joondalup and is delivering solutions to businesses across WA to optimise their operations in a digital world. Joondalup is world-renowned for its cyber capabilities, and I am proud that the Labor government is investing in this growing workforce. The Lower Fees, Local Skills program has delivered significant reductions in the cost to obtain qualifications in industry. Take, for example, the advanced diploma of cybersecurity that can be studied at North Metro TAFE, which is recognised as a premier cybersecurity training provider. This advanced diploma is one of the many courses being offered at a low price for Western Australians. By charging lower fees for these courses, the government is supporting people to attain TAFE qualifications and is delivering a significant increase in enrolment and course completions across the industry.

In these rapidly evolving times, it is more important than ever that there is a visible training pathway from schools into TAFE and university, or even both. As part of the conversation about the diversification of the WA economy, the current challenge is how to market Joondalup cybersecurity and digital capabilities and industries both domestically and internationally. The \$17.1 million injection to expand WA's international trade offices will supercharge export and investment market opportunities both in my electorate and across the state. I am excited about the reconnection to the broader world following our exit from the pandemic and the resumption of widespread travel and trade, and rebuilding those relations globally.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms E.L. HAMILTON:** That brings me to my next point. The McGowan government understands and embraces the vast opportunities provided by innovative industries and is further fostering the growth of WA industry and manufacturing for the domestic export market. It is great to see the Labor government commit to one of the biggest automation and robotics test facilities in the world, right on Joondalup's doorstep in Neerabup, in my colleague the member for Wanneroo's electorate. The 51-hectare precinct will be home to a wide range of industries including mining and resources, defence, oil and gas, agriculture, space, logistics, construction, advanced manufacturing and the education sector. We have committed \$20 million to the precinct, which will deliver over 5 000 ongoing jobs in innovative fields. This cutting-edge precinct will support innovation and high-quality future-ready jobs close to home.

The diversification of the economy will bring about a major transformation in the jobs and skills landscape across the state, so we must ensure that we continue to prepare our kids for the jobs of future. The Labor government is doing just that. It is investing significantly in WA's schools so that our kids are ready for the jobs of the future. It is delivering a total of \$5.9 billion for school education across the state, a 4.7 per cent increase on last year's funding, and it demonstrates this government's commitment to continually improve education resources and facilities for our kids.

I spend a lot of time interacting with primary and high school communities in my electorate. Through the previous budget and the COVID-19 recovery fund, there has been some great investment in educational facilities in Joondalup. Many of the upgrades that were supported over the pandemic are now coming online. They include extended car parking, access upgrades and a new nature play space at Joondalup Primary School and Joondalup Education Support Centre. Heathridge Primary School also received \$1.5 million for upgrades in early learning areas.

The 2022–23 state budget will invest \$595 million in new and upgraded school facilities. These facility upgrades will mean that our kids will be able to access high-quality resources and facilities at great local schools. Schools in my electorate that will receive funding are Beaumaris Primary School, Heathridge Primary School and Ocean Reef Senior High School. I am particularly proud of the investment being delivered to Ocean Reef Senior High School, the only public high school in my area, to continue the construction of a new \$5 million state-of-the-art sports hall. I look forward to visiting the school next week and meeting with the new principal, James Kent, to look at the progress. This will be on top of the \$5 million performing arts centre that opened in 2020, which was fulfilling an election commitment I made in 2017. The new performing arts centre is a high-quality facility and is well utilised by the school community. It is fitted out with the latest technologies and allows students to acquire the skills that they will need to work in the performing arts and music industry. Construction is also underway on a new state-of-the-art STEM classroom, which will allow students to engage with the latest STEM concepts and teaching resources. In a rapidly evolving global economy, it has never been so important to equip our kids with the skills of the future, and this government's investment in STEM, particularly in the science program in schools, is delivering dedicated science labs to every primary school in my electorate.

Joondalup is home to many organisations that support children with special needs. The excellent team at the Joondalup Education Support Centre won WA Primary School of the Year in the 2021 WA Education Awards because of their dedication to supporting students with diverse needs from across our community. The centre's reputation has resulted in interest for enrolment coming from far and wide, across more than 30 Perth suburbs.

Joondalup is home to the great local not-for-profit organisation, All Stars for Autism. Based out of the Joondalup Family Centre, All Stars for Autism is providing Joondalup families with social opportunities and supporting

a positive autistic identity. Just last weekend I stopped by to visit Jo McMillan, the co-founder, and her team of volunteers at their sausage sizzle fundraiser at the Joondalup Bunnings. Given we are currently celebrating National Volunteer Week, I wanted to take the opportunity to thank everyone that donates their time with All Stars for Autism.

It will be great to see more neurodiverse kids receive the support they need at school. In Joondalup, we have several schools providing specialist autism support programs, including Heathridge Primary School and Ocean Reef Senior High School. The fact that these programs cover primary and secondary education in my electorate is quite important and means that the students can continue their education from kindy to Western Australian Certificate of Education, all within the public school system and locally. We know how important it is to support those with diverse needs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the teachers, early childhood educators, education assistants, university educators, training providers, administration and support staff in our educational facilities in Joondalup for their dedication to teaching our children and students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They have often been required to flex and move with changing circumstances and have done so with agility, whilst continuing to educate our children, and young people across Joondalup with the least amount of disruption possible. Thank you.

It would be remiss of me, speaking about our education system, not to mention that yesterday was Thank a Traffic Warden Day. To all of our traffic wardens who ensure our kids travel to and from schools safely each day, thank you. There are many traffic wardens at Joondalup, Connolly, Edgewater, Eddystone, Poseidon, Ocean Reef, St Simon Peter and Heathridge Primary Schools, and at Ocean Reef Senior High School.

Tomorrow is P&C Day WA. Happy P&C Day for 2022. P&Cs are fantastic organisations supporting our local schools and the broader community. Thank you to everyone who is involved in our P&Cs, dedicating time to support our school communities. These last two years have shown the strength of our community. I am very proud of the role P&Cs have had in building resilient and supportive communities in Joondalup. In the lead-up to P&C Day, I wish to take the opportunity to thank your P&C and its dedicated volunteers.

Thank you to the following P&C presidents and their teams: Mickey Stewart at Beaumaris Primary School; thanks to the outgoing president, Holly McBride, and welcome Kiah Snell at Connolly Primary School; Judy Edmeades, who is both P&C president and council chair at Eddystone Primary School; Jason Beltran at Edgewater Primary School; Amy Gilly at Heathridge Primary School; Amy Stewart at our Joondalup schools; Kat Backhouse at Ocean Reef Primary School; Emma Garside at Poseidon Primary School; and Chris McCafferty at Ocean Reef Senior High School. In celebration of P&C Day, I trust they will enjoy the coffee voucher that I have posted to them that can be shared at one of their upcoming meetings, whilst also supporting a number of our local small businesses. My apologies to the P&Cs that I was unable to visit over this past parliamentary sitting. I look forward to connecting with them again very soon at the Joondalup primary schools and Edgewater P&Cs.

This budget addresses the cost-of-living pressures that are being felt by our community. A number of measures are being implemented in this budget. One I want to mention is the capped public transport fares over two zones, with commuters paying no more than \$4.90 one way. Our Joondalup community is also benefiting from public transport links to the north with the Yanchep rail line extension as part of Metronet, connecting people from the north corridor to our Joondalup CBD. The \$448 million expansion of the Mitchell Freeway is set to transform our community's connectedness. The widening of the freeway southbound between Hodges Drive and Hepburn Avenue and the expansion of smart freeway technology will bust congestion on our freeway. More importantly, it will reduce the time needed to commute, which means more time at home with family. Metronet is going to be important for how our community travels for years to come. I am proud that this government is investing in critical public transport infrastructure.

I want to take a moment to also mention the importance of this government understanding the challenges posed by continued climate change. The government is delivering on tackling the impacts of climate change here in WA. We are committed to securing a prosperous, low-carbon future for the next generations of Western Australians. This includes a significant investment of an additional \$500 million into the climate action fund, taking the total to \$1.25 billion.

Joondalup is the city centre that services the rapidly growing northern corridor. It needs to continue to grow its local economy so that it can continue to attract local business. A thriving city centre requires investment from all levels of government. But since taking office six years ago, I must say that federal interest, presence and investment in Joondalup is nowhere to be seen. It is a shame that the federal government does not recognise the importance of our strategic city centre and Joondalup's role as Perth's second CBD. There has been a complete lack of investment in and focus on Joondalup from the Morrison Liberal government and a wholesale failure of advocacy from the sitting Liberal member, Ian Goodenough. Instead, Mr Goodenough sings the praises of projects such as the \$448 million transformation of the Mitchell Freeway and Metronet, which I mentioned before. He fails to mention that the federal Liberal government had to be dragged kicking and screaming to support these key infrastructure projects.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I will just interrupt for a moment. The member has only two minutes left. I am going to ask you to not continue to interject, member for North West Central.

**Ms E.L. HAMILTON:** I would like to note how important these major infrastructure projects are for Joondalup and thank Rita Saffioti and Premier Mark McGowan for getting these projects moving despite the heel dragging of Mr Morrison.

Mr Goodenough's track record of delivery for the Joondalup community is not there. It is plain to see. Only the other day there was a flyer in my letterbox that was meant to be proudly highlighting what is being delivered in Moore, but there were no local projects—nothing. Ian Goodenough and the Liberals do not care about Joondalup. They do not care to invest in our growing Joondalup city centre and they have failed to deliver the critical projects our community needs. There is nothing but a complete lack of vision and drive after an underwhelming three terms in office.

That is why on Saturday I will be proud to support my local Labor candidate for Moore, Tom French. Tom is a hardworking candidate who has been out there, on the doors and the phones talking to locals about what is important. He has run small businesses, worked in a country pub and is a former sparky turned law graduate and, most recently, a new dad to a son, Gabriel. He has a range of experiences and will be a strong voice in Canberra. I look forward to a change of government on Saturday.

I will conclude how I began. This is a Labor budget. It is a budget that invests for our kids and grandkids. It is investing in WA in areas that matter to all Western Australians. I congratulate the Treasurer on this budget and commend the two appropriation bills to the house.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wanneroo.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Sorry, member for Wanneroo. Just before you begin, because I would rather not interrupt your speech, member for North West Central, you seem compelled to consistently interject. I note your comment that it is a little quiet in here. If you would like to go somewhere noisier, please go and sit in the courtyard or somewhere else and make as much noise as you like.

**MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary)** [10.27 am]: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very happy that you are in the chair as I, too, make a contribution to the second reading of the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022.

Before I begin, can I say that it is a real pleasure to follow the member for Joondalup after her contribution. From the member's speech, it is clear to see the very significant investment and support that is being offered throughout the northern suburbs by this government. Whether it is infrastructure, the Joondalup Health Campus, education and TAFE, the Neerabup robotics precinct or, importantly, as the member for Joondalup mentioned, the capped two-zone fare for public transport. That is transformational stuff that is happening in the northern suburbs. I am glad that the member for Joondalup went through it in detail because I may or may not have an opportunity to go into the detail of what it might mean for the people of Wanneroo, but it is clear that the members for Joondalup, Burns Beach, Landsdale and Butler, who is sitting to my left, are delivering for the northern suburbs. Of course, we need to extend the northern suburbs a little bit more nowadays. We have the members for Hillarys, Carine and Scarborough serving the northern suburbs as part of the McGowan Labor government. To go a bit further towards the city, but still considered to be the northern suburbs, we have the fabulous members for Churchlands and Nedlands, all supporting our residents throughout the northern suburbs as part of the McGowan government. If people get the opportunity to listen to government members' contributions to this debate, it is crystal clear that this government delivers on the election commitment that it makes. Members would agree that when we talk to people and hear the conversations around the federal election, one of the key issues that they raise is that politicians do not keep their promises—they say one thing and do another. Members, the clear priority of this McGowan government is keeping its election commitments and promises, and it is continuing to do so.

Before I talk about the budget, I want to take the opportunity while I am on my feet to acknowledge that tomorrow is P&C Day WA. I am delighted that tomorrow I will be hosting my P&Cs at the Wanneroo Sports and Social Club for a play date. I am looking forward to that very much. The committee members of my various P&Cs will come together, and instead of them having to turn the sausages, as many of them will do on "democracy day", I will be turning the sausages for them and shouting them a drink. About 100 kids will also be coming along and will be using the playground at the Wanneroo Sports and Social Club, which was an election commitment that we have delivered and is much used by that club. To all my P&Cs, thank you. It has been a bit frustrating in the last little while that I have not been able to be more connected with you as a result of the pandemic, but I am very much looking forward to tomorrow afternoon and getting back to normal as we move through this stage of the pandemic.

Of course, it is the budget that I really want to talk about. When we talk about election commitments, we need to emphasise that when we were first elected in 2017, we promised that we would get the state's finances back on track. We promised Western Australians that we would be a government that would be a strong financial manager of this state. That is what we promised. This McGowan government's sixth budget, and the second budget under our Premier; Treasurer, does just that. This budget demonstrates very clearly that the McGowan government is continuing

to deliver on the commitment that we made to the people of Western Australia in 2017 that we would be a strong financial manager. Surely by now, after five years of strong financial management, the myth that Labor is not strong on the economy should be busted. How many responsible budgets do we need to deliver until those opposite—those few opposite—accept that Labor is a strong financial manager? How much of the debt that we inherited from the former government do we have to pay down before opposition members will accept that we are a strong financial manager? This budget is another strong budget that is fair and will set up our state for the longer term. This budget will continue our record of strong financial management, help Western Australians with the cost of living, and invest in our future, at the same time as—importantly—we have been paying down the debt that the Liberals left us with us, and have invested over \$11 billion in our safe management of the pandemic. That is quite extraordinary.

While Scott Morrison has been blaming the pandemic for the trillion-dollar debt in his government's budget, we have been able to continue our strong financial management despite the pandemic, and in some respects probably because of the pandemic. The difficult but decisive decisions made by our Premier—which have been knocked by those opposite all the way through the two years of the pandemic—have kept the Western Australian economy going from strength to strength. The numbers do not lie. Western Australia has performed the strongest of all states throughout the pandemic. Western Australia's domestic economy has grown by 7.2 per cent since the beginning of the pandemic. Western Australia has contributed almost 40 per cent of the growth in the national GDP over the past two financial years—40 per cent of the Australian GDP. No wonder Scott Morrison likes us! Spending has remained strong throughout the pandemic, despite what the opposition has been saying over the last two years. Retail trade spending is up 22.5 per cent above pre-COVID levels. More West Aussies have a job today than ever before, with a record 1.46 million people employed. Western Australia has the lowest unemployment rate in the nation at 3.4 per cent, a 13-year low. This state's financial position is strong. This government has delivered a strong operating surplus of \$5.7 billion. We are expecting a \$1.6 billion operating surplus for 2022–23, and solid surpluses going forward. Very importantly, those projected surpluses are based on conservative estimates of the iron ore price. That is unlike what the opposition did when it had control of the finances of this state.

Also, importantly, this budget continues the budget repair required as a result of the record debt that the Barnett Liberal government left us. It is quite extraordinary that the McGowan government has reduced net debt for a third consecutive year. Net debt is now almost \$14 billion lower than projected when Labor came to office. I want to highlight what I mentioned in the house the other day. It is important to remember that debt has to be repaid. Our reduction in debt means that we are saving \$2.5 billion in interest payments on that debt. That amounts to a saving of \$950 for every individual in Western Australia. That is the truth of the matter. When we compare that with the debt Australians are facing under Scott Morrison's "good financial management", we are talking about a debt of a trillion dollars—plus. In real terms, that means that the interest costs are expected to rise to almost \$25 billion a year. That is the seventh largest spend in the federal budget. It is more than the annual cost of the disability pension, which is \$22 billion, and about three-quarters of the annual cost of the aged-care system, which is \$33 billion. That is what the interest bill and the credit card max out under Scott Morrison will do for our future and for the future of my girls and all the people of this state who will have to pay that off.

The member for Joondalup did an excellent job in talking about the investment by the McGowan government into the northern suburbs. I want to quickly highlight some of the main features of this budget. This budget features an investment of \$1.3 billion to further strengthen and diversify our economy. That includes a robotics precinct in Neerabup. That is a classic example of the things that are possible with this investment. The budget also includes a \$2.5 billion investment in health and mental health. Of course, when we talk about cost-of-living support, we are delivering a \$400 per household electricity credit, on top of the \$600 credit that we delivered in the last budget, which in effect will reduce household fees and charges by 3.8 per cent. Importantly, we are investing over \$650 million in our response to climate change and to protect our environment. That includes support for electric vehicles, which means that the uptake will increase. We have made the decision to end logging of native forests. We also have record investment in infrastructure, to the tune of \$33.9 billion. We are looking to the future by investing in a new women's and babies' hospital, and a new desalination plant. This budget not only supports people right now, but also is forward thinking to provide for Western Australians into the future, along with the \$11 billion that we did not have to borrow and have been able to use to support our community as we deal with the pandemic.

I note that the Prime Minister is flying back to Western Australia one day out from the federal election. That seems like a bit of a mad scramble to save the furniture. I welcome him coming back to Wanneroo and the electorate of Pearce. Of course, those on the other side say that we got lucky with the GST and the price of iron ore, but the fact of the matter is that the former Liberal–National government could not get WA its fair share of the GST. The only reason that Scott Morrison gave us a fair share of the GST is because he saw the writing on the wall electorally after 2017; there is no doubt about that. He is using a similar tactic now in pretending to be Mark McGowan's friend post-2021 when we know that he holds hands with Clive Palmer and gives his preferences to Clive Palmer. He is hoping that Clive Palmer's preferences will get him over the line and help him perform a miracle; there is no doubt about that. It is offensive to every Western Australian when the opposition says that we were gifted the GST. We were not gifted it; it belonged to Western Australians. The former Liberal–National government could not get what WA deserved; indeed, WA got what it deserved only after we came to government in 2017.



The coalition government are financial wreckers. As much as Morrison wants to say, “Strong economy, strong future”, it is not borne out when we look at the spending in the federal budget. Prior to the pandemic, debt had already doubled. When the coalition came to power, gross debt stood at \$280 billion and by the end of 2020, debt was at \$568 billion. On 22 July 2020, debt stood at \$723 billion. In fact, two-thirds of the debt was borrowed by the government before the outbreak of COVID-19. There has never been a more important election for this country—and for my children and grandchildren—than this one.

My community in Pearce are doing it tough. Interest rates are on the rise and we see the impact of growing inflation when we buy groceries or fill up the car with petrol. In the context of my electorate and what matters most to the residents of my electorate, there is a clear choice to be made about who we want as our local voice in Canberra. Tracey Roberts, the Mayor of Wanneroo, has spent more than a decade advocating for the northern suburbs and her record is clear. She is committed, she works hard and she will continue to get things done. Of course, the Liberal Party had to find a new candidate after deciding that Christian Porter did not quite have the ticker to take her on. There is a bit of a stench about him and that \$1 million in that brown paper bag. Heaps of people in Pearce have told me that they are disappointed that Christian Porter is not running because they do not have the opportunity to tell him in person what they think of him. Of course, instead, Linda Aitken is the Liberal candidate for Pearce. The other day in Parliament, I called her a serial candidate. I stand by that. I was accused by the opposition of being nasty. I was not being nasty, Madam Acting Speaker; I was just telling the truth.

**The SPEAKER:** Member, I am not the Acting Speaker.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Linda Aitken first ran against the member for Butler back in March 2013, but she did not succeed.

*Point of Order*

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to standing order 94, “Relevance”. This is meant to be a budget reply contribution, not a criticism of federal coalition candidates.

**The SPEAKER:** Thanks for that point of order. As members would be aware, these budget reply contributions are generally fairly wideranging with a lot of latitude given. I note that members of your party, and members of the Liberal Party, were given similar latitude with their contributions.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I repeat—she is a serial candidate. I am not being nasty; I am telling the truth. No-one is as good as Linda Aitken. She first ran in March 2013 but lost. In October 2013, she ran and succeeded in becoming a councillor. In March 2017, she had another crack at Hon John Quigley but lost again.

A government member interjected.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Oh no—there is a lot more to go.

She lost in March 2017. In October 2017 she said, “I’ll be a councillor again” and she was successful in that. Then she thought she would have a third crack at the member for Butler, and in March 2021 she had third go for the state seat and lost again. She decided in October 2021 that she would go back to being a councillor. But she is still not happy being a councillor because fewer than two months after asking ratepayers to let her represent them for four years, she has put her hand up for Pearce. Do you know what? I know there is a cunning plan by this serial pest; I think she is eyeing off being mayor after she is absolutely beaten to a wallop by Tracey Roberts. My biggest concern with Linda Aitken is not that she is a serial candidate. Good on her! She is persistent, is she not, member for Butler? It ought not concern me that she is a member of Margaret Court’s Victory Life Church, but it does, members, and I will tell you why. My biggest concern relates to a flyer that arrived in my mailbox yesterday. This is what is at the crux of the problem with the Liberal Party.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Like I said, I do not have anything against Linda Aitken. I do not. She is persistent and resilient—good on her. I like that; I like people who give it a crack! My concern relates to a flyer that she placed in my letterbox and the letterboxes of all residents yesterday in the seat of Pearce. This is not only the crux of the problem with the Liberal Party at the state level—we saw how that ended—but how it is how it might end for the federal Liberal Party as well. The crux of the problem with the Liberal Party is the Liberal candidates who have very radical and extreme views that do not represent the majority views of members of my community. In Pearce, Linda Aitken has at last shown her true colours and what motivates her in wanting a seat around the table. It is not about getting more infrastructure funding, easing the cost of living or wanting people to have a decent wage. It is about what is in her flyer. It states, “I will always support the right of faith-based schools to teach and operate according to their beliefs.” Don’t we all? This divisive and offensive flyer was dropped into my letterbox two days ago on 17 May, the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia—talk about timing! On the international day on which we celebrate LGBTIQ people globally and raise awareness of the work that is still needed to combat discrimination, this flyer was dropped into my letterbox and all the letterboxes in my community. We know the position of Margaret Court from Victory Life. Linda Aitken is a leader at that church.

I will quote from an SBS article on Margaret Court's position on people who are gay. I know members have heard this before, but I want to highlight it and read into the record of Parliament. It states —

Court, 78, is now a Pentecostal minister at a church in Perth and has drawn repeated criticism over recent years for her outspoken position on the LGBTIQ+ community.

Court has publicly opposed same-sex marriage, condemned transgender athletes ...

We know that that is a big issue out there in the sporting community! I have three daughters; I have spent my entire life going to sports with them and not once has the issue of transgender people in sport been an issue. In fact, it has not been raised by any sporting association anywhere around Australia, yet somehow it is a priority for Scott Morrison and people like Linda Aitken.

In 2013, Margaret Court wrote a letter to a newspaper decrying the birth of Australian tennis player Casey Dellacqua's child in a same-sex relationship, and I quote —

“Personally, I have nothing against Casey Dellacqua or her “partner” ...

“It is with sadness that I see this baby has seemingly been deprived of his father.”

It goes on and on and on. She struck out against Qantas as well. She stated —

“I am disappointed that Qantas has become an active promoter for same-sex marriage ...

“I believe in marriage as a union between a man and a woman as stated in the Bible.

She then said that she was going to boycott Qantas—lucky Qantas to not have such a customer.

Is this really the main concern for the voters in Pearce? I do not think so. Despite her spending a huge amount of money telling that to every voter in my electorate, in the five years I have been the member for Wanneroo, no-one has come into my office and said, “There's a bunch of gay teachers going crazy in private schools converting straight students!” Not one. Not one person has contacted my office telling me that there is a bunch of gay students in the private faith-based schools leading their petty peers astray. I find it utterly, utterly offensive. This stuff is divisive, abhorrent and unacceptable. Why can the media not call it out for what it is? Did members notice the front page spread on the federal candidate for Swan Zaneta Mascarenhas? *The West Australian* thought it was important to put her on the front page because she had a commitment to climate change. *The West* thought it was important that the electors of Swan were told that the Labor candidate for Swan was in support of action against climate change. Why is *The West* not reporting on the radical Liberals who are still getting preselection for these seats and who are not representing the people of Pearce? Why is that?

I want to talk a little about what people in my community think of the important matters at the upcoming federal election. It is the cost-of-living pressures, wasteful expenditure, and demand for an integrity system that holds politicians to account so they cannot have their local member running around like Christian Porter with a paper bag with a million dollars in it without any questions being asked. That is what the people in Pearce want. It is a broken promise by Scott Morrison. We know about the rorts and the blatant misuse of taxpayers' money, but I want to focus on JobKeeper in particular. There is no question that it was a very important measure and it supported many small businesses through the pandemic restrictions. However, the waste from that scheme is quite simply outrageous. Billions of dollars were wasted. *The Australian Financial Review* quoted a Treasury report —

On page 40 of the report, Treasury explains that its analysis is based upon a \$47.6 billion sample of the \$70.3 billion paid in the first phase of JobKeeper. For reasons that are arguably flimsy and inarguably self-serving, Treasury's analysis excluded all of the JobKeeper paid to not-for-profits like rich private schools —

There is a bit of a connection there —

and stadium churches —

There is a bit of a connection there, too —

and to subsidiaries of consolidated groups like Specsavers and Harvey Norman.

*The Australian Financial Review* says that over \$40 billion was wasted, yet Scott Morrison begrudges an Anthony Albanese government that wants to spend a few billion dollars on the aged-care system. The priorities of the federal government are stunning.

Of course, JobKeeper went to many people and many businesses that needed it, but it also went to lots of people who did not need it. Members will be interested to know one of the groups that did not need it. According to a media report I have here, Margaret Court's Perth-based church received more than \$500 000 in JobKeeper payments. The report states —

But according to the report, Victory Life Centre's revenue fell by about 0.72 per cent (approximately \$19,669) during the 2019/20 financial year, excluding government subsidies.

The organisation did not need it; this is outrageous. It was given \$500 000 when other businesses, which members opposite harp on about all the time, received no support. Support was clearly given to a chosen few. It is outrageous that *The West Australian* during a federal election campaign does not truly investigate all the candidates who are putting up their hand—what they stand for, what motivates them and how they will represent Pearce.

In the past few weeks there has been a lot of talk about the need for wage increases. I note that members opposite tried to wedge the member for Joondalup by asking, “Do you support a wage increase?” as if that was such a bad thing. Sally McManus from the Australian Council of Trade Unions put it well when she said that the \$40 billion in JobKeeper payments to companies and organisations like Margaret Court and Linda Aitken’s church that did not need it equates to an \$8-an-hour increase for the 2.6 million workers on the minimum wage. But they like to argue the toss about not being able to afford a decent wage increase to make sure the lowest wage earners keep pace with inflation and do not go backwards. An amount of \$40 billion was wasted in JobKeeper payments, largely to organisations like the one I have just highlighted instead of businesses that required it. That \$40 billion is now not available in the budget to pivot and provide genuine cost-of-living and wage relief for Australians.

The stench from the federal coalition government grows every day. Although Scott Morrison is seeking a second term, we need to remember that the coalition government has been in power for nearly a decade. It would like us to forget that. It would like us to forget the revolving door and its internal fights about its capacity, or stomach, to address climate change. That war is still going on, members—have no doubt about it.

Members, I am sorry I got a bit grumpy, but when I receive rubbish like this in my letterbox—I am a voter in Pearce because I live in Ashby in my electorate; I do not hang around the western suburbs—backed by the Christian lobby, I am outraged. I do not mind if Linda Aitken has such a position; I do not deny her that. However, she is not open with every single person she tries to meet at the polling booth and shake their hand. Candidates need to be transparent and open if they want people to vote for them so that they fully understand the kind of agenda they have if they are going to serve them in the federal Parliament. It is clear that this situation is not acceptable and it does not reflect the majority of people in Pearce who want inclusive government. They know that the time is up for this divisive government. Pearce can do so much better and Australians can do so much better too.

**MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [10.59 am]:** I do not want to dwell on the federal politics or state issues that members opposite have. There have been some very interesting speeches on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022 over the last couple of days. Members have talked about ice cream, fish and chip shops, ribs and all that! We have heard a lot about cost-of-living pressures. Anthony Albanese, the leader of the federal Labor Party and potentially our future Prime Minister, has said that he and the Labor Party are advocating for a wages increase of 5.1 per cent, which is in line with inflation growth. All the Labor Party members here, and their supporters, are going out there selling the campaign idea that under an Albanese federal Labor government, wages will increase by 5.1 per cent, keeping in line with inflation. Yet, here in Western Australia, we have a \$5.7 billion surplus, with \$12 billion or something over two years. Our inflation rate in Western Australia is 7.1 or 7.2 per cent; yet, the state Labor government is restricting wages growth, has had a \$1 000 cap on the public sector over the last five years and is offering 2.75 per cent over two years. Although the Western Australian inflation rate is over seven per cent and the national inflation rate is 5.1 per cent, a federal Labor government, which members opposite are campaigning for—rightfully so; they are members of the Labor Party—is advocating for a 5.1 per cent increase in wages. Why are members opposite not advocating for change within their own state government to lift wages here in Western Australia? Why does the government offer only 2.75 per cent when the inflation rate is well over seven per cent? Why are members opposite not advocating for, or talking about, that in the chamber? The unions have been a bit quiet; although, they are starting to get a bit agitated. It will be interesting to see what happens after next week and how the unions start to put pressure on the state government to change its wages policy, which is not keeping pace with inflation here in Western Australia. When members opposite talk about cost-of-living pressures, they should look in their own backyard first. That is all that I want to say on that matter because some of the speeches that have been delivered in this place have been unbelievably misguided and skewed. We have a federal election coming up, but we have not heard boo from members opposite prior to this federal election on the issues in their electorates. They just attack the Morrison government. Another issue members opposite have talked about is the investment that the federal government has made. Whether members opposite like Scott Morrison’s coalition government or not, the investment into Western Australia has been extraordinary. Billions of dollars have been put in. Over the last five years, this government, the Minister for Transport and the Premier, who constantly refers to the Prime Minister as “My good friend”, have been nothing but complimentary to the federal government for the billions of dollars it has put in, particularly to transport, Metronet and roads. My electorate has received a significant amount of federal funding for roads and projects. But we now have a federal election coming up and we see the attack on the federal government that has done right by Western Australia. Everything that the state Labor government has put to the federal government, the federal government has pretty much funded.

We are in a very good position here in Western Australia. We can argue. We sit here and laugh. We can pump our chests and say, “What a fantastic budget this is; we have a surplus of \$5.7 billion.” However, the facts are that the change to the GST floor has helped the finances here in Western Australia. The iron ore prices have been at record

highs, which has helped our budget here in Western Australia. That is nothing to criticise one political party or another for; it is fantastic for Western Australia. It is fantastic that we can have the surpluses off the back of our resources industry and off the back of the GST deal—a deal that I would say we deserve more than a 75¢ floor in the GST on. We have done well because the state and federal governments cooperated to do what is best for Australia and Western Australia.

Members opposite stand up and I know they are trying to jostle because there may be retirements in the future, so everyone wants to try to become a minister or parliamentary secretary or to move up the food chain, and the factions want to get at each other. We know that that is the case. But the fact remains that Western Australia has been in a very good financial position over the pandemic because of our resource industry and because of the GST. Other states have not had the luxury of those things. We can dress up the Labor Party as being a good financial manager, but I say that we have been in a very fortunate position here in Western Australia to benefit from both the GST and our resources—the number one revenue source for our state. Over the last couple of years, the iron ore sector has done well for our financial situation and has given us a huge surplus. The arguments should be around where that surplus should be spent or whether the government is spending the money in the right areas.

Enough of that. I want to talk about my electorate of North West Central. The electorate of North West Central has had to navigate uncharted waters over the past two and a half years, which has been extremely challenging and confronting for so many people, industries and local governments. They have needed to be resilient to change, and we have had to be accepting of the changes to our lives that have been thrust upon our communities as a result of the pandemic. Some industries have thrived very well while others have suffered enormously and have struggled to survive as we work through this COVID period, which has been all consuming despite the case numbers we are experiencing. It is important that we look forward to, seek out, create or support, new and emerging opportunities for our community and look to reset and build strong industries and prospects for now and for the future generations.

A range of exciting and emerging projects are being invested in by companies across my electorate, which are set to create jobs growth and opportunities to strengthen communities, and the prosperity of local economies in not only our local communities, but also our state and nation. One project that is extremely exciting and is getting close to a final investment decision is with Hastings Technology Metals Ltd. Hastings is a leading Australian rare-earth company and a significant producer of neodymium—hopefully I said that right. I am not going to read out the others because it gets more confusing. Perhaps I will give it to Hansard to put in! Hastings supplies and grows demand in technology metals, specifically the permanent magnets market. The Yangibana project in the Gascoyne is set to take the next step. This is a golden opportunity for Carnarvon and Gascoyne Junction to not only support the Hastings operation, located 250 kilometres north-east of Carnarvon and around 150 kilometres north-east of Gascoyne Junction, but also grow, develop and further strengthen the prosperity of our local businesses, towns and region. With the prospect of around 30 or 40 jobs in Onslow and another 250 permanent jobs being created, we need to ensure that the Gascoyne region capitalises on this opportunity by catering for a residential workforce based in Carnarvon, Gascoyne Junction and Onslow. Hopefully we can limit the number of fly-in fly-out jobs that come from Perth and employ as many locals as possible. We need to ensure that there is the ability for people to move to places like the Gascoyne, being Carnarvon, Gascoyne Junction and, obviously, Onslow. Rare-earth ore will be mined, crushed, milled and processed into a concentrate at the Yangibana site and then trucked 450 kilometres to a plant in the Ashburton North Strategic Industrial Area near Onslow for further processing to a mixed rare-earth carbonate before being shipped to global customers.

I put on the record my thanks to the Minister for Lands, who, through his department, has assisted in enabling this processing plant to be based at the Ashburton North Strategic Industrial Area on a critical piece of land. Hastings Technology Metals will be the first tenant on that piece of land that will enable further growth and diversification to occur in Onslow. Being able to have that plant in the Ashburton North Strategic Industrial Area is a very important piece of the puzzle for Hastings Technology Metals to be able to go forward. A lot of work has already been undertaken, such as site access through the Cobra–Gifford Creek Road, while development of an accommodation village, the airstrip, a water supply and communications are well underway. The company plans to commence construction of the mine infrastructure processing plant and support infrastructure in the second half of this year following the finalisation of funding and a final investment decision by Hastings' board of directors.

One major funding source has been the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, which has loaned Hastings Technology Metals \$140 million. That will really enable that project. Although I think companies are getting one of the highest prices at the moment for rare earths—close to \$30 000 a tonne—these projects are very complex and still need financial assistance from governments. It is a China-dominated market. This is all about trying to divest the reliance on China providing these rare earths, as China is the only country that processes rare earth. I am sure that Europe will have that processing capability in the future, because it is in the interests of the world when it comes to manufacturing, whether it be for hybrid cars or the electric cars that we hear a lot about. This metal is critical for the security of our transport system and our way of going forward to reach our net zero target by 2050, if not before.

A lot of companies are looking at hydrogen projects in the North West Central electorate. One that is very close to Carnarvon is a project involving Province Resources Ltd. The project aims to attract investment and create jobs

in Carnarvon by developing renewable energy sources that will help meet the state government's goal of 10 per cent green hydrogen by 2030, open new domestic and export markets and meet the carbonisation goals set by the nation. This is an exciting project. It is probably some way off—about 10 years—but the work is starting to occur, which is leading to opportunities for businesses in the Gascoyne, particularly Carnarvon, to supply the labour or resources needed to build a trial plant very close to Carnarvon at Town Common. That is exciting in itself, as Carnarvon and the Gascoyne are playing a major role in meeting the state and federal governments' targets for net zero emissions.

Another company that is well advanced and doing a lot of work around the Gascoyne, as well as around this whole state, the nation and the globe, is Fortescue Future Industries. FFI has a goal of starting the process of meeting the emissions targets for Fortescue Metals Group by 2030, which is an admirable task. That will set in motion the ability to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. It is proposing to do that by taking a global leadership position in renewable energy and the green products industry by harnessing the world's renewable energy resources to provide renewable electricity, green hydrogen and other green industrial products, such as green ammonia and green iron.

What is hydrogen? We hear a lot about hydrogen, but we actually do not talk a lot about hydrogen in this place. I think it is the future. It will be the way to meet our net zero emissions target into the future. If companies like FFI, Province or anyone else can crack the manufacture of green hydrogen, it will be a game changer for iron ore and any other commodities that need to be mined or processed, and will also provide cheaper and more reliable energy to Western Australia, Australia and the globe. That is something that we need to start investing in. We need to start to take that seriously.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** What is hydrogen? It is one of the most abundant elements on earth. It is the lightest and smallest element, being 14 times lighter than air. It is colourless, odourless, tasteless, non-toxic and non-poisonous. Hydrogen can be released without contributing to atmospheric or water pollution and can be stored in large quantities for large periods of time. Although the supply is infinite, hydrogen is not commonly found in its pure form in nature. It can be manually produced through a process called electrolysis. This process requires electricity, and when achieved using renewable energy resources like solar, wind, hydropower or geothermal energy with zero carbon dioxide emissions, the result is green hydrogen. There are great opportunities out there for hydrogen. As I said, and will keep repeating, it will play a role into the future in helping to meet our objectives as a state, political parties and a nation to reduce carbon and meet our net zero emissions target, hopefully before 2050.

I anticipate that hydrogen will be much like the discovery of iron ore back in the 1960s. That is how important hydrogen is to the state of Western Australia. I do not think anyone realised—perhaps the Premier at the time realised—where iron ore would be today, or over the last, say, 20 years. Hydrogen is in a similar vein. It is an opportunity to create jobs, help us meet our net zero emissions target and provide us with a resource to export around the world. That technology will be replicated around the world. This is a great opportunity that needs investment. When we look at the \$5.7 billion surplus, we need investment to go into these new and emerging industries. We hear a lot about diversification. This one is staring everyone in the face. Hydrogen is the future of being able to meet our target of net zero emissions. The Leader of the Liberal Party has been quite vocal on this. We see states like Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania putting land and money on the table to attract Western Australian companies like Fortescue Future Industries to build plant and other components there, because those governments realise the value of hydrogen. It is disappointing that the McGowan government has not grasped the opportunity of a Western Australian-owned company and said, "We want you to build a plant here."

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Remember—he wanted to build a plant here.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The founder of FFI, Andrew Forrest, wanted to build a plant here in Western Australia; the Leader of the Liberal Party is correct. I am sure there were plenty of meetings and discussions about where and how FFI wanted to do it, and what it needed from the state government to be able to do it. Unfortunately, we have seen that slip through our fingers because of the government's inaction. We hear rhetoric about what the government is doing, but here is a classic example of the need to invest in our new and emerging industries. This is an industry that could meet WA's climate change obligations, and that is why we need that investment to occur.

Exciting and emerging industries are occurring around my electorate. Hydrogen is important, but it also creates a bit of conflict with landowners. As I have said, we hear a lot about hydrogen, but we do not actually understand how it is produced. It needs large wind turbines to make sure that it is green energy, so we need to take into account the visual impact of that on communities. There is also a need for these large turbines to coexist with a lot of farming and pastoral properties. That is where we could see diversification of pastoral leases. The Minister for Lands wants to try to bring these changes to the Land Act, hopefully in the second half of this year. That will allow for diversification. Negotiations in good faith are paramount to coexistence between landowners and hydrogen companies that want to utilise land in farming or pastoral areas. The minister can correct me if I am wrong, but I believe there is an opportunity for pastoralists to have right of refusal and say, "No, we don't want to have any industry on our pastoral lease." That is one area we know will have a huge impact. Hopefully, it could give some comfort to pastoralists that they will have the ability to negotiate in good faith but also be able to say no. There will also be some comfort in being able to see some detail of the legislation within the coming months so that

pastoralists can actually see how those diversification changes are going to impact on their ability to continue carrying out pastoral activities while taking up the opportunity to coexist with industry through negotiation of a deal that will make their operations sustainable into the future. I note that there will also need to be negotiations with traditional owners that also presents an opportunity to diversify pastoral leases. Negotiating Indigenous Land Use Agreements with traditional owners should allow everyone to coexist and benefit from this new, emerging, exciting and game changing opportunity for Western Australia and the world.

We have these exciting and emerging projects, but it is not the state or federal government's doing; it is the result of technology that is rapidly changing and companies like FFI, Hastings and many, many more. They are moving with the times and they need support and investment from the state government. They need support around legislation that will enable the diversification of pastoral stations and coexistence negotiations that will allow hydrogen infrastructure to be put in place. I am confident that the Minister for Lands understands the importance of this, and we look forward to that legislation coming into this house in due course.

However, we need to ensure that we can have local employment and that we can attract people to come and live in places like Carnarvon and Gascoyne Junction. We need the government to assist with land release, which is another one for the Minister for Lands. There is no shortage of land, but there is a shortage of infrastructure to be able to unlock that land to provide water, sewerage and power. Headworks blockages prevent a lot of land being released. The government needs to invest in that to be able to capture the opportunity to have a drive in, drive out or FIFO workforce in regional towns, rather than coming from Perth. We also need workers; we need the government to work out how to move forward to capture workers, including looking overseas, whether for agriculture, hospitality or tourism. We have heard about the low unemployment rate; well, we know why. It is because we have not had any workers coming into the state. In health, how do we get doctors to come in? How can we make it simpler and easier to navigate the red tape to get doctors and nurses into the state of Western Australia? We also need accommodation in places like Exmouth and Kalbarri. That is another one for the Minister for Lands! It is not that simple in such places to put out expressions of interest to get land to build workers' accommodation. There are headworks costs, and that is where the surplus should be spent—on unlocking those headworks costs so we can build workers' accommodation in Exmouth and Kalbarri.

This is an exciting time. It is exciting that there is a huge budget surplus, but we need that budget surplus to be reinvested so that we can grow and diversify our economy, particularly in our regions, where we have these exciting, new and emerging industries such as green hydrogen. Members should not be confused about the difference between dirty hydrogen and green hydrogen. That is our future. That is the opportunity we have, and my electorate of North West Central is leading the way in providing these exciting new industries, much like the 1960s when iron ore was first discovered.

**MR Y. MUBARAKAI (Jandakot — Parliamentary Secretary)** [11.29 am]: I will remove my mask and use my allocated time to make my contribution to the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022 heard. I had hoped that I would not have to use my allocated time to provide feedback on the contribution of my good friend the member for North West Central, especially after the member for Wanneroo's contribution. I enjoy the member's company outside this chamber, but it is frustrating to sit here and listen to his contributions. I have been in this place as part of the McGowan government for a few years. This is my sixth budget and I still consider myself a newbie. I am sure that you feel the same, Acting Speaker; I congratulate you on your appointment as Acting Speaker, member for Hillarys. I say this just once in the hope that the member for North West Central will gather my words of advice and start to think about what it really means to represent the people of Western Australia, especially his electorate. He has been here longer than I have and has more experience. He was part of the former Liberal–National government for 10 years. It is clear that the budget today talks about the McGowan government's good fiscal management and how to manage the state's finances responsibly, especially after it was handed an atrocious set of books in 2017. The economy in 2017 was absolutely doomed and the people of Western Australia were not sure where the state was heading.

It is fortunate that the McGowan government has cabinet members who learnt a lot from their experience in opposition. They saw firsthand the Liberal–National government, as the governing body in Parliament, take on an operating surplus during one of the best economic times ever. The global demand for iron ore, especially from China, one of our most trusted trading partners, resulted in heavy investment in our economy. Even on today's economic forecasts, it is important to consider this. I can only imagine what it was like sitting in opposition during that time. When I look at the opposition now, I reflect on how well the McGowan cabinet has worked to improve the set of books it was left with in 2017. When I think about the dynamic, I assure members that it would not have been easy to watch what the federal government was doing to the national economy when we compare it with what is happening in Western Australia under the McGowan government.

The McGowan government has had to address not just the financial mess it was left with, but also deal with one of the most drastic times the world has ever experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic. It had to find new ways to keep Western Australians—families and senior members of the community—safe. It had to find ways to create jobs and to keep jobs safe. The COVID-19 pandemic not only impacted globally on families and resulted in the loss of millions of lives, but caused disruptions in the economies of many countries. Western Australia and the McGowan

government, as a government, set an absolute example globally for how to not only manage the state's finances, but also take a step above and beyond its responsibilities to manage the lives of those who trusted the McGowan government to keep them safe day in day out. They include those people who work in frontline services, and we must acknowledge their sacrifices and the work that they have done. We must also look at how well our teachers managed the situation in our schools to look after our kids and help families to deal with this very complex issue. It has not been easy for anyone. Everyone in this place knows someone who has been affected. Now more than ever before, we must be optimistic and aspirational. That is what the 2022–23 appropriation bills talk about.

The McGowan government is talking about the future of the state. To hear opposition members lecture us on economics and fiscal management stretches the elastic too far—seriously! That is coming from me—someone they called a newbie last term and said, “You’re not going to be here. See you later, member for Jandakot, member for this or that.” I am not going to say that to you guys. All I want to say is: get your head together. Use the opportunity to come in here to apologise to the people of Western Australia and tell them how sorry you are, one, for wrecking the finances; two, for completely not understanding the fiscal capabilities of running good government; and, three, for BS-ing your way through MAX light rail. Everything that you guys put in the cloud has not been uploaded. It is time that members of the opposition shared their grievances and told us how terrible they were in government. In that way, they can, what we call, work on their balance sheet and get their deficits in alignment with a clean set of books so that they can proceed to be a good opposition. At the moment they definitely lack that capability, in my fair opinion. Again, they are my views.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** Absolutely, member for Wanneroo. I thought the election result in 2017 was loud and clear, but that bang was even bigger and greater in 2021.

**Ms S.E. Winton:** It wasn't their fault.

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** It definitely was not, especially when we get lessons from them on how to manage the finances!

We are in our third year of consecutive surpluses. We have managed COVID and the world is looking at us and talking about how well the McGowan government managed the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are getting lessons on how to do things better from opposition members who wrecked the economy! We were given the responsibility five years ago to fix their mess, but now we get their advice on how to do things better. The member for North West Central wants us to take him seriously. I do not. But I do take the McGowan government seriously. That is why I want to thank the Premier and the newly appointed Minister for Health, Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, for their efforts in continuing to keep Western Australians safe, particularly the older members of our community. They have done that at the same time as focusing on budget repair, diversification, emerging markets and providing Western Australia with a level of good governance to generate one of Western Australia's biggest surpluses while also adding to federal government coffers to assist in its management of the pandemic.

A lot of Australians in different parts of Australia have benefited from the great work of the McGowan government cabinet from its inception in 2017 to now. The 2022–23 budget not only identifies strategies and a road map, but also presents a clear set of books that outline how we are going to address infrastructure, how to look at emerging new technologies, how we are going to build schools, and how are we going to provide the youth of tomorrow with aspirational guidance through our infrastructure in schools, and vocational education and training, and by freezing TAFE fees.

That is another point, member for Roe, about our term in government. They were in government for 10 years.

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

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** The Minister for Housing is right there. The member for Roe is good at listening, according to the Premier. I will give the advice that has been given to the member for Roe. I have a lot of respect for the member for Roe and his collaborative thought processes on what is good advice. I acknowledge his presence in the chamber, but at some point it would be great to hear his views on why for 10 years the former Liberal–National government thought it was a good idea to raise TAFE fees exorbitantly, which has meant that the McGowan government must now address those issues. He knows better than most that TAFEs provide skill sets and opportunities for the next generation. When that training is unaffordable, where do those skill sets come from to make this country and this state a better place for families to live and work in? He comes in here and gives us lessons on fiscal management and calculations about diversifying the economy. It does not make sense. Water rates and utilities—what was that about in the first and second term of government? The average was about 60 per cent, if I am not mistaken. It was a ridiculous figure. What his government did was absolutely shocking especially when, historically, this state had one of its best opportunities. The future looked so good in 2008. It just so happens that the government could not take those opportunities and create long-term investment for the state and prosperity for the people of Western Australia.

I will go back to my thoughts before Parliament rose in November last year. I wanted to get a glimpse into where the state was financially, so on the last day of Parliament in November 2021, I stood and asked the Premier about his outlook and how well he thought we had kept WA safe and strong by creating jobs. I asked him about the prospects for the economy and whether the outlook was fair for Western Australians. If I may indulge, I will identify the clear

thoughts of the Premier's feedback on the questions I asked him in Parliament. Six months ago, the Premier said that since the McGowan government arrived in office, it had created 120 000 new jobs. That is a staggering figure. He said that our unemployment rate was the lowest in the nation, in contrast to when we came to government in 2017 and Western Australia had the highest rate of unemployment of all the states. It had the worst set of books, the highest rate of unemployment and exorbitantly high record TAFE fees and utility charges that were a burden on households. The Premier said that WA has a record budget surplus \$5.8 billion and had addressed its credit rating, lifting it to AA+ after losing our AAA rating. Obviously, the outlook was considered positive, having been stable. There is a clear outline from when we started in 2017 to what we achieved up to six months ago. The news is even better from that point—six months ago—to this budget. The figures have continued into 2022. The state's unemployment rate currently stands at 3.4 per cent and our participation rate is at almost 70 per cent. That means that 1.46 million Western Australians are employed. Since the McGowan government came to office, it has created 148 000 jobs. That is a remarkable turnaround.

I am looking at the *Economic and fiscal outlook* and at the pathway we will head into over the next four years. That is a lot of reading material. I will not dwell on that, but I will use the time I have—I wish I had more time—to try to condense my contribution. In talking about the efforts that have led us to being where we are today, I want to take the opportunity to thank and acknowledge the tremendous effort of the previous Minister for Health Hon Roger Cook, the member for Kwinana. During his time as Minister for Health, we endured the beginning of the pandemic and the bad news that followed with the devastating effects it had on this state. It affected families and everyone else. I strongly commend him for his efforts in dealing with the health crisis. It is not something that the state has seen for 100 years. Minister Cook took charge of the situation and had empathy and patience for the opposition, which repeatedly asked ridiculous questions over and over again. Minister Cook stood up and regurgitated the same points to members opposite on the importance of the reality of COVID and the devastation it caused.

Minister Cook has taken on a new role as Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade, which has a very strong mandate to expand Western Australia's export opportunities into Asia, and particularly to the emerging markets like India, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines. I do not know whether the member for Roe has heard the news, but it was exciting to hear that Minister Cook has just announced a business delegation that will travel to India to engage with that new market. Clearly, that could be a very strong opportunity for Western Australia to get into those emerging markets like India, Indonesia and Vietnam. Over the next decade or two, these emerging economies will definitely need support and a growing amount of resources that a skilled state like Western Australia can provide, especially in the emerging industries like critical minerals.

On that note, I will share with members in the chamber how Western Australia has performed in the financial year 2020–21, when Western Australia was the world's number one producer of lithium. The value of that market is almost a trillion dollars, and that number is exploding. Obviously, the price of lithium is at a record high. It has gone up by 415 per cent in the last year. That is how important this critical mineral is.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** As I said, lithium and critical minerals present new, record opportunities in terms of where they can lead us, and we have a strategy around that. The state has long been investing in this and fully understands how important the diversification of new markets will be for our state, such as batteries and renewables. I am glad to say that we have planned and are ready to meet the expectations of the emerging markets. The delegation that is going to India to look into those opportunities is definitely something that I consider a strategy based on foresight and merit. We should be engaging those markets and looking at them, post-COVID, as an opportunity to reset. They are an additional 20 partners to help diversify our economy and spread the risk associated with the iron ore sector by capitalising on the huge opportunities that the critical minerals industry offers. The trip to India and other emerging countries is an added bonus for this state. Again, that initiative will be headed by the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade.

Last financial year, Western Australia exported 837 million tonnes of iron ore, 42.4 million tonnes of LNG and \$16.6 billion worth of gold. That was the most in the world in all those categories during that financial year. That is how well we did in the midst of the COVID pandemic. COVID hit around March 2020. During that financial year, the whole world suffered not only from COVID, but also economically. However, the McGowan government defended Western Australia very strongly by creating safety for our citizens. The government also kept people's jobs safe by continuing to support the mining sector and making sure it was not disrupted. Therefore, we could capitalise on that. We have seen that Western Australia contributed \$32 billion to the federal purse in that financial year. That is how much Western Australia tipped into the federal coffers. We not only created three consecutive fiscal surpluses while paying off the debt that was forecast to be \$42 billion under the previous state government, but also paid down the debt by \$14 billion. Try working out the repayments in interest we have saved by reducing the debt by \$14 billion. We can now use that money to make better investments in education and infrastructure and to help those households in Western Australia that are suffering. I will not take any lessons from the opposition when it comes to numbers, statistics, economics, good governance or fiscal management. The evidence is right here. The disgraceful situation that we saw under the previous Liberal–National government is in direct contrast with this united and strong McGowan government, which has not only had the foresight during the pandemic



to lower debt by \$14 billion, but also been able to provide an extraordinary \$11.2 billion worth of support to Western Australian families and businesses to make sure that everyone is looked after and that we can keep on track to continue doing what we do best. Western Australia is a state of opportunities, and we are taking on that responsibility.

I forgot to mention that one of the other flaws of the former government is that it failed to fix the GST. That is a very sensitive matter for members on this side of the chamber, along with the Premier, who has been called different things by other states when they have talked about how unfair the GST system is and have said that Western Australia should not be able to get its fair share of GST revenue. That is ridiculous.

That brings me to a letter that was sent to Western Australian families recently by a former Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard. I have to confess that when I read that letter, I thought of the audacity of that former Prime Minister in sending that letter to constituents in Western Australia. He would probably understand the importance of the state of Western Australia as the backbone of the Australian economy. He wrote in his letter that Labor cannot be trusted with fiscal management because it is used to being labelled a mismanager. Hold that thought. Here is a former Liberal Prime Minister of Australia, telling the people of Western Australia that we are bad at fiscal management. When this state has made a contribution to the federal government's coffers to help support it during the worst crisis that we have faced, and when the current Prime Minister, who is a Liberal, has created a debt worth a trillion dollars, we are getting a lesson from a former Liberal Prime Minister about how badly this state is doing from his perspective! It is staggering. This is an important sentence and I must read it. The former Prime Minister states about the federal budget —

... the most recent Budget has shown the largest turnaround in Australia's finances in over 70 years.

That is true. He is right. Under the current Prime Minister, this nation has the worst set of books and the worst debt that it has ever incurred. I am sure the former Prime Minister meant to write all that but could not fit it into that sentence. From the way he has written that letter, I am sure he is trying to criticise the current Prime Minister by indicating that residents in Western Australia would be better off supporting an Albanese federal Labor government, because Labor has better policies and better ways of fixing the big sinkhole that has been set up by the Morrison government. Again, lessons learnt, taken and noted, and advice provided. The federal government needs to give Western Australia its fair share of GST. Fix that system so that we will not have to keep repeating why it is important to ensure that this state can continue to do the heavy lifting. We do not need other states to look at taking what should duly come back to this state so that we can continue to diversify our economy and manufacturing and invest in new technology and so on and so forth. We should not be kicked in the knee for every good deed this state has done in supporting this nation. I fail to understand the merit in that letter. I know that an Albanese Labor government will make a commitment to fix the GST to enable all states to get a fair GST floor as a minimum base.

I note that time is running short and I have not made my contribution and given my input on my electorate of Jandakot, but I am sure there will be other moments when I will be able to do that. In terms of my thankyou, and my purpose in standing today to speak in this debate, I want to say thank you for my recent appointment as parliamentary secretary to the honourable minister and member for Armadale, Tony Buti. That has been an eye-opener for me. It has been a massive learning curve. I have been privileged and thankful from the day I was elected as the member for Jandakot. Every time I have come into this place over the last five years, it has been a tremendous learning curve, but even more so in the last year being with the cabinet and ministers and trying to understand the new ways in which parliamentarians fit into the broader scheme of things. Parliament is a big machine. It is a massive institution. It comes with a lot of responsibility and purpose. I am very grateful to Minister Buti and his ministerial staffers. They have been very patient, because I am quite passionate in my expressions sometimes, and they have allowed me to take baby steps and have answered my stupid questions. I am most grateful for that support and involvement. I hope to continue to play my part in this place and to make my contribution, in a moral and ethical way, to what this Labor government under Premier Mark McGowan is looking for—prosperity for all Western Australians into the future.

I have been the member for Jandakot for five years, and I am looking forward to the next three. This government's term looks very promising with all the things that are taking place for us in this state. I want to say thank you to you, Speaker, for the time that has been allocated to me in this debate. I also want to say a big thank you to Adam and Bec for being my electorate office team. Without you both, I guess my job would be half complete. You are definitely playing a big part in making my job complete.

On that note, I appreciate and definitely and heartily recommend the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022 to this house in the forty-first Parliament.

**MS C.M. TONKIN (Churchlands)** [11.56 am]: I rise today to make a contribution to the second reading debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022. I am proud to be part of a government that is recognised internationally for its outstanding management of our economy and the state's finances. Such recognition would be laudable in normal times, but our government's standout performance comes in the midst of three international crises: the pandemic; extreme weather events due to climate change; and the economic disruptions being caused by Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, which has impacted international markets and increased the cost of living. The implications of these crises are reverberating around the world.

The implications are also evident here in Western Australia and a cause for concern among the very thoughtful community members in my electorate of Churchlands. Since my election as the member for Churchlands, I have been working with five community groups whose volunteers are passionate about the issues they are addressing. These include ageing; preventive mental health; traffic congestion and road safety; wetlands and bush habitats; and green jobs. This budget includes initiatives across these areas of focus that will be welcomed by our community.

I am proud to be part of a government that has produced consecutive budgets that have delivered significant operating surpluses that will continue across the forward estimates; that is paying down debt, which will reduce our exposure to the current regime of rising interest rates; and that is investing in our future. This world-class financial management has enabled the delivery of a budget that reflects Labor's core values, to the benefit of the entire community.

This budget has investment in significant economic infrastructure, including Metronet. Incidentally, three railway stations used by Churchlands residents will enable access to the expanded Metronet rail network—Glendalough, West Leederville and Subiaco. This wonderful initiative will directly support our community.

The budget also makes a substantial investment in our health and mental health systems with the investment of \$2.5 billion, which is in addition to the \$3.2 billion that has been invested since the 2021–22 budget. There is increased spending on education and training. Our children, young people and the not so young will be provided with opportunities to learn and develop new skills and take advantage of emerging opportunities in our economy.

This budget builds upon initiatives to facilitate diversification of our economy through investments in economic initiatives and infrastructure. There is substantial support for building stronger communities through boosting spending on services and supports to the most vulnerable in our community, including a new remote communities fund to support the development of remote Aboriginal communities and funding for social housing and homelessness, as well as measures to promote infill development and boost housing supply. These initiatives are in line with core Labor values.

In addition, this budget directly addresses the implications of the three crises afflicting the world today. It continues to support the community in addressing the pandemic through funding free RATs for distribution throughout the community and providing COVID-related health responses, additional resources for schools and support packages for WA businesses, bringing the total outlay on pandemic-related measures to \$11.2 billion.

Increasing the climate action fund is another feature of the budget. A total amount of \$1.25 billion will be used to address the impact of climate change and protect our environment, including incentives for the uptake of electric vehicles, which will be music to the ears of many in my electorate. The budget addresses the cost of living with measures to reduce costs by reducing the overall basket of charges to households with a decrease in costs of 3.8 per cent, including a \$400 credit on electricity bills, which adds to the \$600 credit from late 2020. We are addressing the pandemic, climate change and the cost of living in addition to all the general features of the budget that reflect core Labor values.

In September this year, I will be attending an international public procurement research workshop in Ljubljana, Slovenia, which will consider public procurement during crises. So much of what we do in government is based around the procurement of goods and services and works that are necessary to support the delivery of services. I have been invited to the workshop because I have not only expertise in this field, but also now a very different perspective and insights into managing the social, economic and environmental implications associated with disruptions because of being a politician. It is also the case that the three crises are very much a part of the concerns of the people in the Churchlands electorate.

COVID has been high on the agenda and the source of much discussion among members of my community. It has disrupted many supply chains, including those for key resources such as iron ore and other minerals, complex manufacturing, construction materials, parts, medical equipment and supplies, food supplies and processing, and household products. By keeping our extractive industries fully operational during the pandemic, our state has become the engine of our national economy. This did not happen by accident; rather, it required careful management by the McGowan government, and we have been able to take advantage of some of the supply chain disruptions around the world as a consequence. Supply chain disruptions have also caused us to double-down on efforts to diversify our economy, and this budget includes a further investment of \$1.3 billion in diversification initiatives.

As we learn to live with COVID in the community, we are experiencing disruptions to our families, work, businesses, education, and social and community interactions. The pandemic has affected so many aspects of our lives that it has, I believe, changed our outlook politically as a community and as families and individuals. So many aspects of life that we have taken for granted are no longer certain. It has challenged our key health and educational systems. The pandemic has caused many people to change direction as they have re-evaluated their lives as a consequence of their experience of the pandemic. What we value has changed as well. How many times have members heard, as I have heard, parents say that they have a much greater respect for teachers and childcare workers? We have much greater respect for cleaners; truck drivers; fly-in fly-out workers; tradies; shelf stackers; shop workers; those who work in food businesses, such as cafes, restaurants and fast-food outlets; fruit and vegetable pickers; and agricultural workers. We have suddenly realised the important role of all these key workers.

Our health and medical workers are acknowledged as heroes, but the pressure on our healthcare system has never been greater. This is a problem across all the states and is, in large measure, the result of policy failures by the federal government. During question time, I sat and listened to members of the opposition asking what the government is doing about ambulance ramping. We are stepping up and addressing the issues, but a lot of the problems stem from federal government policy failures. For example, demand on public hospital emergency departments has increased because of the failure of the commonwealth government to adequately resource general practices. There are significant gap fees and the lack of after-hours services and GPs has driven people to public hospital emergency departments. On any given day, substantial numbers of aged people and people with disability are taking up acute hospital beds and preventing emergency departments from admitting people, which is causing ambulance ramping. This phenomenon is Australia-wide and a direct result of the federal coalition government's underfunding of aged care and National Disability Insurance Scheme packages. With private health insurance increasing to unaffordable levels, increasing numbers of people are opting out of private health in favour of seeking elective surgery through the public system.

The federal coalition government has presided over 10 years of increasingly unaffordable health care. We have had critical staff shortages in our public health system. Western Australia has been dependent on overseas health professionals and that recruitment was disrupted until November last year because of understandable federal government restrictions in response to COVID-19.

We are also dealing with the diversion of our health workers to support COVID-19 testing and the delays associated with the management of infection controls. Our health workers are impacted daily because of the extent of COVID in the community, with many furloughed because they have COVID or are caring for family members with COVID. This has impacted St John Ambulance as well.

The pandemic has made apparent the neglect of aged-care delivery by the federal coalition government, and the vulnerability of older people and the appallingly low pay and insecurity of aged-care workers is evident. These issues were comprehensively canvassed by my good colleague the member for Kalamunda during this debate, and this matter will be comprehensively addressed by an Albanese government. This state government is not sitting around whingeing about the policy failures of the federal coalition. It has stepped up through its \$11.2 billion COVID-19 response as well as investments in the health and mental health system—a total of \$5.7 billion in investments since the last budget. This budget also includes measures to take the pressure off emergency departments with provisions to help transition out of acute hospital settings the long-stay elderly and people with disabilities who need more appropriate care.

Climate change is a major source of contention in my community. On the day the budget was handed down, I posted on my Facebook page about the way the budget addresses the priorities for people in our community, including addressing climate change. This sparked a lively debate that gave me the opportunity to highlight that the McGowan government is committed to transitioning the Western Australian economy to net zero by 2050 and is developing a credible pathway to get there, including through sectoral emissions reduction strategies that will identify how to grow our economy and create new jobs through the pursuit of low-cost abatement pathways.

A further \$652 million is allocated in this budget to address climate change and protect the environment, including a \$500 million top-up to the climate action fund, increasing the total investment to \$1.25 billion since the 2021–22 budget. Initiatives in the budget include a further \$30 million for the just transition plan to support communities with the transition from native forestry logging; incentives for the uptake of electric vehicles and recharging infrastructure; increases to the proportion of electricity generated through renewable energy at Rottne Island; and initiatives to reduce emissions across various sectors. Hand in hand with an Albanese government, the state government will ensure that Australia steps up on a credible path to deal with climate change.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms C.M. TONKIN:** Mr Morrison will live to regret the day he walked into the federal Parliament with a lump of coal. The rise of the teal independents targeting previously safe Liberal seats such as Curtin on a platform of addressing climate change is a direct result of the inaction of the Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison governments. Scott Morrison is toxic in Curtin. He represents the stymieing of action on climate change, and I can guarantee that he will not make any visits to the Curtin electorate during his visit to Perth. It is a measure of the Liberal Party's desperation that it wheeled out former Prime Minister John Howard to support the Liberal camp in Curtin, and apparently all over the state. I received his tone-deaf letter yesterday. There was no mention of climate change, which is clearly the hot issue in Curtin. In fact, I was told that precisely the same letter had been sent to people in other electorates. Mr Howard's letter basically promises more of the same and pointedly states —

Of course the Prime Minister has his critics and that's part of the job.

I am glad there is something that is part of his job.

Curtin has three candidates with a focus on the need to address climate change. Our Labor candidate, Yannick Spencer, is a sustainability expert who has been working with large private sector companies to decarbonise their supply

chains. He has a great contribution to make as part of an Albanese government and will make a significant and credible response to the challenge of climate change. Of course, the Greens are there with its consistent call to action, and the *raison d'être* of the teal independent is the frustration in the community with the inaction and the blocking of meaningful climate action by the Morrison government. The Liberal campaign is out of step with the sentiment in our community and that may well cost it the seat of Curtin on Saturday.

People in the Churchlands electorate are deeply concerned about the environment. The wetlands and bush habitat working group is focused on preserving and enhancing the quality of our beautiful lakes, bushlands and coastal areas. The members of this group understand how climate change impacts these natural environments, including the fragile coastal dunes at City Beach and Floreat that are impacted by rising sea levels. I recently sponsored a greening of our community event to highlight the practical hands-on work of our environmental hero volunteer groups—WA Gould League, natural resource management groups, Cambridge Coastcare, ReWild Perth, Friends of Underwood Avenue Bushland, Friends of Perry Lakes and Friends of Galup–Lake Monger. On Sunday, I will join the Friends of Galup–Lake Monger to plant sedges at the edge of Lake Monger. We are determined to clean up rubbish and make that environment more wildlife-friendly and beautiful.

Our green jobs working group recognises the opportunities for economic diversification arising from addressing climate change. This group has its sights set on the electrification agenda. I am working with the group to foster innovative opportunities to support the uptake of green technologies. This includes promoting electric vehicles and local access to charging infrastructure that I am delighted has received a boost in this budget. I am also working with a range of groups to address opportunities that can diversify our economy in a way that minimises the impact of climate change. For example, I am working with a group that is focused on WA becoming a manufacturing hub for vertical take-off air taxis. I am working with the cybersecurity industry to help refine its messaging and its value proposition to government and to the private sector. We have some amazing opportunities there, and these are green jobs. They are not jobs that cause greenhouse gases.

I am working on an innovation project for which we are surveying local innovators to find out the nature of their innovations, the challenges they perceive and the opportunities to progress their innovations in this state. I am working very closely with the Minister for Innovation and ICT, Hon Stephen Dawson, on this agenda. We sent out a survey to 150 local innovators and have so far received about 70 responses. We will be providing a report that looks at how those innovators can be better supported to progress the work they do. We will also run an innovation round table at the end of this month with Hon Stephen Dawson. We will have about 50 local innovators around the table, discussing the current suite of innovation programs and state innovation policy, looking at the challenges they face and having a discussion with the minister about how to address those challenges. This is a great opportunity for people to participate in the policy development process as the government develops an innovation strategy. Lots of initiatives in our electorate are focused on addressing climate change in a positive way and creating the jobs of the future.

There are also issues in our community around the cost of living. My electorate is fascinating because we have the extremes of wealth and poverty, which makes for a very interesting conversation. The cost of living impacts many households, and the support in this budget of the \$445 million allocated to all households as a \$400 household electricity credit will be very, very welcome. In this budget, there is an overall decrease of 3.8 per cent in household fees and charges, including the household electricity credit. We have also provided free rapid antigen tests, which I know are valued in our community. I have been allocated 2 000 tests. The bulk of the first allocation went to the families of students at Lake Monger Primary School, who because of COVID outbreaks in the classroom were struggling to find enough rapid antigen tests to keep up the testing regime for children who were close contacts and needed to go to school. Lake Monger Primary School powered through about 800 of the first 1 000 RATs that I was allocated.

In my second allocation, we handed out RATs to community groups, including the Salvation Army, Floreat Anglican Church Op Shop and Christ's Pantry in Woodlands, that have contact with people who may benefit from receiving these free tests. These groups have been very grateful to receive these RATs, as have other members of our community in receiving the free RATs that have been sent to households. I have been delivering RATs to people who have called and said that they have run out and they need them, and I will continue to do so.

This government, this budget, reflects Labor values. We have prioritised initiatives that benefit the whole community. We have demonstrated outstanding, world-class financial management in driving our economy in a way that benefits not only our state, but also the country as a whole. We are doing all this in the midst of an international crisis not of our making, but we are responding more effectively than most places in the world and, in this budget, we are putting our money where our mouths are. I commend these bills to the house, and I am proud to be part of this government and part of the initiatives that we are implementing in the state.

**MR H.T. JONES (Darling Range)** [12.25 pm]: I rise to speak to the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022. This budget is a fantastic budget and I commend the McGowan government and more recently the Treasurer for providing an outstanding budget. I am quite surprised that I have to stand to talk it up! We have a \$400 electricity credit for every WA household to support Western Australians with

the cost of living. We have the biggest investment in the WA public health system, with a further record \$2.5 billion in health and mental health, including \$252 million to improve access to emergency care and to help address systemic causes of ambulance ramping.

I have travelled a fair bit during my working career, primarily for the Navy, all through South-East Asia. I know that the Minister for Police has as well. I have travelled to a lot of places and have perhaps a different perspective from some others in this house and maybe some other Western Australians. I travelled to Manila in 1997 and was aghast at the poverty I saw there. At that time, the homelessness problem in Manila was horrendous. A lot of people were displaced from the Mt Pinatubo eruption in 1991, and they were living on the highway—the main road in Manila—under cardboard. The whole highway was full of people living in terrible conditions. I have also travelled to places like Jakarta, which is the capital city of Indonesia. However, a great number of slums are there. The joy of being in the Navy is that we tend to berth at some of the less attractive berths, so we get to see a different perspective of cities. I have also travelled to Singapore. Singapore is a very rich nation and a great holiday destination; however, it has its fair share of poverty as well. I was proud to be one of the founding members of the first floating Lions Club on HMAS *Westralia*, and we did some work in Singapore to help those who were doing it tough. In Singapore, elderly people work at McDonald's, cleaning up the trays, so this gives an indication of what life is like in Singapore for some of those people. Of course, we cannot forget that Ukraine—eastern Ukraine now—is suffering badly. I have not travelled there, but I see on the news that life is miserable there. In February, I read a story on the ABC online news about Etep Rural Hospital in Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guinea has a real hospital crisis. The hospital is funded from government grants, through intermediary organisations, but no money at all was coming in—zip. The hospital services 100 000 people in the Papua New Guinea highlands, where it is tough to get to a hospital. It had to close. However, the doctors, nurses and administration staff thought that this was not a good state of affairs, so they decided to work anyway, without pay. They had no consumables, no masks and no oxygen, but they kept on going. That is what a crisis looks like. Of course, there are health challenges in any jurisdiction.

I can speak on behalf of nurses. As I mentioned before, both my sisters are nurses and my mum was a nurse. Children do not wake up one day and think, “I want to be a nurse because it's an easy job.” It is a tough job, regardless of the circumstances. It is a high-stakes occupation; it is life and death. There can be good days and bad days. I do not think anyone has any false impression about what they are in for when they sign up to be a nurse or a paramedic—even a doctor. Doctors lives are tough. There are internships. Maybe the life of a general practitioner might be quite good, but they have to go through some rough patches before then.

I was quite surprised that the member for North West Central actually seemed to be quite positive in his speech, but I am not sure that I heard the whole of it. He has blown the wind out of my sails a bit for the next part of my speech! I look at the opposition as the Judean People's Front from the *Life of Brian*, a film from 1979 that I saw as a 13-year-old. I probably watched it a couple of times back then and have never seen it since, but some parts of it resonated and stayed in my mind. For the benefit of *Hansard*, I am talking about the 1979 film the *Life of Brian*. There is a scenario in the film in which the Judean People's Front kidnap Pontius Pilate's wife and want to come up with a list of demands of the Romans or a list of grievances. But they do not get very far, because the people in the crowd point out the good things that the Romans are doing.

“What have the Romans ever done for us?” Health, someone says. The McGowan Labor government is delivering the biggest-ever investment in the WA public health system, as I mentioned before. There is \$1.6 billion for new COVID-19 response and recovery measures to keep WA safe, including \$635 million to secure rapid antigen tests and run the free RAT program. Of course, that is a cost-of-living issue as well. RATs are not cheap; I think it is 40 bucks for a pack of five. If someone is finding it hard to make ends meet and wonders whether they should buy a pack of five RATs or have something to eat or pay a bill, they will not buy RATs. The system in place to try to manage this pandemic will fall down, because people will not test and will therefore not be able to report positive test results.

There is a \$252 million emergency department reform package to improve access to emergency care and to help address the systemic causes of ambulance ramping. There is \$181 million in additional investments in mental health. The government has delivered 342 new beds, with a total of 530 beds to be delivered by the end of the year. There are further initiatives to boost the healthcare workforce, building on the 15.6 per cent increase in the WA health workforce over the past two years.

The budget allocates \$5.9 million for the commencement of site development and forward works for the Byford health hub. That is obviously very important for my community. I was very happy to attend a hackathon on 1 April at Byford Secondary College at which some of the health studies students were asked to workshop how to make the health hub more attractive to young people. There were some great ideas about modifying the working hours and ensuring that there is a diversity of staff at the health hub—diversity of gender, cultural background and disability. They said that staff at the health hub should be non-judgemental, as young people might be dissuaded from presenting to a health facility if they think they will be judged. Teenage pregnancy comes to mind—or sexually transmissible infections. They would also like to see the development of an app so that patients can look at who is working at the health hub and go through and decide with whom they want to make an appointment based upon some basic

demographic information. That is quite a good idea, but I am not sure how practical it is. Hopefully, they can push that idea through the East Metropolitan Health Service, which I neglected to say was also there. Joel Gurr was in attendance and wrote down all the ideas.

“What have the Romans ever done for us?” Community safety, I hear someone say. We are using the strong budget position to invest in local initiatives that support safe, strong and fair communities, no matter where people live. An amount of \$11.1 million is going towards the new Armadale courthouse and police complex. I have been in there a couple of times and it is a fantastic looking complex. It sits over Armadale and has a great view. It has the latest and greatest facilities and IT. The complex also enables court officers and the police to work together, as detectives and regional and reactive police elements can all work out of the same building. I note that the detectives are near the top floor—I do not quite know how they got up to the top!

There is \$14.7 million to create WA’s third one-stop family and domestic violence hub in Armadale. This builds on the success of the FDV hubs in Mirrabooka and Kalgoorlie. An additional \$16.4 million will support the extra 950 new police officers being employed over the next four years as part of our work to boost overall numbers by 15 per cent. There is \$408 million of additional funding for housing and homelessness measures and a \$67 million increase for emergency services to keep Western Australians safe. I attended the handover of three general rescue utility vehicles at Kings Park yesterday morning, and I was glad to see that Serpentine–Jarrahdale received its vehicle. There is \$114 million in the budget to boost child protection and support services to help keep WA children safe, as well as \$19.7 million to construct an Aboriginal short-stay accommodation facility in the Perth metropolitan area to help people from the regions.

“What have the Romans ever done for us?” Education, I hear someone say. The McGowan Labor government continues to invest in local schools to ensure that all Western Australian students have the best possible opportunities to learn. We are increasing education funding in the 2022–23 budget, delivering a total of almost \$6 billion for Western Australian schools. In this year’s state budget, students throughout WA will benefit from \$595 million of new and upgraded school facilities. This includes funding towards projects in my area, including \$21.5 million for stage 4 of Byford Secondary College, which will include a new STEM classroom and other student accommodation. There will be \$9.6 million spent on upgrades to Roleystone Community College, including a new sports hall, classrooms and a STEM classroom. I note the efforts of the P&C and principal Mark Brookes in bringing that to fruition. There is \$8.5 million for upgrades at Kelmscott Senior High School. It is not in my area, but kids in my area attend Kelmscott Senior High School. A new sports hall will be built and the old sports hall will be modified into a performing arts centre and STEM classroom.

We are also delivering \$54.6 million in support for students with disabilities and additional learning needs across WA. I note that the Special Needs Dental Clinic has also received funding—I cannot remember the amount—to enable it to relocate into a more modern and larger facility that can cater for more people with special needs, including my son, who attends there at least once a year. Across WA, \$42.5 million will be spent on COVID-19 measures in schools, supporting the continuation of enhanced cleaning protocols and maintaining mask, personal protective equipment and RAT supplies. I have seen RATs delivered to schools in my area, including Beenyup Primary School.

There is \$2.5 million to support phonics skills development for year 1 students across WA. My wife is a teacher. She talks about phonics all the time and my eyes roll over, but it is a good thing for kids to be taught.

**Mr P.J. Rundle** interjected.

**Mr H.T. JONES:** I go, “Phonics again!”

There is an additional \$33.8 million in funding to go towards maintenance upgrades to improve public schools.

“What have the Romans ever done for us?” The McGowan Labor government is providing more targeted training opportunities for Western Australians to take up quality jobs. We continue to deliver Lower Fees, Local Skills initiatives and are keeping TAFE fees low through annual fee caps across 210 high-priority courses. TAFE courses are widely sought after by people in my area who are looking to capitalise on the jobs that are happening in infrastructure, and at the Kwinana industrial complex and down at Naval Base. They want to get into industry. Principal Paul Jones at Byford Secondary College has offered an opportunity to the local TAFE to deliver pilot programs at his school to test the appetite for various courses, and I am glad to see that work towards Armadale TAFE is progressing. There is \$14.3 million to support training in WA’s in-demand construction industry and an \$11 million boost to the defence industry workforce. I think it is a good thing to take advantage of the proximity of HMAS *Stirling*, RAAF Base Pearce and Campbell Barracks to create jobs and capabilities locally. There is \$5.5 million to help mature age jobseekers and ex-offenders into jobs. The McGowan government also continues to roll out the biggest TAFE capital works program in WA history, with \$216 million committed to delivering state-of-the-art facilities, including high-quality, industry-relevant training across the state.

“What have the Romans ever done for us?” I turn now to roads and Metronet. We are delivering Metronet with a record \$6 billion allocated over the next four years for a further 13 projects that are either planned or underway.

The 2022–23 Metronet milestones will include the opening of the Forrestfield–Airport Link, including new stations at the airport, Redcliffe and High Wycombe; the commencement of major construction at Midland station; the Byford rail extension; and the removal of level crossings in Victoria Park. I think the member for Victoria Park touched on that in her speech, talking about the 18-month delay that will be necessary in order to safely complete this work. Unfortunately, there will be interruptions, but once it is finished, the people of Byford and surrounds, in particular, will enjoy greater access to cheap public transport and will be able to commute to the city very cheaply.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr H.T. JONES:** I acknowledge that the people of Roleystone have been through the turmoil of the Denny Avenue redevelopment, but once that work is complete, they will have the benefit of cheap commuter fares to the city. The Labor government has also made the decision to reintroduce railcar manufacturing at the Bellevue facility in the electorate of Midland. That is great work, and it will bring back highly skilled jobs. The Premier mentioned that people could eat off the floor at that facility! I have been there, and I concur with that assessment. It is not like the old Midland Workshops, which had diesel and mucky boots everywhere; it is a very clean, highly skilled and modern facility.

One of my election commitments to my electorate was a further \$18 million to fund the upgrade of local roads. That will help the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale, which struggles to raise enough revenue to pay for the upkeep of roads, to create safer roads and easier road conditions for local people. There is also \$219 million in the budget for the duplication of Thomas Road from Tonkin Highway to South Western Highway. That is something that has been needed for a long time. I lived on Brookton Highway from 2005 to the end of last year and I used to commute along Thomas Road to Garden Island every working day from 2007, and I could see that it was not really a local road. I did not live in the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale, I lived in the City of Armadale, but I was using that road, and other people coming from the north were also using it to get to work in the Kwinana area. That put a lot of pressure on the SJ shire, so I am glad to see that money is being invested to duplicate that road to make it safer through improved lighting and the separation of vehicles. It is, of course, an east–west transit, so drivers have to deal with sunrises and sunsets, which makes those times of day particularly hazardous when driving along there.

“What have the Romans ever done for us?” We are investing in climate action. The McGowan Labor government is setting up WA for a prosperous, low-carbon future, delivering more funding for initiatives that protect our environment and respond to climate change. There is a \$500 million boost to the climate action fund, taking the total to \$1.25 billion. There is \$22.6 million for new charging infrastructure to expand WA’s vehicle charging network, which I understand will be the longest in the world. There is \$36.5 million to provide 10 000 rebates of \$3 500 to Western Australians who commit to buying electric or hydrogen vehicles, up to a value of \$70 000. We all know that EVs are expensive at the moment. The Leader of the Opposition yesterday talked about comment threads on online news articles; I saw someone comment on my Facebook page that \$3 500 would do nothing for them because they could not afford \$70 000 for a Tesla. However, the important thing is that people who can afford one and are trying to decide between a combustion engine or an EV might be swayed towards an EV if they think, “I’m getting \$3 500 for nothing.” The trickle-down effect of that, if you like, is that people will sell their old car and there will be a better second-hand market for vehicles. The member for Vasse was complaining about the cost of driving electric vehicles and recouping the cost for road maintenance, but I do not think anyone spending \$70 000 is going to worry about a few cents per kilometre.

“What have the Romans ever done for us?” This is a timely subject, because I was going to meet my daughter for a coffee at one o’clock, but she said, “No, Kendrick Lamar tickets are going on sale.” But she added that, because of the anti-scalping legislation, there will hopefully be more tickets available! That is another thing we have done, so I am pretty proud of that. I do not know who he is, though!

I ask the opposition and the Western Australian public to look on the bright side of life. There are difficulties and challenges, such as homelessness, housing and health. There are always things that go wrong with health; people unfortunately get sick. That is an inescapable reality for any health system, but we are in the best shape of any country in the world, and WA is in the best shape of the Australian jurisdictions. I would not want to be anywhere else. I have travelled around Australia with the Navy and lived in various states, and WA is the place to be.

In the time I have available, I would like to quickly raise the decision to discontinue services at seven Activ Foundation industrial sites in WA. My son works at Bentley Activ, so it is a personal issue and I will try to speak without that conflict of interest. I am trying not to get emotional; I do not know why I am. Last week, support workers were called into a meeting. My son had COVID and could not go, so I got an email telling me that in two months’ time the centre would be closing down. My wife and I are well off in comparison with a lot of people, but we will have to spend the next couple of months trying to find something for my son to do during work hours.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent):** I am sorry, member for Darling Range. I was looking forward to you continuing your contribution, but you will have to continue later. I am sorry.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2608.]

**AGRIFUTURES RURAL WOMEN'S AWARD***Statement by Member for Central Wheatbelt*

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition)** [12.51 pm]: Every year, each state sends their best and brightest community leaders to the AgriFutures Rural Women's Award. Over the 21 years that this award has been running, some of our state's finest have been recognised as leaders in their field and change-makers in our rural communities. It was a pleasure to be invited to join nominees and guests at the Western Australian award ceremony on 5 May. Unfortunately, I could not attend in person, but I am told that the event was a resounding success.

WA's finalists were Debbie Dowden, a pastoralist in the Murchison, who strives to deliver innovative regeneration with a focus on natural capital accounting; Dr Bronwyn Blake, an animal nutritionist who is progressing the use of hemp in livestock management and expanding a fledgling industry; and, the winner, Louise O'Neill, who works to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of regional communities through her Farm Life Fitness programs. The nominees, our finalists and our winner, Louise, are a promising sign for our state's future. These women follow in the footsteps of tremendous alumni of this award, such as Cara Peek, the 2020 winner. While these promising community leaders continue in their bias-breaking endeavours, WA will benefit from their vision and drive. The more women we have at decision-making tables in every sector and industry, in business big and small, the better off we will all be. We wish Louise the very best when she heads to Canberra in September for the national award. She will be flanked by some of our country's most impactful rural women. The opposition—me in particular—look forward to seeing these change-makers reach new heights in their careers and we look forward to working with them to develop our regions.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Before you start, member for Mirrabooka, I remind the people in the Speaker's gallery that no photos are allowed and no recording of the proceeding is allowed while in the chamber.

**DOOLANN-LEISHA EATTS — TRIBUTE***Statement by Member for Mirrabooka*

**MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka)** [12.53 pm]: I rise to pay tribute to Doolann-Leisha Eatts, who passed away on 29 March. I acknowledge in the Speaker's gallery her family members Walter Eatts, Glenda Kickett, Mark Kickett and Samuel Pilot, and the former member for Mirrabooka Janine Freeman.

Doolann-Leisha was a proud Whadjuk Ballardong elder. She was born in 1939 when Noongar people were segregated on reserves and subject to repressive government policies. She rose from these beginnings to become one of our most respected Aboriginal elders, living in both Balga and Girrawheen during her life. Her experiences led her to become an advocate for issues confronting Aboriginal people and her life was spent improving outcomes for them. She was widely respected for her knowledge of culture and language, and contributed to heritage and educational programs for more than 30 years, highlighting the Noongar history of Perth. She was a member of many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal committees and was appointed to elder groups at the Cities of Stirling, Wanneroo, Perth, Vincent and Joondalup. She was one of the Noongar elders to welcome the Queen when the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting was held in Perth, when she reminded the Duke of Edinburgh that this was her family's land and it had been stolen from them. She was recognised with many awards, including NAIDOC awards and being inducted into the WA Women's Hall of Fame. Her book, *Doolann: Our Country, my Nyungah Home*, tells of her family life and grandmother's story. Doolann-Leisha showed us all a path of reconciliation, providing wisdom and inspiration, and challenging us all to do more to achieve reconciliation.

**NORTHAMPTON FESTIVAL OF FOOTY***Statement by Member for Moore*

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [12.54 pm]: I wish to recognise the Northampton festival of football, held on 30 April, which was a fundraiser for the community after tropical cyclone Seroja. About 2 500 people turned out to watch West Australian Football League teams East Fremantle and East Perth play for the Seroja Cup, West Australian Football League women's teams East Fremantle and Claremont, and Great Northern Football League teams the Northampton Rams and the Brigades Hawks play in the men's and women's events. It was a magnificent day of country footy with a great family atmosphere. The festival of football grew from a seed sown last year and was progressed by a local committee that included former West Coast Eagles player Andrew Lockyer. It followed the efforts of nine former and current AFL Rams, including Andrew, who all hail from Northampton, to raise funds for and awareness of Northampton's plight following cyclone Seroja. The committee, together with the Northampton Football Club, the Shire of Northampton and the community, worked tirelessly in the lead-up to the event. The oval needed an upgrade for the games to take place. That work was overseen by the shire.

I thank and congratulate shire president Liz Sudlow and her team. As WAFL game hosts, East Fremantle donated the day's takings to the fundraiser. The total amount raised, including sponsorships, was a staggering \$100 000. Funds will be allocated to community groups and projects and will support the purchase of a generator for Northampton's



independent living facility, Pioneer Lodge, whose residents suffered through repeated power outages last summer. I commend the many people who made the festival of football a resounding success. I can attest that the atmosphere on the day was fantastic.

### **ESTUARY GUARDIANS MANDURAH**

*Statement by Member for Dawesville*

**MRS L.A. MUNDAY (Dawesville)** [12.55 pm]: I would like to rise today to recognise and commend the incredible work of local volunteers in our community who form the Mandurah Volunteer Dolphin Rescue Group, also known as the Estuary Guardians Mandurah. This passionate group has worked tirelessly to protect dolphins in the Peel–Harvey estuary for the last 25 years. The Peel–Harvey estuary is known and loved for its dolphins, which are one of the main attractions to the Peel region, bringing much joy to both the local community and tourists. However, due to the extensive number of shallow areas, it is also a stranding hotspot. As a result, dolphins can suffer, and this is where this group plays a significant role. It spends more than 3 000 hours a year responding to rescue and welfare calls and dolphin incidents reported by the community. It supports the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions by surveying stranding spots, monitoring dolphins and providing community education.

Recently, I was lucky enough to go out on the water with local business Mandurah Cruises with some of the Estuary Guardians volunteers, Sally Kirby and Barbara Sing. Along with Minister Whitby and Minister Templeman, we went out to see where they do most of their work and to do our own dolphin spotting, including looking for my honorary baby calf namesake, Frankl. Earlier this year, I hosted the Peel–Harvey estuary dolphin forum and worked closely with the Estuary Guardians, local businesses and the City of Mandurah to coordinate the protection of our dolphins. The state government has also provided the group with a \$5 000 election commitment that has enabled it to purchase equipment to help in its efforts. The Peel region has a rapidly growing population, which can cause issues to our wildlife. The protection of our environment has never been more crucial. I thank the Mandurah Volunteer Dolphin Rescue Group for its continuous work in promoting and protecting our waterways and marine life.

### **NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**

*Statement by Member for Roe*

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [12.56 pm]: In this National Volunteer Week, I would like to take the opportunity to offer a heartfelt thankyou to each and every volunteer in the Roe electorate. All of us in the regions understand that our communities would not be the same without the strong volunteering spirit of regional WA. They include ambos, bush fire brigades, State Emergency Service personnel and surf lifesavers; those who assist regional shires to provide services in community resource centres, libraries and museums; those who assist our elderly residents with Meals on Wheels, transport or company in an increasingly isolated world; the parents who keep the school canteens open, organise parents and citizens association committees and sports days; like-minded individuals who organise civic and community events; creative individuals who facilitate art shows and festivals; and sporting enthusiasts who run every sporting club imaginable. Our communities thrive because you give up your time and use your talents to serve those around you. In fact, volunteering is worth \$39 billion to Western Australian communities. We literally could not afford to pay our volunteers what they are worth, but they are worth their weight in gold. Thank you again to each and every volunteer for making your community a home, not just a place to live. You do it without expectation of reward, but the reward comes in a sense of purpose and belonging and knowing that you have made a difference.

### **TERRY RANSOME**

*Statement by Member for Collie–Preston*

**MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston)** [12.58 pm]: In this National Volunteer Week, I take the opportunity to thank a dedicated volunteer in my electorate of Collie–Preston. Terry Ransome was born in Collie and currently lives in Allanson with his lovely wife, June. Terry is 80 years old. Terry used to own his own business in Collie, Ransome TB and JL auto electrics. He sold the business and worked at South West Fire Units until he retired at the age of 79. Terry is a man of few words. He is a quiet achiever who never likes to draw attention to himself. He deeply loves his community and shows his love for Collie not just in words but in deeds. Terry has been picking up rubbish along Coalfields Highway between Collie and Roelands for as long as anyone can remember. He is out rain, hail or shine. Since his retirement, Terry has done this every day, and on rainy days he will be out in his raincoat keeping the roadsides and surrounding bush clean. Terry loves the McGowan Labor government's Containers for Change initiative, as he uses the bottles and cans he collects on the roadside to help pay for his fuel and incidental costs. Terry is well known by everyone who uses the highway and gives a friendly wave to all who pass by or toot hello. He does all this with only the pride of being a citizen of Collie in mind. His example has moved another local, Carol Gale, to clean Mornington Road between Collie and Harvey. In 1999, Terry was named the Shire of Collie's Australia Day Citizen of the Year. Terry is a fantastic example of volunteering and I thank him in this, National Volunteer Week.

*Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm*

**CLERK ASSISTANT (COMMITTEES) — MAT BATES — PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE***Statement by Speaker*

**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** [2.00 pm]: Members, you may have heard the news that one of our clerk assistants, Mat Bates, is leaving us on 3 June to take up the position of Clerk and chief executive officer of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. This is, in fact, Mat's final stint at the table of this house. Mat started with the Assembly's committees as a research officer in February 2009, working on the Public Accounts Committee before gaining a promotion to principal research officer in 2012. After a few short years, Mat was again promoted, this time to the position of clerk assistant in 2015. It is in this role that we have seen some of Mat's best work, in particular improving committee and house processes, but most notably his significant contribution in managing the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices—one of the most challenging inquiries this Parliament has conducted in recent decades. I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Mat for over 13 years of dedicated and committed service to the Legislative Assembly and invite members to join me in congratulating him on his exciting new opportunity.

[Applause.]

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION —

*DELIVERY OF AMBULANCE SERVICES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: CRITICAL CONDITION***326. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the *Delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia: Critical condition* report tabled today in the Legislative Council and a finding, which I quote, "increased ramping has contributed to St John Ambulance WA's inability to comply with their target response times".

- (1) Does the minister accept this finding and the fact that underinvestment in our hospitals under her government has led to a catastrophic increase in ambulance ramping that took nearly five ambulances off WA roads every day in 2020–21?
- (2) Does the minister agree with the United Workers Union national ambulance coordinator, Fiona Scalon, that St John's ambulance has dropped the ball and that ambulance services should be run as an essential service by government?

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

- (1)–(2) I accept that ambulance ramping has contributed to St John not being able to meet all of its response time. I have not had an opportunity to read the report from cover to cover because it was tabled four hours ago and we are dealing with a COVID response right now. In terms of a formal response, the government will give the committee due respect and consideration and will respond in the appropriate time frame. I will not make any formal response on any of the actual recommendations.

From some of the findings that I have seen, there are a range of findings around St John's. You cannot take one piece of the report out of context. I do not in any way whatsoever accept the Leader of the Opposition's assertion that we have underfunded the health system. That is simply wrong! Under this government, the budget for the health system has increased every single year. Since 2017, it has increased every single year. In the last budget, we saw a \$680 million uplift in business as usual, as well as \$251 million for the emergency access department as well as \$30 million for country paramedics, as well as significant investment in our mental health system. The figures do not lie, Leader of the Opposition. This is a record investment in our health system of \$3.6 billion in infrastructure alone. It is absolutely wrong that this government has underinvested in the system. Since we were elected, the budget has increased by 30 per cent.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION —

*DELIVERY OF AMBULANCE SERVICES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: CRITICAL CONDITION***327. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:**

I have a supplementary question. Will the minister rule out bringing the ambulance service into government hands, as has been recommended or promoted by United Workers Union national ambulance coordinator, Fiona Scalon?

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition pull herself out of the conspiracy rabbit hole and start looking at the circumstances that the community is facing right now—and that is our COVID response. My priority as minister is to work with St John to make sure that we are providing the best ambulance service in the world. That is my priority. We have the best paramedics in the world. We have the best call-takers in the world, and they deal with some of the most extraordinarily difficult circumstances. That is the support they need right now, and that is the support they will get from me as health minister.

## CORONAVIRUS — STATE ECONOMY — RESPONSE

**328. Dr J. KRISHNAN to the Premier:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's strong and stable response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in delivering the strongest economy in the country.

- (1) Can the Premier advise the house what today's job figures show about WA's efforts to deliver a soft landing from the COVID-19 pandemic?
- (2) Can the Premier outline to the house how an Albanese federal Labor government would support the state government in further driving the WA economy, creating local jobs and meeting the challenges facing Western Australia?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for Riverton for the question.

- (1)–(2) Today we have sensational economic news for Western Australia. Western Australia is leading the nation. Our unemployment rate now has a “2” in front of it. Our unemployment rate has fallen to 2.9 per cent, by far the lowest unemployment rate in Australia; and a full percentage point lower than the national unemployment rate of 3.9 per cent with very, very high participation rates—way above those of any other state or territory in the commonwealth. The last time the unemployment rate was this low was when Labor was last in government. No other state in history has had an unemployment rate under three per cent other than Western Australia.

When we came to government, we committed to putting Western Australia back into its rightful position of leading the nation—and we have. When we arrived in office in 2017, after the eight and a half years of Liberal–National government, the unemployment rate was 6.5 per cent; it is now 2.9 per cent. In other words, we have more than halved the unemployment rate. Significantly, Western Australia's youth unemployment rate is the lowest of all the states. The figures show employment has increased by 5.8 per cent over the year to April and, very significantly, full-time employment, full-time jobs, rose by 19 000 jobs in April. For the first time ever, there are now one million Western Australians in full-time work. As I said, we continue to have the highest participation rate in the country. It is clear that our efforts to diversify the economy and ensure we got through the COVID pandemic with our industries open with good health and economic outcomes have worked, and we have achieved the soft landing we were looking for. We have made some very difficult decisions—put in place safe border controls; ensured that our population was one of, if not the most, vaccinated in the world; kept industry open when it closed all over the world and in other states of Australia; and avoided the extensive lockdowns that occurred in other states of Australia that resulted in a booming internal economy in Western Australia and a booming export economy in Western Australia. This is a credit to the hard work and understanding of all Western Australians out there.

Of course, none of that would have been possible if the Liberals and Nationals and their friend Clive Palmer had succeeded in introducing the virus into Western Australia. If they had succeeded in their quest to do so, our economic figures would be very different, our unemployment rate would be much higher and our health outcomes would have been far, far worse. It was terrific to have a federal opposition leader, in Anthony Albanese, support us in what we had to do over that period. I am sure that if Anthony Albanese is elected as Prime Minister of Australia on Saturday, we will work cooperatively on a range of initiatives to boost local employment even further, whether it is in local manufacturing, particularly of buses; local health investment; the Aboriginal cultural heritage centre; or important initiatives, such as making child care more affordable and responding to climate change.

This government has produced the best employment figures and the lowest unemployment rates in Australia at the same time as driving down debt. The commonwealth has increased debt fivefold to a trillion dollars—\$1 000 billion—whereas this government has paid off a third of the debt that was in the forward estimates of the last Liberal–National government and it continues to drive down debt this financial year. We can do these things at once if we have a stable, sensible and responsible government that is focused on employment and good health outcomes, which is exactly what this government has been.

## HOSPITALS — BED CAPACITY

**329. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:**

I refer to the Premier's admission in Parliament yesterday that his government oversees the lowest number of hospital beds per capita at the highest cost of any state.

A government member interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

A government member interjected.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The member did say it.

A government member interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**Ms L. METTAM:** Given that taxpayers are spending so much on the hospital system, why can Western Australian taxpayers not trust that they will safely receive the health care they need when they need it?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is to the Premier, not to others.

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

One day the Liberal Party says that we are not investing enough in hospitals, and now it is saying that we are investing in hospitals the most of any state in the country. One day it is saying there is underinvestment and today it is admitting what is blatantly clear, because the Productivity Commission says it in its annual report: Western Australia invests the most in the health system of any state in Australia per capita bar none. That is the fact of the matter. Western Australia invests the most per capita of any state in Australia bar none. That is what Western Australia does. We put more effort into health than other states do. We have a large state, a diverse population and a lot of very committed staff who provide health services in some of the most difficult and remote locations of anywhere in the world. Overwhelmingly, they do a fantastic job. We get feedback all over the community from people who are grateful for the great public health system in Western Australia.

I will explain it to the member again. We have gone through a worldwide pandemic in which a great many people have died and a great many people have become unwell. Like many people in this room, I have had COVID and it is debilitating. We do not want people who are infectious going to work. What we have done is to ask people who are infectious to please stay at home. In fact, that is the rule. Our health staff are required to furlough—that is, to stay home if they have COVID, if they are symptomatic or if they are a close contact and are symptomatic. That means we now have thousands of staff not at work. Then we have a range of protocols in place that means that processes have been slowed down within hospitals. When a person arrives at a hospital now, they have to be triaged outside because we do not want people who are potentially COVID-positive entering our hospitals without the triage system identifying them and streaming them. The member has criticised that, but what were we to do? What was the alternative? If a person goes to Fiona Stanley Hospital or one of the other hospitals, they are triaged outside. I experienced it recently myself. When a person goes into the hospital, they will see all the protocols in place now around the removal of personal protective equipment. The staff take off the smocks and the gloves and so forth every time they interact. It is a very extensive and time-consuming process designed to stop patients becoming infected and, as I said, we have literally thousands of staff at home. That slows things down. Then we have more calls. We have record numbers of 000 calls. We have lots of people presenting with respiratory illnesses. Because some general practitioners are refusing to see people with respiratory illnesses, they are attending emergency departments. At many GP practices a person can find a sign on the door that reads “If you have a respiratory illness, don’t come in.” All those things are going on. We encourage people who do not require the services of an emergency department to please seek other forms of care. Some of those people are going to general practitioners where there is a sign on the door telling them: do not come in. These are the things we are grappling with.

There are no magic solutions to these things. We are running international and interstate recruitment campaigns. We are investing more per capita. We are putting on more beds. These are the things that are being dealt with currently in the environment we are facing. Our health system and our staff—I met lots of them, particularly in recent weeks—are doing a terrific job under a lot of pressure. There is a lot of pressure out there because of those factors. We live in Western Australia, which is an isolated state, and sometimes people do not see what occurs elsewhere. If we go to Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane or anywhere in Australia, exactly the same things are occurring and it is generally worse because of those factors that I just outlined to the member. I have outlined it to the member on numerous occasions. I know that she does not hear it and I know that she does not process it. I expect, in her supplementary question, that she will repeat some of the banal commentary that she has come up with before. She will ask a supplementary that does not make sense and she will not adhere to the standing orders, but, unfortunately, that is our lot.

#### HOSPITALS — BED CAPACITY

**330. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. Premier, this is a “yes or no” question. Does the Premier have the highest costing health system with the lowest number of beds per capita and —

**The SPEAKER:** No “and”. That is it.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** You’re the worst opposition per capita!

**The SPEAKER:** Members, order! I would like to hear from the Premier.

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

That was actually quite a good interjection. I hope it was recorded.

As I said to the member before, the health system is extensive across the second biggest jurisdiction in the world. It provides services and beds all over the state. Obviously, a considerable expense is attached to that, but we invest the most per capita of any state in Australia and we are very proud of that.

## FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE — YOUNG PEOPLE

**331. Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's unprecedented commitment to combating family and domestic violence and keeping Western Australians safe.

Can the minister outline to the house how the state budget is delivering investment in important measures to support young people who have been impacted by family and domestic violence across Western Australia?

**Ms S.F. McGURK replied:**

I am very pleased to answer this question. We have had a bit of discussion in the chamber over the last couple of days about domestic violence and our state government's response to it. I am very pleased to go through the very large number of items—the different services, the different contributions, the reform, the engagement with the sector—the wide variety of responses and the increased investment that we are putting in place to combat domestic violence. Sadly, we know that domestic violence impacts a range of different people in our community, not the least of whom are women and children. In the past we have underappreciated the impact that domestic violence has on children and young people. They can often be exposed to domestic violence either physically or they see it happening, and of course this is hugely traumatic for them. Ensuring that young people have the right support is crucial if we want to break the cycle of domestic violence and address the trauma that it brings.

During the last election, we committed to \$2.5 million to establish two family and domestic violence counselling services especially tailored for young people aged from 12 to 18 years. We have announced that Rockingham and the wheatbelt will be the locations for those two services. We have commissioned the Australian Childhood Foundation with the Youth Affairs Council, as well as Karla Kuliny Aboriginal Corporation, to deliver the service model. They are consulting at the moment to look at what those services will look like in those two locations. They will work with young people who have been impacted by domestic violence, as well as Aboriginal organisations and elders in those affected communities. That consultation is occurring now. The Leader of the Opposition asked that question; I hope she is assured that local organisations will have an opportunity to tender for the actual service provision when it comes about. They should participate in the discussion about what would work for their local community. We expect these services to be operational by the end of the year. It is another example of how our government is putting more money into the prevention of domestic violence.

I was astounded on the weekend to see the shadow minister try to claim that we are putting less money into service provision, because the forward estimates for the line item in the budget papers reflect a reduction. They reflect a reduction because of the time-limited funding that the federal government puts in as part of our national partnership agreement. Not only has it put in time-limited funding—usually these are five-year agreements—but also, in this case, they have been very short agreements, related to COVID. That is why there is a reduction in the forward years. There is no other reason. When that was explained to the shadow minister, she did not change her position at all on this, and has continued to say in Parliament that there has been a reduction. She encouraged some of her colleagues to say the same. Let me make it clear. What does it mean? Does it mean that they do not understand how to read the budget papers, or they are wilfully misleading the situation? It means one of those two things. Similarly, we had advocacy from the other side for DVassist, which is a service based in the metropolitan area but targeted at regional communities. It is funded by only the federal government, but the federal government has not given ongoing funding. What did the opposition do? It came to the state government and said, "You need to fund this because the federal government is not." Have we seen any indication that the opposition is advocating to the federal government?

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The member for Vasse might want to listen to some of this, because she continues to provide the public with misleading information. I am also not aware of her providing any advocacy to her federal counterparts to say that if they want to step up and create expectations and new services, they should do the right thing and provide long-term funding, which is absolutely necessary.

## CORONAVIRUS — CONTACT TRACING SYSTEM AUDIT

**332. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:**

I note the release of the *COVID-19 contact tracing system — application audit* yesterday. The Auditor General found that highly sensitive medical and personal information had not been protected to the extent the community has the right to expect. How does the Premier explain this shocking lapse of process?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

The Department of Health has responded to the inquiry and I am just trying to find its advice. It advised that there has been no evidence of anyone accessing anyone's personal information acquired through the contact tracing system. It has worked with and implemented many of the recommendations for this issue that were presented to Health by the Auditor General. If I could find the quotation from Health, I would be able to give the Leader of the Liberal Party the exact words of how it has responded to this matter, but, unfortunately, I cannot find it at this point in time. In any event, Health has responded to it.

I just want to comment on the broader issue. We had to put in place contact tracing very quickly over the course of 2020 in response to a pandemic that no-one in Australia or the world saw coming. We had to put in place a whole range of measures across the community, including contact tracing, with hundreds of people engaged to do it. The workload at various points in time was extensive, and sometimes it was not because we did not have COVID here at various points in time. But we trained up a huge number of people across the public sector as a surge workforce. We had various people working in Health who were working on the issue and at various points in time, including still now in some areas, we have contact tracing teams working on these matters. We also put in place the app at restaurants, sport centres and various buildings so that we could contact people should they have been at a venue when someone who was positive was there.

We have to put ourselves back into the situation we were in. There was no vaccine. On the television at night, we saw islands in New York being used as mass graves. I remember watching news bulletins on northern Italy with red over large parts of northern Italy, with basically people dying en masse. I remember in China there were people literally dying in the street with people stepping over bodies. This was going on. In Britain, they have had the best part of 200 000 people or so die. In America, as I said the other day, a million people have died. In its Civil War, 600 000 people died and 400 000 died in the Second World War in the American armed forces. It has had a million people die, of whom at least 900 000 died from COVID. That is the situation we have been confronting. It was not an easy situation.

If the Liberal Party wanted us to delay and say, "We have to work this through; we have to get all these things done. We have to have best practice and consultation on how we do it. Let's consult on how we do it and do tender processes, though it might take months, then work out all the fine points and protocols and so forth, so we get this thing right", it may have been six months or a year in order to do that. In the meantime, a great many people could have died. It is all well and good to be an armchair critic and look back and say, "You should have done this differently or that differently." Western Australia has had the best outcomes of anywhere in the entire world. On a planet of seven billion people, Western Australia came out on top. That is because we did difficult things and we did them quickly, against the opposition's objection.

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

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** And it does not stop. The Liberal Party objected to what we did at the time, and now it retrospectively objects. It is pathetic that the Liberal Party does this. It is pathetic. Minister Cook, myself, the cabinet, but especially Minister Cook, myself and some of the senior public servants in Health and police went through some of the most stressful times one could possibly imagine. It was sleepless night after sleepless night in order to try to prevent the catastrophe that befell other parts of Australia and other parts of the world occurring here. You come in here, an armchair critic who did nothing to support us over the course of the last two years. You come in here tut-tutting. That is what you do. I think your approach to politics is beyond pathetic; it is absolutely shameful.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please! Member for Wanneroo! Supplementary question?

CORONAVIRUS — CONTACT TRACING SYSTEM AUDIT

**333. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. Premier, yes or no: can the public have any faith that their personal information will be properly protected by the Premier's government?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

The answer to that is that I now have what Health provided the Auditor General —

The Department and HSS accepts all recommendations and note the report highlights many historic items that have largely been previously addressed or were issues where existing controls were strengthened. No breach of privacy has occurred in relation to the system, continuous data cleansing and quality checking is undertaken ...

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please. The Premier is giving the answer.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will read it out again. This is what the Department of Health has advised, and it apparently advised the Auditor General —

The Department and HSS accepts all recommendations and note the report highlights many historic items that have largely been previously addressed or were issues where existing controls were strengthened. No breach of privacy has occurred in relation to the system, continuous data cleansing and quality checking is undertaken, no inaccuracies in case status impacting management were found and no inappropriate use of the system was recorded. This demonstrates the robustness of PHOCUS and that the data is well managed and secure.

That is what the Department of Health advised the Auditor General and I am totally comfortable that that is correct. The member was sniping from the sidelines while this was going on. We put in place things that worked and saved countless lives and jobs in Western Australia. Now the member continues to snipe and undermine.

#### PILOT HOUSING PROGRAM — GERALDTON

#### **334. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Homelessness:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's significant efforts to increase the availability of social housing across Western Australia, particularly in our regions. Can the minister update the house on the pilot housing program that is being launched in Geraldton and outline how it will support vulnerable rough sleepers and help break the cycle of homelessness?

#### **Mr J.N. CAREY replied:**

I thank the member for her question and for her advocacy on local issues, particularly the suburb of Spalding.

I often start an answer by talking about the big picture, but today I want to reverse that and talk about a personal story. I had the honour to go to Geraldton with the member for Geraldton to meet with a woman called Natasha. She has experienced homelessness and rough sleeping for a significant period. In fact, she experienced homelessness in Kalgoorlie, in Perth and then in Geraldton. It was an honour to listen to her story and to have her share her story with me. She had her beautiful dog, Tippy, with her. As she told me her story, tears came down from her eyes. They were tears of joy because we were standing in her first social housing home. That home is part of a new program in Geraldton. I want to give a shout-out to Miranda and Grace at the Department of Communities. It is a pilot program that is a demonstration of Housing First. The program at its heart is about providing people with accommodation and intensive support so that they stay in that house over time. We made vacant housing stock in Spalding available. We brought it back online. Those six units are now housing 10 former rough sleepers, including three people from Batavia Motor Inne. The support is being provided by the ICARE health, drug and alcohol team in Geraldton. The program is a demonstration of our work and our progress in tackling a very complex issue. We are bringing vacant properties back online and tying them in with homelessness services. The story of Natasha and Tippy gives me confidence and faith about further progress on these issues.

We are doing everything we can as a government to create more social housing. Contrary to the opposition's claims, there is a genuine, sincere effort to accelerate and pivot every which way we can. We have around 100 homes in various stages of works as part of a timber construction program. We can knock out homes in 22 weeks. We have our program for 200 modular homes. We have our spot purchasing program. Again, the opposition has just realised we have that program. We have accelerated that program to get more stock into the system. We are also looking at how we can reform and better leverage our \$190 million investment this year in homelessness. It is my aspiration that we look at how we can better integrate that \$190 million homelessness investment with the increasing acceleration of social housing delivery. I am deeply proud that this government is at every opportunity seeking to drive reform and leverage on the enormous investment we are making so that we can give people like Natasha and Tippy a home.

#### POTASH ROYALTY RATE

#### **335. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:**

I refer to the minister's decision to allow a five per cent royalty on Western Australian sulphate of potash producers, despite industry advice this level of royalty will cripple the industry's development.

- (1) Can the minister detail what investigation he undertook to determine the appropriate royalty rate for sulphate of potash?
- (2) Why did the industry's request for a new royalty for a new product fall on deaf ears when similar requests for other products such as diamonds and lithium hydroxide resulted in an option of bespoke royalty arrangements in mining regulations?

#### **Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:**

- (1)–(2) They are very broad questions. There are three separate issues there. Before I deal with diamonds and lithium hydroxide, I want to deal with the question of the royalty rate for potash, which has not changed. I refer the member to the "Financial Model—Key Assumptions and Results" in the Kalium Lakes Beyondie

project publication of 18 August 2021 for its shareholders and the broader market. It details for investors that the royalty rate in Western Australia for potash is five per cent. In August last year, the industry knew the rate. It goes further. I also draw the member's attention to the material project metrics costs and production from Reward Minerals on 5 November 2020 that notes the net royalty is five per cent. There is no change to the royalty rate. The royalty rate for potash is the same today as it was under the Liberal–National government.

I want to let the member know about some of the benefits that this government has given the industry. Every time a member of the industry has come to talk to me, I have always said, "The royalty rate is the royalty rate, but I will look at other issues." We have reduced costs for this industry by tens of millions of dollars by giving potash projects a bespoke mineral title. The new minerals in brine title has a much lower rental on the land occupied. That saves the industry tens of millions of dollars. We have also provided a bespoke rate for the mining rehabilitation fund. I make this clear: because these projects are long-lived—they are not like a goldmine that might be gone in seven years—the risk to taxpayers of rehabilitation is much lower, so we have been able to give a lower rate for the mining rehabilitation fund. These projects may last 20 or 30 years. Those two changes save the industry tens of millions of dollars.

I also want to remind the member that the price of potash is currently \$1 200 a tonne. That is \$400 more than it was last year. The additional revenue available to those companies is nearly 50 per cent —

An opposition member interjected.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Prices go up and prices go down. Do you know what? When the price goes down, so does the income to the government. This product belongs to the people of this state. The idea that we would sell something that is worth \$1 200 a tonne for 79¢ is ridiculous.

The next item was about who we have consulted with. We have had a detailed level of consultation with every single company in the industry. We have had representations and I have had tens of meetings with people in the potash industry. Two companies had particular issues. They have allowed the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety to have a detailed examination of their accounts. Arising from that detailed examination, the department has recommended to the government that the royalty rate remain at five per cent. This is a high-value product. However, we do want to get these projects going and, for a limited time, we are giving a royalty rebate of 50 per cent that is non-repayable to projects that are in production before the end of 2024. This is their opportunity to get in there.

It is true that we changed the royalty rate for diamonds, but there is a reason for that. The royalty rate in the mining regulations has never been paid by any company ever. There were two diamond mines in Western Australia—one was the Rio one, which had a state agreement act and a specific royalty rate, and the other was the Ellendale mine, which had a special arrangement. All I did was take the special arrangement that had been applied to Ellendale and put it into the royalty regulations so that the diamond industry knew that it did not have to make a special plea to the government; it could simply have the royalty rate.

On the question about the royalty rate for hydroxide, we said that whether the product is exported or processed domestically, the royalty rate will be the same. It is called an input royalty on hydroxide. We charge five per cent on the value of the input, the spodumene, and not on the output, the hydroxide, because that is a transparent way of taxing. It means that there is no advantage for export, because we did not want to have a situation in which money could be saved by exporting and processing the product overseas.

I do not understand the problem here. The idea that we would sell a product worth \$1 200 a tonne for 79¢ is ridiculous. The 79¢ rate applies to sodium chloride—otherwise known as salt. Sulphate of potash has always been levied at the rate of five per cent.

#### POTASH ROYALTY RATE

#### 336. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

I have a supplementary question. Will the minister consider extending the potash industry royalty rebate scheme to all prospective projects, including those that may be coming into production post-2024?

#### Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

No, we will not, and I will explain why. The industry is saying to us that it is difficult to finance these projects when nobody else has done one. But once they are done, the cash flows and the understanding will be available to all the participants—not the project proponents, but the bankers in New York and Germany, because they are the ones who have to make the decisions. We want to get these projects going. There are six projects that are all on the cusp of production. We want them to produce now and not delay their process. We do not want them to say to the banks overseas, "We can wait forever for these projects to come into production." We want them in production now. Once they are in production, all these issues will disappear and we will not have to talk about it again. These will be profitable projects because Western Australia is the best place in the world to do mining, and that is why we are the world's number one mining jurisdiction.



## STATE BUDGET 2022–23 — BUILDING INDUSTRY

**337. Mr S.N. AUBREY to the Minister for Finance:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's efforts in supporting the building and construction industry as it deals with global supply pressures and tight labour market conditions.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how the state budget will support the building industry, as well as homebuyers and home owners?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this support will help alleviate pressure on home builders and the construction sector?

**Dr A.D. BUTI replied:**

I thank the member for Scarborough for that question. He is a very positive member of this house compared with those in the opposition. They must be very happy with their masks on today—it is masking their disappointment at the unemployment figures that have been recorded in Western Australia!

A member interjected.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Of course, it allows some of their former colleagues who were defeated at the last election to obtain a job now, although Michaelia Cash did her best to employ some of them! But I digress.

(1)–(2) As the Minister for Housing —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** As the Minister for Housing informed the house yesterday, there are some great stresses worldwide and in Australia on the supply chains for the materials needed for the construction of homes and also there are workplace issues. The unemployment rate in Western Australia now has a “2” in front of it and we have the highest participation rate in the nation. The combination of supply chain issues and employment workforce issues has, of course, placed pressure on the local construction market, which results in delays and also cost escalation. The member asked me how we are seeking to alleviate that issue. A couple of measures are mentioned in the budget. We have created a \$30 million financial relief scheme for head contractors who face unseen supply chain issues. We will also have more rise-and-fall provisions in government contracts for future projects. That will help the construction industry deal with the escalation in cost due to supply chain issues and workplace pressures.

I would like to thank the peak industry bodies, including the Master Builders Association and the Housing Industry Association. We have consulted them, we have listened to them and we have come up with solutions. That is what the McGowan Labor government does—it addresses the problems; it does not stand up for 25 minutes and read word for word a speech of negativity about the budget.

Also, we have announced an extension of 12 months to start the construction of homes for building bonus applications. I have received a number of letters from Western Australians who are concerned that the construction of their house will not commence in the time period, so we have extended that by 12 months. That will be a great relief for many individuals in Western Australia. Whoever wins the federal election in two days' time—I dearly hope it is an Albanese government when I wake up on Sunday—I will be writing to the relevant federal minister and asking them to amend the deadlines for the federal home builders scheme to align with the extension that we now have for the building bonus.

Having such a brilliant state economy creates problems. It creates stresses in the construction industry. We believe these measures will go some way to alleviating those problems.

## ARTIFICIAL REEF — CARNARVON

**338. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Fisheries:**

I refer to the minister's 2017 commitment to Recfishwest and the Carnarvon Chamber of Commerce and Industry of \$300 000 to deliver the Carnarvon artificial reef.

- (1) Is the minister aware that five years after this commitment, there are now hundreds of noncompliant reef modules sitting in the yard in Carnarvon, costing the local chamber of commerce thousands of dollars?
- (2) Has the minister directly raised the need for a sea dumping approval with the federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment about why the constructed modules cannot be utilised for this project?
- (3) Is the minister aware that to create an artificial reef now, there would be a \$1.6 million cost?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:**

I thank the member for North West Central for the question.

- (1)–(3) We work very closely with Recfishwest and we are working very closely with it on the recreational fishing plan. It certainly has not raised these issues with me and I will take them on notice, thank you.

## ARTIFICIAL REEF — CARNARVON

**339. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Fisheries:**

I have a supplementary question. Will the minister commit to funding the delivery of an artificial reef for the local community, noting the inflated construction costs, if the current modules cannot be used?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:**

The member for North West Central has been in this place far longer than I have—and far longer than he should have. He swapped a few parties, so I would have thought he would have some experience of asking parliamentary questions. To stand and ask such a silly question like that does not breed an answer. No, I will not give any consideration to anything at this point and I will wait to see the recreational fishing plan from Reefishwest.

## GERALDTON HEALTH CAMPUS — REDEVELOPMENT

**340. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to redeveloping Geraldton Health Campus and delivering the single biggest investment in this facility since that made by the Gallop Labor government in the early 2000s.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the additional \$49 million announced in the state budget will ensure that the hospital continues to meet the needs of the local community into the future?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house of what new services will be delivered as part of the hospital expansion?

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Geraldton for her question and for her long-term advocacy for the redevelopment of this health campus. It is an important strategic health campus for the midwest region and this government is very pleased to announce an extra \$49.4 million to bring to \$122 million the entire appropriation for the project to redevelop this campus. We are absolutely committed to delivering for the people of the midwest, and I can say that they have no better advocate than the member for Geraldton.

This was committed to in 2017, before we were elected to government, and stage 1 of the project was delivered in June last year. The remaining stages of the precinct have been delayed due to significant building and construction shortages, both labour and material. A lot of this was exacerbated by cyclone Seroja and the priority for the region is to allow those people to rebuild their residential homes and to use all the might of the building and construction sector to rebuild their homes and their lives. But we are very pleased to announce that an extra \$49 million has been invested to see this project to completion. Since it was the originally costed, we have seen a significant increase in delivering building projects, particularly in regional areas.

This is part of the largest infrastructure program across the state, and it is the largest infrastructure program that the public health system has ever seen. The redevelopment will be incredibly important and will expand services at the health campus, importantly. There will be a bigger emergency department. I went there recently and met with a lot of fantastic and very excited staff, including an emergency department registered nurse who was delighted and relieved to see that the project had been given extra funding. There will be a new intensive care unit co-located with an expanded high-dependency unit. That is important for attracting and retaining staff who want to train and stay in their regional towns. They do not have to leave to increase their competency and expand into intensivism.

Importantly, there will be a 12-bed acute mental health unit, which will be a game changer for mental health in the midwest. People currently have to travel to Perth to seek acute mental health treatment, so this is very, very important. It is not since the Gallop government that Geraldton has seen this kind of investment. It takes a Labor member and a Labor government to deliver this commitment.

Several members interjected.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** In the many, many years of the previous government, and with the billions of dollars from royalties for regions, it did nothing.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please, members!

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** The only contribution that the Nationals WA has made to Geraldton was to provide a very questionable candidate, who was previously in the upper house, to run in that seat—a very questionable individual and candidate. Frankly, it brought embarrassment to Geraldton. The previous government provided no investment in that local hospital. This is significant investment in regional health care. In this budget alone, there is \$158 million across regional health care.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** I will tell the member for Moore what we are doing: we are making the full commitment to Geraldton with \$122 million, not half a commitment to Geraldton like Melissa Price has made.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Vasse with the last question.

#### ONCOLOGY SERVICE — ALBANY

#### 341. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I ask this question on behalf of Albany oncology service campaigner Mary Williams. I refer to the federal government's 2017 \$6.6 million commitment to the \$13 million radiation oncology service for Albany. Noting reports that there has been a funding extension to June 2023, can the minister guarantee the project will be completed and open to patients in September 2022 as promised?

#### **Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

I thank the member for her question on behalf of the local community.

The government is absolutely committed to building and delivering the oncology unit. As we are all acutely aware, there have been delays to building and construction. I was onsite a few weeks ago. I think we have been very clear that there will be a few months' delay in opening the oncology unit, but we have awarded the contract to the service provider that will provide the service. It will be an incredible oncology unit. We have every hope and intention of opening it this year, but there are factors outside our control, and we are very open and frank with the community about that. I met with the builders, who said to me they are losing contractors onsite because they get better offers and go to other jobs. They are all circumstances that are outside our control. We just heard the Minister for Finance outline what the government is doing to support those contractors to meet their obligations to subcontractors and meet the cost escalations, but I assure the Albany community that only a Labor government is delivering this unit. Only a Labor government is delivering at-home oncology. There will be a number of chairs and they will face one of the most spectacular views in the world. It is absolutely spectacular. We are building it. We have awarded a contract and it will open as soon as humanly possible.

#### ONCOLOGY SERVICE — ALBANY

#### 342. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I have a supplementary question. We are now five years on. Will it be open to patients this year?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please! I would just like the Minister for Health to answer. Thanks for your help, Minister for Mines and Petroleum, but no, thank you.

#### **Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

That would be my greatest hope and wish. If we could go there and build the building ourselves—is that what the member wants? The contractor is onsite every day building that building. The bunker is in. It is going up. But it is losing subcontractors and workers. That is the reality of building and construction right now. I would love, one day, for the member for Vasse to say something constructive—just one day!

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** There are occasions when the Leader of the Opposition is constructive—on occasion! Take a leaf out of her book. Being in opposition is not only about opposing, because right now the member is opposing an oncology unit that we are trying to build.

### ESTIMATES COMMITTEES — REMOTE PARTICIPATION

#### *Statement by Speaker*

**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** [2.56 pm]: Members, I would like your attention, please. I have been asked whether remote participation in the estimates committees can be considered next week for members who have to isolate because of COVID. Currently, I cannot give a commitment as we do not have the capacity due to staff absences. However, if this changes, I will consider requests on a case-by-case basis for remote participation for limited periods. Please note that any member who participates remotely in estimates cannot be counted for the purposes of a quorum.

### BILLS

#### *Assent*

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following bills —

1. Firearms Amendment Bill 2021.
2. Sentencing Legislation Amendment (Persons Linked to Terrorism) Bill 2021.

**ESTIMATES COMMITTEES — MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE***Report — Presentation*

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum)** [2.57 pm]: In accordance with the standing orders, I present the report of the management committee prescribing which parts of the estimates and off-budget public corporations will be considered by estimates committees A and B, and the time allocated for that consideration.

[See paper [1139](#).]

*Adoption of Report — Motion*

On motion by **Mr W.J. Johnston (Minister for Mines and Petroleum)**, resolved —

That the report be adopted.

**APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2022–23) BILL 2022**  
**APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2022–23) BILL 2022**

*Second Reading — Cognate Debate*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR H.T. JONES (Darling Range)** [2.58 pm]: Before the break, I was talking about the decision by Activ Foundation to close seven of its large industrial workshops, one of which my son works at. Around that is what I assess as a callous decision to give as little as two months' notice to some of the least easily employable people in the state, I would say, yet the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Senator Reynolds, has failed to manage this issue, leaving people very distressed.

I received text messages last night from people I know who work at Activ. They said that people were coming into work crying. They do not understand why they are losing their jobs. They do not work for the money. They are not like Linda Evangelista, who famously said she does not get out of bed for less than \$10 000 a day. These workers are on \$20 a day. In my son's case, he catches a bus to work, which costs \$30.90, so he is down 10 bucks. Luckily, NDIS covers it. They go to work for companionship.

That is all right. It happens to me all the time when I talk about my son. Their work gives them structure, they are occupied, they are satisfied and they experience feelings of independence—true independence in some cases. It offers respite for families. It is a selfish thing, but having a child with some disabilities is like having a child forever. We have to manage that. I have tissues and water and everything—I think I will be all right now.

This decision has also impacted other employees—people who work at Activ—who have lost their jobs. It has affected the bus companies and the drivers who drive the workers to work, along with taxi and Uber drivers who drive them to work. The Tate Street Lunch Bar in Bentley in the seat of Victoria Park provides all the lunches for the workers. It will lose some business.

I call on those opposite to speak with their federal colleagues and express their concern. The member for Vasse should also talk to her federal colleagues because the Bunbury–Busselton facility is also closing down. Andrew Hastie is my member. I get on quite well with him. I work with him. But he probably has little to do with disability. Like me, he was in Defence, where most people are white, male and have no disability, so it is hard to relate. I did not relate until my son was diagnosed. I know that Senator Linda Reynolds does not get it. After discussing it with Activ, if the end result is two months' notice, it is not good enough. I know that Scott Morrison does not get it because he is blessed with healthy kids, and he is more likely to cause disability by falling on kids playing soccer! The Labor candidate for Canning gets it. She has worked in community services for 20 or 30 years. The member for Dawesville gets it. The member for Victoria Park gets it. Everyone here gets it. Everyone in the Labor Party gets it. Even the member for North West Central, with a black shrivelled heart, which used to be a red pumping Labor heart, gets it. Mr Punch gets it; the Premier gets it; Bill Shorten, the architect of NDIS, gets it; and Anthony Albanese gets it. I am proud to care and I am proud to be Labor.

I commend the bill to the house.

[Applause.]

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [3.03 pm]: I rise to respond to the cognate debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the budget that we were presented with last week. As we know, that budget has a large surplus amounting to billions of dollars, and many billions of dollars coming into the coffers of the government that previous governments have not had the pleasure of being able to deal with. That leads to some opportunities for the government to make expenditures and to become involved in activities that are perhaps beyond the dreams of many governments across Australia at the moment.

I want to commence by noting the report of the ambulance inquiry that was presented in the Legislative Council. I wish to put on record my tribute to the volunteers, especially in the many small sub-centres right across my electorate and across the state of Western Australia who provide the only cover for many people, including the arduous nature

of making frequent inter-hospital transfers with limited numbers of volunteers in order to garner enough money to keep the substation going and to pay the bills. That takes a toll on many of the volunteers. Places such as Jurien Bay, for instance, have no adequate health facility or hospital beds, despite having had a program that would have been funded under the previous government. We see ambulance drivers spending many hours driving to Joondalup, in particular, to transfer patients. Hundreds of transfers are made from that place every year.

I also want to put on record my concern for those people who were affected by cyclone Seroja last year, which cut a swathe right across the midwest, starting in the Kalbarri community. Until a few weeks before the arrival of the cyclone, I was Kalbarri's local member and then there was the electoral boundary change. The communities in the rest of the midwest area that I represent, through Northampton, Chapman Valley, the City of Greater Geraldton, Mingenew, Morawa, Perenjori, Three Springs and Dalwallinu, have all had a really difficult time over the last year. I see that the budget notes that there has been a considerable underspend on some of the grants that have been available. When talking to residents in Northampton about their experience accessing the grants, they say it has been difficult because they have had to expend all the money on rebuilding a building and then in some circumstances try to get the money back. That means that they have the capacity to finance that building themselves. If they have that capacity, that is good, but many people do not have that capacity, and we need to pre-fund some of the work that has been done. I note from the budget papers that there has been discussion around that. I will be interested to ask some questions about that during the estimates hearings.

**Mr R.R. Whitby** interjected.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The federal minister visited the area, and we had that discussion. As we know, the federal government is in a caretaker period now, so we cannot do much at the moment.

An issue relating to Western Power is another matter of great concern in my electorate. Recently, Hon Martin Aldridge and I created a petition that was presented to the Legislative Council—the first e-petition—calling for a review of Western Power looking at various aspects of the operations of Western Power in that area. There has been a catastrophic level of failure in much of my electorate. Some of the towns that I represent, such as Port Gregory, Horrocks and Northampton, have been badly affected by not just cyclone Seroja, but also a longstanding issue often to do with structural problems in that area; that is, poles and wires being exposed to salt and dust and then episodes of low levels of moisture settling on them, making the tops of the poles conductive and causing fires and many outages. We know there has been an issue with Western Power being able to put the power back on during total fire bans, which are quite frequent nowadays—much more frequent than they used to be. Perhaps that is for two reasons: first, climate change; and, second, DFES is much more involved in those areas than it used to be. Work was largely carried out by local government in the past. Now, areas have fire bans imposed on them for days and days, which leads to lengthy outages for many people.

I understand that a program has been set up to roll out standalone units to many isolated farms et cetera. During a briefing I had with Western Power, which was arranged by the Minister for Energy a little while ago, I learnt that about 900 of those units were expected to be put into my electorate, which is a huge amount. In fact, in most of the area roughly between Latham and Perenjori, across to Carnamah and Coorow, many farms will be going off the grid for good. They will have these standalone units. It is interesting that the standalone units will have costs attached. If people in that area want one with a new connection, it will cost \$170 000 up-front, which is very significant. That shows the difference between Western Power and a private provider doing some of that provision, because when Western Power is asked by a person who might want the option of doing their own power rather than accessing the standalone unit, Western Power will pay that person \$50 000 to go off the grid, if you like. Apparently the view is that it can be done privately, adequately, for about \$50 000, whereas \$170 000 is the cost to Western Power, or to the customer, if they use the Western Power unit. There is also the issue of what to do with a town like Latham if the rest of the network around it has been taken down because all the farming area has been put onto standalone units. Is there some sort of a local solution for the town? Standalone units are not big enough for a town that size. The wheat bin there would take a lot of power. There are still a number of residences and there is considerable demand for a standalone system. I put the suggestion to the representatives there that perhaps they could look at enabling some small community-based power supplies to go in there, and I was told that it would be considered to be privatisation by stealth. Apparently there is a bit of politics involved there and it was felt that that might be in some way privatising Western Power. I think it is actually about looking for the most efficient way to provide power in areas of little interest to Western Power. I would imagine it would be very expensive for Western Power to make some of those solutions work.

I turn to some other matters across the electorate. I start with the Mullewa Health Centre. I am glad the Premier is here because I raised the issue of the Mullewa Health Centre with the Premier some time ago in this place. It might have been around budget time in 2021 or 2020. Anyway, at the Premier's invitation I wrote a letter to him about Mullewa in May 2021, and he was kind enough send a reply to me, dated, I think, 23 June 2021, so now nearly a year ago. He said —

... in relation to the Mullewa Health Centre redevelopment project. I acknowledge that the redevelopment of the Mullewa facility to deliver infrastructure that supports contemporary health care provision has been a protracted situation for the community ...

It goes on to say that after a review, additional scope was now included in the proposed build to enable the provision of 24-hour care for respite, palliative care and community renal services. The letter then goes on to talk about some of the process that might follow from there. I am grateful that those issues are being examined, but when I look at the budget, I still see that the only reference to Mullewa that has ever been in the budget is under a program called “primary health care demonstrated site initiative”, and that has not had any additional funding attached to it that I can see. It stands at \$7.7 million this year and \$500 000 next year. That program has stayed at around that level for about six years and still includes a little bit of money, I think, for the Dongara centre, which was originally part of a \$12 million to \$13 million build between the two when first announced in about 2016. I would like to see some action on that and some more money attached to the development at Mullewa because it has been a long time. The old hospital there has been allowed to fall into a state of neglect and it is very debilitating for the community. It is disheartening and morale sapping for the community for that not to be addressed. I would love to see that addressed as soon as possible.

I turn to other matters of note in the midwest that I would like to raise, the next being the Geraldton port. There has been an announcement. The Minister for Transport; Ports has announced a very large commitment of well over \$300 million towards development of the Geraldton port. This is in part due to increased activity in the midwest. I will talk a little bit later about mining activity, but there is also a very strong situation with Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd deliveries of grain into that port. My concern, though, is that that \$300 million-plus investment is a bit of an Oakajee port killer, if you like, in that we will never see Oakajee develop because the Geraldton port is increasing its capacity by so much that it will not necessarily lead to the development at Oakajee. The problem with that is that even if there is a bit of extra depth in Geraldton, it will still be capacity-constrained in terms of the size of the vessels that can go in there because it is relatively shallow. That was the whole idea of Oakajee: the bigger vessels would come in there and that would drive down the cost of transport for people in the midwest.

Another matter of note regarding the Minister for Transport is the situation at Jurien Bay marina. It is rather disappointing to see that there is no funding for the situation at Jurien Bay, a longstanding matter I have raised here in petitions, grievances and discussions with the minister. I received a letter from the minister explaining the situation. I am pretty annoyed about that letter, to be honest, because she said in that letter that she acknowledged that there was a longstanding problem and that she had advocated for the marina in the midyear review and again in the budget, but that she was looking for a federal contribution. I have not heard of the need for a federal contribution; it is a state asset. There is over \$5.5 billion of surplus. I would have thought that the state was well placed to solve the problems with Jurien Bay marina. She went on to say, according to my notes —

I note the current Federal Minister for Transport is a member of the National Party. I’m sure your community would be interested to know in what attempts you’ve undertaken to secure a support for this project from your federal National Party colleagues.

I am happy to say that the National Party candidate in the electorate of Durack, former member for Geraldton Ian Blayney, will be only too happy to take up the matter of Jurien Bay marina with the National Party federally should he be elected on Saturday, so there will be interaction in that regard. I also point out that I would have gladly taken up the issue of Jurien Bay marina with the federal government if the minister had included me in the discussions. I did not know, and I still do not know, exactly what the business case looks like. It is pretty hard to advocate for something when I have not been told the time line for the project and when the state government may be looking for the money. The last thing I heard from the minister was that she was waiting for environmental approvals, not for finance. If I had known that she needed money from the federal government, I would have gladly advocated on behalf of the Jurien Bay community to try to get that money, just as the member for Central Wheatbelt and I advocated, along with 49 shires, to get funding under the wheatbelt secondary freight network some time ago. I think Michael McCormack was the minister when that announcement was made. That project is still bringing benefits to wheatbelt areas, and I am glad to see that now funding has been announced by Canberra to enable the development of the midwest secondary freight network. I have been working with the country shires of the midwest region to get that project up and running and I am very, very pleased to see it happen. I can tell the minister that I am in touch with the National Party ministers in Canberra, and when there is an opportunity, we do advocate. When Warren Truss was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, he was instrumental in making sure that money was put towards Great Northern Highway. I think he pushed in excess of \$300 million into Great Northern Highway. He also insisted on the development of the New Norcia bypass against the direction that the state wanted to go. In fact, he told me that he said to the relevant state minister at one point that the state would not get any funding unless he saw a project for New Norcia on his table. That is the level of interaction we can have if we are actually included in the discussion.

I would also be keen to see funding for the Northampton bypass, and I have raised this many, many times. It is part of a wider transport network in the midwest to go from Dongara. Pell Bridge in Dongara is a limiting factor in getting larger vehicles up the highway, and the constraints of driving through downtown Geraldton, basically, in road trains are well known.

We then have the issue with the town of Northampton that will get very nasty in the near future because Strandline Resources is developing a mine at Coburn station just north of Northampton in the Shire of Shark Bay. That is

progressing quite well. I have a son working on the project. He tells me the haul route is pretty well built, and a lot of the construction work is done. Very soon we will see hundreds of thousands of tonnes of mineral sand coming through Northampton, adding to the very heavy road traffic there already. The member for Central Wheatbelt knows this only too well, because we tried to do a press conference on the footpath outside the pub and, my goodness, it was very hard to do with those trucks running through all the time.

I am also disappointed the budget papers did not mention a passive rail crossing program, or none beyond the normal situation.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The member for Central Wheatbelt has advocated in this place to the Minister for Transport the need to take up the issue of improving rail safety at what are known as passive rail crossings, which are crossings that are not controlled by flashing lights, boom gates et cetera. There are many in the midwest and central wheatbelt. They are dangerous. We have been working with families of people whose loved ones have been killed at these crossings, and it is a heartbreaking thing. The Deputy Prime Minister put up \$180 million to assist with that program. He listened to the concerns of families and saw the need, but I am afraid we are not seeing any matching contribution from the state. This program is 80 per cent funded by the federal government and 20 per cent by the state government. We need this state government to put some money up—it will attract \$4 for every \$1 it spends—to fix the passive rail crossings, which are an issue right across our electorates. That is a small amount of money compared with some of the projects of this government.

I will talk about one in particular that is quite concerning in terms of its delivery—the Bunbury Outer Ring Road. Initially, this was \$850-odd million; now we know it has blown out to \$1.25 billion. Not only that, the scope of the project has retracted. Four of the proposed overpasses will now be roundabouts. The whole idea of ring-roads is that that they will be like a freeway. We will now have a freeway with four roundabouts on it. That is not a freeway; that is a suburban road. The government will spend \$1.25 billion to build an overgrown suburban road, and the southern section through Gelorup, to my knowledge, still has not had environmental approval. The government is building three-quarters of a road! It could well be that the Environmental Protection Authority says it cannot knock down these trees. What has happened is that the corridor was preserved from development; it is the only bushland left in that area that is of great value. The government now proposes to knock down bushland that is far more valuable than the wetland it protected on Roe 8 and 9. The government is proposing to knock it down for a project that has already blown out from \$850 million to \$1.25 billion, and it has gone back in scope. It is a worry.

In response to a question from Hon Dr Steve Thomas about how this project is going and what would happen if there were further cost issues, what is really worrying is that the government said it could seek further money. The government has been living in la-la land, where the Morrison government has been pouring money into the piggybank. It will not be the same after the next election if Anthony Albanese is elected. I do not think he will prop up every state government project that runs into trouble. An extra \$400 million has been put into that project on the flick of a pen. That will not happen again. I do not think Albanese likes this expression, but it is true that life will not be easy under Albanese. He will not be quite so willing to try to keep in the good books of the Premier and spend such huge amounts of money on projects without looking deeply at what they are achieving.

Funnily enough, there was a program announced a little while ago, last year I think, saying the government would “smooth” projects, which meant they were delayed. We had a white-hot development environment and construction costs were blowing up, so the state government smoothed those projects. One of those projects was the Yanchep rail extension; in fact, it did not have to smooth it because it was already stalled. It had been underspent by \$100 million in a year. The government could not spend \$100 million to deliver that project, and then it claimed it was smoothing it. That was another sleight of hand.

Another project that was smoothed was the Bindoon bypass. That project has some vital elements to it. It picks up on the investment in NorthLink WA and the \$300 million or \$400 million that Warren Truss enabled on the Great Northern Highway. It would make Muchea the centre of an efficient freight network from the northwest all the way to Perth. Muchea would be the place where triple road trains would break up, instead of what happens now where they have to go up to Wubin.

*Point of Order*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Acting Speaker, I cannot hear the speaker here because of the conversation going on on the other side of the chamber.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk):** Member for Moore, you can continue.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I was saying that instead of going to Wubin, which has a significant facility now and does benefit from it—I feel a bit for Wubin because it is also in my electorate—that will come down to Muchea. There is an industrial park there. A structure plan was announced recently by the Minister for Planning, who is also the Minister

for Transport who smoothed out the road project. Without that ability to bring triple road trains down through Bindoon, the Muchea industrial park will remain stalled. I also point out that in order to get the industrial park really firing, there needs to be investment in gas, electricity, water, sewerage et cetera. I heard from the locals that the entirety of that expenditure to get that industrial park up would be around \$42 million. These are the costs for going into the region at the end of Tonkin Highway. It is regional, but it is the end of Tonkin Highway. Can members imagine how much more difficult it is in Dalwallinu, which also has considerable restraints on industrial and residential land? They do some pretty innovative things up there.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Mines and Petroleum, I have tolerated one conversation but I think an extra three might be too much.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I will try to remember where I was.

There was a proposal where they needed some land, and, quite innovatively, they turned an old disused golf course into a place for industry. They work hard but they are constrained by the heavy headwork costs and difficulty to get the government to be the developer of these types of things. I am very pleased that the member for Central Wheatbelt, the Leader of the Nationals WA and Leader of the Opposition, announced on Tuesday that she would, in government, provide a regional headworks program with a billion dollars attached to it over 10 years to provide communities with the ability to get their industrial and residential land up and ensure that their communities can grow and benefit. It is important in these towns to be able to take advantage of investments that are happening.

I turn quickly to some issues within the electorate of Moore. Many people think it is all farming, with Moora, Northampton, Dowerin, Goomalling and lots of farming communities, but driving around the electorate now, it is evident that most investment and employment comes from gas. I know the Premier is well aware of this. He has been up in Dongara opening gas plants et cetera. There is also a lot of mining activity. Up through Cataby, we see Tronox; down at Gingin, we see Iluka Resources; at Arrowsmith, hopefully we will see silica being developed; and in Port Gregory, in that neck of the woods, we see garnet. Karara Mining is on the eastern side with what I would say is a successful magnetite development. It is much more successful than the one that Clive Palmer seemed to be building. Along the western edge of the Darling scarp, which is the western edge of the Yilgarn Craton, some very interesting mineralisation has been found, including by Chalice Mining at Julimar. That is not without its controversies. Local people are concerned about the associated transport and its effect on the environment. At the same time, the area has a very exciting mineral deposit that would yield an enormous amount of revenue for the state if it could be developed in harmony with the environment. Further north up through Walebing, companies like Liontown Resources et cetera are finding gold in the hills around Moora. It is quite amazing that in those traditional wheatbelt areas they are now finding significant mining deposits.

In fact, in recent times we have had great support from the federal government in some of those areas. Back in April, Keith Pitt was over here. It was good to catch up with him and spend some time there. We know that the federal government put \$49 million into the Australian Vanadium plant. It is building a plant in Tenindewa, which is between Mullewa and Geraldton in my electorate, where the vanadium from Meekatharra will be processed. Similarly, Keith Pitt made the announcement that Iluka would be receiving a loan facility at \$1.25 billion to build the rare-earth facility at Eneabba. Ironically, the weekend before that announcement, I was having a coffee in a little real estate agent-coffee shop in Jurien where they do a bit of both. I was looking at the “for sale” signs for Eneabba and Leeman. When I went there the following week, there were none. When I went back a week or so later, the ones that I had remembered being around \$60 000 were now priced at \$160 000 or \$260 000. That announcement has already brought a lot of interest to Eneabba and also Leeman, which used to be the base for many of the miners at Eneabba. When I talked to some of the people who work at Iluka Resources, they are thinking that their long-term future will be based in that area and they are thinking of moving there. That is a tremendous effort by our federal government in Canberra. Keith Pitt showed great support for Western Australia in doing that.

We can contrast that with the support shown by recent federal Labor governments. Do members remember Kevin Rudd and the 40 per cent mining tax he wanted to bring in? Then Julia Gillard actually brought in the 30 per cent mineral resource rent tax and the carbon tax, and I have seen articles that report Julia Gillard as saying that she might be gone but that tax will be back. It may as well be back if Albanese is elected. We know that his candidate in Swan, Zaneta Mascarenhas, has said she supports the carbon tax.

A government member interjected.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** It is in the newspaper. I will happily show the member the article, but I have not got much time left so she will have to take it that I have the article right here with the candidate’s quotes in it.

A government member interjected.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I have the article with her quotes in it. The Australian Labor Party has a candidate in the seat of Swan who supports a carbon tax and bringing in a tax in that will cripple industry in Western Australia.

A government member interjected.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am happy to show the member the article.



**MS J.J. SHAW (Swan Hills — Parliamentary Secretary)** [3.33 pm]: Perhaps the member for Moore can draw a breath and calm himself down. It is late on a Thursday. I appreciate that that can be a bit challenging. I am very pleased to rise today to speak on the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022. Over the course of this week, many others have spoken about the outstanding financial management and the state of the finances. I am not going to dwell for too long on that. I would like to speak to the implications that the announcements in the budget have for my electorate and then some of those announcements that are very pertinent to a project in my electorate. There has been quite a bit of discussion around the project. I would like to put on the record and give a complete picture of my view of the project just so that it cannot be misunderstood, because it is a very important project for not just Swan Hills, but the entire state and, I would argue, the nation. It is very important that people who are looking to understand what my perspective is are fully informed of it, and that selective quotes are not made. I want to go through that so bear with me, members.

Some outstanding commitments have been made in this budget for Swan Hills. Most importantly, a \$400 electricity credit for every household will address a lot of the cost-of-living pressures that my constituents are experiencing. Education funding is really important in Swan Hills, which has an extremely young population. This government is increasing education funding right across the state. Across Western Australian schools, \$6 billion in total will be delivered and \$595 million for new and upgraded school facilities. This includes a \$19.1 million expansion and upgrade at Anne Hamersley Primary School. I was there for the opening of that school, and, my goodness, has it grown at an exponential rate—like Malvern Springs Primary School. Two years ago we made a funding commitment to that school and I was actually at Malvern Springs Primary School yesterday and saw those new classrooms that we delivered in action.

In terms of other assistance for young people in the electorate, our Target 120 program is being expanded by \$11.1 million. That program will now be delivered into Ellenbrook, where, as I say, we have a high number of young people. It is no secret that we, as a lower socio-economic area, do have our fair share of difficulty with young people. The Target 120 program is targeted at young people between 10 and 14 years of age who are already having some unfortunate encounters with the justice system. It is intended to provide those young people and their families with wraparound services to try to divert them away from increased criminal activities and incarceration. That is on top of \$3.86 million that this state government has delivered for the Ellenbrook youth centre. I was very pleased to turn the sod on that project. That was a long time in the works and it was absolutely fantastic. This is not just about educating our children well; we also have to ensure that those who are perhaps not having the best in terms of life outcomes are receiving appropriate supports, and then the kids across the community also need places to go to and things to do. From a very holistic perspective, we are seeking to address the needs of young people in Ellenbrook.

In terms of community safety, an incredibly significant announcement was made of \$11 million for a bushfire-fighting large air tanker that will be stationed in Western Australia during the fire season. When we consider that we have just gone through the Wooroloo fires, that is of great comfort to my community. Bushfires are becoming a lived outcome, a real-world impact, of the changing climate for us in the hills. It was very pleasing to see that the budget also makes significant investments in climate action, with a range of funding initiatives to protect the environment and respond to climate change, including a \$500 million boost to the climate action fund taking the total now to \$1.25 billion.

The government has provided \$22.6 million for new charging infrastructure to expand WA's electric vehicle recharging network and \$36.5 million to provide 10 000 rebates of \$3 500 to Western Australians who buy a new electric or hydrogen fuel cell vehicle up to the value of \$70 000. In fact, electrification of transport is something I will go on to talk about.

Infrastructure is a significant investment area in my electorate, which hosts both the Ellenbrook railway station and the major arterials from Great Northern Highway, Toodyay Road and Great Eastern Highway, which is a major point in and out of my electorate. What we do to upgrade infrastructure is very material to my electorate. A record \$6 billion will be allocated over the next four years, with a couple of those projects in my electorate being very important. The first is the \$100 million for the Tonkin Highway corridor upgrades that will become the North Ellenbrook interchange. The interchange will be located between Maralla and Warbrook Roads and will make access to the NorthLink for people in North Ellenbrook much easier. NorthLink is a game changing piece of infrastructure, and I will return to that point.

The budget will also continue delivering funding for projects that are underway, including other Tonkin Highway upgrades such as the Tonkin Gap project, and the Leech Highway and Welshpool Road grade separated interchange. Those projects are important because they are part of a very holistic approach that this state government is taking to upgrade our entire freight and infrastructure network. It is important to appreciate that, because the project I will now move on to discuss is part of that complete picture.

As part of the WA recovery plan, the state government announced funding of \$10 million towards planning for the EastLink WA project. This project will link Tonkin Highway to Northam. It is known locally as the orange route, and it has been around for 30 or 40 years. When my family first moved up into the hills decades ago, there was an orange route, a green route, a purple route and a brown route. The orange route was settled on as a major

piece of infrastructure. It has been in the works for an awfully long time. It has bipartisan support from the state and federal governments and it is a significant advocacy priority for both the City of Swan and the Shire of Mundaring, which my electorate covers. This project has had an incredible amount of support for a very long time. It is a key piece of economic infrastructure. It is very important that not only the community at large is aware of the importance of it, but also, simultaneously, some of the community concerns that have been expressed to me are addressed.

The planning phase for EastLink WA is now underway. That phase is expected to take about three years. Construction will be commenced in stages as funding becomes available. There are three elements. The first stage is Reid Highway west of the Swan River, and a lot has happened there. If members drive along Reid Highway, they can see the duplication of Reid Highway that has been delivered under this state government. It is incredible. It was a one-lane terrible road that was a complete bottleneck. The duplication has been absolutely incredible. There will be continued upgrades to Reid Highway now as part of the EastLink project. The second stage is the Reid Highway, Roe Highway, Toodyay Road and Perth Adelaide National Highway to Clackline phase. That is the bit that goes right through my electorate. The third phase is Great Eastern Highway from Clackline through to Northam. That is not in my electorate; that is the member for Moore's patch. This project is a key part of WA's broader infrastructure and transport planning and will lead to a more efficient and safer freight network. It will enhance our economic capacity and will contribute to our sustainability objectives. It is important that that is understood, because there is a lot of debate at the moment around the sustainability values surrounding this project. It is important that we have the full picture. The project itself complements a swag of recent infrastructure upgrades, such as Gateway WA, the upgrades around the airport, which Anthony Albanese, as a former infrastructure minister, initiated; the Westport project that this state government is absolutely committed to delivering; the Tonkin Highway upgrades; NorthLink and the intermodal transport hub that will be located in south Bullsbrook in my electorate; and, as I said, the duplication of Reid Highway.

This is all part of a big picture of modernising and upgrading our infrastructure to ensure that we can modernise or deliver as efficient a transport, infrastructure and freight network as possible to help our economy grow and develop. It will deliver a range of local benefits. On Great Eastern Highway, it will considerably improve safety. That will help my constituents who come down Great Eastern Highway from Chidlow, Sawyers Valley, The Lakes, Mt Helena and Wooroloo. It will bypass the Mundaring town site. A hell of a lot of freight traffic that currently goes right through the heart of Mundaring town site will be bypassed. All the way down Great Eastern Highway, driveways from residences go straight onto a highway that carries heavy freight traffic. It is not safe. Great Eastern Highway is very densely populated. It cannot expand. It cannot accommodate any growth. There are far too many truck movements on Great Eastern Highway as it is. Anyone who goes down Great Eastern Highway knows how dangerous that steep descent is and how terrifying, frankly, the infamous Scott Street intersection can be. EastLink will also improve safety on Toodyay Road. There are also driveways straight onto Toodyay Road. Trucks go up and down Toodyay Road all the way. There will be grade separation and on and off ramps. Again, we have the infamous Red Hill descent, which is incredibly dangerous. Toodyay Road also cuts right the way through the centre of the Gidgegannup town site. Trucks speed regularly straight past Gidgegannup Primary School. It is not safe, it is not appropriate, and EastLink will divert those trucks away from the town centre.

The project will of course lead to improved connectivity for hills residents to the rest of the metropolitan area. We will be able to get from the hills down to the flats far more quickly. It will improve our commuter times. A lot of people from the hills drive to Midland train station, and this asset will directly decrease travel time to enable people to access the Midland train station more quickly. Combined with the upgrades to the Great Eastern Highway bypass and the Roe Highway interchange that are underway, it will improve our travel times and links to the airport. It will be a safer, better highway for everyone and that will mean more efficient transport use also for our road freight. It will contribute significantly to the modernisation of the entire freight network. An improved road system with fewer intersections will also lower carbon emissions from existing diesel combustion engine trucks. Projects such as this perfectly complement moves towards a more efficient and electrified truck fleet into the future. Electrified fleets should run on efficient, modern and safe roads.

There has been quite a bit of debate as well about this project on getting freight to rail. The improved interconnection that this asset will deliver with existing and planned transport upgrades, particularly to the intermodal transport facility where road and rail will meet planned for Bullsbrook, will expand the scope from freight to rail and on to Fremantle port and the new Westport facility. I want to dwell on freight to rail, because some of the things I have said about it have not been as well understood as they potentially could be. This project is an enabler of freight to rail. I fully support freight to rail, particularly given, as I said, its inextricable links with other infrastructure projects. I just want to put it out there that I absolutely support freight to rail. Freight to rail is a key component of this government's agenda. When we were elected, we set a target to lift freight to rail to 20 per cent for Fremantle port. That was met in 2018–19, with an average of 20.2 per cent. Fremantle port now enjoys the nation's highest mode share on rail. In fact, in April last year, at the Heavy Haul Rail conference, Minister Saffioti affirmed this government's commitment to freight to rail and spoke of the need for more efficient pathways to ports. This project, its interconnectedness with the Bullsbrook intermodal terminal through the first phase of EastLink and the recent completion of NorthLink, is a key enabler for freight to rail.

I also want to underscore the importance of having a range of freight options, particularly given that we are facing, in real time, an increasing frequency of extreme climatic events. Members will be aware of the massive floods in South Australia in January this year that washed away significant sections of the Trans-Australian railway. Rail-based freight could not get to WA. This affected our supermarkets; it affected business continuity. It interrupted a whole range of normal activities and brought home to us that a dependence on one form of freight is probably not a good idea.

In response to the interruption, a land bridge was instituted, relying heavily on road freight. The debate about freight is not a zero-sum game. It is not one or the other, it is both. We need both rail and road freight and they should both be as modern and efficient as possible. I would argue that in caring about climate change, this project makes sense from both a prevention perspective, because it reduces emissions from road freight, and an impact mitigation perspective, because it will provide redundancy in the event of climatic events. There is no two ways about it: we have to try to act to prevent climate change, but we will increasingly have to respond to it, and I would argue that this asset is a key part in this state government's response to the impacts of climate change.

We need to modernise our eastern road transport connections. That is the last piece of the road infrastructure puzzle. In decades to come we know more freight will be coming from the east coast and Great Eastern Highway cannot be widened. There is far too much density between Mundaring and Midland and that stretch of road needs to be far safer. Toodyay Road, our major link to the wheatbelt, is also not suitable for significant increases in road freight. If we want a more sustainable, efficient road and rail transport network, we need the EastLink WA project.

Having said that, I know there are concerns in my community. I would like to thank the constituents who have reached out to me to share their views. I really appreciate it. People in my electorate are very concerned about the environmental impact. Certainly, this project will involve some clearing of vegetation. People are concerned about that and the impacts on wildlife. I say to my constituents that in 2017 I secured a commitment for a \$25 million upgrade to Toodyay Road. The initial plans rolled out for that upgrade involved quite a bit of vegetation clearing. I worked with the community and we advocated to Main Roads WA and achieved a 40 per cent reduction in the amount of trees and vegetation cleared in association with that project. I am very, very keen to continue to work with the community to advocate on this project to ensure that we get the best possible environmental outcomes when it comes to clearing and impacts on native fauna.

People are also concerned about the impact on watercourses and heritage. These are very legitimate concerns. In terms of the impact on amenity, people are worried about noise abatement.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** If there is one thing I know from my experience of having the NorthLink project in my electorate, it is that these types of projects can have significant noise abatement. Again, I worked with the community in Ellenbrook and Bullsbrook to have their concerns addressed.

My constituents are also concerned about connections to local roads into town sites. These are incredibly legitimate concerns. I completely understand people's concerns in the wake of the Wooroloo bushfires that our emergency services have to have the ability to move around the local area.

As someone who has lived in my electorate and been a hills local for 16 years, I know how important the environment is. I appreciate the amenity and that is why I live there, too. I understand and deeply relate to these concerns. I will be side by side with my constituents to ensure that those concerns are communicated and those issues are addressed to the best extent possible. On 6 July last year, I sought and received a very extensive briefing from MRWA at which I clearly communicated all these concerns. Main Roads WA assured me that the concerns will be considered in the planning phase. The planning phase will last three years. We will need further funding for this project to proceed to construction. As part of the planning phase a number of studies are underway looking at vegetation, flora and fauna, heritage, hydrology, noise, and engineering and geotechnical investigations. I understand and share my community's commitment to sustainability values. I strongly encourage people to visit the website and look at the explanations and descriptions of the studies underway and particularly to review the sustainability report for the project. People will see that an incredible amount of thought is being given to incorporating sustainability values into this project.

There is also extensive community consultation underway. On 11 September, Main Roads held a drop-in session at Gidgegannup. I attended the session with Tania Lawrence, our outstanding candidate for Hasluck who is very connected to her community and really understands this project. We listened intently to the views that were put to us. Main Roads WA is currently seeking community views on access and connectivity. I really encourage people to engage in that process, which will be open until 30 June. The plan is to release a report in August, which again the community can review. People can subscribe to project updates on the Main Roads WA website.

This piece of infrastructure is needed for a range of reasons. It is needed because we must facilitate the development of a strong economy that will deliver jobs and prosperity across the state. We have to deliver this EastLink asset to increase the sustainability of our transport system, lower transport carbon emissions and facilitate initiatives like

freight to rail. We need to improve the resilience of our freight network in the event of extreme climatic events. We need to improve local road safety and connect our hills communities in a better way to the rest of the metropolitan area. But there are important environmental and amenity considerations that the government must have firmly in mind as this project is developed.

I am always willing to meet with my constituents to listen to their views and discuss their concerns. I will work with them to ensure that our local voices are heard. I look forward to ongoing engagement with the many individuals and groups who have reached out to me. This budget will deliver key infrastructure that is necessary for the state. The EastLink project is necessary for future economic development, so I encourage people to fully apprise themselves of all the issues surrounding this project. I commend the bills to the house.

**MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Treasurer)** [3.55 pm] — in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022. I am sorry I was not in the chamber to listen to many people’s addresses.

I want to make a few points. A lot of work goes into the budget and I would like to thank the staff at Treasury, in particular Michael Barnes, Michael Court and the team at Treasury. It is an outstanding agency that has once again done a terrific job. The outcomes or the expenditure contained within the budget is the envy of the rest of the country. Under Treasurers and their colleagues in other states and nationally obviously look at Western Australia with some considerable admiration and perhaps a degree of envy. That is a good position for Western Australia to be in. We are very proud of the position we are in. Treasury staff worked very hard to create the budget. Obviously, they did the same last year and the year before in the very, very difficult COVID environment. The budget last year was late because of the state election and the year before it was late because of COVID. This year it was at the normal time in May. The last budget was in October 2021, the midyear review was in December and this year’s budget was in May, so it has been an incredible period of work for Treasury staff, and I would like to thank them for that. Obviously, they have been working in the environment we are all in in which a lot of people have been unwell or required to stay at home because of COVID protocols. I thank Treasury staff for all their work.

I thank members for their support. The budget delivers a whole range of things. It delivers a significant surplus—the second biggest surplus in the history of Western Australia. It delivers major debt reduction of over \$2.5 billion. It will take the debt down below \$30 billion for the first time since 2014–15, I think it is—or around then. It will be significantly lower than the earlier government’s projections of around \$44 billion. In effect, one-third of the state’s debt has been removed in an environment in which we had to spend over \$11 billion on the COVID response. Doing the maths on that, it has been a remarkable period of debt reduction, surplus delivery and good economic management. Despite the criticism, that is a virtue for Western Australia, because as interest rates climb and other states’ debt continues to climb, Western Australia will be in a unique position nationally. As we will be one of the only governments in the world in that unique position, we are hopeful and working towards strong credit rating assessments of our state. As Treasury constantly tells me, it is very easy to lose a credit rating, which obviously the last government did—it lost our AAA credit rating—but it is very hard and takes years of effort to regain it. We are doing what we can to perform well and show our good budget management.

I will give members one quick example of this. I note the Victorian government has been critical of Western Australia for what we have done. I also note that the Victorian government bid for and successfully secured the Commonwealth Games. That is a nice thing to have. The Commonwealth Games is a lovely thing to have. It cost Victoria \$2.6 billion. It is going to be a regional sporting event in Victoria at a cost of \$2.6 billion. Had we done that when the opportunity was open to us, that would have been, according to the Victorian experience, an added \$2.6 billion in an environment in which interest rates are climbing and there is nervousness about a soft world economy. We decided not to; our priorities are health and economic diversification. There are people out there saying that we should have got the Commonwealth Games. That would have just been a massive drag on the budget, as Victoria has shown, and we are far more disciplined than that. If Victoria or the other states want to complain about Western Australia’s financial position, perhaps they should not do things like that. Perhaps they would have a little bit more credibility if they did not do things like bid for the Commonwealth Games and add \$2.6 billion to the credit card.

There is a record asset investment program of nearly \$34 billion contained in the budget, and there is an additional spend on health, including for our COVID response, since last year’s budget and the midyear review. It is over \$5 billion—\$5 000 million—of additional spend. We spend the most on health per capita of any state in Australia.

There will obviously be significant investment in climate change initiatives.

One initiative that some members have mentioned, particularly the member for Kimberley, is the investment in remote communities. We have set up a \$350 million fund specifically for remote communities. There are 200 or so remote communities and they have some of the most inhospitable conditions in the world. Obviously, housing provision and repairs and service delivery in those areas is very difficult. It requires enormous expense. We have set aside this fund. We would seek whoever is elected on Saturday at a national level to assist us with that expense. The commonwealth has been involved in remote community funding since 1968. Some of the remote communities formed around that time. In 1968, the commonwealth stepped in and said that the cost of service delivery in those

areas—the remotest parts of the country—should be shared between the states and territories and the commonwealth. That was the arrangement until a few years ago, when the commonwealth government pulled out. We have put a massive amount of money in and we would seek some support from the commonwealth to match, or at least assist in, this ongoing effort to provide a decent standard of living for some of the most disadvantaged and isolated people in Australia and perhaps the world.

We have also put \$400 million of our surplus towards information technology upgrades. That is because across government, information technology is not a sexy issue. It does not win public support. It is not something that people march around the streets cheering about. But it does mean that we can have good service delivery and avoid service failure. There is \$400 million in this budget; there was \$500 million in the last budget. There will be a competitive process for agencies to access it.

In addition, we are providing cost-of-living relief. I know that the opposition has criticised it, but the criticism seemed to be that it was not enough and then the criticism seemed to be that we were giving it to everyone. Members opposite are walking both sides of the fence, and that is always a dangerous place to be. When they have one foot on either side of the fence, it is a dangerous place to be. As Joh Bjelke-Petersen said one day, “You don’t want to walk with one leg either side of a barbed wire fence.” We have obviously had to balance many things, but the \$400 electricity credit will reach everyone. As I mentioned in question time the other day, all those families in my electorate who never receive any support from government will get some cost-of-living support. It is not debt funded. The commonwealth’s fuel tax relief has just been added to the credit card, so that will have to be paid off in due course. The initiatives of other states and the commonwealth—I think the commonwealth has some initiatives for older Australians—as worthy as they are, are debt funded. Ours are not debt funded. We can do this while reducing debt. That is a \$545 million addition to help people. In net terms, it is around \$250, but in overall terms, it is a 3.8 per cent reduction in the overall cost of state government goods and services. That is important.

The opposition says that the government is just lucky. I do not see how it is lucky that we have reduced our recurrent spend over our first three years in office and we have taken the measures necessary to protect the economy and continue to deliver revenue for the first time in 20 years. Do members opposite think it is just a coincidence that the GST arrangement was improved? It was not just a coincidence. It was because of the election of this government.

In terms of the opposition’s complaints about the economy, today we have an unemployment rate of 2.9 per cent and one of the highest participation rates in the history of the country. The biggest complaint—it is strange—is that we do not have enough people for the roles. It is difficult to get the balance right so that we have exactly the right number of people for the entire number of jobs. In fact, it is impossible to achieve that. We have kept in place the low fees for TAFE courses, at a cost to the budget. We are also delivering the lowest unemployment rate in Australia.

As I indicated earlier, the opposition’s theme on Tuesday was “Why aren’t you reducing debt?” and the opposition’s theme on Wednesday was “Why are you delivering surpluses?” The two things do not compute. We are reducing debt. This is the third year in a row that we have reduced debt. We have taken a very cautious budgeting approach across the forward estimates. We do not want to put in overly optimistic estimates of our revenue and then spend accordingly and, as a consequence, have deficits and debt. That is why we have relatively stable debt levels across the forward estimates, certainly compared with those in other states in Australia, and a very conservative methodology for estimating our revenues in the state budget. That is just sensible budgeting. It is amazing that the opposition can criticise us on one day because debt is too high and then criticise us on the next day because we have a \$5.7 billion surplus. Every question yesterday was about why we have a \$5.7 billion surplus. If we do not have a surplus, we cannot reduce debt. We need to have a significant operating surplus to do that, which we do. That is the reality.

As I said, families will be given major assistance through cost-of-living relief within the state government’s capacity. We do not have massive capacity, but the major delivery mechanism we have for families across the state is through electricity and water charges, because we run the systems. The credit we put in place in 2020 was a good model. We have showed that it worked, and we have been able to replicate it this year.

The spend on health has gone from \$8.8 billion per annum in 2016–17 to \$11.6 billion per annum in 2021–22. That is a 31 per cent increase in health spend since the election of this government. That is a massive investment in the health system. The demand on the health system has been enormous. As I have said, I have seen it myself and there is a range of factors. As I said before, when general practitioners put signs on the door saying, “Do not come in if you have a respiratory illness”, which I find disturbing, it just sends people to emergency departments. That is the problem we face. We also have the lowest number of GPs per capita of anywhere in Australia. That is a federally funded matter. We also have people in hospital beds who should be in aged-care or disability beds. All these things combine and they make the situation difficult, but we are putting in an enormous amount of resources. We are putting more beds into the system. We have done our best to deal with COVID. Members will have seen what happened in the health systems across Australia over the last two years. They will have seen the huge dislocation in the eastern states, and the delay in treatment that occurred in Sydney and Melbourne because of the COVID experience. Many people did not receive surgery or attention during the huge lockdown periods because the hospitals were overrun with COVID patients. That has caused a massive backlog to build up over there. We have not had in any way, shape or form the same experience here. But there have been huge pressures, as I said

earlier, so we are putting in place an enormous amount of resources to deal with that, but it will take time. Most reasonable people who listen to the reasons for it and the issues behind it and who understand that we have the strongest spend per capita of anywhere in Australia will understand that there is a major problem that the government is doing its best to deal with. The health minister and I focus every day on how to alleviate the situation.

I know a lot of issues were raised about specific electorates. It is a good opportunity to raise those issues about members' electorates and I look forward to the estimates process and seeing whether I can answer questions on some of those specific electorate issues. I look forward to the estimates process next week because it will be a good opportunity to tease out the details of the budget. In overall terms, I think Western Australia more generally should be very proud of the budget. It has come down in the last days of a federal election campaign, so it probably has not received the attention that it otherwise would, but if we want a barometer for how well the budget has gone, we probably need only look at some of the reactions of the Treasurers over east. There is a sort of inverse relationship. The angrier they are, the better our budget is. That seems to be the way it can be judged.

As a state, we should all be very proud of what we have achieved. I am very proud of it. On every measure, the government is investing in the appropriate things, providing cost-of-living relief and a massive capital works program and ensuring that our priorities, particularly for health, climate change and remote communities, receive the attention they deserve.

I commend the bills to the house.

Questions put and passed.

Bills read a second time.

Pursuant to standing order 222, bills and estimates referred to Estimates Committees A and B.

#### **ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE**

*Special*

On motion without notice by **Mr W.J. Johnston (Minister for Mines and Petroleum)**, resolved —

That the house at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 14 June 2022, at 2.00 pm.

*House adjourned at 4.12 pm*

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