



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 11 August 2021

Legislative Assembly

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THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) took the chair at 12 noon, acknowledged country and read prayers.

FINANCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (EMERGENCY RELIEF) BILL 2021

Notice of Motion to Introduce

Notice of motion given by **Mr D.R. Michael (Parliamentary Secretary)** on behalf of Dr A.D. Buti (Minister for Finance).

MAINTENANCE AND CHAMPERTY — LAW REFORM COMMISSION PROJECT 110

Statement by Attorney General

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler — Attorney General) [12.03 pm]: I rise to table the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's report titled *Maintenance and champerty in Western Australia: Project 110: Final report*. This report completes the commission's reference commenced in July 2018 and is essentially the final chapter of the 2015 commission report on representative proceedings.

The commission examined whether the torts of maintenance and champerty should be abolished, and considered strategies to mitigate any adverse impacts from their abolition. Put simply, maintenance refers to assistance or encouragement by a person, who has neither an interest in the litigation nor justified motive for interference, to a party to litigation. Champerty is maintenance of an action in consideration of a promise to give the maintainer a share in the proceeds or subject matter of an action. The commission undertook considerable research and consultation with stakeholders in the legal community, including through its discussion paper. Most Australian jurisdictions have already abolished the torts of maintenance and champerty and the majority of stakeholders supported the abolition of those torts in Western Australia.

The commission made three recommendations. The primary recommendation is that the torts of maintenance and champerty be abolished, whilst preserving the rule of law regarding when a contract is to be treated as contrary to public policy or as otherwise illegal. The other recommendations seek to complement the Supreme Court's supervisory role in protecting the interests of class members in funded proceedings. These matters fall within the court's remit and if government is to accept the recommendation, it will require further discussion with the court. The commission has presented four options for change in relation to litigation funding arrangements to protect defendants, representative parties and group members in funded representative proceedings. These will be considered in due course.

I thank the commission for its work and table the final report in accordance with section 11(7) of the Law Reform Commission Act 1972.

[See paper [419](#).]

ACCOMMODATION — WEST END VILLAS — GERALDTON

Statement by Minister for Disability Services

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Disability Services) [12.05 pm]: I am pleased to inform the house of the new six-unit specialist disability accommodation development in Geraldton, known as the West End Villas, which I had the honour of opening recently. The development is the first of its kind in regional Western Australia and was a collaboration between WAI Group, well-known disability services organisation Activ and community housing provider Community Housing Ltd. The villas have been built by Geraldton-based builders, and provide a new housing option for local people with extreme functional impairment and high needs requiring specialised housing.

The McGowan government is keen to see eligible Western Australians with disability activate their SDA entitlements and exercise choice and control over their housing, which is what makes the opening of this Geraldton project so exciting. In 2020, the state government committed to the Department of Communities registering as a specialist disability accommodation provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This will allow state-owned group homes to be enrolled as specialist disability accommodation and, importantly, attract NDIS funding. The funding generated by SDA payments will be used to modify, maintain, refurbish and redevelop existing group homes, or build additional specialist disability accommodation, thereby increasing the supply of its housing stock in the market and creating local jobs. The McGowan government remains committed to the successful transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and recognises that the specialist disability accommodation funding stream plays an important role in improving housing choice for people with disability requiring specialised housing. It is fantastic to see nation-leading SDA projects, such as the West End Villas, being built in regional WA and I look forward to seeing the construction of similar developments across the state.

CRIMINAL APPEALS AMENDMENT BILL 2021*Introduction and First Reading*

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr J.R. Quigley (Attorney General)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the Attorney General.

Second Reading

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler — Attorney General) [12.10 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Criminal Appeals Amendment Bill 2021 will amend the Criminal Appeals Act 2004 and make consequential amendments to other acts, introducing a new statutory right for a person to make a second or subsequent appeal against a conviction on indictment in circumstances in which there is “fresh and compelling” or “new and compelling” evidence.

Members may recall that the Criminal Appeals Amendment Bill 2019, which was introduced in the last Parliament, lapsed on prorogation of that Parliament. This bill will effect the same policy as that bill, but it reflects some wording changes, including those amendments that were made in the Legislative Assembly of the previous Parliament.

A pillar of our justice system is the principle of finality, which dictates that once a court has handed down a decision, that decision is final. This is an essential element of the way our legal system works, creating certainty and consistency. However, there are limited circumstances in which the principle of finality must be put aside for the purpose of allowing justice to be served, however belatedly. This bill seeks to provide that avenue.

As it stands, a convicted person who has exhausted all of their appeals has no further right to appeal, even if new evidence later emerges that has the potential to exonerate them or fresh evidence establishes that a substantial miscarriage of justice has occurred. Without this important bill, even when new evidence is available showing that a person is innocent, their only avenue of redress is to lodge a petition for the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy by the Governor or petition the Attorney General to refer the case to the Court of Appeal. I have been a long-time proponent of removing politics from criminal appeals, and have been vocal about the need to create a passage of second and subsequent appeal direct to the Court of Appeal.

I have had significant involvement with two referrals to the Court of Appeal. The first was several years ago when, as a backbencher in this house, I advocated for Andrew Mallard’s case to be referred to the Court of Appeal. The second, more recent example was my decision as Attorney General to refer Scott Austic’s case to the Court of Appeal.

Mr Mallard was convicted of wilful murder in 1995. His appeal against his conviction was dismissed in 1996. In 1997, the High Court refused special leave to appeal. Mr Mallard’s family unsuccessfully petitioned the then Attorney General, Hon Peter Foss, to refer his case to the Court of Appeal. It was not until 2002, under a new Attorney General, Hon Jim McGinty, that the case was referred to the Court of Criminal Appeal, allowing an appeal process that culminated in the High Court overturning Mallard’s conviction in 2005. Six months later, the then Director of Public Prosecutions decided not to retry Mr Mallard and a subsequent cold-case review identified another convicted murderer as the perpetrator of the senseless killing of Mrs Pamela Lawrence. After almost 12 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, Andrew Mallard was a free man.

In 2009, Scott Austic was convicted of wilful murder. In 2010, Mr Austic’s appeal of his conviction and sentence was dismissed. In early 2012, Austic lodged a petition with the then Attorney General, Hon Christian Porter. In September 2013, the new Attorney General, Hon Michael Mischin, refused to refer the case. In February 2018, I received a petition from Austic, which was substantively the same as the one refused by my predecessor. In April 2018, two months after Austic lodged his petition with me, I referred his case to the Court of Appeal upon advice of the then Solicitor-General. In May 2020, the Court of Appeal overturned Austic’s conviction. In November 2020, Mr Austic was acquitted after a retrial.

Therefore, six years passed between Austic’s first petition to Mr Porter and his second petition to me. Mr Austic waited over 19 months for his petition to be considered, only to have it refused by Mr Mischin. How many years earlier would Scott Austic’s case have been heard if he had had the option to bring his case to the Court of Appeal, and not to a politician? How many more years did Andrew Mallard spend in jail because he could not convince an Attorney General to let the Court of Appeal hear his case?

I now provide some detail of what is contained in this bill. This bill will allow an offender convicted of an offence on indictment to bring a second or subsequent appeal to the Court of Appeal against conviction, not against sentence, if there is either fresh and compelling evidence or new and compelling evidence relating to the offence.

The ability to bring a second or subsequent appeal to the Court of Appeal under this bill has been limited to convictions on indictment. The policy is that the principle of finality ought be interfered with only in circumstances in which a wrongful conviction has the most serious consequences—that is, when the absence of an opportunity to commence a further appeal could produce significant injustice. Consistent with this policy, the bill does not provide

for further appeals against conviction on simple offences. Such matters are dealt with in the Magistrates Court of Western Australia, attract lower penalties and are on the lower end of offending. The scope of appealable convictions when appealing to the Court of Appeal is consistent with other legislation allowing appeals to the Court of Appeal, being section 140 of the Sentencing Act 1995 and section 23(1) of the Criminal Appeals Act 2004.

There are two categories of “fresh evidence”. First, evidence is fresh if, despite the exercise of reasonable diligence, it was not and could not have been tendered at the trial of the offence or any previous appeal. Second, evidence is fresh if the evidence was not tendered at the trial of the offence or any previous appeal but, with the exercise of reasonable diligence, could have been so tendered, and the failure to tender the evidence was due to the incompetence or negligence of a lawyer representing the offender. Evidence is new if it was not tendered at the trial of the offence or any previous appeal but, with the exercise of reasonable diligence, could have been tendered at the trial of the offence or at any previous appeal.

In either circumstance, the evidence must be compelling, meaning that it must be highly probative in the context of the issues in dispute at the trial of the offence. Evidence will be highly probative if it has a real or material bearing on the determination of a fact in issue that, in turn, may rationally affect the ultimate outcome in a case. The level of proof required for a successful appeal differs between cases based on whether the evidence is fresh or new. The Court of Appeal must allow an appeal based on fresh and compelling evidence if it is satisfied that there was a miscarriage of justice. The court may dismiss the appeal if it considers that no substantial miscarriage of justice has occurred. The intent of this proviso is to ensure that technical errors do not unnecessarily result in appellate intervention, which would cause undue distress to victims and next of kin, but to allow a second or subsequent appeal when a miscarriage of justice is so significant as to warrant an exceptional incursion into the principles surrounding the finality of a conviction. The threshold for new evidence is, understandably, much higher. There must be powerful reasons for disturbing a conviction obtained after a trial that has been regularly conducted. The higher threshold will also prevent persons who have gone to trial underprepared from being rewarded for their lack of diligence. The Court of Appeal must allow an appeal based on new and compelling evidence only if it is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that, in light of all the evidence, the evidence establishes that the offender is innocent.

This bill has significant safeguards to protect against the flooding of unmeritorious appeal applications, thereby limiting the potential impact of re-traumatisation on victims and next of kin. The requirement for an application for leave to appeal in every case is designed to act as a filter for vexatious, frivolous or spurious applications. The Court of Appeal must decide the leave application before the appeal unless it considers it necessary or desirable to give leave to appeal at the hearing of, or when giving judgement on, the appeal.

The proposed amendments in the bill will operate retrospectively insofar as they will apply to any person convicted prior to the commencement of these amendments. I also point out that the proposed amendments will not alter the current powers of the executive with respect to an application of the royal prerogative of mercy and the power of the Attorney General to refer matters back to the Court of Appeal under section 140 of the Sentencing Act 1995.

As the bill introduces a new process for criminal appeals, it also incorporates a provision for a review of the operation and effectiveness of the amendments to occur within five years of the commencement of the legislation.

This bill will strike an appropriate balance between the competing interests of wrongly convicted persons and victims of crime. The framework will establish an additional mechanism for correcting substantial miscarriages of justice while respecting the public interest in the finality of litigation. My aim with this important reform is to depoliticise what has previously been a highly political process. It has been my view over a great number of years that this is a process best carried out by the judiciary, not the Attorney General of the day.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr P.J. Rundle**.

CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Third Reading

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Child Protection) [12.24 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

At the conclusion of the second reading debate last night, I spoke for longer than I expected to, much to the chagrin of other members because I stood between them staying here and going home for the evening. I appreciate the contributions that members across the chamber made to this important bill.

I would like to thank the people and organisations who attended consultations and provided submissions and the staff who assisted in the review of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 and other consultations that we have had during the process of bringing this bill in its current form to this Parliament.

There has been and continues to be much public interest in this bill. I would again like to place on the record my thanks to all involved in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and also those

survivors who stepped forward and shared their experiences to inform the decisions that we make in this place as a Parliament. I would also like to thank the hardworking staff in the Department of Communities who work every day to keep children in our community safe.

I commend the bill to the house.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL 2021

First Reading

Bill read a first time, on motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Minister for Tourism)**.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Tourism) [12.26 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

Thirty-one years ago, the Horticultural Produce Commission Act 1988 established the commission as a statutory authority with the primary function of establishing producers' committees. This act was amended to become the Agricultural Produce Commission Act in 2000. The amendments now proposed will modernise the act, improving service and responsiveness to agricultural industries that already use, and those that might choose in the future to use, the act. The amendments emerged from a comprehensive review of the act in 2006.

The act relies on collaboration, consultation and majority-supported outcomes. It provides a mechanism for producers to combine their efforts and resources, and work together, through their producers' committee, to achieve the agreed goals of their industry.

For a committee to be established, the act requires a poll of producers in the industry to determine whether producers are in favour of the proposal. Before the poll can be conducted, the commission must advertise the intention to conduct the poll and invite submissions from affected producers. The commission, with 30 years of experience in forming and supporting producers' committees, has learnt that the vital component of a successful producers' committee is the involvement of, and support from, the producers who will be the beneficiaries of the services the committee provides. The commission does not move to conduct a poll until there has been extensive consultation with the members of the industry concerned. As an example, the discussion between the wine industry and the commission covered a span of nearly 10 years.

The 11 existing APC producers' committees, covering 13 horticultural and prescribed industries, use the act to provide various services to their industries. Some provide all the services available under the act and others undertake only specific functions. The commission supports the committees and is responsible for determining, on the recommendation of each producers' committee, the charges for the services provided by that committee. These are fee-for-service charges and are payable by producers.

Over the years, producers' committees for agricultural produce such as pork, pome and bananas have provided services as varied as conducting research into maximising the performance of pigs after weaning, contributing to the commercialisation of the Bravo-branded apple and paying compensation to Carnarvon banana growers after cyclone Olwyn. These achievements evidence the value of the act to producers and their industries, the government and the greater agricultural industry. The act has allowed and encouraged producers to undertake candid and objective assessments of their industries and put in place strategies that allow them to work together in a leadership capacity for individual and greater industry good. This has fostered grower and industry responsibility and accountability, whilst aiding government by reducing the impost on government funding.

Most of the proposed amendments are of an administrative and operational nature, with the key amendments as follows. First, the bill contains compliance and enforcement provisions, including powers to direct a person to provide information or records, powers to investigate and a penalty for providing false and misleading information. This is to ensure that producers are complying with the act and that all funds collected are used as intended, which is to support industry. Second, the bill will allow non-producers to be appointed to committees. This will give the commission the option to have a producers' committee comprising a blend of producer and non-producer members, subject to producers always being in the majority. Voting rights on committees will be restricted to producer members only. Third, the bill will provide a mechanism for existing committees to be allocated responsibility for additional produce. Fourth, the bill includes power for the commission to have weighted voting at a poll for the establishment of a committee. Weighted voting, determined according to the proportion of produce produced by a producer, will be utilised only if there is sufficient industry data available to the commission for it to make the determination and when such an approach is in the best interests of the relevant agricultural industry. Fifth, the bill will allow flexibility on the number of commission members.

These amendments will assist the commission and the producers' committees to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve improved outcomes for producers. One amendment proposed in the 2019 version of this bill was the removal of the exclusion of the broadacre cropping and grazing industries. This would have allowed those industries to be prescribed as agricultural industries under the act and to be able, should they have chosen, to take advantage of the opportunities it offers and create a producers' committee to service its industry. However, pastoralists were unable to reach consent about whether their industry wanted to access the act. As such, the bill retains the act's exclusion, with an amendment to clarify that this excludes an industry that concerns livestock enterprises generally conducted on pastoral land.

Another important amendment is the capacity for the regulations to provide for the circumstances in which a charge for services may be waived, refunded or reduced. This, in effect, is an opt-out clause, providing the ability for regulations to be made on the process for producers to opt out of paying charges or have their charges refunded or reduced. Regulations are tailor-made to suit the different requirements of each producer committee and industry. For existing committees, this new head power for regulations will allow waiver provisions to be included in the current regulations if their producers wish to have this option included. For new committees, the need for a waiver provision will be part of discussions with the commission when producers indicate an interest in establishing a committee.

The proposed amendments will improve the effectiveness of the Agricultural Produce Commission mechanism for producers currently using it and make the opportunities it provides available to producers in the broadacre cropping industries.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr P.J. Rundle**.

FAMILY COURT AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second Reading

Resumed from 2 June.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [12.34 pm]: I rise briefly on behalf of the opposition to contribute to the second reading debate on the Family Court Amendment Bill 2021. The shadow spokesperson for this legislation is in the Legislative Council and, as with all the Attorney General's bills, I suspect there will be considerable debate in the other place and further questions from the shadow, but I will put our views about this bill on record. From the outset, the opposition supports the legislation.

From a background perspective, this bill is a five-clause bill that seeks to amend the Family Court Act 1997, which deals with child and property matters for de facto relationships. The Family Court Amendment Bill seeks to mirror the amendments to the commonwealth's Family Law Act 1975 that were passed in 2018 by providing protections to victims of domestic violence during cross-examination in family law proceedings. Most notably, the bill aims to treat de facto partners in the same way as married couples by, first, prohibiting personal cross-examination in certain circumstances, such as when a family violence order exists between the parties. Under this legislation, each person will need to engage a lawyer to conduct the cross-examination of the other party. They will be able to access a lawyer by applying for legal representation under the commonwealth's Family Violence and Cross-Examination Scheme.

Second, the bill will ensure that the court puts in place appropriate protections for victims in situations in which an allegation of family violence has been made but none of the prescribed circumstances exists. Such protections will be left to the court's discretion, but the explanatory memorandum states that these can include allowing a witness to give evidence from a remote venue, allowing the victim to have a support person and ordering that questions be directed to the presiding judicial officer, who will then relay them to the witness.

The bill further amends section 243 of the Family Court Act, which imposes penalties when a person publishes information about proceedings that identify a party, their relatives or any witness to the proceedings. A new exemption has been created to mirror the commonwealth act, which will allow documents to be shared with a state or territory authority that oversees the welfare of children and will be prescribed by the regulations.

Obviously, the situation that the government is trying to remedy is concerning and distressing for those involved. Personal cross-examination can be difficult and distressing for a victim and it can cause them additional trauma. However, that cross-examination process in our courts is important because it ensures that a party's evidence is appropriately tested and it can prevent untoward circumstances, such as settlements or agreements that are not in the best interests of the children. In banning personal cross-examinations and requiring that a legal practitioner conduct cross-examinations in such circumstances, the bill seeks to provide procedural fairness and make sure that it is enhanced.

Attorney General, it is my understanding that the bill is essentially identical to the Family Court Amendment Bill 2019, which failed to progress through the fortieth Parliament. I understand that it was read a third time in the Legislative Assembly on 12 March 2020 and introduced in the Legislative Council on 17 March 2020, but was never brought on for debate. The material difference—I am happy to be corrected—between the 2019 bill and the current

bill is the inclusion of amendments to section 243. The key difference between the commonwealth act and the bill is that the commonwealth act mandates a review of the provisions dealing with the cross-examination of parties when there are allegations of family violence. We understand that the review will take place in September 2021. This bill does not contain a review provision. It is asserted in the explanatory memorandum that this is not necessary given that the commonwealth will be conducting a review. Perhaps that is something the Attorney General might like to comment on in his response.

There has been a number of reports and inquiries about this matter. The stakeholders who have been discussing it, as we would expect, raised concerns about issues of procedural fairness, particularly if one party is unrepresented following an application for a ban. The unrepresented party will not then have a chance to challenge the other party's evidence through cross-examination.

I have not had the fortune, misfortune or opportunity to experience this firsthand but certainly when we speak to those who have been through a court proceeding, particularly when talking about family issues, it is distressing at the best of times. I think from the opposition's perspective trying to make sure everyone has access to procedural fairness without re-victimising people and ensuring they are safe and secure is an admirable outcome.

As I said, questions will be asked by the shadow Attorney General in the Legislative Council. I think the forthcoming questions will be in relation to the financial viability of this scheme and whether funding is adequate so that legal representation can be guaranteed to ensure procedural fairness. I think that is an appropriate question to ask and we ask that the Attorney General perhaps shed some light on how that will be funded in an ongoing way, not just in the set-up, to ensure sustainability and that it will continue to serve its purpose.

Without any further ado, Attorney General, as I said, the opposition is supportive of the legislation. I am sure the shadow Attorney General will have more questions for the Attorney General's team and the minister representing in the Legislative Council.

Mr J.R. Quigley: You can guarantee that.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: There are not many things we can guarantee in this world but I absolutely can guarantee that. With that, I will not take the time of the house any further other than to say that it seems to be a very sensible piece of legislation. It was sad not to see it pass so that families had access to this earlier on in the piece. Unfortunately, it was not progressed in the last Parliament. There should be no reason the government cannot pass this on this occasion with the numbers it has in both houses.

DR K. STRATTON (Nedlands) [12.42 pm]: I am pleased to rise to speak in support of the Family Court Amendment Bill 2021 to ensure that perpetrators of family and domestic violence can no longer cross-examine their victims in Family Court proceedings. I think that to understand the importance of this amendment, it is important to understand the complex dynamics of family and domestic violence. While violence takes place within a range of relationships and takes many forms—physical, sexual, financial, emotional and social—it is characterised by a pattern of abusive behaviour that involves the perpetrator's exercise of control and power over his victim. Victims of domestic and family violence may sustain long-term harm to their physical, mental, social, financial and emotional wellbeing. It is now recognised that children who bear witness to family and domestic violence are themselves victims of child abuse with ongoing trauma and developmental impacts through to adulthood.

Domestic violence is gendered in nature. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, intimate partner violence is the greatest health risk factor—greater than smoking, alcohol and obesity—for women in their reproductive years. It is the top risk factor for death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44. It is also the leading cause of homelessness for women. It is also a significant contributor to women's poverty and a major reason for their involvement with the child protection system. According to one of our national leaders in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, violence against women starts with disrespect. When a violent relationship ends in a Family Court hearing where a perpetrator can cross-examine his victim, it ends also in disrespect, a disrespect that is currently institutionalised.

There are times of heightened risk for family and domestic violence to either commence or be exacerbated. Pregnancy is often a time when family and domestic violence starts. Attempted or actual separation is a high-risk time as are actual court proceedings. All of these represent a change in the dynamic of power and, therefore, see the perpetrator work to reassert their control and power over their victim. Imagine, if you will, that you have lived in a home marked by fear, violence, and intimidation. You have been socially and financially isolated and controlled. You have had criminal assaults committed against you. Imagine then that you gather the courage, resources, strength and support to leave, perhaps getting your children out with you as well. You do this despite knowing that leaving is one of the highest risk times in a violent relationship. There are fears of further and even extreme violence, poverty or homelessness if you leave. There are fears of being murdered. Given that a woman dies every single week in this country at the hands of her partner or ex-partner, this fear is very, very real.

For a brief time, I worked on the women's domestic violence helpline, and women would routinely express their deeply held knowledge and fear that separation, that leaving, was a time of great risk and that this knowledge influenced their decision-making about separation. Imagine, again, that you put that fear aside; you gather the strength

to leave; the separation proceeds; and you finally get to the point of a legal separation with decisions to be made about property and child living arrangements—decisions that will lay a foundation for your new life; your new life of safety, free from violence and abuse. It is a time of both great hope and great anxiety. The idea of being cross-examined by anyone in a formal court process is daunting. Attending court itself is intimidating and stressful and you know you are exposing yourself to risk of further harm and abuse just by being there. Imagine then that you present to court to find that your perpetrator has the right to cross-examine you. In some cases, a perpetrator may even choose to be self-represented hoping to secure the opportunity to directly cross-examine the victim and reassert their power. The Family Court system in WA currently allows your perpetrator to subject you to further violence and control.

When this amendment was introduced to Federal Family Court legislation, the ABC reported on the experience of a woman they called Eleanor, a mother of four in regional Victoria. She had escaped an abusive relationship and was going through the family court process. Her relationship was marked by repeated sexual assaults. Her husband would repeatedly rape her. She had also been kicked on a regular basis by him while he was wearing his steel-cap work boots. Eleanor's story reminds us of criminal and violent acts that survivors of family and domestic violence have been subjected to, and yet the court allowed his control over her to continue.

In Eleanor's words —

“When I turned up for the Family Court hearing, I found out on the day that he had become a self-litigant, and that he was going to be representing himself, and that he was going to be given the privilege of being able to cross-examine me directly.”

“Why would they give someone the power over their victim like that? Why would they give him the right to cross-examine me in court, knowing the trauma that I had faced?”

The man who had raped and repeatedly assaulted her, was now going to question her in a formal, legal context. She found this out on the day, so she had no time to prepare emotionally, physically or legally for this situation. I repeat Eleanor's question of disbelief: “Why would they give someone the power over their victim like that?” When a self-represented perpetrator cross-examines the victim, their power is allowed to enter the court, with a direct impact on evidentiary process and its outcomes. Their power is also allowed to continue to traumatise and diminish their victim. It is, I say again, a form of institutional abuse.

Procedural fairness in legal proceedings should mean that the court puts in place measures to ensure that witnesses can provide their evidence comfortably and without fear or intimidation. A self-represented perpetrator's cross-examination can impact the victim's capacity to give evidence. This in turn can compromise the quality and completeness of that evidence. Victims are scared about the repercussions for them and for their children after court proceedings have been finalised. The court, as a result, may not get a full picture of abuse because victims hold back on sharing all information. Self-represented litigants may also ask questions that are irrelevant to proceedings. Again, they are questions designed to antagonise and distress. The amendments will not remove the right to cross-examination of someone's testimony. However, it will improve the quality of evidence and conduct of the hearing itself. These provisions will ensure a fair hearing for all parties.

In 2015 and across 2016, Women's Legal Service Australia commissioned a survey that was undertaken by Women's Legal Service Victoria. It aimed to catalogue the experience of women—survivors and victims of domestic violence—engaging with the family law system. The survey was distributed nationally through its networks and gathered 338 responses. The survey formed its submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs' parliamentary inquiry into a better system to support and protect those affected by family violence. The survey also captured women's experiences of being personally cross-examined by their abusers in Family Court proceedings. Roughly half the survey participants had the experience of being directly cross-examined by their abuser in the family law courts. Seventy-seven per cent of those participants responded that their family law dispute had settled by way of consent orders and over half that group said that the prospect or fear of personal cross-examination by their ex-partner was a factor in their decision to settle. They outlined reasons that included fears that related to the cross-examination, including —

“The judge pointed out that cross examining me may lead to further decline of my mental condition which could halt proceeding”

“I couldn't go back in that room and face him”

“We agreed to my having custody of the children, I agreed to visitation with him, even though I was fearful [of] my safety and theirs. I knew I wouldn't abide by all the orders, but I couldn't keep going”

In another survey question, the participants were asked how significant the prospect or fear of direct cross-examination by their ex-partner was on their decision to settle prior to trial. Of the 60 women who responded, 41 women said that it was very significant. These findings indicate that the fear of direct cross-examination can directly result in consent orders that do not reflect the wishes or the consent of all parties and that can indeed endanger the safety of children and their parents.

Alongside the legal implications are the human ones. Family Court proceedings are difficult and emotive for any family. When we add family and domestic violence into the dynamic, there are additional layers and complexities of trauma, stress and fear. Being subject to direct cross-examination by their abuser is likely to re-traumatise victims, cause immense stress and be a continuation of the abuse. In the work undertaken by Women's Legal Service Victoria that I have already referenced, many women described feeling frightened, unsafe, re-traumatised and intimidated. Some also expressed having physical symptoms of stress leading up to and following the event, including panic attacks, weight and hair loss, being physically sick, insomnia and post-traumatic stress disorder. A number of participants described the process as court-sanctioned abuse; as I have already noted, it is institutional abuse. As quoted in the submission, one woman said —

"I felt as though the court was enabling my ex husband to re-abuse me but publically this time. I was so traumatised I lost 10 kilos and lost my hair."

Another woman said —

"I felt under extreme pressure, I was very anxious and I was trembling whilst I was under cross examination... I felt that the judge was unaware of the extreme stress I was under. I made mistakes when I was being cross examined because I felt so cloudy and confused."

In addition, 38 per cent of the survey participants stated that they had to cross-examine their abuser and additional themes emerged in their descriptions of this experience, including —

"I was afraid to really question him and I felt when I tried the Judge continually silenced me"

Another woman said —

"I was so scared because he has a look in his eye that still intimidates me, and I had the future safety of my child in jeopardy. I just wanted to get down on my knees and BEG the judge to allow me to protect my daughter. It's so hard to appear calm and collected on the inside when you have so much hatred for the person who has hurt you and your child, and so much fear for what lies ahead. And also fear that he might show up at your house later and become violence because he's mad at you standing up to him."

Our Watch says that to stop violence against women from happening we need to look at the bigger picture and address the four key drivers of this violence, which are: condoning violence against women; men's control of decision-making and limiting women's independence in public and private life; rigid stereotyped gender roles; and male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women. When we allow perpetrators to cross-examine their victims, we see all four of these dynamics at play. It condones violence against women by allowing it to continue in the court process and setting. It allows men's control and undue influence over processes of decision-making in a legal public formal setting, decisions that impact a victim's ability to recover and re-establish a life of safety and security for her and perhaps for her children. It represents rigid stereotyped gender roles by continuing to minimise the impact of the trauma of family and domestic violence on the victim. I think it is fair to say that allowing perpetrators to cross-examine their victims demonstrates aggression and disrespect towards women on an institutional scale.

Domestic violence is complex. Preventing and reducing violence requires strong legislation among other measures that hold perpetrators to account. We cannot provide a perpetrator with the opportunity to examine a victim in any court case. That is a simple and powerful action we can take now as a government to protect victims through the courts. We can acknowledge their courage and resilience. We can remove a layer of institutional abuse and ensure everybody's right to procedural fairness. This means, too, that we are no longer active participants in institutional abuse. People at their most vulnerable could and should expect more from us.

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston) [12.56 pm]: I also rise today to speak in support of the Family Court Amendment Bill 2021, and I wholeheartedly support the contributions from the member for Nedlands. In fact, I have crossed out nearly a page of my notes. It was very succinctly and very personally put to the chamber.

In giving members my contribution to this discussion, I would like to begin by reflecting on the reasons for the amendments to the bill, and I think that speaks a lot to the fabric of society. I would like to really reflect on what that looks like in the context of Australian history. Right across the world, in fact, we can just about pinpoint the point at which society changed and women's rights changed. I look at World War II as one of the major drivers for that change, certainly in the last century. It really allowed the evolution of women's roles in the home and in society. If we examine society prior to World War II, we see that the role of women was really about being the carer for children, doing the bulk of the housework and domestic duties, and belonging to part of a nuclear family, which was generally a husband, a wife and probably several children. The male of that nuclear family was the breadwinner for that particular home. In looking at that from a sociological perspective, we can really reflect on the gender inequality and, therefore, potential power imbalance in situations like those prior to World War II.

The advent of World War II meant that men travelled across the oceans to various fronts to fight the war on behalf of Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and other allies. For society, it meant that a lot of the men were not present and women were required to step up to perform a lot of the jobs that were normally done by

men in those very specific stereotypical roles outside the home. Some women became nurses or took military jobs such as signal-person or radio operator. In the case of my grandparents, my nanna travelled to Geelong and was involved in deciphering and communicating some of the signals that were being sent and received by Australia, and my grandfather fought in the war in New Guinea. Other women were doing what were at the time very clear gender-specific roles. They took up jobs in manufacturing industries producing uniforms, weapons and ammunition, and also stepped into agriculture through organisations like the Australian Women's Land Army, as many men left the land to fight in the war.

In America, the roles that women were stepping into were particularly reflected in professional baseball. Five hundred Major League Baseball players left the league to serve in the military in World War II, most notably Joe DiMaggio. The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League was established in 1943. It was meant to be temporary, but it actually continued for 12 years. Jean Faut, a player in the league, was asked about her participation in the league in a non-traditional role. She was quoted as replying that those years were the greatest years of her life.

After World War II, it was considered that women holding jobs were taking them from men returning from the war who needed to support their families. Women then stepped back into their traditional roles of caring for and looking after the family and the home. The postwar baby boom also signalled the fact that child-rearing was the domain of women at that time. That was often coupled with caring for husbands who had returned from the war with physical or mental disabilities—the latter being what we now refer to as post-traumatic stress disorder, as a result of what they had experienced during the war. It was a very complex time, when we look at it from the perspective of societal development.

From the 1950s to the 1970s, society progressed again, but the key change was the advent of the contraceptive pill. For the first time, women had control over their fertility and the size of their family—obviously, most of the time in consultation with their husbands—which meant that women had control over what their individual circumstances looked like.

In 1975, the Family Law Act was enacted, which established the system of no-fault divorce. From the 1980s to 2021, our society again changed in that it became more accepting of women's roles changing within the community and the family. The sharing of child-rearing responsibilities was more and more commonplace and is now probably the norm rather than the exception, which it certainly was in the early part of the last century. Sharing household chores and responsibilities is also part of what a functioning family now looks like, and it is now not uncommon for both parents to be working and sharing childcare and household responsibilities.

I ask: what does this mean for our society today? Although society has changed and adapted significantly, I would like to acknowledge that family structures have also changed over time. However, amongst all of this, there is a dark undercurrent in some family dynamics of family and domestic violence. This is certainly not a new phenomenon, but it is now more readily talked about in our society.

I refer to some research that was published in 2017, *Are we there yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equality*. It was conducted by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety in partnership with a number of universities and bodies, including RMIT University, the Social Research Centre, the University of Melbourne, the University of New South Wales and VicHealth. I took the time to have a read through it because it traces attitudes towards violence, women and gender equality from 1995, so it gives a really good snapshot of where society's values are at this point.

There are some very encouraging and positive findings in this report. It highlights that Australians have an accurate knowledge of violence against women and do not endorse this violence; that most Australians support gender equality and are more likely to support gender equality in 2017 than ever before; and that Australians are more likely than ever before to understand that violence against women involves more than just physical violence. Those are some really positive developments that I think demonstrate how society and people's attitudes have changed, even within the last 20 years.

However, I would like to highlight some of the concerning findings within the report, because I think they speak to some of the issues that relate back to the Family Court system and the things we are considering here today. There continues to be a decline in the number of Australians who understand that men are more likely than women to perpetrate domestic violence. There was actually a decrease in the number of people who recognised that that is potentially the case. That is a worrying statistic because it does not matter which report we pick up; that statistic is absolutely irrefutable.

There is also the fact that a concerning proportion of Australians believe that gender inequality is exaggerated or no longer a problem. I would like to counter that particular argument shortly. Another concerning statistic is that one in five Australians would not be bothered if a male friend told a sexist joke about women. All those things link back to the idea that gender inequality is, sadly, alive and well in Australia today.

I would like to also reflect on some information that was sourced from the Impact for Women organisation. There are some concerning statistics around family and domestic violence, even now, in 2021. In 2020, 156 men were

murdered or victims of manslaughter; that is a terrible statistic. In the same year, 62 women and 31 children or teenagers were killed. I find that a staggering statistic and I just cannot understand how, in this day and age, our society can function with those numbers. They are numbers, but they are people. The concerning statistic for me is that, of the 156 men who were killed last year, 18 were killed at the hands of their partner as a result of family and domestic violence. Of the 62 females who were killed last year, 56—or 90 per cent—were killed as a result of family and domestic violence. Of the 31 children, 20—or 65 per cent—were killed as a result of family and domestic violence. I ask everyone in the chamber to reflect on those numbers; they are a national tragedy.

I would like to reflect upon the concerning proportion of Australians who believe that gender inequality is exaggerated or no longer a problem. Women and men in many workplaces around Australia would disagree with that point of view. I look at mine sites and our own federal Parliament and I use, as an example, an occurrence in the federal Parliament on 11 November 2020 when Prime Minister Scott Morrison talked over the top of Minister Anne Rushton as she was responding to a question about what it is like to be a woman in Parliament.

I think the Me Too movement also speaks to this. It also reflects on the concerning proportion of Australians who believe that gender inequality is exaggerated or is no longer a problem. Only two weeks ago, John Coates, the Australian Olympic Committee chair, appeared to order Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk to attend the opening of the Tokyo Olympics. These are only a few examples that are in the public realm, but they demonstrate that there is still a power imbalance in workplaces. Sadly, it is still alive and well.

Notably, the ABC program *Ms Represented*, which is about women in politics, is littered with examples of gender inequality. Reflecting on the third concerning result, that one in five Australians would not be bothered if a male friend told a sexist joke about women, I am not sure what the result would be if we surveyed any workplace in Australia, but I certainly think that society still needs to make some inroads.

I would like to dig deeper into the results of this particular report. I now refer to the knowledge of violence against women. I would like to particularly highlight the understanding of sexual violence. In 1995, 76 per cent of people agreed with this statement: women are more likely to be raped by someone they know than by a stranger. Worryingly, in 2017, 64 per cent agreed with the statement that women are more likely to be raped by someone they know than by a stranger.

I now refer to “Attitudes towards gender equality” and the question about undermining women’s independence and decision-making in public life. People were asked whether they agreed with the statement, “On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.” In 2019, 23 per cent of those surveyed agreed; in 2017, the number was 14 per cent. That is certainly an improvement, but it is still an interesting fact to reflect on. A significant number of people still think that men are better placed than women to be political leaders.

I have drawn those examples from the research that indicates that we still have an issue with gender inequality in Australia. I would like to take this opportunity to link that information back to the Family Court Amendment Bill by reflecting on Family Court proceedings. There is a significant impact on the relationship between parents and children when a family is involved in court proceedings related to family and domestic violence. I would like to remind everybody that it is still, generally, women and children who are the victims of family and domestic violence. It is our role as legislators to support our community and to protect families.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms J.L. HANNS: I would like to talk very briefly about family and domestic violence in terms of the types of violence. I would like to raise some examples that I have seen from 30 years of supporting families and children in communities and schools. When I was doorknocking last year, I met a number of women who raised concerns about what was happening in Family Court proceedings, particularly the cross-examination of victims by the perpetrator. Family and domestic violence obviously develops slowly over time, as the member for Nedlands referred to. It may be physical violence, but it also takes in many other examples, such as emotional violence and financial violence. One in five Australians who were surveyed did not believe that financial control was a serious problem in family and domestic violence circumstances, yet, after listening to people tell their stories, one of the barriers to changing the situation they are in is that they cannot afford to move on or seek other accommodation or support for their family.

Coercive control is another example of family and domestic violence that people are becoming more and more aware of. Recently, I was at a supermarket. I saw a man standing at his car. Two very young children were sitting in the back seat of the car. He was yelling and agitated. I was getting out of my car, attempting to get all my shopping bags and things together. He was pacing up and down outside the car and, obviously, was very upset. His words to these very young children, as he screamed through the back window of the car, were, “She needs to effing hurry up.” I have deleted the word because I prefer not to swear in Parliament. I walked in, reasonably distracted at that time, and it was only after about two or three minutes that I heard the car engine revving to the point that everybody in the shop was wondering what was going on. I could not help but reflect on the fact that that was clearly his attempt to control what that woman was doing inside the shop. It was a non-verbal but very obvious way of saying to his partner, “You are taking up time and I do not have time to wait for you.” I reflected on that, thinking this poor woman

was probably inside the shop attempting to buy some supplies for her very young family. I decided at that point that I was going to see what I could do, but she had obviously gone through the checkout and the car had disappeared. What can we as a society do to support families in that situation? If family and domestic violence victims get to the point of going to a Family Court, we need to do whatever we can to not allow that power imbalance to be played out within the court system.

I will briefly mention a couple of examples of family and domestic violence situations that were raised with me when I was doorknocking during the election campaign. One woman explained to me that her previous partner had bashed her so badly that she was left with an acquired brain injury. She had significant health issues resulting from this acquired brain injury that prevented her from holding down ongoing employment. She said the reason she had not left her partner before she was hospitalised, and only then made the decision to leave, was that she was scared to leave the relationship, she had no money, and she was unable to care for the children and the pets of her family. She was scared about what her husband would do if she left the children and the pets in his care, so she stayed. There was an ongoing impact on her children. They had observed years of abuse and were left traumatised. One of her children had attempted suicide. Despite the fact that the family was supported after she left that relationship, they really struggled after the separation. It is very important to reflect on what this looks like for people who are in this situation.

Another woman I spoke to told me that it was easier to walk away from the violence. She was a carer for her children, and her husband was the breadwinner. She was a stay-at-home mum. When she left the relationship, she had basic skills and a basic education level. The fact that she was on lower wages was part of her challenge in leaving the family. She was left with no superannuation because the superannuation after separation basically belonged to her husband. She chose to walk away and not challenge a lot of this in court because she did not want to put herself through the trauma of what she had already been through.

In reflecting on children who are part of the family and domestic violence experience, in the classroom we often had to be aware that if we raised our voice with children, we might be modelling what was happening in their own home, and that would trigger a trauma response; or if children acted out in class and were challenged by authority, that might bring back the trauma for those children. Often in a classroom situation, and in fact right across society, when people are in a trauma situation, they either fight or flee. Over the last 30 years, I have seen children leave the classroom because they cannot continue to be there. I have had a scooter thrown at my head. Luckily, it missed. The impact of the trauma that child had experienced meant that although I had questioned that child in a humanitarian way, their response was to pick up the nearest thing to them and throw it at me. That was a very sobering experience. It makes us reflect that if that is what that child is doing in the classroom, clearly they are potentially modelling what they are seeing at home and what their family is doing in response to trauma and family and domestic violence at home.

Imagine, if you will, that you are a woman or a child who has gone to the court system to be protected from family and domestic violence and you are questioned openly in court by the perpetrator of that family and domestic violence. Having to relive that trauma must be a terrifying experience. The provisions in this bill aim to reduce trauma for victims of family and domestic violence by prohibiting cross-examination by perpetrators. That will enable witnesses to give clear evidence. I am particularly heartened by the fact that witnesses will be able to give evidence remotely, perhaps from a nearby room. The bill also provides that support people will be able to sit with the victim during their proceedings, including when giving evidence. Given the trauma that these people have experienced, that is a welcome move in this legislation.

In 2021, sadly, news headlines across Australia continue to report on family and domestic violence incidents and murders at the hands of partners and parents. The statistics are overwhelming. The victims of family and domestic violence are being murdered by people they love, not by strangers. Our role as legislators is to make laws that will protect the victims in these circumstances. Our role is also to make laws that police and the justice system are able to implement to support families in this situation. As a government, our challenge is to fund programs and provide systems to support participants in Family Court of Western Australia proceedings. Importantly, as a community we need to work together to offer support to both the victims and perpetrators of family and domestic violence, because no person is broken. If we work together, we can achieve positive change for people in our community. We all have a role to play in keeping victims safe. This law in particular will help to do so. Thank you.

MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka) [1.23 pm]: I also rise to speak on the Family Court Amendment Bill 2021. I want to thank the Attorney General for bringing this piece of legislation to the house, and acknowledge the contributions that have already been made on this very important topic. The two speakers on this bill so far talked about the background to this bill. At face value, this bill is pretty straightforward. The bill seeks to amend our state legislation to reflect the provisions that have been introduced in the federal Family Court Act to protect victims of family and domestic violence during cross-examination processes. In short, this bill will prohibit personal cross-examination between the parties to a Family Court proceeding in circumstances in which there has been an allegation of family and domestic violence. These are very sensible and relatively modest changes to our laws and reflect the changes that have been made to the federal law.

As a number of the speakers before me have reflected, these proposed changes are straightforward and, I hope, uncontroversial. They will have a number of benefits that will, importantly, provide support to victims experiencing family and domestic violence. Putting an end to victims being able to be cross-examined by their perpetrators will improve their ability to give clear and cogent evidence in legal matters. As we have already heard in the contributions to date, the prospect of a victim being cross-examined by the perpetrator might be so daunting that it leads to the victim prematurely settling their matters on terms that are less favourable to themselves and their children, if they have them, or might even actively discourage victims from seeking to separate from their partner when family violence is involved. It is important to note, as others have done, that the victims of family and domestic violence are predominantly women. It is interesting to note that a woman who is subject to family violence is three times more likely to receive a minority share of relationship assets compared with a woman who is not subject to a family violence situation. Therefore, there is a compelling case for these very sensible and necessary laws.

In making my comments today, I want to spend some time reflecting on not just these changes, but also the many things the McGowan government is doing to put in place practical and significant measures that will hopefully help bring an end to family and domestic violence in this state. Since the McGowan government was elected in 2017, a number of significant achievements have been made to progress this very important end. It is significant that the McGowan government created the first Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Hon Simone McGurk. A number of good works have been done as a result of having a minister with carriage of this area. I also want to acknowledge the work of the Attorney General, who has brought to the house not just this bill, but also a number of other pieces of legislation to provide support to victims of family and domestic violence. I also want to commend all the members of government and cabinet for the excellent work that is being done in this area.

It is important to note that the McGowan government has a 10-year plan to eliminate family and domestic violence. The document *Path to Safety: Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence* provides a long-term vision for Western Australia to be free of family and domestic violence. It sets out a clear whole-of-government and community plan that will help reduce the incidence of family and domestic violence and help the community to respond to it. The plan was adopted last year and sets out the work that will be done in this area. It is very important strategy that has been informed by data and research, and by consultation across Western Australia, working with experts from not just government, but also academia, in the family and domestic violence sector in this state. The clear message from all the work that has been done, particularly since 2017, is that if we are to bring an end to family and domestic violence, we need to work across a wide range of different areas and employ a wide range of strategies. The contributions that have already been made underline that ending family and domestic violence is not just a policing issue, a health issue or a court issue. It is also not exclusively a women's issue, although it is important to note that women are disproportionately affected by family and domestic violence. We need to work across a number of different areas. We need to employ a number of different strategies.

I think the focus of the government has been excellent. It has worked across a range of different areas. Importantly, it has worked on three main objectives, which are as follows. Firstly, we should hold perpetrators to account; secondly, we should provide appropriate support to victims; and, thirdly, and I think really significantly, we need to change community attitudes towards women and towards family violence. I note the member for Collie-Preston in her contribution spoke quite a bit about community attitudes and gender inequality. I think that is a really important part of the overall strategy.

Holding perpetrators to account has been an important part of the approach to family and domestic violence, and law reform has been necessary. Good work has been done in this area. I particularly note that non-fatal strangulation and suffocation was made a specific offence last year. There is a sound research base that shows perpetrators who use this kind of violence, or potentially lethal force, are seven times more likely to then go on to kill. There have also been excellent changes to restraining orders over time and importantly to men's programs to provide support for perpetrators to help them to change their behaviour.

Members, there have been a number of good works in the area of supporting victims, and I think this legislation will also do that. We know that it is critical to provide support for people experiencing family and domestic violence—helping them to leave violent relationships and build a new life. It is essential that we do that to provide people with the confidence to leave, because the decision to leave is often very difficult, and for good reason. We know that women are more likely to experience a serious violent occurrence when they are leaving a relationship.

I want to talk about a number of the initiatives that have been implemented by this government that provide very practical support to people experiencing family and domestic violence. In particular, I want to recognise this government's decision to implement 10 days' paid family and domestic violence leave for public sector workers, which it did shortly after winning its first term in office. This leave is becoming more common. More and more employers are recognising that it makes good sense to provide leave for people who are experiencing family and domestic violence; they recognise that this kind of violence does not stop at the front door of the workplace as someone makes their way to work and that, in fact, victims will often experience abuse or other forms of violence while they are physically in the workplace or that it impacts in a wide variety of ways on their work attendance or on their performance. Providing employees with time-off to seek assistance for any family violence matter is a really practical way to give support to employees so that they can arrange their affairs and hopefully begin a new life.

We also know that staying in work and engaged with the workforce is a key consideration for people seeking to leave a violent relationship. Family and domestic violence leave is an excellent way to ensure that victims have the opportunity to seek the support they need in their employment without risking that employment due to being absent or unable to perform their tasks. Being in employment is one of the things that helps to determine people's success in making a decision to leave a relationship. It is also an important initiative because it ensures employers are fully apprised of the circumstances their employees are dealing with so that they can provide them with the appropriate protection at work and, indeed, appropriate protection for work colleagues who might be impacted.

During my former life in the union movement, I was a keen advocate for this kind of paid family and domestic violence leave. Today I want to acknowledge the work of the Australian Services Union—the first union to secure this kind of paid leave in an arrangement with a local government employer in Victoria. The McGowan government, as the largest single employer in this state, has shown great leadership on this issue. I think it provides a very positive example to all employers in this state that it is appropriate to assist employees at this most critical time, if indeed they are experiencing it.

I also want to talk a bit about other strategies that the government has put in place to provide support for victims of family and domestic violence. The McGowan government is providing excellent support in my electorate of Mirrabooka to those who are experiencing family and domestic violence by trialling one-stop hubs. The one-stop hub in Mirrabooka is called Naala Djookan Healing Centre. Naala Djookan provides integrated, wraparound services to enable people experiencing family and domestic violence to get help sooner and to access the services they need closer to where they live. The service operates as a consortium of organisations that deliver services in Mirrabooka. It includes the City of Stirling and a range of health and mental health services, and alcohol and other drugs, legal, housing and financial counselling services. Clearly, there is a wide range of services that people might need to access at the point at which they seek to leave a violent relationship.

I want to acknowledge the consortium partners that are working collaboratively to make this pilot a success. These organisations provide a wide range of important services to many people who live in our Mirrabooka community. These services have chosen to work together and collaborate on family and domestic violence services because they also recognise that partnerships and collaboration to provide these wraparound services to victims is the best way to support people experiencing violence at home. I want to thank all those services for their ongoing work in Mirrabooka and particularly for their hard work in trying to find innovative solutions. The organisations involved are the Australian Childhood Foundation, Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation, Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services, Karla Kuliny Aboriginal Corporation, Legal Aid Commission of WA, MercyCare, Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre, Sudbury Community House Association and Wadjak Northside Aboriginal Community Corporation. Naala Djookan is an excellent example of how we can adopt new ways of thinking to address family and domestic violence in the community.

Another excellent example of practical support for victims of family and domestic violence is the changes to tenancy laws enacted in the last Parliament that make it easier for tenants who are impacted by family and domestic violence to leave. They also allow victims the opportunity to change locks and do other practical things if necessary. There is the Pets in Crisis program. The member for Collie–Preston also referred to pets as one of the things on people's minds when they are seeking to leave a relationship. This program provides practical support, again, by offering a temporary home for pets while owners seek refuge or temporary accommodation.

Finally, I turn to the question of changing community attitudes, because I think this is a really significant and important piece of work. I want to reflect on the excellent work that has been done to change community attitudes towards family and domestic violence and women generally. The excellent 16 Days in WA to Stop Violence Against Women initiative promotes community action to address violence against women and to really shine a light on the need to promote equality and respectful relationships. The campaign starts each year on 25 November, which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December. It brings together under one banner a series of community events and has significantly raised community awareness about the issue. The wearing of, and lighting up a range of key landmarks in, orange are very visible ways to show solidarity in the community about bringing an end to family and domestic violence. I think it provides an excellent opportunity for all manner of conversations in business and professional settings about what is an important community issue. The underlying success of 16 Days is that it is a very powerful way to reinforce the message that family and domestic violence is a community issue—it is an issue for us all—and demonstrating support for this important cause by all in our community is a powerful way that we can begin to make change.

In a similar way, I would like to acknowledge the work of the late Angela Hartwig and the Women's Council, as it was known. As many members in this place would know, Angela Hartwig was a lifelong campaigner for women affected by family and domestic violence. She was a powerful advocate for change and approached that task with patience and tenacity over many decades. Under her leadership, the Women's Council achieved a number of things. It commenced the tradition of a silent march and memorial service each year in November to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. I have to say that I have been profoundly moved on the occasions that I have attended that event, particularly by the personal stories from victims of family and

domestic violence that were shared. Every year, someone would share their story. Often these were very harrowing and confronting stories, and I have great admiration for those who are able to tell us a very difficult personal story in quite a public way. But it is a profound way that we can effect change.

The event also recognises those who have died as a result of family and domestic violence in the previous 12 months, with their gender, their age and where they lived being read out. I think that is also an incredibly powerful way to illustrate the reality of those who die from family and domestic violence each year. There are men and women amongst the number; they are very young and sometimes very old. Again, I think it is an important way to illustrate that it is something that impacts on us all.

During my time in my former role as secretary of UnionsWA, I felt very strongly that community leaders should stand up to be counted on this very important community issue.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: My own awareness about family and domestic violence came during my time as an organiser with the Australian Services Union some time ago, when I was responsible for organising workers in women's refuges. During this time, when family and domestic violence was not a topic that was regularly referred to in the news and was not a matter that was on people's minds particularly, it became very clear to me that the many excellent staff who worked in women's refuges did very difficult, very demanding and very complex work. They provided practical and emotional support mostly to women who were leaving violent relationships and also provided crisis counselling to women at a time when they were most vulnerable and distressed. I was particularly impressed by the workers in women's refuges. They were incredibly hardworking, skilled and dedicated to the work they did, and I still have to this day great respect and admiration for them all.

It became clear to me that the demands for their services were great in the community, and I began to get an understanding of the extent of family and domestic violence within our community. Up until this time, like many others, I had not thought about it particularly much before. I had never experienced it and was never aware that anyone in my life had experienced it, although statistics would now tell us that that is probably not the case. At that time, for too long family and domestic violence had been carried out behind closed doors in the family home mostly, and for years those who perpetrated violence were protected by the idea that what happened in the family home was a private matter and was nobody else's business. As a society and a community, we tended to turn a blind eye and remain silent. This is one of the reasons why family violence has remained entrenched for so long. I think one of the most important things we can all do as community leaders is to speak up and speak out, in particular to break the stereotypes about whom family and domestic violence affects. Rosie Batty, the campaigner I think we are all aware of, has done excellent work on making the point that family and domestic violence can affect anyone. It does not happen just to people in certain suburbs or from certain socio-economic backgrounds or people who are poor, working class or uneducated; in fact, family and domestic violence is happening in homes right across our suburbs and in our regional areas. It happens to people who are young and old and in families of all income and education levels.

When community leaders speak up about how family and domestic violence can happen to anyone and how it is unacceptable, it sends a powerful message. It normalises the experience of those who might be experiencing it. One of the things we know that acts as a disincentive for people to come forward and seek support is the idea that there must be something wrong with them if they are in a situation in which they are experiencing violence. I think speaking up gives people the courage to step forward. Community leaders can and should call out sexist behaviour that allows family and domestic violence to flourish.

In the time left to me, I want to speak briefly about one event that I am involved in that seeks to do exactly that—to enlist community leaders to speak out about family and domestic violence and to help bring it to an end. The Ride Against Domestic Violence is all about bringing together community leaders from this Parliament, the union movement, business and the community to raise money for our women's refuges, but also to raise awareness about this issue. The first Ride Against Domestic Violence was held in 2016 and was initiated by the member for Armadale and the then member for Darling Range, Hon Tony Simpson. Participants cycle from Busselton to Perth—I note that that is over 260 kilometres—over a two-day period to raise funds for refuges. Since its inception, the ride has raised considerable funds for refuges in Busselton, Bunbury, Mandurah and the Peel region, Rockingham and Armadale, as well as for other services. I know these funds are greatly valued by the services because they allow them to provide a range of supports for their clients.

I think the real power of the event comes from such a disparate group of community leaders coming together on such an important issue. As we progress over the two days, we stop along the way from Busselton to Perth to hold community events to discuss our ride and, most importantly, to talk about how family and domestic violence is never acceptable. Those who participate also hold events within their workplaces and with their friends to raise funds. The point is not just to cycle and then talk about how we did some charity ride on the weekend; the point is for those who ride to also talk about family and domestic violence, its prevalence and its cost to our community, and, importantly, to make the point that family and domestic violence is never okay and that we all have a role to play in bringing it to an end.

The ride will happen again in September, and I look forward to joining the WA Parliament team, with the member for Thornlie as our captain and the member for Armadale once again participating. I need to confess that I have not done enough training and it will probably hurt quite a lot, and it has been pretty uncomfortable training during the wettest July in living memory, but we all need to be prepared to get uncomfortable to have conversations that will make a difference on this significant issue.

I want to acknowledge Mick Buchan and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union for the administrative support they have provided to the event over the years, and Sam Buckeridge and BGC for their support for the administration of the event.

Like many members in this place, I feel strongly that we must work hard to bring an end to family and domestic violence. We all have a role to play in achieving this. We can all speak out about how family and domestic violence affects our communities and we can call out bad behaviour and sexist attitudes when we see them, and I acknowledge that many in this place have done exactly that on occasion. I commend them all for speaking out about poor behaviour and sexist attitudes when they see them, and I particularly acknowledge that, on occasions, that can be difficult when people who are part of your own team might be responsible for the poor behaviour.

Members, we need to do a great many things to bring family and domestic violence to an end. I am very proud to be part of a government that is introducing a very wideranging plan that will help to achieve an end to family and domestic violence. The work that has been done to hold perpetrators to account, to provide support to victims and, importantly, to change community attitudes will help us to shift the dial on this issue. I hope it will bring an end to family and domestic violence in the near future. This bill is an important part of a whole series of strategies and actions that are part of shifting the dial, making change and bringing an end to family and domestic violence in the Western Australian community. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to support it and to speak on it. I commend the bill to the house.

MR D.A.E. SCAIFE (Cockburn) [1.48 pm]: It is a great privilege to rise today to speak in support of the Family Court Amendment Bill 2021. It is particularly a privilege to follow the member for Mirrabooka, who has been a great advocate on the issue of stamping out family and domestic violence in both the community and the workplace. This bill is an important step forward in protecting victims of family and domestic violence, as it will effectively ban perpetrators of family and domestic violence from cross-examining their victims in family law proceedings.

As the member for Mirrabooka pointed out at the conclusion of her contribution, this bill is part of a suite of reforms that have been implemented in this state and this country over the last decade that are designed to stamp out the scourge of family and domestic violence in our communities. This reform has been a long time coming, but it is also a reform that is just one step on the path towards dealing with family and domestic violence. That reckoning with family and domestic violence has forced us to consider how we protect victims in our court system, while at the same time protecting people's right to a fair trial and ensuring that all parties in legal proceedings can be effectively represented and effectively have their day in court. I am satisfied that this bill strikes the right balance between protecting victims of family and domestic violence and ensuring the right to a fair trial.

The intention of my contribution today is to outline a little of the history behind this important reform and the breadth of support this reform has. I will give a local example of why this reform is needed and then I will conclude by discussing how this bill strikes the right balance between protecting victims and ensuring the right to a fair trial.

The last decade has been characterised by our country and our state, and, indeed much of the world, coming to grips with the scourge of family and domestic violence. I pay tribute to those many advocates and supporters of the movements that have brought us to this stage today. As the member for Mirrabooka acknowledged, Rosie Batty has been a shining light in this movement. I also pay tribute to all those involved in the Me Too movement over the last several years who have told stories of sexual harassment and sexual violence in workplaces and in our community. I acknowledge the many unions that have campaigned over the years for the protection of victims of family and domestic violence, such as provisions for family and domestic violence leave. I acknowledge, of course, Brittany Higgins, who quite bravely spoke out against the culture of sexual harassment and violence that unfortunately pervades even our own profession and workplaces in politics.

This reform has a long history. The earliest record I could find of this reform being formally supported was a report of the Productivity Commission from 2014. A number of inquiries since that time have supported this reform. After the Productivity Commission report, the Council of Australian Governments national summit on reducing violence against women and their children was held in October 2016. Coming out of that summit, the recommendation was made that a ban be placed on direct cross-examination of victims of family and domestic violence by perpetrators in family law and family violence legal proceedings. Following that summit on 7 March 2017, the commonwealth Attorney-General asked the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs to inquire into how the federal family law system could better support people who have been victims or otherwise affected by family and domestic violence. Consequent on that referral, the committee reported later in that year, in December 2017, and produced a report which is titled, *A better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence: Recommendations for an accessible, equitable and responsive family law system which*

better prioritises safety of those affected by family violence. I give my thanks to members of that committee and to the commonwealth Attorney-General for requesting and then conducting that inquiry, because it has led to a range of reforms in the family law system being implemented that protect victims of family and domestic violence.

Today we are considering one of those reforms that was recommended in that report. That inquiry received evidence from a broad range of stakeholders who supported a ban on direct cross-examination by perpetrators of family and domestic violence of their victims. Those organisations included Women’s Legal Services Australia, the Australian Capital Territory Human Rights Commission, the Family Law Council and many family and domestic violence support and advocacy services. It can be seen from this history that this reform has been thoroughly investigated. It has been subject to inquiry by a number of different bodies and it has been supported by a broad range of stakeholders. This bill does not deal with a new concept; indeed, this bill has the effect of harmonising the position in the Family Court of Western Australia with the existing position in the federal Family Court of Australia.

I have spoken before in this place about the growth of self-represented litigants in legal proceedings across the country. This growth in self-represented litigants is often bemoaned by some lawyers, but, as I have said before, and I reiterate, the reason for it is that the cost of legal representation in this country is prohibitive when it comes to retaining legal practitioners in private practice. That surge in self-represented litigants has a direct bearing on the subject of this bill that we are considering today. Indeed, the House of Representatives committee inquiry received evidence that in about 26 per cent of matters that proceeded to trial in the federal Family Court in the 2016–17 financial year, only one party had legal representation. That is more than one-quarter of cases in that jurisdiction in that year. The committee also received evidence that the figure was even higher in the Federal Circuit Court of Australia, which deals with some federal family law matters. The figure in the Federal Circuit Court was that 52 per cent of family law trials in the 2014–15 financial year involved at least one party who was unrepresented. The result of that very high proportion of self-represented litigants in the family law system is that there is a significant risk in family law matters that there will be what I will refer to as “direct cross-examination”. Direct cross-examination is when one of the parties to the litigation conducts the cross-examination of the witnesses for the other side of the litigation. In cases that are affected by family and domestic violence, which, sadly, are too many in the family law courts, the risk therefore arises that that cross-examination will be conducted by a perpetrator of family or domestic violence of their victim.

I will now give a local and a compelling example of why this reform is needed. It is an example of a situation in Western Australia in which a perpetrator of family and domestic violence cross-examined their victim in Family Court proceedings. The case I refer to is Sampson and North, and the citation is [2014] FCWA 75. Prior to descending into the circumstances of that case, I note that this case occurred prior to some other reforms in the Family Court system taking place, such as the Family Court Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Act 2013. That act prioritised protecting children from physical or psychological harm over the requirement to ensure a meaningful relationship with both parents. It repealed what were referred to as “friendly parent provisions”. These provisions essentially gave greater consideration to parents who had a positive view of facilitating the other parent’s access to the child. Those provisions had an unintended consequence in that women—it was predominantly women—who were victims of family and domestic violence were less likely to disclose that there was family and domestic violence in their relationship because they were concerned that that would lead to them being labelled an “unfriendly parent” because they were attempting to restrict their partner’s access to the child. Those provisions had the effect that victims of family and domestic violence were less likely to make very significant disclosures.

Another thing I note about that act is that it was passed by the former Barnett Liberal government. That is worth highlighting because I want to acknowledge in this place that taking action on rooting out family and domestic violence has long been a bipartisan proposition in this Parliament and indeed in Parliaments right around the country, and that should continue.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2661.]

VISITORS — MAIDA VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [2.01 pm]: Before I call for question time, on behalf of the member for Forrestfield, I welcome students and staff from Maida Vale Primary School to the Speaker’s gallery. Welcome to all the students and staff.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

HOUSING SOLUTIONS SUMMIT

379. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the housing solutions summit held on 29 July convened by Shelter WA and attended by peak housing industry representatives and community organisations.

(1) Was the minister invited to attend the summit?

- (2) Did the minister or any of his ministerial colleagues attend the housing solutions summit; and, if not, why not?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. I was in the goldfields at the time visiting regional staff and looking at regional public properties. A departmental staff member was at the summit.

HOUSING SOLUTIONS SUMMIT

380. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Housing:

I have a supplementary question. If everything is on the table to address the housing crisis, why did the minister think the summit was not important enough to attend?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

There are two things. First, I am a very open and accessible minister. I have met with a large number of stakeholders, including Shelter WA on two occasions. I want to address this issue because the member for North West Central seems to be such a keen proponent for Shelter WA and some of its proposals. As I have said on the public record very clearly, there is a nuanced and complex approach to delivering public housing. It is not as simplistic as some advocacy groups suggest, including the suggestions for the member for North West Central's electorate, and I will give an example. Shelter WA is on the public record with the suggestion that using vacant suburban land in Carnarvon, I should build 157 one-bedroom units. That seems great, but actually there is complexity to the equation for these simple reasons. Firstly, there is no demand for 157 one-bedroom units; in fact, what we need in many regions is culturally appropriate accommodation. Secondly, we have to think about, as I have flagged before, the complexities of high-density social precincts and suburbs. I would be interested in the member for North West Central's approach and attitude and what nearby households may think when potential antisocial behaviour develops as a result of a Shelter WA proposal to put 157 one-bedroom units in a small suburb or precinct of Carnarvon. Does the member for North West Central support that measure?

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Do you support that measure, member?

Several members interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: We hear from this member, who is so simplistic in his analysis. He has been to the Barnaby Joyce school of media training—say whatever and do whatever to get a headline. We saw it on the Pindan issue, when he said, “Terminate the contract and put at risk 90 jobs in the regions.”

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: That was your advocacy! I have to say this: members in the member for North West Central's community have thanked me personally for taking a prudent approach to Pindan and securing 90 jobs, including jobs in the member's electorate. The member may not care about that. He may be after a headline in his reckless approach, but I am very clear that on both our housing and homelessness strategies and in dealing with those sorts of issues, this government has got it right.

HEALTH SERVICES — REGIONS

381. Ms D.G. D'ANNA to the Premier:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's significant investment in health services throughout regional Western Australia.

- (1) Can the Premier advise the house how the McGowan Labor government is expanding the capacity of health services in regional Western Australia and outline how these services will assist vulnerable and disadvantaged patients to access high-quality healthcare services?
- (2) Can the Premier advise the house whether he is aware of any threats to regional people's health?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1) I thank the member for Kimberley for the question and all her advocacy for her electorate. On Sunday, we announced a \$1.9 billion boost to health and mental health spending in the coming budget and we also confirmed massive improvements in capital works for hospitals and health services around Western Australia. This will be hundreds of additional beds, hundreds of extra nurses and at least 100 extra doctors, as well as a significant investment in mental health. We will make sure that the regions receive their fair share as well, particularly to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged patients.

Just to name a few of the services that will be improved, expanded or created as part of this, we have allocated \$2.8 million to expand women's community health services in the Kimberley; \$15.7 million to begin construction of the new consolidated health service in Meekatharra; \$10.9 million for the Royal Flying Doctor Service to refurbish and replace aircraft engines on some of its aircraft; \$1.8 million to employ a permanent GP for cervical cancer at the Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre; \$2.2 million to establish

a women's community health service in the Peel region; \$17.6 million towards social and emotional wellbeing services for Aboriginal people in regional WA; \$14.8 million for a step-up, step-down mental health facility in South Hedland; and \$19.7 million to expand the eligibility of the patient assisted travel scheme for patient support escorts and others, as well as for maternity patients all over regional WA. All that is on top of the rebuilds or new hospitals in Newman, Tom Price, Laverton, Geraldton, Bunbury, Peel and other places around regional WA. That is a massive investment in regional health as part of the upcoming state budget.

- (2) In terms of threats to the health of Western Australians, I know that regional people in particular, and Aboriginal people most especially, are very vulnerable to pandemics, as was shown 100 years ago with the Spanish flu. Aboriginal people and regional people in Western Australia are vulnerable to the COVID pandemic. I am very pleased that the Prime Minister has supported Western Australia in its latest fight with Mr Clive Palmer and his efforts to undermine the vaccination program in Western Australia. The Prime Minister has backed us, and, of course, regional people are very vulnerable to what Mr Palmer is saying, in particular Aboriginal people. It is actually deranged, insane and dangerous what Mr Palmer is doing. He has picked Western Australia to challenge our vaccination program. He is a Queenslander with limited interest in this state and he has decided to challenge our vaccination program here with a view to stopping the rollout in Western Australia. It is a deranged approach. If he is successful in any way—even in an injunction to delay the rollout—it would be very damaging to the health of all Western Australians. I urge him now to stop.

PUBLIC HOUSING — HOMELESSNESS

382. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Housing:

Before I commence my question, I welcome into the gallery today Tania Hansen and her mother, Patsy. Tania and her five children are facing eviction from a private rental next week and they have nowhere to go. I also welcome Michelle and Jodie Garlett, the sisters of Alana Garlett who tragically died homeless in Perth in June. I offer my sincere condolences to Michelle and Jodie and their family.

I refer to estimates by Shelter WA that over 9 000 Western Australians will experience homelessness each night and the tragic death of 56 of these people this year.

- (1) Why has this government sold more than 1 300 public houses since 2017?
 (2) Is the minister aware that WA has the worst record in the nation for public housing stock?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for his question. Public housing is a key priority for this government, and we are making a serious commitment with nearly \$1 billion in both social housing refurbishment and new building of public homes, and also homelessness initiatives. Only last week, we saw announcements relating to two initiatives. The first was the medical respite centre, which is about addressing that particular gap of rough sleepers coming out of the hospital system. That is only, I must declare, a few minutes from my home. The second, which I am very proud of, is the 100-bed facility within the city operated by an Aboriginal-controlled organisation that is about providing that transitional approach, that first stop, to help get rough sleepers off our streets. We invest nearly \$100 million a year in homelessness programs, shaped around the Housing First approach. That is an approach we did not see in the ad hoc nature of the previous government. We are seeing a very strategic evidence-based approach that is about ending rough sleeping. I also want to put this on the record and I have been very clear before: we have made some difficult decisions regarding the nature of public housing. We do not want to see high concentrations of public housing that can have impacts on social behaviour. Some tough decisions were made; for example, we lost 300 public houses as a result of our decisions, but they were the right decisions. Now we have a very clear program in place and nearly \$1 billion in investment in social housing, public housing and homelessness initiatives.

PUBLIC HOUSING — HOMELESSNESS

383. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Housing:

I have a supplementary question. Given this issue has now reached crisis proportions, has the government asked the Treasurer and Premier for a rescue package to deliver the 3 500 new properties required to deal with this crisis and the services that are needed to support people back into safe and secure housing?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Environment, you should not be interjecting whilst a question is being asked. Minister for Water, you should not be interjecting while the Speaker is speaking.

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

I find it fascinating how the Liberals and Nationals WA rewrite history on this matter. First of all, there should be a Liberal Facebook page or website that says “Liberals who claim stuff that Labor’s done”. I love the way that they claim housing increases that were practically funded by the huge social investment made by the Labor Kevin Rudd government. It is a bit like the Libs when they were making claims about hard borders. Do members remember

before the election when they were claiming they were all in favour of hard borders? Never heard from them; never saw from them. Suddenly, they were claiming the huge social housing gains that were delivered as a result of a Kevin Rudd budget!

Also, let us talk about waiting lists. Let us talk about the Liberal–National government’s record on waiting lists. The member for Cottesloe calls a 17 000-person waiting list a crisis. Here is a magic number—24 136. Can the member tell me why that number is important?

Dr D.J. Honey: What are you doing?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Member, can you tell me why that number is important?

Dr D.J. Honey: What are you doing as minister?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Can you tell me why this number is important? It is because that is your record in 2010. The peak—that is your record. If you are claiming that we are facing a crisis now, what was it when 24 000 people were on the waiting list?

Dr D.J. Honey: What are you doing now?

Mr J.N. CAREY: The answer is silence—absolute silence. You are rewriting history when the facts clearly show that the greatest housing waiting list was under a Liberal coalition government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: We will just wait for order again.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

384. Mr M.J. FOLKARD to the Minister for Health:

On behalf of the member for Swan Hills, I welcome the students from Eastern Hills Senior High School.

I refer to the McGowan government’s record investment in mental health services across Western Australia. Can the minister outline to the house how this unprecedented investment will help avoid hospitalisations and ensure that more Western Australians can access appropriate care closer to where they live?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question and I acknowledge his long advocacy for mental health issues. I wish him all the very best for his PTSD Research Foundation, which is doing great work on behalf of the people of the community.

This morning I joined the Minister for Mental Health, Hon Stephen Dawson, at what will be our new community care unit in Orelia, located in the heart of the centre of the universe—Kwinana. This is a \$24.5 million 20-bed service funded under the WA recovery plan, which is a great example of the significant investments the McGowan government is making as we come out of the COVID-19 experience. This is all part of the \$1.1 billion record investment in mental health as a part of the 2021–22 mental health budget—an 11 per cent increase on the previous budget of 2020–21. We are delivering a \$495 million additional investment for statewide mental health, alcohol and other drug services. This includes a \$311 million boost to contemporary community accommodation supports. This is about addressing critical gaps in our mental health services.

As I was saying at the press conference this morning, many of the solutions with our hospital services lie in strong community mental health services so that patients can transition out of the public hospital system into appropriate care environments as residents, so that they can get on the road to recovery in a more appropriate setting for their healing pathways. This service funding includes \$27.7 million for youth long-term housing and psychosocial support, plus in-reach support packages to assist young people to live in the community while accessing mental health and AOD supports; \$25.4 million for a step-up, step-down facility that provides a community mental health service and short-term residential support; as well as \$12.5 million for a purpose-built 20-bed alcohol and other drug withdrawal rehabilitation facility in the Perth metropolitan area.

These important investments are being made to ensure that we can continue to have services available for those who are suffering from mental ill-health. It does not stop there. We also have a \$24.6 million investment in new mental health emergency centres at the Rockingham and Armadale hospitals. That is an important investment for making sure that when people come to an ED in a distressed state, they have an appropriate environment in which to be cared for. We will also invest \$31.7 million in expanding WA’s eating disorder treatment services to include central hubs and clinical and community spokes.

The \$495 million investment is part of our \$1.9 billion boost to health and mental health funding. It is such an important effort as part of making sure that in this period of the COVID-related spike in hospital demand, we are providing the resources needed to supply our doctors and nurses with the resources they need to care for those who come to their hospitals. It is also part of making sure that we have great mental health services in the community so that we can care for people and get them on their healing pathways. I think the Minister for Mental Health has done a great job advocating for this funding, and we should be very proud of the investments the McGowan Labor government is making in mental health.

PUBLIC HOUSING — CITY OF GREATER GERALDTON

385. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the 130 public houses that are boarded up across the City of Greater Geraldton, including homes that are less than five years old, and reports of more than 950 people in the midwest and Gascoyne on the public housing waitlist. Given the desperate need for public housing in Geraldton, why are there so many houses boarded up and disused?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

I want to thank the member for his question, but it demonstrates the opposition's lack of understanding of the challenges and complexities of public housing in Western Australia. I actually went out to Geraldton and met the mayor—the robust mayor! I think that is a fair description! Even the opposition is agreeing with me on that one! I went out to Spalding because we are aware of the difficulties in that suburb. This is, unfortunately, the reality, and this is what I have been talking about. Firstly—I have said this on the public record, and I think I am the first housing minister to do so—everyone supports public housing unless it is built next to them, behind them, in front of them or within a kilometre of them. Part of the challenge is that we get resistance wherever we build public housing. Politicians know that, because we get the emails and the calls.

Where there is existing high-density public social housing, it is actually difficult to get tenants in. Some of the boarded, vacant properties in Geraldton were actually available to tenants on the waiting list, but they did not want to take them up. That is the sad reality we face—that there are particular suburbs, streets or precincts where tenants do not want to live in public housing, so they are boarded up until decisions can be made about them.

This is the problem, member for Cottesloe: we do have increased demand for public housing, and as the minister responsible for public housing, there are difficult choices to be made. Do we refurbish those properties and bring them back into the system but then face the possibility that there is no demand; or do we make the difficult choice, even though it involves short-term pain, of demolishing those homes or selling them back to the market so that we can start to de-densify some of those suburbs? These are the complexities of public housing, and Spalding in Geraldton is one example of that.

I want to assure the Parliament that I am looking at a program for Spalding that will help bring those public houses back online, but on the basis that we also renew the suburb and make it a more attractive place for people to live. That will require cooperation between the state government and the local government because ultimately, lighting, footpaths, parks and bus shelters are not the responsibility of the state. However, I want to work with the City of Greater Geraldton, the robust, effervescent mayor and, of course, the local member for Geraldton, who has made her position very clear. I want to see a renewal program in place that will deliver on those outcomes.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Police!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe, before you ask your supplementary question, the reason we have this disorder is that ahead of you asking your question, the Minister for Police decided to gratuitously interject. We will not be able to continue question time if people are going to interject every time the Leader of the Liberal Party rises. Leader of the Liberal Party, with a single supplementary question.

PUBLIC HOUSING — CITY OF GREATER GERALDTON

386. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Housing:

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will definitely ask a supplementary question.

Is it the minister's position that all 130 homes that are boarded up in Geraldton are not wanted; or is it also the case that the minister's maintenance budget for those homes is simply inadequate?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

No. Did I make that claim just then? I do not think I did. I find that extraordinary. The reality is that we have made significant investments. In fact, as part of our economic recovery program, we are investing \$319 million specifically for the social refurbishment of ageing stock. I have to say, the other challenge we faced was the collapse of Pindan Group. It was this government's prudent approach, despite the reckless calls for termination by the Nationals WA in opposition, that saw the continuation of maintenance of priority one and two jobs. Because we stayed the course and because we were not reckless, we were able to maintain that maintenance contract, which will now ensure that further refurbishment works can be undertaken.

I am very confident about the future of Spalding. I am going to work with the City of Greater Geraldton on this matter. I want to make it an attractive place to live, but again, there is no point refurbishing homes if they are not in an attractive place to live. That is the difficulty we face with Spalding. We have to face some misconceptions about that suburb, but I am confident that we, along with the City of Greater Geraldton, can deliver good outcomes.

SPORTING FACILITIES

387. Dr J. KRISHNAN to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to ensuring that local community sporting organisations have access to high-quality facilities. Can the minister update the house on the significant investment being made by this government into community sporting infrastructure and outline how this will support local jobs; and can the minister outline to the house what this investment means for organisations such as Corinthian Park Tennis Club?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

I thank the member for Riverton for his question and commend his advocacy for his local community. It is great to have a doctor of medicine representing Riverton rather than a doctor of economics whose hero is Milton Friedman!

The McGowan government has a very proud record of investment in the area of community sporting infrastructure. At the last election we made more than 326 commitments to local sporting facilities and an additional 36 major commitments in the sport and recreation area, to the tune of \$110 million. Of course, that is going to be of major benefit to local communities. In addition, there is \$10 million over the next four years for the club night lights program, which will be of great benefit to local government facilities and will allow more people to utilise sporting club facilities at night time. We have also made a commitment of at least \$4 million over this term of government to facilitate the construction of female change rooms. As we know, female participation in many sports is increasing exponentially, so that is a great initiative.

That is all in addition to the annual \$12.5 million through the community sporting and recreation facilities fund that is provided for sporting and recreational infrastructure. The member asked me about Corinthian Park Tennis Club, which is a very strong tennis club in his electorate. It received an election commitment of \$160 000 to convert two of its grass tennis courts to gel surface hard courts, which, of course, saves water and maintenance. The club received that money, as the member would very well know. In addition, it received \$140 000 through the community sporting and recreation facilities fund to reconstruct its existing set of hardcourts to the same gel surface hardcourts.

I believe that the club actually wrote to the member for Riverton expressing its sincere gratitude for the election commitment grant, which had been executed and paid to the club. I should also let the house know that the grant will also allow the club to upgrade its lighting to LED standard, which will improve lighting and of course will lower operating costs and allow for greater use of facilities at night-time.

The member for Riverton may remember that last week the member for Cottesloe asked the Minister for Local Government a question about Corinthian Park Tennis Club. I make two points about that. Firstly, the member for Cottesloe should be very careful about whom he speaks to in obtaining his facts. He may have had a coffee meeting with a former opponent of his. I am not sure, but maybe that was the case! Secondly, I was really quite confused when the member for Cottesloe asked the Minister for Local Government a question. Only last month, I toured the member for Cottesloe's electorate with him to look at a number of sporting facilities that are looking for local commitments to be delivered out of my portfolio. I am wondering why the member for Cottesloe would ask the Minister for Local Government a question that he clearly knows is within my portfolio. I spent half a morning—I know; I am very brave!—with the member for Cottesloe in his electorate looking at a number of facilities.

Several members interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Did I get lost?

Before the member for Cottesloe asks his next question, to any minister, he should make sure that he asks the correct minister, if he wishes to get an answer, although I should end by saying that the Minister for Local Government did answer the question superbly!

WORKER ACCOMMODATION — REGIONS

388. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the dire shortage of workers' accommodation in towns in the north of the state, leaving business owners so desperate that they are resorting to hosting workers in their own homes and local governments are forced to deliver their own solutions to fix the mess.

- (1) Given it has been five months since the election commitment to accelerate the process to facilitate new workers' accommodation facilities in Exmouth and Kalbarri, has the minister commenced the expression-of-interest process for local builders?
- (2) Will the minister give Broome business owners a commitment to address the dire shortage of workers' accommodation in the community?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. I am acutely aware of the housing pressures across Western Australia. We have said that on the public record. But also we have introduced a range of measures for both the

metro area and the regions. Of course we broadly know this and the statistics do not lie: there have been 27 000 building approvals in the last financial year. That is an increase of more than 80 per cent. That is extraordinary and is the result of a very deliberate policy by the state government, in combination with the federal government, to provide an incentive to boost industry. Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre has clearly said—not the state—that there will be 10 000 more rentals coming on across Western Australia. That will provide rental relief across all markets.

The building approval success has not been confined just to the metro area. In fact, across regional Western Australia we have seen increases of 190 per cent. But we are not resting there. We have also sought to get more land onto the market, because it is not just about housing supply, it is also about land supply. The Minister for Lands in our first term introduced a \$116 million regional investment fund. There are currently about 700 discounted lots on the market.

I, along with the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Planning, met, for example, with the regional council alliance to look at other opportunities, working with local government or through our agencies, to look at what other land is available for potential redevelopment. I want to say this: Nationals WA members hold their heads high on workers' accommodation, but we only have to remember Osprey and the inquiry that found that that whole project was \$95 million more than was estimated or put forward in the first case. What an extraordinary situation. This is their history of financial management. This is their history of delivery. I will not be lectured by the member for North West Central. We have very clearly developed and delivered a robust strategy that is fuelling a large number of houses in both metro and regional areas.

WORKER ACCOMMODATION — REGIONS

389. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Housing:

I have a supplementary question. The Shire of Exmouth had already identified a suitable piece of land in February. It has started the process of a scheme amendment. It has been five months now. Is this a failed election commitment that was made to the people of Exmouth?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo and Minister for Environment!

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

It is the same seriousness that the member for North West Central showed to Pindan staff! He showed real, genuine concern there! He was more interested in cheap headlines! That is you—the member for cheap headlines! That is what you will be remembered for. You put 90 jobs in the regions at risk. That is your legacy, member. That is what you will be remembered for.

GASCOYNE WATER CO-OPERATIVE

390. Mr K.J.J. MICHEL to the Minister for Water:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's strong commitment to supporting food production workers and businesses in Western Australia's horticultural industry. Can the minister outline what the new water supply agreement with the Gascoyne Water Co-operative will mean for growers in the region and how this will support sustainable growth of food production in the Gascoyne?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for the question and I thank him for his representation on many issues relating to regional WA, least of which is water, which is what today's question is about. The Gascoyne Water Co-op is obviously very important to the growers in the Carnarvon region. It transferred from government ownership to the private sector and became a private business in 2001. As part of that transfer, it negotiated a 10-year water supply agreement with the Water Corporation. Like most other businesses, that was based on the growers paying the true cost for the provision of that water. That agreement expired in 2013. Unfortunately, the previous government could not get its act together to negotiate a new water supply agreement for the co-op through the Water Corporation. From 2013, up until we came to government, growers faced a great deal of uncertainty. Obviously, for those people who are in the horticulture business, their water supply is the most important asset. The growers endured quite a difficult position in that they did not know what their future would be. They could not plan for the future. One of the things we wanted to do when we came to government was establish a new long-term agreement for the growers in the Carnarvon region so that they could plan and grow their businesses. I am pleased to advise the house that we have, in fact, signed a new five-year agreement with the Gascoyne Water Co-op for new water pricing, which will again establish cost reflectivity for water. It will be phased in over the next five years and includes a whole lot of other packages that will improve business for the Gascoyne Water Co-Operative. Additional land will be made available through the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, and I want to congratulate the Minister for Agriculture and Food for the work that she has done on this agreement. There will also be improved infrastructure for the growers.

It really is a good deal for the growers in Carnarvon. I want to quote from one of the co-op's directors, Tom Day, who gave an interview on 9 August in which he described the new agreement as welcome and very positive, and said it gave certainty to the growers. He urged everybody to get behind the agreement and not muck it up. After a long period of uncertainty created by the previous government, they can now go forward with confidence.

Of course with the reference to not mucking it up, there are some people who have been agitating against the agreement.

Mr D.T. Punch: Who's that?

Mr D.J. KELLY: The member for North West Central, who prior to the election, having failed under the previous government to deal with this issue, was out there attacking members of the co-op who were negotiating in good faith with the government and undermining the process and making promises that he knew he would never have to keep because they were never going to win the election. He is still out there undermining the good work of the co-op to get this business back onto a secure footing.

We know the member for North West Central is good at undermining and attacking people, because we see what he does in his own team. We know how good he is. We know he is a fan of Barnaby Joyce. We know he does not like his own leader. We know he does not like his own deputy leader. He is a great force of destruction. While for me a new member for North West Central at the election would have been immensely welcome, in some ways I am glad to have the member for North West Central back in the Parliament, because we know he is not only a destructive force in the community, he is a destructive force on the opposition benches.

FIRST NATIONS HOMELESSNESS PROJECT

391. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the First Nations Homelessness Project, a program that has saved hundreds of Aboriginal families from eviction and kept more than 1 500 children off the street.

- (1) Is it true that the minister told Jennifer Kaeshagen, the founder of the project, that there are no available funds from the state government to support this project?
- (2) Will the minister reconsider this and work with the project to find just \$50 000 a year from the government's \$5 billion surplus to allow it to keep offering this vital and proven service?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

- (1)–(2) Madam Speaker, I am happy to take this question. I did meet with representatives from the First Nations Homelessness Project. This is a project that had been funded under the federal government, to my recollection with \$1 million a year for four years, to assist families who are at risk of eviction. Although it is important to note that it is not an Aboriginal-controlled organisation, it has a strong relationship with many Aboriginal families, and credit to it for its work on the ground, and particularly to Jennifer. I have met with her a number of times and I know that she does good work.

However, the state government currently, through the Minister for Housing's area of responsibility, has the Thrive program. That is \$11 million a year given to support families or tenants in public housing who are at risk of losing their tenancies by helping them to maintain their tenancies and overcome the issues that they are confronting—\$11 million a year. It is a \$58 million contract that has been given to a range of different organisations around the state to do that work. To my knowledge, the First Nations Homelessness Project has never applied for funding in any of those tender processes. It had an opportunity to apply through the Thrive tender process and elected not to do so.

When the federal government funds an organisation, and then when that money runs out, all of a sudden the opposition wakes up and says that the state government should be funding this organisation, because the federal government has decided to withdraw its funding. It is staggering. We cannot pick up the tab every time the federal government decides to withdraw funding from a pet project that it had decided to fund. All of a sudden, the federal government is saying to the state government, "This is a housing issue; you should fund this project." We spend \$11 million a year to support tenancies. I think that is a good contribution.

While I am on my feet, member, I did want to address the issue that was raised yesterday in a question in this place and that has since been reported in *The West Australian*—namely, the member's question about whether there are 100 pregnant women, as the member claimed, in the south west who are believed to be without a fixed address and perhaps facing homelessness. I asked the member in the answer to that question what her source of information was, and the member did not answer that in her supplementary. When I was reading the article in *The West Australian*, I was interested to see that it seems that one of the sources of the information in this article is a representative from the Australind Lions Club, which develops care packs for people struggling to find accommodation. All credit to it. I am sure it does good work. I respect that work. That is good work. But it is not a paid service provider that would understand the extent of homelessness and who is at risk of homelessness.

Interestingly, the other source of information is actually Gerry Georgatos from the First Nations Homelessness Project, also an organisation that does not receive funding from our government and is not a service provider that has access to any reliable data. I would be interested to know from where the member gets her information. If you want to be the Leader of the Opposition, and if you want to be credible in asking for information about sensitive issues, can I ask where you got that information from, and whether in fact it is from any paid service provider or from any reliable piece of data.

This government is investing in this area. Yesterday was census night. We encourage people to participate in the census, and I met with some staff employed by the census providers to go out and work with homeless people. We are funding new data collection in Bunbury and Geraldton, in the metropolitan area, and in a number of regional centres to make sure we have reliable information, not rumour and speculation on which to base some sort of hysterical claims.

The SPEAKER: Just before I give the supplementary, it is not open for the person asking the question to respond to matters in a supplementary; all they are able to do is ask the supplementary question. But I note that we will be having a debate on this issue later in private members' time, so you might get a response to the questions if directed then, minister. Leader of the Opposition, with a supplementary.

FIRST NATIONS HOMELESSNESS PROJECT

392. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Community Services:

Minister, can I draw you back to the question, which relates to the First Nations Homelessness Project asking for just \$50 000 a year. Can I take it that the minister would rather play politics and blame games, rather than listen to experts like Dr Fiona Stanley and Dr Betsy Buchanan, and other providers, by refusing to fund this proven and successful program?

Several members interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just answer the question. You are refusing to fund it.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! A number of people have interjected. I am assuming they are trying to assist in answering the supplementary. The minister is more than capable of answering the supplementary, so I would ask that people do not do that during a supplementary question. We want a short, sharp supplementary. I want it heard in silence so that we can get a response from the minister, who is more than capable of answering adequately.

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

Madam Speaker, we fund \$11 million through the Thrive program. We fund additional money in the child protection area for families whose children are at risk of coming into the child protection system, including to a number of Aboriginal-controlled organisations—about \$30 million. Last week, we opened the 100-bed Wellington Street facility, which will be run by two Aboriginal-controlled organisations and targeted at people who are street present, homeless now and needing assistance. We also announced last week the local government co-contribution fund of \$6 million. The Minister for Health and I were at the launch of the recovery centre for people experiencing homelessness or have been in emergency departments and need somewhere to recover and be able to link in with services. We made a range of different announcements during Homelessness Week. We are doing important work, not only with new funding into homelessness, but also into reforming the existing system.

I am committed to working with Aboriginal-controlled organisations to make sure that we can get better outcomes for Aboriginal people, and I will continue to do that.

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

393. Ms C.M. COLLINS to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to reducing the impact of plastic waste and litter on our environment by fast-tracking WA's plan for plastics. Can the minister advise the house on how Western Australia's record on reducing plastic waste compares with the rest of the country?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I thank the member for Hillarys for her question and her local advocacy for the environment. Single-use plastics are a scourge on the environment, without doubt. If it cannot be re-used or recycled, it should not be made. That is the view of the McGowan government and why I have sought to build on the work of my predecessor in this portfolio, Hon Stephen Dawson, who launched a very broad-ranging and ambitious ban on single-use plastics late last year. Shortly after the election result, we sought to fast-track that plan, which means that Western Australia will be banning a broader range of single-use plastics earlier than other states.

Single-use plastics like straws, cups, plates and bowls end up in our oceans and do immense damage to marine life. They end up in riverways as litter. It costs millions of dollars for clean-up, restoration and repair. Volunteers are out all the time cleaning up our riverways, picking up people's rubbish. We want to take single-use plastics out of the waste stream.

The first stage of the ban will be implemented at the end of this year via regulations; that is, bowls, cups, cutlery, straws, thick plastic bags, polystyrene food containers and helium balloon releases will all be banned. We are not interested in using a big stick; we want to work in particular with small businesses and retailers that might find this challenging. We are going to embark on a range of education programs. For the first six months, there will be no enforcement. We will take the same approach that we took to the single-use plastic bag ban, which we saw, in the end, was exceptionally well received by the community. It is now just part of people's trip to the shops to bring their own bags. I feel really confident that WA will be ready to do this.

The second stage of the plan, which will come into force at the end of 2022—so in 18 months—will include plastic produce bags, cotton buds with plastic shafts, polystyrene packaging, microbeads and oxo-degradable plastic and takeaway coffee cups and lids. Most of the takeaway coffee cups that people use are not recyclable or biodegradable, but there are biodegradable alternatives available for people to use now. We are encouraging people to make that change or buy a keep cup. Again, we will take the same approach around education and compliance. This will make WA a leader in this field. According to WWF Australia, WA outstrips any other state on banning single-use plastics.

This builds on the work that we are doing with the container deposit scheme, which has now seen over 360 million containers recycled and \$2 million returned to community groups and charities. This government is committed to cleaning up our environment and has a strong track record on recycling. If it is not recyclable or re-usable, it should not be made!

The SPEAKER: The member for North West Central with the last question.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY — KALBARRI

394. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the series of power outages yesterday—I believe five in total; one from 9.30 am to 1.00 pm—adding to the pain and suffering of Kalbarri residents with continuing unreliable power to the community. What is the minister doing to ensure reliable power supply for the community, which has already suffered so much?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

I am very pleased to answer the question. I want to say to the residents of Kalbarri that I understand the frustration of being without power. Modern society is based on the use of electricity and we understand that when people are without electricity, it makes it hard for them. Unfortunately at the moment, there is a long feeder that serves the community; therefore, weather disturbances have a big impact on it. That is unfortunate. It is about the fact that those people are served by such a long feeder.

One of the reasons that people are experiencing a larger number of outages than we would like is climate change. I hope that the Nationals WA will support the Western Australian Labor government, under the leadership of the Premier, in our work to try to reduce carbon emissions in Western Australia. We hope that the National Party will demand that the federal government supports those actions and supports setting a zero target for emissions in Australia for 2050.

In the meantime, although we need this action from the commonwealth government to take genuine action on climate change, we are not letting the people of Kalbarri stand idle. I want to acknowledge that the majority of Kalbarri residents voted Labor at the last election. I want to make the point to them: even if you did not vote Labor, I am not going to leave you alone. We are spending nearly \$7 million on building a new microgrid. It is unfortunate that for a range of reasons the microgrid was not ready before cyclone Seroja hit. Therefore, we allocated all our resources to reconnecting the traditional network in Kalbarri. I want to congratulate Western Power and its workforce for completing that incredibly difficult task in record time. I remind people that in Victoria, after the floods there, there are still people without power. In Western Australia, we renewed a grid the size of Tasmania using our state-owned enterprise.

We look forward to the microgrid being ready. That will allow greater resilience. It will mean that there is power on the other side of the long line, so if the long line is disturbed, the microgrid will come into action and supply the people of Kalbarri. I apologise again to the people in Kalbarri that for a range of reasons—not the least being that when the former government announced the microgrid, it actually did not contract anybody to build it—it has been delayed, including by the impacts of cyclone Seroja.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY — KALBARRI

395. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Energy:

I have a supplementary question. Given this microgrid was due for completion in 2019, will it solve Kalbarri's woes when it comes to not having reliable power?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

It is physically impossible to provide 100 per cent reliable power. That is physically impossible. There is no community anywhere in the world that gets 100 per cent reliable power. But the microgrid will be a significant improvement. I will explain the reason for that. If we think about the physics here, we have the power stations

around Collie and the electrons have to travel through the high-voltage system, through the medium-voltage system and through the low-voltage system—it is literally thousands of kilometres—and any break in the system prior to Kalbarri means that there will be a disturbance and people will lose their power. The whole idea of the microgrid is to keep energy on the other side of that long line, in the community in Kalbarri, so when the line goes down, the microgrid will be able to provide power. It is expected that there will be a very, very significant improvement in the performance of the Western Power network in Kalbarri when the microgrid is fully implemented.

I acknowledge that there was a delay in the completion of the project because one of the contractors engaged by this government went into receivership and we had to select a new technical provider to complete the project. The project is engineering complete. It was being tested immediately before cyclone Seroja hit. It would have been fully implemented now if it were not for cyclone Seroja. But, naturally, we applied all our effort to the recovery work first before we went back to work on completion of the microgrid. I cannot guarantee that people in Kalbarri will have 100 per cent reliability, because nobody can have that. I will say that there will be a significant improvement in performance for people in Kalbarri and I thank them for showing such strong support by the majority voting Labor at the election.

The SPEAKER: Members, that concludes question time.

FAMILY COURT AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR D.A.E. SCAIFE (Cockburn) [2.59 pm]: Prior to question time, I was reflecting on a local example of the need for the reform that is in this bill, being the case of Sampson v North. These proceedings in the Family Court of Western Australia were in relation to the custody of children aged four and two, who were living at the time with the mother. The father sought shared care of the children, while the mother was seeking sole custody.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, just hold on two secs. If members want to have a conversation, please either quieten it down or take it outside.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

The mother was seeking sole parental responsibility, amongst other orders. In that case, there was a very serious history of violence on the part of the father. For example, on 15 April 2013, the mother obtained a final violence restraining order against the father. The father had also previously been convicted of assault occasioning actual bodily harm, amongst a series of other offences. Also quoted in the judgement at paragraph 37 was a police incident report from 19 March 2013, which reads —

Police attend to execute recovery order. Police advised the father they were there to recover the children. He refused to engage in conversation with the police. He said they were not taking the children and would have to shoot him. The police forced entry. The father attempted to grab a police officer's firearm. He struck a police officer and placed him in a headlock. He struck him several times with his fist. The police charged the father with assaulting a public officer.

In this case, the father had a substantial record of violence, including against public officers of the state. In court, the mother was represented by a lawyer, but the father was self-represented. As a result, during the proceedings the father actually directly cross-examined the mother. The cross-examination was shocking. There is an example given of it in the judgement. I am going to read an extract set out in paragraph 44 of the judgement of the father asking questions of the mother under cross-examination. It reads —

How was I being abusive to you? — Physically, sexually, emotionally.

What's the difference between threatening to rape you and forcing you to have sex with me? — One's a threat, one's an action.

Okay. And I raped you, did I? — Yes. You were very forceful on several occasions.

Say that in my eyes? — I don't have to.

Just look at my eyes.

At that point the judge intervened, and Her Honour said —

No, no. She doesn't need to.

The father then said —

No, no. Fuck this.

The judge responded —

No, no, no. She does not need to.

The father then said —

Fuck this. She's calling me a fucking rapist.

Her Honour said —

She did not say that.

The father said —

She fucking did.

Her Honour said —

What she said was you raped her. And no, she doesn't need to look you in the eyes. Now just ask your questions and she will answer them. No. She's not going to look you in the eyes.

The father responded —

You're fucking shitting me. So I kept you in my home for seven years, or by my side as a friend, by forcing you to be with me? And we were never really friends or anything?

The mother responded —

You were very controlling in a lot of ways, and manipulative, and basically I guess what kept me there was fear of leaving, because on several occasions you threatened if I ever left you, you would kill me. And you also said —

The father interrupted —

Same way you did to me?

The mother said —

No. And you also said that the kids would be taken away, and ...

The father again interrupted —

You know, I only thought there was a problem (indistinct) year. If I'm capable of killing you, how come you're not dead yet?

The mother's solicitor intervened at that point and said —

Your Honour, my client can't possibly answer that question.

It is plain from that extract from the judgement that the cross-examination engaged in by the father in that case was utterly reprehensible. It should be condemned in the strongest possible terms. It had the effect of re-traumatising the mother, who was the victim of family and domestic violence. In that respect, I make it clear that I make no criticism of the court. Clearly, the judge in that case attempted to protect the victim, but Her Honour was also hamstrung by the fact that she needed to allow the father a fair opportunity to conduct his case and conduct cross-examination. But I really do believe that cross-examination like that in the legal system brings the administration of justice into disrepute.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: It is difficult to imagine how awful that situation was for the mother, but she at least had the opportunity to give evidence in her case. The fact is that many others would be deterred from giving evidence at all. There is evidence that that is the case. I refer here to a submission from Women's Legal Services Australia to the House of Representatives inquiry that I referred to earlier. In that submission, Women's Legal Services Australia stated that over a three-month period in 2015–16, it surveyed 338 women about their experiences with the family law system. One hundred and forty-seven respondents, or 43 per cent, said that they had experienced direct cross-examination by their abuser, and 77 respondents said that the dispute had settled by consent orders. To quote page 29 of the submission —

Of that smaller group —

The 77 respondents —

44 women said that the “prospect/fear of personal cross-examination by [their] ex-partner” was a factor in their decision to settle ...

Later the submission states —

... participants were asked how significant the prospect or fear of direct cross-examination by their ex-partner was on their decision to settle prior to trial. Of the 60 women who responded, 41 women (68.3%) said that it was very significant, 6 women (10%) said it was of medium significance, and 13 women (21.7%) said it was one of many factors. These findings indicate that the fear of direct cross-examination can directly result in consent orders in family law matters involving family violence that endanger the safety of children and their parents.

What I think is important for members to take from the case of *Sampson v North* is that the re-traumatising of a victim by their abuser has taken place in our own state relatively recently, and it is but one example of it happening. It is worth reflecting on the variety of effects that this has on the victim and also on the court system generally. The first, as I have outlined by reference to the submission by Women's Legal Services Australia, is that the prospect of direct cross-examination by an abuser pressures victims of family and domestic violence to settle. Obviously, in all likelihood, that results in settlement on less favourable terms than would otherwise be the case. Exposure to cross-examination obviously re-traumatises the victim if they proceed to trial. The prospect of being cross-examined is itself likely to traumatise them. That likely raises just the pure fear of having to face the perpetrator and be questioned by them. I imagine that for victims, actually undergoing cross-examination would be similar to having to relive those experiences all over again.

The other thing that is often overlooked is that allowing perpetrators of family and domestic violence to conduct their own cross-examination very likely does them no favours. These people may have a history of mental illness or substance abuse. They may come from backgrounds in which they were themselves abused. Being in the position of conducting their own case likely means that the best case is not put on their own behalf, while at the same time it causes unimaginable trauma to their victims.

At this point, I note two matters. The first is that family and domestic violence disproportionately affects women and the perpetrators are disproportionately men. It is a gendered issue and there is no shying away from that fact. But I also acknowledge that victims do not belong to just one gender and that relationships come in all varieties, and that, for example, in same-sex relationships there are men and women who are perpetrators and victims of family and domestic violence.

This is a sensible reform in that although it acknowledges the gendered nature of the issue, it ensures that victims are protected regardless of the identity of the victim or the perpetrator. The way that the scheme offers that protection is as follows. I mentioned at the outset of my contribution that the right to a fair trial is a critical consideration here; indeed, the right to a fair trial is a cornerstone of our legal system. The difficulty with banning direct cross-examination in an era in which there are more self-represented litigants is how does that litigant conduct cross-examination. For the non-lawyers in the chamber, cross-examination in our adversarial system of justice is seen as a critical part in testing the evidence, so that when the decision-maker is presented with evidence from one side, the other side has an opportunity to test that evidence in cross-examination and it allows the decision-maker—the judge or magistrate—to make comfortable findings about the credibility of that evidence and about the facts that can be found on the basis of that evidence. It is an essential part of our adversarial system, and as long as that is the case, parties need to be able to conduct cross-examination. This is where the scheme that sits alongside this reform steps in. The scheme funded by the commonwealth government is essentially as follows. If circumstances arise in a case in which direct cross-examination is banned and at least one of the parties is unrepresented, that will trigger the scheme. The scheme, effectively, arranges and pays for the unrepresented party to be represented by lawyers. I understand the legal aid commissions have duty lawyers who will be available for some minor work, but, by and large, that will be by a grant of funding that will be used to retain an experienced family law practitioner in private practice from a panel. Further to that, if both parties are unrepresented, the scheme will arrange and pay for both parties to be represented—so not merely the perpetrator. That is important because of the concept in the justice system that is referred to as “equality of arms”, which is the notion that parties should be roughly equally armed or have the capacity to be equally represented when it comes to presenting their cases. That is how this scheme preserves that entitlement.

This scheme therefore allows the perpetrator to test the evidence by having a legal practitioner conduct the cross-examination, but it also allows the victim to be protected from being directly cross-examined by the perpetrator. That has two effects. The legal practitioner, who is familiar with the rules of evidence and who has professional obligations, is going to be able to conduct that cross-examination to the extent possible in a way that is respectful and as forensic as it can be. It also means that the victim will not have the experience of sitting and answering questions asked directly of them by the perpetrator.

Another advantage of the scheme is that the legal practitioner will be appointed to represent the person for the entire proceedings and not just for the cross-examination. That is likely to have advantages in not only protecting victims in cross-examination, but also resulting in generally more efficient and professional presentation of cases. I understand the feedback from the Family Court is that the scheme is working well. As I said previously, the scheme is funded by the commonwealth government. It is a commitment of \$7 million over three years to the various legal aid commissions. I am satisfied that the scheme, therefore, strikes the right balance between protecting victims of family and domestic violence and also protecting a person's right to a fair trial. It also facilitates access to justice by ensuring that family and domestic violence victims can continue to pursue proceedings without fear of being directly cross-examined by their perpetrator, and it provides the necessary resources for unrepresented parties to conduct their case where direct cross-examination has been disallowed.

I congratulate the Attorney General on bringing forward this bill at such an early stage in the new Parliament. It is a bill that has been subject to significant consultation and inquiry. I challenge anyone who has heard the cross-examination in *Sampson v North* to argue this bill is unnecessary.

MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley — Parliamentary Secretary) [3.16 pm]: I rise to make a short contribution to this important piece of legislation, the Family Court Amendment Bill 2021. I start by thanking the member for Cockburn for his contribution. He has taken us chapter and verse through the ways this bill will operate forensically to deliver more equitable access to justice. I do not want to go over that, as the argument has been well made by the member in the cases he has cited.

In the time I have, I want to talk about three newspaper articles and three academic works that help illuminate the conversation around family and domestic violence that will help us understand why legislation like this is incredibly important. Before I do that, I congratulate both the members for Mirrabooka and Collie–Preston. I listened to their contributions before question time, and they covered a lot of the material that forms the context in which this debate takes place. I note they are both new members in this Parliament and their contributions speak volumes for what they will contribute over the course of the forty-first Parliament. I have spoken previously on issues like this in which we as a Parliament work in a collaborative and bipartisan way. When similar legislation came before the fortieth Parliament, I congratulated the former members for Hillarys and Dawesville on their contributions indicating the support of the opposition to legislation that had been introduced by the Attorney General. I am looking forward to opposition contributions that will spell out the extent of their support for the bill. I say that because, perhaps unlike some of my recent contributions in this place, I do not propose for this contribution to be partisan; this is a bipartisan issue.

The first book I refer to is a great starting point for anyone who wants to understand feminism in Australia. It is Anne Summers' classic *Damned Whores and God's Police* written in 1975. Members will know that Anne Summers was a founding member of the women's liberation movement. She set up a shelter for victims of family and domestic violence in the 1970s in Sydney and went on to become a leading adviser to Prime Minister Bob Hawke in the 1980s, as first assistant secretary of the Office of the Status of Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

I refer members to *Damned Whores and God's Police*, because at the back it has a terrific appendix of the time line of achievements by and for Australian women. I thought it would provide a good starting point for my contribution today. In the past couple of weeks, we have all celebrated the 100th anniversary of the election of Edith Cowan to this chamber, becoming the first female member of Parliament in Western Australia. We have celebrated having the first female Speaker in the Legislative Assembly, and having the first female Speaker in the Legislative Assembly while also having a female President in the Legislative Council. The celebration of these recent achievements comes at the end of a long line of achievements by feminists in Australia since European colonisation. The reason that I quite like the time line of achievements contained at the back of Ms Summers' book is that within it are several subcategories containing the important milestone events of the achievements for women in the areas of equal pay, political rights, fertility control, child care and parental leave, and domestic and family violence. I want to outline those five particular areas because those are the areas I will touch on during my second reading contribution this afternoon.

The first area I will refer to is equal pay. There is a great quote from Justice Mary Gaudron of the High Court of Australia. In 1979, Her Honour said that equal pay was won in 1969, won again in 1972 and yet again in 1974. The fight for equal pay continues, and I defer to the member for Mirrabooka's contribution in this regard, given her experience and background. I was reading a 25 March 2021 article authored by Angela Priestley on the online magazine Women's Agenda, which refers to the gender pay gap. The article refers to the research undertaken by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and states that at the current rate of narrowing, it will take another 26 years to close the gender pay gap in Australia. The article celebrates the fact that the gender pay gap has moved in the right direction, with the gap between the earnings of men and women having narrowed from 24.7 per cent to 20.1 per cent over the preceding seven years. That is a significant closing of the gender pay gap, but it is still an incredible 20.1 per cent. What is worse is that in some fields of endeavour, the gender pay gap actually increased. The gender pay gap in the managerial classification grew by 5.1 per cent over the seven-year period. To people in this chamber, this will probably not come as any surprise, but the areas in which the gender pay gap is the least narrow are the female-dominated industries, such as education and training, health care and the social and assistance sectors. That is where the gender pay gap ranked the lowest.

During her contribution, the member for Mirrabooka made the point about her affiliation with the Australian Services Union; I am also a member of that union. In 2012 and 2015, the Australian Services Union was instrumental in this with its applications to the Fair Work Commission. I refer here to the time line in Ms Summers' book at page 680, which states that in 2012 —

Fair Work Australia awards pay rises between 19 and 41 per cent to community sector workers —

This was known at the time as the SACS award —

and finds that gender is one of the reasons their work —

That is, the work undertaken by women —

is undervalued.

That was in 2012. The attachment of lower value to the work of women is one of the social constructs in which discrimination against women takes place. The others are, as I said, access to political rights, fertility control, child care and parental leave, and domestic and family violence.

The next thing I want to raise is political rights. I have already mentioned the example of Edith Cowan. We have said it all before, but it bears repeating: if we look around this chamber, we see so many women who have been elected to Parliament; indeed, more than 100 women have been elected to Parliament in WA. But the struggle for political rights for women is ongoing. It always seems like it is two steps forward and one step back. We celebrate the successes—the appointment of the member for Midland as the new Speaker, a second female President in the Legislative Council and 100 years since the election of Edith Cowan—but I recall so clearly the vilification of Julia Gillard as our first female Prime Minister. There is still so much work to be done to communicate to the broader population that women have an equal role to play in our political and power structures as they do in any other facet of endeavour. The way in which Prime Minister Gillard was attacked with misogynistic, gender-oriented and sexist language perpetuated the social environment in which family and domestic violence takes root. Although we celebrate successes, there is still so much work to be done.

On the question of fertility control—referring again to Ms Summers’ book—the Legislative Council is currently debating safe access zones around abortion clinics. That we had to wait until 2021 for that debate to take place when it seems so incredibly straightforward and such an important health and community safety measure just speaks to the amount of work that needs to be done in that particular area.

On the question of child care and parental leave, in a society in which emphasis is still placed on women being the primary caregivers in the house, the issue of access to affordable high-quality child care and paternity leave continues to be characterised as a women’s issue. That that is the case demonstrates that much work still needs to be done. As a dad, it was a great joy for me to share parental responsibility. As a society, we have not arrived at the point at which we can say, “Yes, we’ve reached the point of complete equality.”

The next thing I want to talk about from Anne Summers’ book is the question of family and domestic violence, which is what the Family Court Amendment Bill 2021 is about. One of the things that I want to bring to members’ attention is a report from the New South Wales Parliament by the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control. This discussion has been had in this chamber both during the previous Parliament and in this Parliament. It is interesting to note that in England and Wales, section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 has been amended to create a criminal offence of coercive control. The New South Wales Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control published report 1/57 in June 2021. I will not quote from the report but I will quote from an ABC news article by Jamie McKinnell from the same day, 30 June 2021, that refers to coercive control. I note that the committee did not use the term “domestic violence”; rather, it used the term “domestic abuse”. Jess Hill explains in her book *See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control and Domestic Abuse* why this nomenclature is important. She states —

In this book, wherever possible, I have replaced the term ‘domestic violence’ with ‘domestic abuse’. I did this because in some of the worst abusive relationships, physical violence is rare, minor or barely present. As Yasmin Khan from Eidfest Community Services writes in an article for *Women’s Agenda*, —

That is the online news service that I referred to earlier —

‘Many women that we support assure me there has been no domestic violence—“he’s never laid a hand on me”—but on deeper questioning and reflection, realise they have been abused for many years, in ways that have been more subtle but [are] just as damaging and potent.’

Khan has made it her mission to replace ‘domestic violence’ with ‘domestic abuse’ ...

That quote is important because the joint committee of the New South Wales Parliament arrived at the same nomenclature or language. The ABC news article states —

The inquiry heard opinions from domestic violence workers and advocates, police, prosecutors and academics earlier this year, following a discussion paper on the complex issue released in October.

Current NSW laws cover some types of controlling behaviour, but the inquiry was told the justice system was geared to respond to individual incidents of physical violence.

“The pandemic of domestic abuse evidenced through statistics cannot be ignored,” the inquiry’s findings said.

“It is clear that coercive control is a factor and red flag for the horrific and preventable murder deaths of Australian women and children—some 29 murders in 2020 alone in NSW.”

I interrupt myself to thank the member for Collie–Preston for again referring to the statistics and the number of people who are victims of family and domestic violence.

The article refers to the report and states —

It said the NSW government should propose amendments to the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to create “a clear and accessible definition of domestic abuse”, including such behaviour.

“This should be done as a priority, before criminalising coercive control,” ...

This is a complicated issue that requires a great deal of examination and investigation. I think that a discussion about the work of the New South Wales Parliament in undertaking this inquiry will, hopefully, prompt a broader discussion nationally about how we tackle the issue of coercive control. Based on the runs on the board of the McGowan government, I know that we are committed to tackling family and domestic violence in all its forms, not least because we have the first minister responsible for the prevention of family and domestic violence; not least because we have implemented the 16 Days in WA campaign, which other people have spoken to; not least because the Attorney General brings forward legislation such as this to tackle the scourge and pandemic of family and domestic violence; but also because we have all these members, many first-time members, who will stand to speak in support of this legislation.

I think I have covered off *Damned Whores and God's Police* by Anne Summers and I have already referred to *See What You Made Me Do* by Jess Hill. I will come back to Jess Hill because she is quoted in one of the articles I propose to refer to now. I want to commend a friend of mine, a constituent, who is a family law practitioner. She is very active on social media and she is always sharing articles. I referred to this in my last contribution, but I wanted to go through and remind members of some of the debate that has taken place. My friend shared a number of articles on social media from last year. They are all from *The Guardian*. The first is an article by Liz Ford from 5 March 2020, titled "Nine out of 10 people found to be biased against women". This is on a global survey. It reads —

Analysis of 75 countries reveals 'shocking' scale of global women's rights backlash

Almost 90% of people are biased against women, according to a new index that highlights the "shocking" extent of the global backlash towards gender equality.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: The article continues —

Despite progress in closing the equality gap, 91% of men and 86% of women hold at least one bias against women in relation to politics, economics, education, violence or reproductive rights.

Unsurprisingly, these are the same five issues that were identified in 1975 by Anne Summers. It continues —

The figures are based on two sets of data collected from almost 100 countries through the World Values Survey, which examines changing attitudes in almost 100 countries and how they impact on social and political life.

This is the most staggering statistic —

Of the 75 countries studied, there were only six in which the majority of people held no bias towards women.

That is just the majority, and not 100 per cent. There were six countries in which the majority of people held no bias against women. It continues —

But while more than 50% of people in Andorra, Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden were free from gender prejudice, even here the pattern was not one of unmitigated progress.

It is fair to say that Australia should be proud that we fall within those six countries that are leading the charge, but so much more work still needs to be done, which brings me to the second article that my friend posted on social media. This is the interview with Jess Hill, who is the author of *See What You Made Me Do*. The article is called "Patriarchy and power: how socialisation underpins abusive behaviour". This is essentially the whole point of what I am saying this afternoon about the context in which we are operating, where the scourge of family and domestic violence persists. It refers to Hannah Clarke and Rowan Baxter and reads —

Hannah Clarke's family described her husband Rowan Baxter as controlling, coercive and obsessive. His abuse appears to have followed a familiar script known as coercive control. Can you explain this?

Coercive control is a very particular kind of domestic abuse. It's not a "reaction" to stress, nor is it triggered by alcohol or drugs. It's an ongoing system of control, in which the abusive partner seeks to override their partner's autonomy and destroy their sense of self.

...

Coercive controllers may use extreme physical or sexual violence; or, as was reportedly the case with Rowan Baxter, no physical violence at all. For more than 40 years, women and children have been saying that except for extreme violence, the coercive control is the worst part.

Jess Hill is then asked —

If domestic abuse cases almost always follow the same script, as you write in your book, why is it so hard to stop them?

...

Many women don't know they are experiencing abuse until they are already in situations that are incredibly dangerous—partly because coercive control is so poorly understood, but also because the perpetrator makes it invisible.

They are placed in an invidious position of not knowing what to do or what the best course of action would be. The article continues —

If they do report to police—if something reportable actually occurs—they are making a terrifying gamble. Will they get an officer who’s sympathetic and proactive? Will reporting their partner make him more dangerous? What if child protection gets involved? What if he contests for custody?

The circumstances that prevent action are highlighted. The article continues —

How do some men come to feel so entitled to their power over women?

This response prompted me to posit this hypothesis in my contribution to this debate —

Thousands of years of patriarchy has laid pretty good groundwork for this—and it’s not so long since a wife was considered her husband’s property, and had no legal rights whatsoever. It was only in the 1980s that new laws against marital rape recognised that men didn’t have the right to demand sex with their wives anytime they wanted ...

This point brings me, sadly, to the last article that I am going to refer to. I said I was not going to politicise this contribution, but, unfortunately, there is a stain in Australian politics that we have not been able to expunge and that is the stain of One Nation. An article titled “Malcolm Roberts criticised after claiming ‘many’ domestic violence allegations made up” by Ben Smee was published in *The Guardian* on 10 March. The article states —

The One Nation senator Malcolm Roberts has told a parliamentary inquiry into Australia’s family law system that “many instances” of domestic violence allegations are made up by parents to gain custody of their children.

Obviously, this scandalous allegation was immediately called out in the public and in the media. Ben Smee notes —

Pauline Hanson ... made a series of unsupported statements about parents lying to the family court ...

He then clarified the situation by saying —

The claim that women frequently make up abuse claims is a prominent grievance among men’s rights groups, but has been widely discredited in multiple studies.

According to researcher Jess Hill, who has authored a book on domestic abuse called *See What You Made Me Do*, one of the most thorough studies on false abuse allegations from Canada found that non-custodial parents, usually fathers, made false complaints most frequently, accounting for 43% of the total, followed by neighbours and relatives at 19% and mothers at 14%.

As a community, we need to do what the Attorney General is doing and what Parliament is doing, and pass legislation that tackles this issue. We also need to listen to those voices that are now speaking up. We need to listen to Grace Tame, Rosie Batty and Brittany Higgins. Rosie Batty responded to Pauline Hanson’s comments and was quoted in the same article. It states —

... Rosie Batty denounced Hanson for saying women made up false allegations of violence during custody disputes.

Batty said such remarks were “incredibly damaging” ...

I do not think anyone in this chamber is motivated by the perverse incentives of people like Pauline Hanson and Malcolm Roberts. One of the things I am fearful of is the rise through social media of ultra-right-wing organisations, racist organisations, and anti-scientific and anti-vaccination organisations. I am fearful of their pernicious influence on the political discourse in Australia. Malcolm Roberts and Pauline Hanson and others give oxygen to that.

We, as a community, need to call that out when we see it and we need to tackle it. Although this legislation should enjoy bipartisan support, everyone who speaks in support of it, from whichever party they are in, should also call out the ultra-right-wing political fundamentalism that now seems to be creeping into the discourse in countries in North America and Western Europe and in Australia. Unless and until we do that, we are going to struggle to get the equality that women are entitled to and we are going to struggle to rid our society of the scourge and pandemic of family and domestic violence.

As I said, the Family Court Amendment Bill 2021 is an important contribution to the work we can do as a community to alleviate that, and I commend all the speakers who contributed to the debate. The member for Collie–Preston is back in the chamber so I will say to her while she is here: I am incredibly grateful to you for your contribution to this debate; it was outstanding. I commend the Attorney General for the work he has done and I commend the McGowan government for tackling this issue as a priority. Thank you.

MRS L.A. MUNDAY (Dawesville) [3.41 pm]: I rise to speak to the Family Court Amendment Bill 2021, which supersedes the Family Court Amendment Bill 2019 that lapsed in the previous Parliament. This bill will mirror in Western Australia the commonwealth Family Law Amendment (Family Violence and Cross-examination of Parties) Act 2018. That legislation bans the personal cross-examination of victims by perpetrators of family violence. Personal cross-examination occurs during a court hearing when a party is not represented by a lawyer, so they

must perform the cross-examination of witnesses themselves. This amending legislation will allow equal opportunity for representation, with the opportunity for alleged perpetrators and victims to have court representation. I take this opportunity to thank the Attorney General for bringing forward this important legislation.

Firstly, I would like to relate a bit of personal experience. Approximately 45 000 people are divorced every year in Australia, and in 2004 I was one of those statistics. Divorce was probably the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. I made the decision to leave my husband; my kids were six and eight at the time. My husband was very, very angry. He said it came out of leftfield. I did not think so, but you know. A lot of counselling was done prior to that. While I was researching this, I was thinking about having been one of those women sitting in the Family Court. There was no sexual abuse or domestic violence involved, apart from the worst part, during the time of separation, when there was a lot of yelling. We were both very angry and he was very, very hurt. I understand that now—probably not so much back then, because a lot of words were said that can never be unsaid. We both spoke poorly of each other and I am not very proud to admit that I did a lot of that in front of my boys. They are now 24 and 26, and they still remember the divorce, how it went and how terrible it was. When I look back, I like to think that I did not do too badly, really, so I can only think, as I have followed on with my research, how important this bill is for people who actually have endured sexual and domestic violence, so that they are not put into the situation of having to ask questions of their ex-partner in court.

The member for Nedlands spoke very well in this debate. I am pretty much here from a more personal point of view. I want to talk specifically about the type of person who would actually prefer to self-represent. They are coercively controlling-type people or people who show signs of narcissistic behaviour. From my point of view as a psychologist, some of the things that would be red flags in court of narcissistic behaviour or of people who are trying to coercively control people would include grandiosity, with the expectation of superior treatment. Such people in a court situation would expect the judge to rule in their favour and would be absolutely gobsmacked if rights were taken or moneys were limited in terms of access to children. They fixate on fantasies of power and believe that they are very successful, intelligent and attractive people. That goes for either gender. I know that gentlemen are over-represented in this situation, but there are quite a few females I know who would tick the narcissistic box. With regard to self-perception, they would see themselves as unique, superior and high status. Again, if we can imagine them sitting in court and taking on their victim, it would be almost an exciting event for them to bring someone down, especially in an open forum with other people watching. They would actually get a great deal of satisfaction from that, which again comes back to the point that removing this ability will be awesome.

They have an unwillingness to empathise with the feelings and wishes of other people, so they would not even consider that what they do or say could be incorrect. They are pompous and arrogant and would probably recognise that being in court would be a source of embarrassment for their victim, and would accordingly make them pay. This legislation is therefore very timely. Victims should be given the opportunity to not have to sit in front of an ex-partner and go through that. A narcissistic person is very averse to responsibility, so they systematically stage their life to avoid responsibility and become very masterful at denying and projecting everything back onto their partner or the other person. If they are losing their wife or husband and children, that would be even more reason to win in court.

Lastly, they do not forgive. If there is a potential threat to be defeated, or if they feel that they are under attack, they will always frame it as life being a battle zone in which they are fighting for their survival. They regard any kind of hurt or retaliation as revenge. If they see someone apologising or showing what they regard as weakness, they regard it as proof of their superiority and will probably take the opportunity to further punish the person for whatever he or she has dared to come to court for.

I will illustrate that by way of an example. Unlike the member for Cockburn's example, which was a very raw and detailed account of a court action, my example is more about what happens in an everyday event. Therefore, it is more from the female's point of view as to why she would not take on her partner and would prefer to settle out of court, becoming one of those statistics of people who settle for less—not because she feels that she does not deserve it or because she feels that she got herself into this situation, which is actually really sad in itself, but just because it is the easier path for getting away.

An order of a court might state that the husband and wife take turns spending each alternate birthday with their kids. A court might ask specifically that they do this because joint events have not in the past been particularly nice. Making it alternating years means that a special day can be created for the child without any drama, danger or humiliation. They are putting their child's needs first, and they are protecting themselves from harm. The ex might feel entitled to contact the person, regardless of what the court order says; they feel protected by the Family Court. They will now use the occasion to exert control and cause frustration, anxiety and fear. Seeing these emotions makes them feel superior and powerful. The person's ex knows their deepest fears and uses them to hurt them.

A WhatsApp message sent by the ex-partner may say that they will contact the daughter on a non-contact day. They say they will drop by at the daughter's birthday party because "I should see my daughter on her birthday". Panic is felt by the victim when they know what is ahead. The victim knows it will end in tears. If there is a fight, the daughter's birthday will be ruined. The victim decides to text back and say something like—something I would have

probably written back in the day—“Don’t you dare show up at this birthday party. I’ll call the police. You know we have orders. Don’t contact me again”, and take it back to court. This works in well with the ex because they respond, quite cunningly, “There’s no need to be angry all the time. I just wanted to see our daughter for an hour on her birthday. It’s not too much to ask. I just want to give her a present. She told me on the phone last night that she wanted me to come. I think what you’re doing is going to upset her more.” After reading that message, the victim realises what they have done. They become more terrified because they have to deal with the judge. They are thinking, “The judge is going to read this. He’s going to think that I’m being a mean and nasty person and that I’m trying to hold my daughter back when really that’s not the case at all.” They feel as though they will be condemned and the judge will favour the side of the ex. Fear and anxiety is created all because the victim is standing up and keeping boundaries, but on the other hand this manipulative person has been able to make the victim do things that they did not want to do.

That was an example. It is quite a basic example that a victim can fall into if they do not know what they are up against. It is an example of why people should be represented by lawyers in court. Generally, lawyers are trained to spot coercive control. They are trained in how to deal with narcissistic people.

In closing, people who live in fear because of these types of examples—which are basic day-to-day examples—should not be cross-examined by alleged perpetrators, especially victims who have had to endure physical and sexual abuse. It increases the importance of banning the opportunity for these people to self-represent. I commend this bill to the house.

MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont) [3.51 pm]: I rise today to make a contribution to the Family Court Amendment Bill 2021. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the Attorney General and thank him for bringing this very important bill to this place.

In my view, any measure to provide assistance to victims of family and domestic violence is of critical importance. It seems that every single day our news is littered with examples of abuse and stories of violence, mostly perpetrated against women. Last week, we learnt of the sexual assault by a number of students at a private Catholic boys school of over a dozen students from a Catholic girls school who were at a combined school event. The girls were groped by the boys. This would have led to an incredibly distressing experience for the teenage girls, and no doubt will stay with them for many years to come, which is really quite tragic.

In 2021, the concept of consent is non-existent in much of our community. This speaks to the amount of work that still needs to be done to educate our boys on the topic of respect and consent. This serious issue needs to be addressed. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the horrors of family and domestic violence is abating in our community. This is evidenced in our news on what seems to be a weekly basis. On 29 July this year, WA today reported on the brutal murder of Ruqia Haidari by her husband of only two months, Mohammad Ali Halimi. Using a kitchen knife, Halimi slit his wife’s throat twice. As his wife was left to bleed to death on the kitchen floor, Halimi phoned his wife’s brother and told him to “come get your sister’s dead body”.

Those two examples really point to the fact that this is, and will continue to be, a blight on our society until the government does everything within its power to make sure it provides safety for victims of family and domestic violence. On the other hand, I would like to note that it is clear that a lot needs to be done around the conversations that need to occur, most critically with our young boys, about respectful relationships. The Minister for Women’s Interests is doing great work in this space. The conversations need to continue about consent and respectful relationships well into adolescence. The incident that occurred recently at a Catholic boys school is disgusting.

This bill aims to protect some of the state’s most vulnerable people—victims of family and domestic violence. Although it is disappointing that the bill did not proceed through the Legislative Council during the last Parliament, I am pleased to be able to contribute to this very important legislation. This bill builds on the commonwealth legislation that was passed in December 2018 to ban the direct cross-examination of victims by their abuser in family court settings. The practice of direct cross-examination of victims by the perpetrator is clearly unacceptable. Imagine how confronting that experience would be for victims. One in six females has been a victim of physical and sexual violence from an intimate partner. I note that it is not always women who are victims of domestic violence. I agree with the member for Cockburn that this is a gender issue as it is overwhelmingly an issue that affects women.

As victims, women who come to court, seeking protection and assistance, can face cross-examination—direct questioning—by their abuser. This, of course, can lead to further trauma to the victim, and would no doubt be deeply distressing. In addition, because this experience is so distressing, victims may be more inclined to expedite the proceedings to limit their exposure to this type of questioning by their abuser. In their haste, however, they can be settling property matters or parenting rights that are detrimental to their welfare and that of their children, and their overall wellbeing, which would be preferential to the perpetrator. Further, allowing perpetrators to cross-examine the victim has the potential to affect the victim’s testimony, and hence the result of the trial.

The prospect of direct cross-examination can be so daunting that it causes victims to accept premature and very unfavourable settlements. This has been witnessed by experts in the field for far too long and formed part of the push for change at a commonwealth level. The acceptance of these unfavourable settlements can have really devastating

effects on children who are involved in court proceedings. It can place vulnerable children in situations in which their personal care and safety is ultimately at risk. The ban on direct cross-examinations will remove this daunting prospect for victims and the potential avenue to premature and unfavourable settlements for women who are experiencing family and domestic violence.

The real-world consequence of this is, obviously, fewer children in unsafe environments. Fewer children will be exposed to domestic and family violence. It also provides victims with the security of knowing that they can pursue a fair outcome without putting their own mental health in jeopardy and being re-traumatised during the process. Ensuring that a fair outcome is reached in any court is pivotal. The cross-examination process is an integral element of having evidence tested in a proceeding and allowing the court to make evidence-based decisions and findings. Putting an end to victims being cross-examined by perpetrators will improve their ability to give clear and cogent evidence. Furthermore, the cross-examination of perpetrators by legal practitioners will ensure that their evidence is appropriately tested and therefore more reliable. This in turn will enable judicial officers to make more informed decisions and judgements.

In 2015, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on the case of Eleanor, whose name was altered for the purpose of reporting. Eleanor's experience in the Family Court system is an alarming example of the necessity to ban these types of cross-examinations by a victim's perpetrator. I quote from this article —

A week after Eleanor's former partner was ordered not to come within 200 metres of her by a Magistrates Court, she faced him in a Family Court dispute over the custody of their children. It was then she learnt that he had dismissed his lawyer, which meant he could question her directly about her parenting of their children in the witness stand.

The article quotes Eleanor directly —

“That day I wanted to end my life ... I just wanted the trauma to end. I couldn't believe they'd allow him to do it. It was like they'd given him permission to have power over me again.”

The article continues —

Eleanor, who fled their home with her children, said he had raped her twice and beaten her in front of their daughter. She began to hyperventilate.

The article quotes Eleanor again —

“He could have asked me the colour of the sky ... There was a point where I could not understand the words coming out of his mouth,” she said.

The article continues —

Her partner had initially argued for sole custody, and was ultimately awarded weekly visits with their children. After the trial ended, he moved six hours away from them, and now rarely sees them in person. She believes the exercise was another form of abuse.

Years later, she testified against him in a criminal case from another room. This time, she said she was able to think clearly about her responses to his lawyer's questions because she was not forced to look at his face or listen to his voice.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — HOUSING — PERFORMANCE

Motion

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [4.02 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Labor government for its failure to prioritise housing in the last five years of government, creating a housing crisis that the state has never seen before, triggering significant economic and social consequences.

The reason the opposition has moved this motion today is that over 17 000 struggling families are looking—queuing—for government housing. The government has sold 1 300 houses that it had owned. Who knows how much that was worth to the government. I would say that the government got in the order of \$300 000 or \$350 000 in its back pocket from the sale of social housing that is desperately needed by the people in Western Australia who need it most. This government has neglected the over 17 000 individuals and families in this state who are struggling. We know that over 1 000 government houses remain empty. We know that over 1 300 government houses have been sold. We know that while 17 000 struggling families are looking for housing, the government has been selling off its stock, and, more importantly, it has empty houses that are scattered right across this state.

When we look at the history of this government from 2017, we see a decrease in the number of social houses available to the people of this state. In 2017–18, the government sold 269 homes; in 2018–19, 234 homes; in 2019–20, 196 homes; and in 2020–21, 138 homes. The list goes on. The government sold 534 three-bedroom homes, 82 four-bedroom

homes, 123 two-bedroom homes and 44 one-bedroom homes. When we look at this government's track record, we have to question that. We talk about the health crisis. What is contributing to the health crisis is the housing crisis, and I will go into why the two are connected.

In question time today, I asked the following question of the Minister for Housing —

I refer to the housing solutions summit held on 29 July convened by Shelter WA and attended by peak housing industry representatives and community organisations.

(1) Was the minister invited to attend the summit?

The minister said yes, he was invited. I also asked —

(2) Did the minister or any of his ministerial colleagues attend the housing solutions summit; and, if not, why not?

The minister was not there. He was away on an adventure! Where was he? He was in Kalgoorlie. When there was a housing summit to talk about the housing crisis, where was the housing minister? I know where he was. He was perched up at the Palace Hotel, sipping his bloody mary. That is what he was doing while there was a meeting to try to work out how we can come up with solutions to the housing crisis, coupled with the health crisis, that the most vulnerable people in Western Australia are suffering. I want to get this on the record. The Minister for Housing did not attend the housing solutions summit held on 29 July, convened by social housing industry leaders, because he was away at a love-in in Kalgoorlie with the rest of his Labor Party cronies. The minister is not tackling the serious housing crisis in this state and the huge waiting list for social housing, which has been caused by the government's lack of investment and its selling off of the empty houses that exist. Who is in charge of housing in this state? That is the question. It is not all the fault of the current Minister for Housing. We had a housing minister who was removed, and rightly so. The government's lack of action in the housing space over the last four and a half years has now led to a catastrophic set of circumstances in which people in Western Australia are struggling to get into any form of social housing.

I want to indulge members with some of the headlines that we have seen day in and day out and week in and week out every month over the last four and a half years. We have seen report after report about the housing crisis in this state. The state Labor government is only now starting to act under the pressure that the opposition, the media and the public have put on the Minister for Health. The minister had to be backed into a corner and is now starting to talk about the health crisis in this state, hence the government's announcement about extra health funding. There is no detail around that money or when that money will be spent, but it is a start. The government is now acknowledging that there is a health crisis in this state. We now need to do the same to get this state Labor government and the Minister for Housing to acknowledge that there is a housing crisis in this state.

The minister referred to the comments on housing from Shelter WA's CEO today. He wanted to bring me, as the local member, into the debate on building single-bed units in Carnarvon. He asked whether I support that. I think the Minister for Housing missed the point. Frustration has built up and in desperation people are looking for large parcels of land that can be developed to try to curb the housing crisis. Do I support housing being built in Carnarvon? Absolutely. Do I support single-bed housing—100 of them—on an old school site? Absolutely not. The minister suggested that I support or do not support housing in Carnarvon. We have a lack of housing. I will go into the needs of my electorate, the Gascoyne and greater regional Western Australia.

I have looked at and will read out a few articles over time. An opinion piece by Shelter WA CEO, Kieran Wong, published in *The West Australian* of 9 August 2021 reads —

Figures ... last month showed ... at least 56 people died while homeless in Perth in 2020 ... in the past year ... we lost ... six times as many people ... to homelessness.

...

... more than 50,000 renters ... consider their housing unaffordable.

A distressing part of the situation we are in is that not only have we tens of thousands of people on waiting lists; the government sold 1 300 houses and over 1 000 houses are empty. Also, the social housing economic recovery package for the renovation of houses is three to four years away. Reports of sex-for-rent schemes have skyrocketed. Having headlines, or comments, like that shows the desperate situation people in Western Australia are in. It is not all beer and skittles. When the Premier gets up and talks about our economy, he fails to address community needs—social, housing and health needs. People should not be confused that our economy is going well because of the resource sector, particularly iron ore keeping us well and truly afloat and doing well. But when it comes to our housing and health sectors and small business, it is not all beer and skittles; there are pressures and concerns. When we have the headline “Sex-for-rent schemes skyrocket”, it should set off alarm bells that there is a housing crisis if that is what people are having to resort to. It is outrageous. The article goes on to say that one in five people have ranked housing as their number one issue.

Mr P. Papalia: Did you actually do any research at all into this other than the paper?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am glad that Minister for Police has piped up because part of the issue is the lack of housing and that there is no housing in regional WA for his own members of the Western Australia Police Force to take up. Even if he wanted to increase the number of police in regional WA, he cannot because there is no housing. It is affecting the minister's portfolio. How about the minister finds a voice within cabinet and does what is right for his members—stand up for them and get some houses built! If not, be quiet! He should be vocal in cabinet.

Several members interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Members, here we have the peanut gallery! It is still here! They are failing to address —

Dr D.J. Honey: We have the report member; they do not say much in cabinet.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No, they do not. They get told what to do in cabinet.

Mr P. Papalia: You are probably the worst member of Parliament in decades.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Oh my God!

Mr P. Papalia: The worst representative of your community.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Keep going.

Mr P. Papalia: People are disparaging of you to our face all the time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Do you know what? It is funny; they say the same thing about you!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, member, can you please direct your contribution through the chair. Members, please refrain from interjecting.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We know that when the Labor government is hurting, it resorts to personal attacks all the time—attacking the individual. The member for Armadale knows what that is like. He has been on the other side as well.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But, members, we know how the arrogant Labor government acts towards opposition members here representing their constituencies. They are the only ones trying to make sure that the Labor government is held to account on very important issues, such as the housing crisis we face.

Mr D.A.E. Scaife interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: If the member for Cockburn thinks that he does not have a housing crisis—do you have a housing crisis in your electorate? Member for Cockburn, do you have —

Mr D.A.E. Scaife: There's a special place for people like you in the Labor Party, all right. I think that's what the member for Armadale —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, can you please have some respect for Hansard; they cannot hear what is going on.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does the member for Cockburn have a housing crisis in his electorate?

Mr D.A.E. Scaife: I will say it again —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: See—silence! He cannot answer it. He has to now learn how to personally attack those opposite. It shows the depth that the government has.

Several members interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The mediocre police minister —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, please take your seat. Minister for Police, thank you.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Let us continue on. Like I said —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, members.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: News article after news article —

Point of Order

Ms M.J. DAVIES: This is a very serious issue, Madam Acting Speaker. I would like to be able to hear the member for North West Central. I am having great difficulty hearing what he has to say on behalf of his constituents and others who are being impacted in relation to this matter.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Member for North West Central, please direct your contribution through the chair. Members, please stop interjecting.

Debate Resumed

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to a news report from the ABC of 8 August 2021 on a drop-in service for homeless people in Midland forced to turn away 6 000 families and 500 young people in the past year since the moratorium was lifted. People need more help and it is not slowing down. The centre needs more affordable housing and more funding to expand its services. A growing group is going to Midland because they feel unsafe in the CBD. The City of Swan wants to see homeless people given a seat at the table. It goes on. A news article from the ABC of 6 August 2021 states that a Geraldton youth homelessness service has recorded its highest level of demand in 10 years. Turnaround is slow because there are no tenancies to send young people to. An article in the *South Western Times* of 5 August 2021 reports 13 people sleeping in a tent city at the Graham Bricknell Memorial Music Shell in Bunbury. Housing First relies on placing people in housing and giving them wraparound support but there is a lack of housing stock. A PerthNow article of 5 August 2021 refers to a philanthropic housing developer being given the green light to build temporary homes on government-loaned land in Victoria Park. Building temporary homes—if that does not say crisis, what does? Shelter WA is very active trying to find land and throwing up suggestions because it is desperate. Perth Lord Mayor Basil Zempilas has taken it upon himself to try to deal with the homeless situation, the crisis gripping our pride and joy—that is, Perth city. He is taking it upon himself to come up with solutions and putting money where his mouth is. I think he is putting \$3.7 million of City of Perth ratepayers' money towards dealing with people who need shelter. Where is the state government? We have the local government, the City of Perth, leading the way. Well done to the Mayor of the City of Perth, Basil Zempilas, for taking on trying to fix these issues plaguing our city.

Mr P.J. Rundle: He shouldn't have to.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: He should not have to.

The *Midwest Times* reported that 7 420 square metres of government-owned land listed for sale in Carnarvon could be converted into 157 one-bedroom units. The minister has criticised that, but I think he is missing the point—that is, that Shelter WA is trying to find available land to deal with the crisis facing people in this state and particularly in regional WA. The arrogance of the Minister for Housing and his government means that they criticise Shelter WA and do not show up to the forums it holds. The minister should be working with Shelter WA to come up with workable solutions rather than criticising and bullying these organisations. One thing that is coming out is that not-for-profit groups right around Western Australia are fearful of speaking out against the Labor government because they fear that it will cut off their funding, or that they will not have a seat at the table when the government holds a forum. This is what is growing, members—shameful acts of arrogance by the Labor government and bullying of organisations. In today's question time, the Minister for Housing snubbed the forum and then criticised Shelter WA for coming up with a potential solution to the problem. It keeps going on. In *The West Australian*, Dr Betsy Buchanan wrote —

The housing crisis is WA's emergency, and it hits First Nations families first hardest.

The article continues —

... vulnerable Aboriginal families are losing children at a rate of more than one a week because of WA's acute public housing crisis.

Overcrowding is occurring, and there is a housing crisis when it comes to our most vulnerable —

Several members interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Perhaps members might learn something or perhaps they want to get a cup of tea. They are usually there eating the scones and biscuits during afternoon tea, member for Wanneroo. Anyway, it keeps going on —

A Perth grandmother has spoken about how homelessness has torn her family apart, with her 14-year-old grandson “wandering the streets” while she and her one-year-old grandson live out of the boot of her car.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, members!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That was an article in *The West Australian* of 3 August 2021. Another news article from 3 August reports that the Housing First program in regional WA has been hampered by a shortage of social housing. It states that the \$9.4 million program started in Perth and Bunbury in June to fund caseworkers to help them find sustainable housing. There is money there to help try to find sustainable housing, and organisations are putting up options, but the government is very dismissive of those options.

We can look at article after article. I will read an online article for members from ABC News titled “Public housing properties sit empty in Geraldton as wait list grows”, published on 20 July 2021. It reads —

A not-for-profit social ... group in regional Western Australia says the state government's plan to boost social and public housing supply will do little to tackle homelessness in the regions.

More than 950 people in the Mid West and Gascoyne are on the public housing waitlist, with an average wait time of 94 weeks—nearly two years.

Meanwhile, more than 130 ... properties sit vacant in Geraldton alone, including 39 which are under review and may be refurbished or demolished.

When Shelter WA said that it could use the old Carnarvon high school site for 100 single beds, the minister said that there is no need for 100 beds. There may not be a need in Carnarvon, but there is a need for housing in the midwest and Gascoyne, including Geraldton, where more than 950 people are on the waitlist. I will talk about Carnarvon, for example. There are 14 boarded-up homes in Carnarvon. When there is a housing crisis with long waitlists, when people are in desperate need and are trying to find a home, and when there is overcrowding, which often leads to families being dysfunctional because of the overcrowding and unwelcome visitors that some families have to put up with, it often leads to the police being tied up with some of the antisocial behaviours that occur as a result of overcrowding. That leads to crime issues. When kids do not want to go home because of the overcrowding that is occurring, what do they do? They roam the streets. They break into properties. That causes the police and the community to be at their wit's end.

A good example is that the police say that they need more police officers in Carnarvon. They say, "We need nine police, but we've got nowhere to house those police officers." The police are not the answer to the crime problem or the housing problem, but they are at the pointy end. The police say that they need more police officers, and the Minister for Police says that the government will give Carnarvon an extra five police officers—I think it originally started off as nine—but the government cannot fulfil that promise because there is no housing for the police, and so the cycle continues.

There is an issue of overcrowding due to not having enough housing stock, or adequate housing stock, and yet there are 14 boarded-up homes. Then there is the issue that government employees such as the police need to increase their presence but cannot because there is no government housing. Government Regional Officers' Housing is another issue. Regional towns such as those in the Gascoyne cannot fulfil their complement if they have FTEs available to them because there is no housing for those employees. There is no Government Regional Officers' Housing and no social housing; therefore, we start to see homelessness increasing in regional towns and family dysfunction occurring because of overcrowding in homes. We then start to see issues of domestic violence. Kids do not want to go home. They are bored and roam the streets to try to keep themselves occupied, to get food or drink. They break into businesses and homes to try to get a feed or some money because they do not want to go home. That is what transpires when there is a housing crisis, Minister for Housing. That is the cycle of issues that come from a lack of housing, which is the number-one driver of antisocial behaviour and issues of family and domestic violence. People are leaving regional towns because the rents are starting to go through the roof and they cannot get any social housing whatsoever because no social houses have been built in the Gascoyne over the last five years—not one!

Minister for Housing, this is a crisis that is gripping every part of the state. We have waiting lists and houses are being sold, and this is the department's response —

A department spokesperson said of the 141 homes to be built across the state under the first stage, eight will be in the Mid West and Gascoyne.

I just want to say that I hate when the midwest and Gascoyne are merged together, because the Gascoyne and the midwest are separate. When people talk about the midwest, that includes Geraldton. It is a large regional city. The article continues —

... 141 homes to be built across the state under the first stage, eight will be in the Mid West and Gascoyne.

This includes two new social housing dwellings which are managed by community housing providers and six public housing properties maintained by the department.

That is all there is to deal with the housing crisis. I have some articles to quote. It is good to see the member for Geraldton in the house because this article states —

Member for Geraldton Lara Dalton said a study last year found 40 to 50 people sleeping rough, but the true number of people experiencing housing instability was unknown.

She promised residents that she would be pushing "very hard" to get up to 60 Homeswest homes, presently out of commission, open as soon as possible.

Dr D.J. Honey: They are all boarded up.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: They are; they are all empty.

Ms L. Dalton: There are houses that are available but people do not want to take them up. It is not as clear-cut as you described.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am glad the member brought that up. It is not that clear-cut because those houses have not been adequately done up.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, members.

Mr P. Papalia: When did you last visit?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the minister talking about Geraldton?

Mr P. Papalia: Yes.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Last week. I cannot remember; I think it was Saturday.

Mr P. Papalia: Did you go into any of those houses?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have gone past them with the Mayor of Geraldton.

Mr P. Papalia: You drove past.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have been past; I do not have keys to go in. I am not part of the government. Perhaps the minister would like to give me the keys to those houses.

Several members interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: To continue, the member for Geraldton has acknowledged that there are empty houses that have been boarded up, and that they could solve something of the huge waiting list that exists. That is only in Geraldton, in the midwest and Gascoyne, which is huge. It is getting to a point of being very difficult to ever cater for the struggling families and individuals in the midwest, the Gascoyne and the whole of Western Australia. That will move families away from regional Western Australia; they will go to the city, where a family member or someone they know might be able to put them up for a certain time or where they might have a greater chance of getting a house. We have gone through the social housing statistics and my colleagues will continue to go through the lack of housing around the state—the housing crisis that is gripping many people and communities.

A number of letters were written to the former Minister for Housing. I have one here from the former Minister for Housing Hon Peter Tinley dated January 2021, which was in response to a constituent of mine who talked about the need for housing in Exmouth. The minister's response was —

I appreciate you sharing your observations on the current trends in the Exmouth real estate market. It is recognised that housing options in regional centres are in high demand and that smaller markets, like Exmouth, may find it difficult to respond to significant upturns in demand and that this may negatively affect the local economy.

As you may be aware the Department of Communities' land development functions are being transferred to Development WA, accordingly the Department of Communities has forwarded your comments and suggestions to Development WA.

That was a great response from the former Minister for Housing, to whom one of my constituents wrote expressing the dire need for land to be released so that people could build houses.

Dr D.J. Honey: Ended up not being in the right faction, member.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Clearly. That is probably the case.

In places such as Exmouth, land needs to be released so that housing can be built. It will be built by the private sector, not so much by government. The government has dragged its feet on the ground on the release of land by DevelopmentWA. The processing of land has been delayed or not acted upon. In the past five years, the government has not put a priority on land release in a town such as Exmouth. Land is available but the government has not been able to settle native title issues. Obviously, one of DevelopmentWA's key performance indicators is based on how much it will make from a development. DevelopmentWA will therefore wait until the land reaches a certain price and then develop the land, because under its legislation it has to turn a profit. That is not what is needed in regional WA.

Mr P.J. Rundle: We might need a new Minister for Lands as well as for housing.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It will be interested to see what the Minister for Lands says about the housing situation and the land that needs to be released by DevelopmentWA in a town such as Exmouth, which is suffering at the moment. It has a general population of 2 500 but a visitation rate of 20 000 people. In the height of the tourist season, that puts pressure on small businesses and the like.

That leads me to some of the government commitments about workers' accommodation made prior to the election. I do not know whether workers' accommodation falls under the remit of the Minister for Housing or the Minister for Lands, but it is part of the housing crisis. At the moment, businesses everywhere in Western Australia are struggling to get employees. If they can get an employee, there is nowhere to house them, particularly in regional WA. Just before the 2021 state election, the Premier spoke about workers' accommodation. In an article headed "Land release for Kalbarri workers accommodation", the Premier was quoted as saying —

"If re-elected, we will accelerate the process to facilitate the construction of a new workers' accommodation facility."

Mr McGowan said COVID-19 had had a "significant impact" on the availability of workers' accommodation in Kalbarri, with the shortage continuing to impact tourism, hospital and small business.

The initiative came after Northampton Shire president Craig Simkin said Kalbarri employers were "screaming out" for the Shire to find a workers' accommodation provider.

It goes on.

This commitment was made on 11 March 2021, when the Premier waltzed in and announced that the government would fast-track workers' accommodation. If there was ever a need for workers' accommodation, it is now. Workers' accommodation is needed so that not only business operators have housing for their workers, but also tradies and builders can be accommodated while they repair the homes and businesses of Kalbarri residents that were damaged by cyclone Seroja, which hit a few months after the election.

Members opposite talk about commitments. One such commitment was —

“If re-elected, we will accelerate the process to facilitate the construction of a new workers' accommodation facility.”

That was about Kalbarri. What is the date today, members?

Mr P.J. Rundle: It is 11 August.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is 11 August and we still have not seen any movement on workers' accommodation for Kalbarri. It is critical now for the rebuild of Kalbarri so that workers can be housed and so that the tourism products that Western Australians want when they visit places such as Kalbarri can be supplied—that is, going to a cafe, getting a coffee, getting something to eat and being able to check into a hotel because the bed sheets are clean or the rooms have been cleaned because there are workers. The list goes on. It is a major issue.

I follow that up with another hotspot in my electorate, being Exmouth. This is a *Pilbara News* article titled “State Election: WA Labor reveals plan to fast-track solution to stem Exmouth staff housing shortage”. Amazing! What date was this? It was 5 March, a week before its same announcement in Kalbarri. It states —

Initiatives to stem the dire shortage of worker accommodation in Exmouth will be fast-tracked under a re-elected Labor government.

The launch for expressions of interest for local companies to build much-needed workers' ...

Several potential sites have already been identified and a future Labor lands minister —

That is the member for Armadale.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes. It has it here. The Premier actually dobbed you in. He knew that the member for Armadale was going to take on that role—the future lands minister, being the member for Armadale —

would grant tenure approval for an appropriate development.

Perhaps the Minister for Lands can enlighten the house and the residents and businesses of Exmouth what actions he has taken to fast-track what the Premier said here—that is, to stem the dire shortage of worker accommodation in Exmouth. It will be interesting to see whether the Minister for Lands will get up to speak in this debate and enlighten the businesses of Exmouth on what action he will take, given that the Premier made sure that he is the minister responsible for delivering much-needed workers' accommodation.

The Exmouth Chamber of Commerce and Industry conducted its own survey and found that more than 200 employees were needed and that more than 200 beds were needed to accommodate the workers' accommodation crisis in Exmouth. The groundwork had been done. The Premier said that the government would fast-track these initiatives under a re-elected Labor government. We have a re-elected Labor government, but we are not seeing too much of that fast-tracking to alleviate the pressures that businesses are under.

I know that quite a few members have travelled up north and have seen that businesses are often closed simply because those owners needed respite. They basically work 24/7 and need a day off. They simply cannot find any employees; and, if they can, there is no accommodation to put those employees in.

That is happening from Exmouth to Coral Bay to Shark Bay to Kalbarri. That is happening inland and particularly in Broome. It is good to see the member for Kimberley here. I am sure her chamber of commerce—which I have met with—has approached her about the need to build workers' accommodation. That is what is needed. The member for Kimberley will be aware that we often hear that Broome is full. But a lot of those hotels are at only about 80 per cent capacity because they are using the other 20 per cent for staff or they cannot fulfil the other 20 per cent because they have no-one to clean the room and provide those services. I am sure the member for Kimberley has received that same feedback. Broome and other tourism hotspots are under a huge pressure. When we hear that tourism is booming, Broome is full, Exmouth is full, Kalbarri is full, Shark Bay is full and Coral Bay is full, the reality is that it is full according to the ability to be as open as one can be. That is because there is a shortage of workers. If there are workers, there is no workers' accommodation for those businesses to maximise their profits from this wonderful opportunity because no-one from Western Australia can go overseas. When the borders are open, people come here from the east coast. That is a great position to be in. We have always wanted our tourism spots to really be booming because of the number of tourists travelling around. But those businesses in those towns cannot maximise their capture of the market because they simply do not have the workers or workers' accommodation to

fulfil demand and keep their businesses open. That then causes stresses and strains on our mental health. Business owners are experiencing burnout and fatigue because there is simply no workers' accommodation for employees if they are able to get those employees.

I hope the Minister for Lands can address some of those issues. Hopefully, he will stand up and talk about the worker accommodation shortages gripping our northern towns. Rents are sky high. Property market sales remain calm still because banks find it extremely hard to lend in regional areas. Not many houses are being built because banks are demanding large deposits to start the process of building a house.

I hope that the Minister for Housing and Minister for Lands work with DevelopmentWA to look at ways to make land that the state owns affordable so that people can build homes. That will be one way to deal with the crisis that comes when people want to live in regional communities but will also allow for Government Regional Officers' Housing to be built, which is a major problem. Nearly every regional town does not have adequate FTEs for government departments simply because there is no housing.

Dr A.D. Buti: Have you spoken to the shire president?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Of?

Dr A.D. Buti: The shire that deals with Kalbarri.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes.

Dr A.D. Buti: What has he said? Has he said that he keeps changing his mind?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: On?

Dr A.D. Buti: On what he requires from DevelopmentWA.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: My understanding of the need in Kalbarri—I will give an example —

Dr A.D. Buti: No. My question was to you. You asked me if I could explain. We have been trying to work with them but the shire president keeps changing his mind on what he wants.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I know this is not you —

Several members interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can I answer that question?

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Minister —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Minister, you have a chance to get up. If I can just respond to what you have just said. The only way I can respond is to the pressure that the Shire of Northampton —

Dr A.D. Buti: The CEO of.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No, and councillors and the whole community. I cannot downplay this. I am not playing this in any other way.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Madam Acting Speaker, the minister has a chance to get up and speak.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Lands, excuse me.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Lands, thank you.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Not only is the member continually interjecting —

Dr A.D. Buti: Minister! Minister!

Dr D.J. HONEY: You are the member for Armadale. Acting Speaker, not only is he continuing to interject —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: — he continued to interject whilst you were speaking.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Member for North West Central, if you do not want interjections, please do not engage in conversation.

Debate Resumed

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I do respect the Minister for Lands and what he has to say, but I want to explain to this house—the Minister for Emergency Services would fully understand this as well—that the pressures that the Shire of Northampton has been under have been immense. The CEO has been criticised unfairly. I think that is just somewhat due to a lack of understanding of the magnitude of the cyclone and the effect it has had right across the Shire of Northampton and the midwest, as well as the shire president and councillors who are bearing the burden of their community which is under huge amount of pressure. Like I said, for most of yesterday Kalbarri had no power. That just adds to the fact that people do not have a roof on their house; they still have a tarp. They had no-one to complain to, so who did they complain to? They complained to the shire president, shire councillors and staff. In times of distress —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the minister hang on a second. It is important that we understand the pressures that people are under.

The shire is working through what is needed, but the community is constantly at it. The government needs to provide support through people on the ground helping out the shire to fully ascertain what is needed for workers accommodation. I will give the minister an example. One assessor needs 200 employees—tradies—to do that company's work. That is one company. That is the issue with workers accommodation. Like I said —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the minister hang on a second. I will let him respond.

Prior to the election a commitment was made by the Premier about workers accommodation to house workers needed by small businesses. That is one commitment that has not been forthcoming. The other issue that has now transpired is the need to house workers—tradies and builders—to rebuild places like Kalbarri and Northampton. There is basically no accommodation, and businesses are trying to survive and get tourists to come back. At the moment, it is a perfect storm of everything going wrong. We can all take on board the pressures that the CEO, councillors and president are under. They are sometimes seen as being bullish or angry, but we must respect the position they are in.

Dr A.D. Buti: I know the Leader of the Opposition got a bit annoyed. I was just trying to state a fact. It was not a criticism of the shire CEO. I was just stating the fact that there had been a change of mind over a period in Exmouth, and Kalbarri actually, about what they wanted, and, of course, the cyclone then changed the position again. DevelopmentWA has been trying to work with both shires to accommodate what they want, but their position has changed. That is partly a result of the cyclone, but it is not only that. It is not just an issue for DevelopmentWA; it is also an issue for the Department of Planning. Both are involved and trying to assist in very trying circumstances, but there has been a change of positions. That is not a criticism; it is just stating the fact.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I thank the Minister for Lands. I look forward to a resolution to what is now a dire situation. We are not even talking just about Kalbarri. Like I said, the population of Exmouth goes from 2 500 people to 20 000 people and that of Kalbarri goes from a couple of hundred to 5 000 or 6 000 people. That goes on right across this great state of ours. Our state is experiencing a wonderful opportunity to grow our businesses, our tourism product and our regional communities. However, they are hamstrung because of a lack of land that is allowed to be developed and built on. Those issues are due to hold-ups with the extinguishment of native title land so that those areas can be developed. There are problems with services such as sewerage, water and power. For example, sewage ponds are inhibitors. If someone wanted to build a house in Exmouth, the sewage treatment facility there would need to be upgraded in order to cater for any new houses. The list goes on. It is the same in Coral Bay.

Dr A.D. Buti: It is very difficult and complex.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is expensive, minister.

I suppose the point is that there are all these massive pressures. I am sure every member in this chamber would visit regional communities for a holiday, especially along the coast, and they know how wonderful they are, but our communities are under huge housing pressures. The lack of investment over the last five years has culminated in this massive problem that will take years to fix. We are not even seeing a plan to build social housing or to take boards off boarded-up houses and renovate and fix them up so people can live in them. We are not seeing the plan for workers accommodation. We are not seeing a plan to upgrade the sewage treatment plant. Land cannot be developed because there is no sewerage connection. Services are lacking and there is no plan from government. There is no regional development plan for our regional communities that will allow those houses to be built. The rental market does not exist in Western Australia at the moment, so where are people living? What is the government's plan? What is the plan to incorporate the private sector to be part of that problem-solving? Where is the government sitting down? Is it sitting down with Shelter WA and other community organisations? Perhaps the minister could have gone to the housing summit at which those ideas were thrown on the table. What plan does the state government have to curb this housing crisis crippling regional communities, crippling the most vulnerable, crippling businesses that cannot get any accommodation for their workers and crippling the growth of our towns and this state because no

housing is forthcoming? That is the problem. That is what we need to hear from the government. The opposition will support a plan moving forward. In the absence of a plan, we will come up with one and take it to the next election. There is a housing crisis gripping every community in this state.

The government departments that the minister is responsible for are all suffering because there is no Government Regional Officers' Housing. Our communities are suffering, which leads to crime, antisocial behaviour and overcrowding. This is what we are facing, and this is what we need the government to fix. It is not just about announcing millions and millions of dollars. We need to see a time frame and a plan that does not just include a number of houses, because utilities are needed to connect to those houses. That is why the government needs a regional development plan. It needs a plan for housing in this state. Ultimately, what plugged the holes of the government in the past was royalties for regions, which provided all those services so we could grow our regional communities. That is what we need to bring back. It would make a huge difference so we could grow our regional towns and fix this housing crisis.

As I said in a speech last week, we see the Premier on the stage doing the bow with all the lights on him. We see the Minister for Health jump on the stage to get his accolades, and he suddenly trips over the curtain. The Minister for Housing comes the other way to get his accolades and also trips over the curtain, and behind the curtain we see the health crisis and the housing crisis. We see the crisis in general that this state is facing because of the smoke and mirrors and the failure to reinvest in our state in the last five years so that we do not have the crisis after crisis that will be the government's downfall. It will be the government's downfall because people cannot find a house. With the health system where it is at, I would watch out, government members. I would be working as much as possible to come up with a plan to fix these massive issues gripping our state. We have a massive health crisis that is stopping our growth and potential as a state. I have faith that the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Lands will work together to create the plan we need so that people have a roof over their heads.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.59 pm]: I, too, rise to support the motion today. I do so because of the massive and can I say unnecessary housing crisis that we have in Western Australia. We have a \$5 billion budget surplus, and we have had a budget surplus year on year. This is due to the GST fix for the state that was organised by Hon Matias Cormann, former minister for —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Thank you, members!

Dr D.J. HONEY: The federal Liberal government fixed the GST inequity for this state, delivering billions of dollars to the state government above its forecast budget.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Police, can you please stop interjecting.

Dr D.J. HONEY: On top of that the government has had a massive windfall from royalties right through the term of this government. Therefore, there is no excuse for where we are. There is no excuse, in particular, because members of this government—the Minister for Police sitting opposite, the new Minister for Housing, the new Minister for Lands and the new Minister for Emergency Services—have sat in this Parliament and heard from this side the crisis that the state faces. I came into this Parliament in 2018 and Tony Krsticevic, the former member for Carine —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: For goodness sake—please, Acting Speaker!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Ministers, it is great that you are all here, but can we please just let the Leader of the Liberal Party speak.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. I would appreciate at least a few fewer needless interjections.

From the first day that I came into this chamber, Tony Krsticevic, who is the former member for Carine, raised the issue of homelessness and he raised it right in the Premier's electorate. I know because I used to be the head of the Kwinana Industries Council and my office was based down that way. I used to drive past there and see that —

Ms A. Sanderson interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Oh; Acting Speaker, please! Can I have some clear air?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): I will get in the chair first!

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Continue.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. I would be grateful for your support.

Tony Krsticevic, the former member for Carine, in this very place raised the homelessness problem in the Premier's own electorate in Rockingham. We had desperate people sleeping rough in the Premier's electorate, on the road that he drives past to get to Parliament from his house. The Premier was alerted to the crisis and the fact that people

had died sleeping rough in that camp because they had nowhere else to go. Do members know how long it took the Premier to visit? I am not talking about the Premier of this state going to visit some far-flung place; I am talking about the Premier in his own electorate. It took the Premier two years to go to visit that camp. For all your foibles around this chamber and for all the things that we may disagree on, I am pretty sure that all of you as local members in that situation would have gone and visited those people in that community, like I visit people who are homeless in my community and discuss issues with them. I know that you would do that. It took this arrogant Premier two years to go to visit people who were homeless in his own electorate. It took some considerable time after that for the matter to be dealt with, and then only because the then member for Carine was dogged in highlighting the issue of homelessness. He highlighted the issue of homelessness not only down in Rockingham, but also right across metropolitan Perth and this state.

I have some sympathy for the new Minister for Housing. I know that the new Minister for Housing is passionate about this issue and wants to do something about it, but we are not talking about a new government. We are not talking about a government that has just come in and is trying to deal with issues from the past. We are talking about a government that is four and a half years in, and we are now hearing about plans or plans to plan. We are now hearing about things that might be done. This crisis sits at the feet of the Labor government. This government has simply been completely inadequate in dealing with this issue over the last four and a half years. As I say, I know that the current minister is passionate about this topic. I have had private discussions with him about the homelessness issue in my electorate. I will not go into that in detail. I do not play politics on serious issues like this. I dealt with this in the same way I did with the sports clubs in my electorate when I invited the Minister for Sport and Recreation down for a private meeting. I must say that I was a bit disturbed that the minister would then say that I tried to use that for some political pointscoring. I did not try to use that invitation to meet me to my political advantage; I invited him down to privately discuss matters in my electorate and to introduce him to people in the sporting clubs who needed some help and assistance. That is exactly the same way that I respect the current housing minister. I know that he is trying to do something.

The problem with this government is it is paralysed by an emperor who makes all the decisions. We get the reports. The thing about humans is that people talk about things, and we hear what happens in cabinet. I can tell you what government members do in cabinet: “Keep your mouth shut”; “Keep your head down; otherwise you’ll get it kicked off!” That is what we hear.

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: We will find out! If you are in the chosen group, you are fine; do not put your head up otherwise. Whatever this Premier’s characterisation of the former Premier was —

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Honestly! Whatever this Premier’s characterisation of the former Premier was, he clearly was enamoured with the model.

Mr D.A.E. Scaife interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am glad to hear from you, member for Cockburn. I am not surprised.

In my electorate of Cottesloe, one in 30 residents lives in social housing—that is 3.2 per cent. The great moral crusader, the member for Cockburn, has only 2.4 per cent social housing in his electorate.

Mr D.A.E. Scaife interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes—and we know that you have a chip on your shoulder because you went to a public school and had to put up with private schoolkids at university; we have heard it all! Member, let us go on. There is only 2.4 per cent social housing in the City of Cockburn. There is 3.2 per cent social housing in my electorate, and I passionately care about those people. I go down to the loners’ lunch. I talk with them, I discuss the issues and I try to help those people with their problems. The City of Rockingham has only 3.1 per cent social housing. Armadale definitely has a bigger issue with 4.2 per cent social housing, which is one per cent more than the case in Cottesloe. This issue affects us all, and we see that right across the state.

But after four years, what is this government’s response? This government reduced social housing by 1 372. We did not make up that number. That number was in answers to a question asked by Hon Steve Martin on 17 June 2021. There were 44 087 public houses on 30 June 2017, and it is now down to 42 715. This is the party, the bleeding heart socialists, who care about those people doing it tough —

Ms S. Winton interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Do you know what, member for Wanneroo? If you think you have won —

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a point of order, Madam Acting Speaker. I am really getting this problem on my left here; would you mind telling the member for, I think, Wanneroo to respect the member on his feet?

Debate Resumed

Dr D.J. HONEY: If the member for Wanneroo thinks that the government won the election on its response to social housing, she is delusional. There is a good chance it will be one of the things that it will lose the next election on, the way it is going. For all the arrogance and hubris, in four years this government went backwards. After four and a half years, this government houses fewer people in social housing than the previous government did. Government members should be ashamed about that—all of you, because this is your government.

Despite sitting on a massive surplus throughout this term of government, members opposite have simply not stepped up to do their job. They have forced people onto the streets by selling public houses and not replacing them. We on this side know that public housing stock has to be turned over. We know that it is part of the business and that was happening under the provisions of the previous government, but that money should not go into consolidated revenue; it should go into building more houses. The situation now is that, because the federal and state governments have pump-primed the construction industry so much, it will be almost impossible for this government to catch up, simply because we do not have the workers to do the work. All the available workforce is tied up in residential projects. I am told that the pipeline is probably two to three years long. It will be an enormous challenge because this government did not do anything in the last four years to properly deal with the issue. In fact, it sold houses. I feel sorry for the challenge that is being presented to the new Minister for Housing because he has been handed a suicide pass. I know he is passionate, but he has been given an enormously difficult task by a government that did nothing in the last four years.

I can compare this term of government with that of the Liberal–National government, during which 6 000 additional public houses were built. This government has run down the figures. I refer to a report called *Ending homelessness in Western Australia 2021 report: Key findings*, which was published on 3 August 2021 by the Centre for Social Justice at the University of Western Australia. The report shows the number of clients accessing specialist homelessness services in Western Australia who were homeless or on an entry to support. In July 2017, there were 2 251 people; there are now 3 099 people. That is a massive increase of 750 people seeking that support. The figures show not just what we see on the streets, but real numbers. We know that the most vulnerable people in society are victims of homelessness. The report shows that, in this state, almost 30 per cent of homeless people are Aboriginal people. That group already suffers enormous disadvantage in a number of aspects. Almost one in three homeless people is Aboriginal. They face a whole range of challenges, which I will not go through because of time restraints. More than 25 per cent of homeless people overall had an educational attainment to only year 9 or lower. These are people with real challenges in a whole range of areas—particular challenges with particular issues. Two-thirds of homeless people are male and one-third are female.

We have heard about the crisis in presentations to emergency departments. This is the government's own doing, exactly as the member for North West Central outlined very clearly earlier on. One of the root causes of stress in our hospital system is that, according to the report, 48.7 per cent of homeless people had been to an emergency department due to not feeling emotionally well or because of their nerves. More than half, 58.7 per cent, reported a diagnosis of depression, and 52.3 per cent reported anxiety. Almost one-third of these homeless people reported a diagnosis of a post-traumatic stress disorder and 26.2 per cent had been diagnosed with psychosis. The report further states that accident and emergency departments were visited an average of 3.5 times per homeless person in the six months prior to the survey. It is exactly as the member for North West Central said for these people who are living rough. There is no chicken and egg here. When people are forced out onto the streets, they suffer anxiety and depression. Their medical conditions are not treated properly. Because of that, they end up in emergency departments. These are not my statistics; they are from a respected research group based at the University of Western Australia. It reports that a substantially larger number of people are out on the streets seeking help during this term of government. These are the people who are turning up in emergency departments. If I compare the number of hospitalisations, there is a dramatic increase for people who are living rough on the streets. When we talk about the hospital crisis, we can say that it is intimately, intrinsically linked to this government's failure to deal with homelessness.

Geraldton has been a focus. Just a couple of weeks ago, I spent four days in Geraldton talking to people in the community. We had what we call our winter love-in there. We went out and spent a lot of time talking to people in the Geraldton community. Overall, Geraldton is doing well. The economy in Geraldton is doing well—certainly better than when I spent some time there about 12 months ago. Certainly, more shops are open and people are generally buoyant. However, there is another side to it. As the member for North West Central pointed out, almost 1 000 people in that area are on the streets. There are statistics and statistics, and we can talk about the houses. I went to have a look at the issues in the suburbs. I heard what the minister said today about those houses but, in Geraldton, the Australian Red Cross is giving out tents so that homeless people have somewhere to live. That is what they are doing in the great city of Geraldton, with an economy that is otherwise doing well. The Red Cross is handing out tents. I went to the old Batavia Motor Inne, which was a property deal gone wrong. The Batavia Motor Inne is like something out of a dystopian movie of some futuristic nightmare.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: In this prosperous community, we have desperate people. I saw some of the people in that area and a couple of my colleagues spoke to them. I did not want to go there as a big group because I think sometimes people in that situation feel humiliated, but I heard about their conversations and I spoke to people in the community who regularly interact with the people in the Batavia Motor Inne. The poor people have put up boards to try to make themselves secure. They have to carry bottles of water up flights of stairs in order to flush the toilets. Those people would happily live in that boarded-up house if it was available. I accept what the minister said. There may be some circumstances in which that is not possible. I went to see houses that were only five years old; they were beautiful in their external appearance. All the houses I saw were dramatically better than the house I lived in when I was a child.

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I learn and I look.

Mr J.N. Carey: Those houses that the member referred to were seriously vandalised. As a result, some of the internal materials were not appropriate for public housing tenants. They will be refurbished, but that is the point I made; on a simple assessment, you may simply say that we should just do it instantly, but sometimes there are very clear reasons.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I accept that point, minister, and I accept that this is not a trivial issue. I accept the point the minister is making, but we are four and a half years in. Those houses were not boarded-up yesterday. I spoke to people in the community and they said that they had been progressively boarded-up over years. The government has had time to do something about that. I heard the argument about the wraparound services requirement, but, again, this is no mystery. We know, as a generalisation, that probably half the people who are living in social housing have mental health and/or drug issues. It is not their fault. There are unfortunate people in the community. It is worse for them, obviously, that they have those afflictions. That is why a holistic approach is required. That is why four and a half years into government, it should have those wraparound services. The Minister for Community Services is responsible for that area. In conjunction with the Minister for Housing, that is the job of the Minister for Community Services. What do we hear from the Minister for Community Services in this place? We hear the Minister for Community Services talking about a plan and what will happen in six months, a year or two years. That minister has been the minister for four and a half years. I have heard that from this minister for the whole time she has been a minister. I know that the Minister for Community Services is a compassionate person. I do not doubt her level of compassion or that of most of the people in this room. But having compassion and saying in a great voice how much a person cares makes no difference. When in government, the government must do something about it. It actually has to go in and do something about it, and this government has not done enough about it in the last four and a half years.

There is a large population at the Batavia Motor Inne. When I visited that dwelling, I saw that they had done a pretty good job of setting up, as best they could, a secure housing apartment. I know there are periodic issues. I was talking to the mayor, who, as it transpires, is a neighbour. The mayor interacts with those people. Typically, the Batavia Motor Inne does not have horrendous problems. There are sometimes problems when people come and visit and so on, but that is why there are wraparound services in those places. It was fascinating to go there.

I have gone all over this state since I took on this leadership role. As an opposition, we do what we can in Parliament, but our job is to get out and listen to people and learn and help when we can. Mostly, our job is to make sure that we hold this government to account. I have been to Kununurra, Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, through the Pilbara, Ningaloo, the Murchison, Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Bunbury, Albany, Esperance and Mt Barker, near the wonderful town of Cranbrook in the south west of Western Australia. The simple fact is that in every single one of those communities, homelessness was an issue. I visited Esperance, which is a wealthy town. Any member who has been there knows that it is a beautiful town that has benefited from government expenditure on amenities and facilities. In Esperance tonight there will be at least a dozen people sleeping rough. Those people are sleeping around the town and cannot get housing. Again, I spoke to the shire and the community groups there. These are not people who cannot be housed because they cannot handle housing properly; they just cannot get houses. We cannot have that in a beautiful, wealthy community.

I see that the Minister for Community Services has announced a \$6 million program to work with the shires. That is fine, but \$6 million is 0.001 per cent of the \$5 billion surplus. The government is hardly reaching deeply into its pocket to work with the shires. Since when has providing housing been a mainstream function of the shires? The shires are desperate. I have seen that in Halls Creek, Kununurra, Broome and Fitzroy Crossing. In Fitzroy Crossing, the local prescribed body corporates have got together to build their own housing. They are desperate for housing in that community because the government cannot help. When a house comes on the market in Geraldton, it basically disappears in a day, which is incredible. I drove around the community there. There are a lot of DevelopmentWA blocks with beautiful big DevelopmentWA signs on them. Do members know what they all are? They are all bush, and have been for the term of this government. The government is big on signs, but not on developing the land that is required for housing in that town.

The tragedy of this debate is that every member on this side could speak for an hour on this topic and only scratch the surface. I hear all about the plans for the future, but the government has to accept that for four and a half years it

has dealt with this issue completely inadequately. Despite the well-meaning ministers in their roles, we have seen nothing to indicate that this government is treating this problem with the seriousness that it deserves. We know that there need to be at least 3 500 new social houses just to cope with the backlog and get back to the position that the government found itself in at the start of its term, given the growth in requirements. That is the challenge before this government. As I said, despite the well-meaning nature of individuals, I have no optimism whatsoever that this government will be able to deliver this, and the government should be ashamed of its poor performance in this area.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [5.26 pm]: I back up and support the members for North West Central and Cottesloe in support of the member for North West Central's motion that this house condemns the Labor government for its failure to prioritise housing in the last five years of government, creating a housing crisis the state has never seen before and triggering significant economic and social consequences. I think the member for Cottesloe summed it up very well: every member in this house could quite easily talk on this topic for an hour without even blinking because all members, regional and metropolitan, have issues and are getting contacted, if not on a daily basis, at least every couple of days.

The thing that sums it up for me is the statement made by the Minister for Housing today in question time when he said that we have lost over 300 houses due to the government's decision but that it was the right decision. I have to question that. There is a question mark there.

As the member for Cottesloe said, in the government's last term, it took great pride in blaming the previous government for the financial situation. This government spent about three and a half years blaming everyone else but would not take any responsibility. Now the government is in its second term and has been in government for four and a half years. It is predicted to have a \$5 billion surplus yet the health department is in crisis and now the housing department is in crisis. It is time that these ministers took responsibility.

The first thing I want to concentrate on is the Government Regional Officers' Housing situation in the regional areas in particular. That is an important part of the housing stock in this state. Hon Colin de Grussa asked a question in the upper house on 10 August about what the total number of GROH stock was as at June 2021, just to get a handle on what is happening. The total number of housing stock is 5 040 properties, but we have 217 additional requests for GROH from client agencies. A couple of the highlights are the 88 houses for the Department of Education, which is still on the waiting list, and the 59 houses for the WA Police Force.

We have seen real examples of public services in our regional communities in real crisis. A principal in one of our schools has left. We need a replacement principal. We advertised but, lo and behold, we do not have a house for that principal. In the past, places such as Nyabing in my electorate of Roe have struggled to get principals or teachers. They have to be put up in other people's houses or in the hotel down the road and not just for a week or two, but for months on end. We are seeing a critical shortage of housing. It is starting to create problems for not only the Department of Education, but also our police force. We heard examples today. The member for Cottesloe mentioned places such as Fitzroy Crossing and Broome, which are starting to have real crime issues due to the housing situation. The problem is twofold: we have crime issues because homeless people are on the streets creating the crime and, at the same time, the Western Australia Police Force cannot find places for its officers to live in. It is a twofold situation. I am really concerned about it.

The other part of the problem is the maintenance situation. The member for North West Central has mentioned the situation relating to Pindan's housing maintenance contract many times. I am pleased to hear that that contract has now been reassigned. I believe the Minister for Housing needs to look at the whole structure of the maintenance program right around the state. I can refer to areas such as the great southern.

Ms A. Sanderson interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The Minister for Commerce got her legislation moved through the house just as the Pindan situation was happening. There was no protection for those subcontractors, and now we are seeing the results. We have seen plenty of people left out of pocket. I do not want to focus on that.

I want to talk about these contracts. Houses in places such as Katanning, Nyabing, Kojonup and Wagin are being maintained by a company in Bunbury. Yesterday one of my constituents—a small business owner, an electrician, in one of my local towns—rang me because he is distraught about the amount of compliance and government red tape that he has to go through every week trying to sort out issues. He just wants to fix houses and do his job. He was becoming so frustrated that he rang me yesterday. He was quite distraught. We have a scenario in which big companies are located in towns three to four hours away from where they have contracts, and they try to subcontract the work to someone and pick up a bit of profit along the way. The Minister for Housing needs to look at restructuring these maintenance contracts so that local people can carry out the work on GROH properties and the like quickly and efficiently.

A classic example occurred during the winter break. One of my constituents rang me. His daughter was visiting on holidays. She lives in the Mullewa–Morawa region. Her house was broken into when she was on holiday, seven hours away. It was not dealt with properly by the department in the first place. The department was trying to tell her that she needed to drive for seven hours to secure her house. Her father rang me because his daughter was distraught, firstly, because she had been broken into and, secondly, because the department was trying to demand that she secure her place, which had not been secured properly by it in the first place. They are the issues.

We have crime issues in the north west. We have many young teachers who are keen to work. They love coming out to the regions. They think they are making a difference, and they are on many occasions. They are becoming disillusioned because they are under threat from people breaking into their houses. They love their school and their community, but they get to the point of not wanting to stay any longer because they are frightened. We have come to a point out on the lands at which we are really struggling for teachers. We now have the flying squadron coming in from the Department of Education and the like. Because of the situation that exists with the housing scenario, people are too frightened to stay in their own houses.

The number of GROH dwellings in the great southern fell from 274 in 2015–16 to 226 in 2020. In the south west, the figure fell from 243 houses to 188 in 2020. They are the figures we are seeing. In regional WA between 2015 and 2020, 635 GROH properties were sold. I do not know how the government can explain that. The minister was talking about social housing and the like. When we have a shortage of police officers and teachers coming out to the regions, how can the minister stand up and say, “It’s not a problem. We’ve sold 635 properties, but things are going well”?

Mr J.N. Carey: Member, do you know the biggest sale of GROH housing in the wheatbelt, what year that was? It was in 2015–2016, under your government.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The Labor Party is in government now. I am talking about the fact that it has been in government for four and a half years. It was well recorded by Hon Steve Martin in the other place that over 1 300 houses have gone. We have real issues with not only our policemen and our teachers, but also our doctors and other health staff. The risk of moving to a rural town is too high unless housing is affordable and secure.

As the member for Cottesloe pointed out, four properties were available for rent in Esperance on Monday at an average of \$300 a week. Up to a dozen or 15 people are homeless at any time on any night in Esperance, which is unheard of. I have looked at the situation in some of our other towns. In Narrogin today, only one house is listed for rent on the real estate website. In Katanning, there are five houses, two of which are 3-by-1, for \$650 a week. We will not find anyone there. There are no houses for rent in Lake Grace; there is one in Kojonup, Wagin and Cranbrook; two in Ravensthorpe; and none in Pingrup, Ongerup, Williams, Dumblebung, Hopetoun, Gnowangerup and Darkan. There are 10 houses for rent in the electorate of Roe, which spans 106 000 square kilometres. This is a real issue. We have heard about the government’s solution—the WA recovery plan. In 2020, the great southern recovery plan promised \$80 million for targeted maintenance programs for regional social, remote and government worker housing properties, including 200 homes in the great southern region, and \$141.7 million to refurbish social housing across WA’s ageing housing stock, including 30 homes in the great southern region. I am looking forward to it, minister. It is great to make these announcements, we hear them all the time, but we are not seeing it on the ground. That is what I am concerned about, and I am very concerned when I have people in Esperance ringing me up to talk about how many people are homeless every night.

I refer to my favourite subject, of course. As the minister knows, it is the Katanning Regional Emergency Accommodation Centre. I will continue to persevere to get him and the Minister for Community Services to come and have a look at that situation, because it is a great model of what the government could do to fund emergency accommodation. It is a great model for those families, especially those women facing domestic violence. I certainly look forward to hosting the Minister for Housing the next time he is in the Katanning region. I nearly got him there the other week when he was in Tambellup, but it was not to be. I look forward to the minister visiting us at some stage in the not-too-distant future.

The other thing I want to briefly talk about today is the strain that homelessness is putting on the mental health system. We have seen that in the last couple of days, and I was pleased today to hear the Minister for Health recognising the mental health situation. I look forward to seeing that package come to fruition in the state budget. There are some really interesting figures. Clearly, we have a dire shortage of mental health beds in WA, and, sadly, people experiencing homelessness are among some of the very long stayers in mental health wards. A Mental Health Commission inpatient survey from 2019 pointed out something that was quite surprising to me. That survey found that of the 656 mental health inpatients occupying a bed at the time of the survey, 178, or 27.1 per cent, were deemed unable to be discharged because of a lack of suitable community-based accommodation or mental health support services. The Royal Perth Bentley Group, which keeps a history of mental health hospital admissions, found that 417 individuals accumulated 23 647 psychiatric bed days in a two-year period. The cost of this to the health system is \$35.8 million in psych bed days. That is equivalent to \$86 000 per person. Those are obviously very concerning figures. As I said, 27.1 per cent of those with mental health issues were homeless. An example given was that the cumulative healthcare costs for three individuals over a 33-month period were extreme and placed the health system under extreme pressure. We need to treat homelessness as a combined health and social issue.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It would be great to see the Ministers for Mental Health and Housing combine to work out a strategy to deal with both mental health and homelessness, because they are linked. We have seen some of the stats that the member for Cottesloe spoke about, such as 9 000 people in WA are experiencing homelessness every

day and 1 041 people were homeless in Perth and Fremantle in May 2021. Of course, recent examples have been coming thick and fast. Foodbank Australia has seen an increase in its usual number of customers. Anglicare WA has seen the demand for emergency relief and food assistance triple in 2021, and, of course, there was the recent example of the Salvos having to pay car registrations for people to sleep in their cars. That is a short-term solution, but I think our community is in a sad state of affairs when the Salvation Army has to pay car registrations so that people who are on the street can sleep in their cars.

There have been many recent newspaper articles reporting on some of these issues. I know that we have had the COVID scenario. We are seeing a scenario involving both landlords and tenants. Some tenants do not want to pay their rent and then their landlords say, “Well, if they’re not going to pay, I would rather leave my house vacant.” I am sure that this has added to the situation. It is not really anyone’s fault; it is just a scenario that has played out, but I am really concerned.

As members of the opposition, we know that these are extraordinary times, and I know that the culmination of many factors has caused an avalanche of issues, but on this occasion we are just focusing on housing. We have identified this as probably the second-most major issue that the government has on its hands after health. But what has been missing from this Labor government is any discernible strategy to soften the blow within our communities. These individuals are in real crisis. This cannot be solved by playing the blame game, as I have said. Members opposite are in government now and have been for four and a half years. They have had time to build a strategy. The government can own the solution to these serious problems, but what we have had so far is a lot of yelling and a lot of screaming; we saw it in question time today. I look forward to this minister providing a solution.

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Housing) [5.46 pm]: Given that we have listened to the opposition for nearly two hours, respectfully, I would like to map out our government’s agenda, and also raise plenty of the issues that the opposition has decided on for a prong of attack. I think the first issue that is really important is the opposition’s definition of a crisis. What is very clear is that the opposition’s definition of a crisis is built on the 17 000 people on the waiting list. Members will have noticed in question time today that members of the opposition said that repeatedly as one of the bases for their crisis. What is extraordinary about that is when we actually look at the statistics and the evidence, we see that the largest housing crisis was of their own making back in 2010. Let us be very clear on that: the waiting list at its height had 24 136 people. That cannot be denied. It is on the public record. Members opposite say we are at a crisis at 17 000.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: I did not interject for you, member.

Dr D.J. Honey: Your colleagues did!

Mr J.N. CAREY: I showed you all respect and I listened attentively. That is the case.

Dr D.J. Honey: Fair enough.

Mr J.N. CAREY: If a waiting list of 17 000 is problematic, what was 24 000? Apparently, that was a walk in the park.

We have to understand that that was quite an extraordinary time. Actually, we also have to look at the wait times, because, under our government, the wait times have significantly reduced. Again, the peak was under the previous government, when wait times increased to nearly a year longer than they are now, peaking at 158 weeks in 2014–15. In fact, wait times were worse almost every year under the previous Liberal–National coalition government than they are now. Also, bailiff evictions were higher under the Liberal–National government in 2015–16. The opposition also likes to crow about significant investment in public housing. Again, as I said on the public record, the most significant funding commitment in Western Australia was part of the Kevin Rudd federal government commitment to fuel massive social housing expansion across Western Australia. I note that remote communities have also suffered. We faced cost pressures because the commonwealth yanked out \$146 million from the system annually. We have invested nearly \$200 million a year in remote housing, but \$147 million has been taken out of the system every year thanks to the federal government. These statistics cannot be ignored. This is the reality of the record of the previous government. We also inherited ageing stock. The average age of the public housing stock is around 30 years—a proportion are 40 years old—and that has left us with significant challenges that the state has had to deal with.

We heard the member for North West Central also make claims of bullying or threats. I want to be very clear on the public record: I have an excellent relationship with all my stakeholders. Not once have I, nor am I aware of any minister who has, made a threat or bullied any advocacy organisation in the social sector field and those that I engage with. I have disagreements, but they are respectful, and I have done that. I understand that social housing agencies have to put their best foot forward—I get that—but I have to focus on pragmatic and practical actual deliveries. I raised the proposal by Shelter WA that suggested 157 one-bedroom units in Carnarvon. I said that that was inappropriate and not warranted. It is very easy to simply go along and say that we should pluck out any type of land, but the delivery is far more nuanced than either some advocacy groups wish to recognise or the opposition wishes to recognise.

I note that it was the previous government, the Liberal–National coalition, that began an aggressive sales program worth \$100 million because of the debt collected under the Government Regional Officers' Housing program. We paused those sales. I note that there has been an increase in the number of GROH houses, whether leased or purchased or by other means, of around 2.6 per cent, or 129 GROH houses. As the minister, I brought together for the first time a forecasting group to predict and look at future trends, to look at eligibility requirements and to see whether we can get better outcomes from the GROH system.

The member for North West Central mentioned there was demand for an extra 200 places. That does not necessarily mean that there is that demand right now; it could mean demand in the future. We ask agencies what they need, and, of course, we go out and use a multitude of means, including spot purchasing or leasing, to meet that future demand.

Geraldton was raised repeatedly. I think that this really demonstrates the complexity of the issue at hand. I have said it before and I say it again sincerely: it is not simply a matter of plonking people in a refurbished house. There has to be good wraparound services, like the Thrive program—a \$58 million program—and not those like the opposition suggested for the First Nations homelessness project, which is a \$50 000 request. The funding of that million-dollar program was cut by the federal government. We have our own program of \$58 million that will substantially invest in wraparound services. I am very clear about Geraldton: properties were made available but people did not want to move into them. That shows that we are facing a bigger symptomatic problem—that is, particular precincts, streets and hubs are not attractive for people to live in, or there is a perception of that. That is a significant struggle. As I said, there is real complexity to this. Do we make a decision that ultimately there should be demolition or private sales, recognising the impact on the social housing stock, or do we make a decision to refurbish and work to make the suburbs more attractive so that more people will be willing to live there? I think that is being honest to the community and the public about the problems and challenges that we face in the delivery of social housing. I do not think that there is anything wrong with that. As I mentioned with Brownlie Towers, I do not, as the member for Roe suggested, celebrate the closure of those 300 homes; but, ultimately, that decision was the best outcome for the local community in the area given the antisocial behaviour problems. It is not as simplistic a policy as the opposition consistently tries to paint. That is the dishonesty we have seen in this debate. I say sincerely and respectfully that it is not simply about refurbishing boarded-up houses so that we can get them back into the system and then all the problems will be fixed. I am demonstrating that it is quite nuanced and that, from street to street, it is quite complex.

Today, I met the managers and directors from all regions across Western Australia. I have been criticised because I went to Kalgoorlie and met the regional managers and teams up there. On every regional trip, when I meet local governments, I make a real effort to engage with frontline staff to talk about what is working and what is not working. They actually show me some of the boarded-up houses. I give the example of Kalgoorlie. There was a set of group units and dwellings, and because of antisocial behaviour, they made the decision to close some of those units because it was the best social behaviour outcome that they could generate. That again shows the complexity of this issue. When we see boarded-up houses, we must remember that conscious decisions have been made by regional staff that are in the best interests of those units. The other complexity that the opposition again fails to recognise is that it is not just about plonking people into public housing; it is about getting the right mix. In Kalgoorlie, we cannot put families from different regions in the same social housing complex because it might generate significant social issues. I acknowledge those issues. We are saying that this is a complex matter and we want to have a conversation with the community. I will not gloss over it like the opposition does. There is no recognition of this. It is very simply black-and-white politics and policy from the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party.

We are trying to seriously grapple with the complexities of the delivery of public housing. We have given a commitment to move away from enclaves or high-density public towers and to move to integrated approaches across density and suburbs. Even that is difficult to achieve. Developers often flag with me that they worry about the level of public housing in joint developments. That is a serious concern too. Developers say, "If you put too much in, then we won't be able to flog the other product." I think that is sad. I am deeply passionate about public housing. Public housing is the most transformational experience for people. It provides people with a roof over their head. It gives them security and an opportunity to look at their lives, to focus and to be able to, perhaps, go into training and education because they no longer have to worry about not having a roof over their head. I am a passionate advocate of public housing, and this a priority, but in our first term of government we had to make some difficult decisions.

I want to address the assertion by the member for North West Central that there has been no construction in the Gascoyne. I am advised that in our five years we have completed 38 houses in the Gascoyne region, including 18 social houses and 20 key worker houses. Additionally, we have purchased another seven houses in this area. I wanted to correct some of the statements made on the public record by the opposition.

I also want to talk about the broader picture. We are in extraordinary times. That is the one thing that I can agree on with the member for Roe, and I think he acknowledged that. We have seen COVID hit. At first we brought in the moratorium on rent increases. If members remember, we were criticised for that, but I think it was the right policy decision. We were criticised by landlords. This is the other complexity of housing policy. That moratorium provided certainty for renters, but, of course, some landlords said they were mum-and-dad investors facing negative equity and the moratorium was putting off rent increases. Once the moratorium lifted, it was natural that we would see a correction in prices. We are also seeing an extraordinary increase in housing supply, but no opposition member

acknowledged this. There was no reference to the statistics of housing supply. This picture is critical. We had 27 000 building approvals in the last financial year. We were told there was no plan at all, but there was an economic stimulus plan. There was a deliberate plan to boost the construction industry because of the fears about a recovery in a pandemic environment. That had a significant impact, and in the regions too. That was again ignored by the opposition. It did not refer to the statistics at all. There were extraordinary increases. There were around 4 000 new home building approvals in the regions. There was around a 118 per cent increase. In Albany, there was a 137 per cent increase. The list goes on and on. We have seen extraordinary growth in building approvals in the regions. On top of that, we had our Keystart loan. Keystart is a proud Labor program that is about giving first home owners a chance. We have seen 4 000 approvals, which is significant growth that we have not seen for a long time. There were 27 000 building approvals and 4 000 Keystart loans. These are extraordinary figures. As we saw in *The West Australian* this week, many of those were for first home buyers. For the first time in their lives, Western Australians are grasping the opportunity thanks to the state building bonus grant and the federal government grant. I will read from an article in *The West Australian* headed “Year of the First Home Buyer: First home frenzy as 71 houses selling in WA each day”, which states —

The past 12 months have shaped up as the Year of the First Home Buyer, with remarkable figures revealing more than 100 people joined the property ladder in WA every single day.

That is fantastic and shows an incredible growth in affordable homes. That will provide relief. As I have already stated, that relief has not been projected by the state government. That was done by the very credible Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, which came out with a report that clearly stipulated that because of this huge growth in building approvals, there will be an estimated 10 000 homes coming back onto the rental market. That is for the obvious reason that people will leave those homes and go into new homes, and we are starting to see that come through. That is good news for Western Australia.

We are cognisant of the other challenges of the COVID pandemic, a booming economy and WA being a safe place to live. With the state of the borders, we are obviously facing skills shortages. The Premier has had a skills summit and there are a number of new measures. Some of those are really small, but they are really tailored, down to looking at drivers’ licences for apprentices who may have fallen out of the system. Some of these are really good ideas that will help get people back into the labour market to assist with delivery of both public homes and those in the private market. As part of that, last year under the Minister for Education and Training we had quick short-term courses in bricklaying, because that was obviously a clear need. We will continue to look at other measures we can take in the future to deal with that skills shortage. But that is a reality.

I have to say this: I would rather face this scenario than what was predicted when COVID first hit. There were some quite dire projections about the state of the economy. In fact, we are in different circumstances. We have the strongest economy in Australia. We are a safe haven. People want to come back here. That is even related in the migration figures. The Australian Bureau of Statistics released data that showed that 1 639 more people moved to WA than left for interstate destinations in the first three months of this year to March, which was the biggest number for a quarter since 2013. Other states had an exodus. We are in extraordinary circumstances, and I would rather still be trying to meet the challenges we face than the alternative, which was the economic recession predicted by some economists. The state government brought in the building bonus grant. We also brought in the \$116 million regional land booster program, which is about providing discounted land in the regions; I am advised that there are currently 700 lots available in the market.

We also have three ministers—the Minister for Lands, Minister for Planning and me—who are working together as part of the residential housing and land supply committee to look at how we can further tackle the issues that have been described in the regions, which I am acutely aware of, whether it is about potentially using future land or other measures. For example, in the future we will be meeting with the alliance of major regional councils.

We are also making a significant investment of nearly \$1 billion in public housing, social housing, affordable homes and homelessness initiatives. That includes \$319 million for the social housing economic recovery package, which is part of the COVID recovery program. Like everyone, we are meeting the challenge of securing contractors because it is a heated construction market, and I have said that on the public record saying. But there is a very strong and genuine funding commitment there. We have seen significant and real investments to alleviate homelessness, with nearly \$100 million a year going into homelessness services. We have had significant new investments. We are building two Common Ground facilities that will provide wraparound services. Last week, we opened the 100-bed Aboriginal-controlled homeless transition facility in the city. We are opening a medical respite centre for rough sleepers coming out of hospitals who may be experiencing homelessness. These are all real, tangible and meaningful actions that will change people’s lives.

The member for Cottesloe said, “It’s just a plan in a plan in a plan.” That is not the case at all. There is real money and it is all part of the Housing First Homelessness Initiative approach, which is the approach that the previous government did not take. The previous government had an ad hoc approach, but our Housing First approach is simple. At its heart, it is about saying that we need to help people get off the streets. They may face serious mental health issues and drug and alcohol addictions, but we get them into supported accommodation with intensive

wraparound services. What is critical and why that is different from the old model is that previously we used to have high barriers, so people could not even get off the street, or once they got off the street and into accommodation, they fell out of the system. Therefore, the Common Ground facilities and the Housing First program are about providing intensive wraparound services, including onsite, to make sure that people do not fall out of those houses. This model has been successfully done around the world; for example, Melbourne, which is far ahead of us, has demonstrated that people have been sustained in their houses. Melbourne has some quite extraordinary figures. The previous government could have adopted the Housing First approach. It did not; it just did bits here and there. I notice that members opposite keep quoting Australian Bureau of Statistics figures that relate back to their time. The figures of 9 000 and 1 600 were actually from 2016.

I am really proud of this government in that we have taken an evidence-based approach to housing, and we are now applying that to all significant investments in not only the city, but also Geraldton and Bunbury. On top of that, we have made new commitments for Indigenous-supported accommodation in Geraldton and the city. This is significant because people can be coming into city areas for cultural reasons or health services. Sometimes those people may sleep with relatives or they are out and about, so we want to provide culturally appropriate accommodation that, again, provides a support service. That is Aboriginal-supported accommodation and we will have one facility in Geraldton and one in the city. I believe the tender is out now for Geraldton. We can see significant rolling investment in the homelessness field and in public and social housing.

I will turn back to the complexities about delivery. This example is from my electorate, and again I come back to the nuances. I was doorknocking in a public housing complex in Perth, which had about 14 tenants. I was getting a number of complaints from some of the public housing tenants and, sadly, those complaints were about a tenant who was under the Housing First program. This again demonstrates the complexity of the fact that we got someone off the street, provided support and put them into the public housing system, yet other tenants were demanding that that tenant be evicted. As a government, we do not want to see evictions. We want to have every supportive measure in place that we can to help people stay within the public system. Contrary to some of the reports by advocacy groups, the evictions prior to and post-COVID are relatively the same. This is why we have the \$58 million Thrive program, which provides support for tenants so that they can stay in the system.

The other challenge that we have faced, and the member for Roe mentioned it, was maintenance. For the future, I will look at how we can get a better bang for our buck in maintenance. Of course, I want us to always do better, but coming in as a new minister, I faced a major challenge in the midwest in dealing with the collapse of the Pindan Group. That was a serious issue for me because had we decided to terminate that contract—I say this respectfully—priority 1 and priority 2 maintenance jobs would have stopped. They would have stopped overnight and we would have had people at risk in that public housing.

Mr V.A. Catania: Sorry, minister; will you take this interjection? My understanding was Housing were directly employing the plumber or electrician on those 1s and 2s during that period of time of uncertainty with Pindan. So, Housing were directly employing those subcontractors to do that work.

Mr J.N. CAREY: I am advised that it was through Pindan that the contract negotiations continued. The point I am making, member, and I say this sincerely, is if we had terminated that contract, we would not have seen the outcome that we see today. I appreciate that the member has his politics to make, but it is fair to say that by holding steadfast, by working through with EY Australia, we delivered the best outcome for the midwest because we were able to maintain services to those properties. These were critical-risk jobs for tenants. We were also able to keep 90 people in jobs that otherwise would not have been maintained had we terminated the contract, because there would have been no potential sale to Programmed to see the continuation of that staff.

I want to say this, member for North West Central: I have had positive approaches and I will read out one for the public record right now. It states —

Good Morning John

Wanted to personally thank you for your unwavering support recently for Pindan Asset Management continuation of the Housing Authority Head Maintenance Contract under licence agreement with Programmed.

I know this was a very difficult situation for you and your integral support has now secured almost 100 PAM jobs. I can assure you all personnel of PAM are extremely grateful.

I look forward to meeting you soon and thanking you in person.

I did not ask for that; it was sent to me. It demonstrates that I understand the politics in which we want theatrics and we want to get headlines in the paper, but the proven and measured approach that I took provided the best outcome for regional jobs and the services for the maintenance of public housing properties, and I think that that is the general assessment of the community.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Yes.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

Mr V.A. Catania: No, but this is actually serious.

Mr J.N. CAREY: I am serious!

Mr V.A. Catania: No, I'm not talking to you; I'm talking to that member across from me.

Minister, if I can just clarify this. I think the issue with the Pindan situation was, and it has now come to light, that there is more evidence that perhaps it was known before that they were in trouble. The real issue around the Pindan situation was there was a government contract and the government, which you are a part of, said that they would legislate to protect subcontractors. That's the issue that has come about. This is where the legislation doesn't protect those who have lost money. I think that's the issue. The point that I was coming from is that you promised legislation, it wasn't delivered and we had that situation with Pindan, and now we've got another company in the same boat.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Member for North West Central, it is fair to say that it is on the public record repeatedly that you yelled across the chamber: terminate, terminate, terminate! If I had taken that approach, there is general agreement in the member's own community that it would have resulted in the loss of 90 jobs. Is anyone saying that I took the wrong course of action in sticking forth, being measured, not reacting to the politics, seeing the negotiations through—obviously, not personally—and having the department persist to get the best outcome?

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: I absolutely understand the plight of contractors —

Several members interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Member for North West Central, under your scenario, there would have been no outcome because they would have lost their jobs. There would have been no sale to Programmed and no benefit for creditors. Your outcome painted the worst scenario for people!

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: No, your outcome painted the worst scenario. If I had listened to your advice and your politicking, it would have generated the worst scenario. I do not understand how you can still argue against the saving and retention of 90 jobs, including in retentions.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: That is including in retention.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: The member for North West Central continues to persist! There is a clear line —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Minister for Housing, would you prefer not to have interjections?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Yes, I am fine without interjections.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Okay; go on, minister.

Mr J.N. CAREY: It is very clear that we made the right decision on this. It was a prudent approach and I stand by that decision. It is clear that the workers directly affected agree that it was the best outcome and that we protected jobs in the regions. I am very cognisant that it was the right direction.

On future policy, I am working through the budget process but I have been looking at particular issues and trends. The opposition raised the issue of vacant houses. Again, I have been looking at the churn rate for vacant houses. I want to be very clear that the opposition is misleading again. There is always going to be a percentage of houses in the public system that are vacant. That makes sense. If someone wants to leave the public housing system, their property becomes vacant and refurbishment works have to be undertaken. That is entirely normal. As minister, I am working through ways to accelerate that churn rate. The other factor that the opposition ignores is that we also need to make significant investment in refurbishment. I have put in the public arena that there has to be significant investment in vacant properties. It varies, but there is significant investment across the board in maintenance and refurbishment of properties as part of that churn rate. We are working through how we can better get through the churn rate. To suggest that there will ever be no vacancies in the public housing system is simply nonsense. It is dishonest and it fails to recognise the churn rate.

As I have also said on the public record, I am also looking at modular homes. I understand that we have a very strong construction market and, accordingly, the agency and I are looking at modular homes. We are looking at how we can use them to accelerate public housing delivery or increase housing, particularly in regional areas, because it is an obvious fit. It is potentially a way of growing the sector in the industry, which will create jobs in those areas and add to the overall public and social housing stock.

Overall, we have a very strong investment program of nearly \$1 billion. Our building bonus grant has delivered for Western Australians. It has been extraordinary, with 27 000 building approvals. That will create private rental relief across Western Australia. We have seen extraordinary building approvals in the regions. All those homes

will provide relief for people in the regions. We have seen 4 000 Keystart homes, as a huge number of first home buyers are entering the market. We have a nearly \$1 billion program. We are investing \$100 million in homelessness initiatives. New initiatives were opened last week, including the two Common Ground facilities that are part of the Housing First approach. We are making a very significant investment and also being up-front with the community about the complexities of public housing delivery and how we want to move to a more integrated approach across suburbs and towns because that will deliver better social outcomes. We have had to make some tough decisions on high-density social housing areas, but we are strongly committed to public housing in Western Australia. We want to do it in a better way that delivers better outcomes for all Western Australians. That is our strong commitment.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [6.25 pm]: I thank the minister for his response to this motion. From an opposition perspective, the motion that was brought to the house by the member for North West Central on the matters canvassed by members who have already spoken, and what we will follow-up from the minister's contribution, is very timely. I think the Minister for Health has been given a reprieve this Wednesday night because a significant amount of funds was announced, but we are yet to see the detail on timing and how it will be rolled out. This is a crisis of a similar scale in another portfolio that has come about under this government's watch. This government likes to refer to the previous Liberal–National government but the Labor Party has been in power for four and a half years. It is time to own the fact that decisions made in the first term of this government are now coming home to roost. The people of Western Australia are the ones suffering for them.

I have been in the Minister for Housing's position. I have stood on that side of the chamber and had to respond to private members' business, matters of public interest and suspensions of standing orders in my portfolio areas. One tries to reasonably rollout the reasons why it is difficult to provide a response that the community desires and to assist in providing basic government services. It is difficult to do that in government because there are many moving parts. I think all members here acknowledge that. None of us came to this house and said it was a simplistic problem. I know that is what the minister said, but that is not what we came to the house to say. We acknowledge that it requires a whole-of-government response. It requires a complex mix of departments and also the private sector. Although everything that the minister said seemed sensible, it will not provide any comfort to those many people already sleeping rough or without a fixed address, or who find themselves at risk of becoming homeless. This creates stress and pressure for not only the individuals and their families, but also all government services and community organisations that come into play. All I can say is that this has come about because of the lack of investment, lack of planning and lack of prioritisation in the sector by this government four and a half years in. We cannot keep hearing ministers come to this place and say this is something that can be sheeted home to the previous government.

From a local perspective, I found it interesting when the Minister for Housing raised the issue of the sale of assets in the wheatbelt. One of the reasons given by the housing minister for having started to sell houses—although the government has not been able to replace them, so we are in this deficit—is that the government wants a different mix of housing in communities across the state. I was personally involved in some of these issues in the wheatbelt. For instance, I know that the community of Goomalling, which is just outside Northam, back in the time that the minister referred to, was one of the towns—if not the town—with the highest proportion of public housing in the wheatbelt. That town does not have access to wraparound services or public transport and there are no Centrelink offices within cooe. There is no way that a family with serious or complex needs can have them addressed there, yet it had the highest proportion of public housing, in terms of population. There were moves from a wheatbelt perspective. I am aware of that because at that time I was working with the then Minister for Housing, Hon Colin Holt, and prior to that Terry Redman, to try to address some of those concerns. It is not a new issue but there was a plan at the time to invest, and that investment occurred. We invested significantly in public housing in regional centres—I am talking from a regional perspective and certainly from my electorate's perspective at this stage—where those services were made available. I cannot tell members the number of times that people turned up to my office in either Merredin or Northam and, through sheer desperation, had taken a house in Hyden, Mukinbudin, Goomalling or Wyalkatchem. Although those communities are amazing places to live and the community will provide an enormous amount of support if a family or individual has complex needs, they will not be able to access the services they require in some of those smaller communities. The percentage in Goomalling in particular sticks in my mind because I went to many, many meetings. I sympathise with what the minister is trying to do. We reinvested in and had a significant housing program for right across the continuum of not only public housing, but also community housing and workers' accommodation, as the member for North West Central said, and in Government Regional Officers' Housing. The member for Roe talked about GROH and the 217 houses identified in response to a question asked in the Legislative Council. Worryingly, the departments that are in most need of these houses are the police department and the Department of Education.

Another issue the Minister for Housing raised was about working with the community to try to address some of these issues. I know from my own experience in my electorate—other members have also experienced it—that the Department of Housing places an extraordinary amount of pressure on our local governments to be the provider of this type of housing. The Department of Housing has ceased to build its own houses through the Government Regional Officers' Housing program. It relies on local governments to fill that gap. That is okay—it is probably

not okay; that is a generalisation. If a town has the capacity to fund that, like the City of Karratha or some of our bigger regional centres with a bigger rate base, perhaps the local government can fit that into its budget, but when the Department of Housing says to the Shire of Wyalkatchem or Narembeen or any of the smaller communities that the department has a proposition to build a GROH house and the department will give the town a contract, the small towns are stuck between a rock and a hard place because they know that if they do not agree to it, the potential to secure the next police officer or education individual, whether it is a teacher or principal, will be put at risk. I do not think it is right that our communities are now being asked to provide a solution to a problem that, regardless of whether it has compounded over many years, has come to roost right now four and a half years into this government's tenure. We see many of our communities fronting up and stumping up ratepayers' dollars because they are fearful that they will not be able to attract and retain the workers that they so desperately need for their kids to get a decent education and for the hospital to have a nurse or to house a doctor. Again, this government needs to attend to that. If the minister is truthful that everything is on the table and he is looking for innovative solutions, I put on the table now that some of the smaller councils do not have the ability to continue to do this. In the north of the state, when we add the cost of insurance and the development costs of the land, it is simply out of reach of some of these communities to do that. There is no way they will ever get their money back, even with a contract with the Department of Communities or through Government Regional Officers' Housing. We have local governments that are faced with that every day. I think if the minister is genuine, he will look at that issue and stop using our local governments as an external bank for the government to build houses and actually get on with the job of building them and expanding our housing options in regional Western Australia, particularly for GROH.

Whether or not the 217 GROH houses is a wish list, I can promise the minister that houses throughout regional Western Australia are in desperate need of refurbishment. Having spoken recently to a number of police officers in my own electorate, I know that none of them will complain publicly, but they all know where the good houses are in the state. The first question they ask when they have been recruited or asked to move to another place in regional Western Australia is: What is the housing like? Am I bringing my family into something that was built in 1972 and has not been upgraded since then, or was it built in 2010 and looks pretty good? In some of these communities, that is absolutely one of the major attractions for retaining a workforce. Members need only to talk to those staff to understand just how important it is.

If we want to talk about records in government, when we came to government in 2008, one of our first programs of investment back into regional Western Australia after years of neglect under the previous Labor government was to actually do just that—to go through the GROH stock and make sure that we either refurbished, rebuilt or added to that housing stock. The difficulty at the time, and I think it still exists, is that the Department of Housing manages its own housing stock. The funding that we were providing went through the Department of Housing and so there was a whole raft of health housing that did not get that investment. I can tell members that there was investment in police and teachers in particular and other key service workers right across the state as a result of our focus in government.

Mr V.A. Catania: During the boom.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is right, member for North West Central. The minister talked about 2010. At the peak of the construction boom in 2010, we saw almost the population of Tasmania move to Western Australia. We did not have a booming royalty rate at that point. In fact, it was one of the lowest rates we had ever seen in the state. We had the major mining companies in a race to the bottom to get their costs right down. We had called on every construction worker we could get our hands on, so it was a very difficult environment in which to work. There was certainly no solution to the GST on the table at that time. We invested even within those constraints because we knew that we would be constraining the future growth of our state if we did not make that investment. That is one part of the housing continuum, but it is very, very important. Workers' accommodation is part of the continuum. Again, that is very important. That funding stream was made available and possible by royalties for regions, because at the time the opening of land to allow for that development had been neglected, and there was no way to get that work done in time to accommodate those workers and retain all the business and service workers who make a community a community in places such as Karratha, Port Hedland and Exmouth. There might be criticism about the workers' accommodation projects run under the previous government, but I tell members what—they are all full. Every community we go to says, "Can we have another one? Build us some more."

When that type of pressure comes on and our state is subject to the swings from the mining sector, we need to be able to maintain those business that are the heart and soul of our communities. We need to make sure that we have hairdressers, butchers and people who work in coffee shops and all our key critical workers in our government services. In some places in the north of the state, that is incredibly difficult without some sort of intervention from the state government. That is the role of the state government, without a doubt, partnered with the private sector. Do not shy away from using the private sector's expertise, because at this point if the minister is genuine in his statements that everything is on the table when looking at trying to address these problems by thinking outside the square, he should not discount things done by previous governments out of sheer bloody mindedness. Do not look back and say, "We're not going to do that. We don't want to go anywhere near it because the previous government did that; we'll come up with our own solution." We will cheer the government on because every one of our communities is

saying that they need assistance. That housing continuum, when talking about workers' accommodation, is not just restricted to the north west. We had conversations like this in the midwest the other day with the member for Moore about significant roadworks. Federal and state funding is going into major projects through that area. A number of mining projects in the midwest are drawing workers from all over the place. For example, the towns of Toodyay, Moora and Dandaragan, and communities in and around the midwest, are at capacity; there is not a rental to be had. Yet businesses such as AGRIFresh, Moora Citrus and Northern Valley Packers, which are cutting edge from an agricultural perspective with the technology they are employing and the quality of the produce they are supplying to the domestic and export market, cannot find places for their workers to live. We have a lack of joined-up thinking on land release—looking at how we can mitigate some of the costs of developing land in regional communities, given the cost of connecting power and water. There is a disincentive for local governments to do it. Quite frankly, I do not think it should be left to them, but history says that that is exactly what happens in these smaller communities when the market does not work. That is the kind of joined-up forward thinking that we want this minister to address.

Then we get to the very vulnerable end of the housing issue. That has been canvassed very well in this place on a number of occasions. I asked a question of the Minister for Community Services today relating to a housing support service. The minister pointed out that the program was previously funded by the federal government. There were four years of commonwealth funding for what is essentially a state government program. We would argue for housing support every day of the week. The minister went on and explained what was invested in other programs. It is clearly the state government's responsibility. This program has been funded at \$1 million a year since 2017. Unfortunately, that funding has come to an end. The proponents of the project have asked that the Minister for Community Services consider funding of \$50 000 a year—in a state with a \$5 billion surplus! The information that we have is that the program has helped keep more than 1 500 children off the streets and kept at-risk vulnerable Aboriginal families together. It was launched as a volunteer organisation.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Its staff includes psychosocial counsellors, social workers, health practitioners and mentors to help resolve issues with both the Department of Housing and the Department of Communities. It is regrettable that the federal government has not sought to renew that program. There is an opportunity for the state to step in. For \$50 000 a year, we would have the endorsement of very well-known and respected community members here in WA who have significant expertise in children's wellbeing and services, including Dr Fiona Stanley, the program managers that the state government funds, Outcare, and its Thrive program. It uses the program and the services that are provided by the First Nations Homelessness Project. It would see it as hugely beneficial to be funded. The minister agreed that it was a good project, but she said that no funding for it is available from the state government. As I said, at the time the funding was coming to an end, Fiona Stanley was reported to have directly intervened and written to the Minister for Community Services to ask her to save the program. She said that there was no comparable service. She stated in an article —

“It is successful because it assesses each family and wraps around them the support and services they need to survive ...

She continued —

“Supporting people to stay in their home and helping them to manage their budgets, health and social issues etc prevents later costly problems—costly for the people concerned and costly for government services.

If we have a housing problem and we already have people in homes and there is a program that would cost \$50 000 a year to support people to stay in their homes so the Minister for Housing does not have to build additional homes, that would be a no-brainer. Instead, the minister chose to play politics and do the finger-pointing. She had an opportunity to step up and say, “Yes, that's something that I'll reconsider. We will make sure that we reach out and have that conversation again.” There is a \$5 billion surplus in the state budget. We need to help prevent the evictions that result in homelessness and help prevent some of the crises that are burgeoning onto our streets in every community in Western Australia. I know it will be cold comfort for the team at the First Nations Homelessness Project, but I have had the same conversation with the Minister for Community Services about local housing support projects.

This is what I do not understand, because I have raised in this place and directly with the minister on a number of occasions the Avon Community Services program. This program supports young people in the wheatbelt to put a roof over their head and to give them some life skills to get them back on track and into sustainable and stable housing. I would have thought that would be right up the minister's alley. However, despite every request made, we do not have funding in the budget for that. I wonder why we are not putting everything on the table to try to keep people in the homes they have. Avon Community Services has a home in which it can look after these young people who just need a helping hand. The alternative is that they are homeless, street present or are couch surfing in our communities. There is only one program in Northam for the whole of the wheatbelt, yet we can get no traction.

From our perspective, we have had a very disappointing response from the minister on the issue that was raised today. I urge the minister to reconsider this and to reach out and have that conversation again. Surely, in a state with a \$5 billion projected surplus, we can find \$50 000 a year to support the work that this community does. Do not take

the opposition's word for it, many eminent people support that program. I have gone on record that it is regrettable that the federal government has ceased to fund this program. But I consider that the program received four years of commonwealth funding, when, really, it should have been a state government-funded program.

Ms A. Sanderson interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is a housing support program. Housing support programs are funded at a state level. The federal government provided \$1 million of funding over four years. The program is asking the state government for \$50 000. It is not an unreasonable request.

The government continues to fail the people of Western Australia on every front. We could not get the Minister for Health to say the word "crisis"—six little letters! Now, we have a minister who will not acknowledge that public housing is at crisis levels with a lack of public housing across the board. As a result of the government's failure to invest in public housing and also selling off properties, we do not have housing options for workers who are desperately needed in the regions, not least in Kalbarri, Northampton and across the midwest area. That needs urgent attention.

We do not have solutions for shortages of Government Regional Officers' Housing properties, and I do not see a program of refurbishment for some of those very rundown government-owned facilities. I welcome the minister's commentary, either in this place or offline, as to how we might try to stem requests to local governments to become the bank for the state government to build houses to attract and retain nurses, teachers and the like. That is the feedback I get as I travel across the state. It is not good enough.

The Minister for Lands is the about to walk out the chamber on urgent parliamentary business, but I will not go there; it is fine.

We have seen the hugely tragic circumstance of people losing their lives on the streets because they have not had the support they need. On the steps of Parliament House last week, a number of sleeping bags were laid out to demonstrate the number of people who have lost their lives from exposure or succumbing to myriad complex issues they face by being street present, homeless and unable to access the services they deserve.

The first thing that the government should do is admit that there is a crisis. Then it should get on with doing what it has managed to do after consistent pressure from the unions, the workforce, the media and the opposition in relation to the health crisis that we are experiencing—again, of this government's own making—and come up with a package that comprehensively deals with all those issues and brings all the government agencies together. That goes to the issue that the member for North West Central was talking about when we are dealing with people under pressure, like the CEO of the Shire of Northampton. We understand that we need the government's firepower sitting behind people to support them to come up with these solutions and to wrap around them. It is too much to expect someone in that position to manage that and to deal with multiple agencies and multiple departments. Although the government may say that a coordinator has been appointed, I can promise members that it is unrelenting for CEOs in situations like that. We just need to be a bit careful, because those issues will change and new ones will emerge. But if we cannot get appropriate housing and support services and work with the people who are elected and very well supported in their communities, we will fail those communities. That is our great fear.

I thoroughly support the motion that has been brought to the house today by the member for North West Central. I note that on the notice paper the title is "Public Housing", but the motion —

... condemns the Labor government for its failure to prioritise housing in the past five years of government, creating a housing crisis the state has never seen before, triggering significant economic and social consequences.

I think all members have touched on areas not only in their own electorates, but also across that housing continuum that we talk about. We really urge this government to make sure that there is an appropriate response in this upcoming budget so that we are not having this conversation in another six or 12 months. There needs to be a plan, and we need to understand what that plan is. The private sector should be engaged. We should include the private sector in the conversations about how we might best solve some of these wicked problems. Certainly, I thought that the minister would be in attendance at the forum that was held the other day. It was disappointing that he was not. I do not think there was an answer to the question about whether any of his ministerial colleagues or other colleagues attended that meeting. I understand a department representative was there. These were some of the peak bodies in the sector and, given the severity of the situation that we face here in Western Australia, I thought we would have someone from the government sitting there and paying respect to those who are on the frontline dealing with these issues —

Mr J.N. Carey: Do you agree with the member for North West Central's assessment that we are bullying people in the sector? Do you agree with that assessment?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Do you want me to answer that?

Mr J.N. Carey: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I absolutely do.

Mr J.N. Carey: Based on what?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is because I get that feedback from community groups. Constructive criticism —

Mr J.N. Carey: That is nonsense.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The minister does not like the answer, does he?

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Would the minister like me to continue the answer? The minister asked me the question. I hear feedback from people who would —

Mr P. Papalia: I hear feedback about you guys too, but I don't say it in here.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The minister asked me a direct question and the Minister for Police has just walked into the chamber and has no idea what we are talking about. As per usual he has no idea. He just chimes in with some inane comment. The Minister for Housing asked me a genuine question and I am telling him that there are people who would consider themselves friends of the Labor Party who say that when they provide constructive criticism to a number of ministers—some are not in the chamber at the moment—if they do not seem to agree with the agenda and the priority of this government, they are blocked out of the conversation and told that things will get very, very difficult for them. Whether that is the minister or someone sitting around his cabinet table —

Mr J.N. Carey: He said specifically the social housing sector and me. He's misled Parliament.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I tell you what; I have heard it more than once! And you do not want to get like that, because arrogant governments lose government. They lose government, so just tread very carefully because that is the word on the street.

Several members interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The word on the street is that if you do not agree with this government, you will not be welcome in those ministers' offices.

Several members interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: You asked the question. I am hardly going to list the people who have said —

Mr J.N. Carey: Substantiate it! Put it on the public record!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: So you can go and victimise them further? I do not think so, minister.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Actually, I was not directing the comments at the minister, but his indignation makes me think that perhaps there is something to hide. Anyway, he invited the assessment, and, yes, I absolutely endorse the comments by the member for North West Central.

Mr J.N. Carey: You're making it up!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: You should not have asked the question if you did not like the answer, minister. This entire sector is in crisis.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It has come about under this government's watch. Four and a half years and we find ourselves —

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, that is enough.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Four and a half years and we find ourselves in a dire situation in not only health but also housing and accommodation right across this state.

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.55 pm]: I wish I had more than five minutes. Since the member for North West Central's contribution, I have a lot to say.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member for North West Central.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I have a lot to say, but I think I will do him first, if that is all right. I will do him first. I need to correct the record from when I interjected and suggested that the member lost the booth of Exmouth. I was incorrect; he actually won that booth. Well done, member. But I want to add that he lost the booths of Kalgoorlie, Meekatharra, Onslow, Pannawonica, Paraburdoo and Tom Price. In fact, it was one of Scott Morrison's miracles —

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Point of order, Madam Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Go ahead.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The Labor Party did not win the seat of North West Central; the National Party did. I think the member is misleading the people in this chamber.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member for North West Central. That is not a point of order. Continue, member for Wanneroo.

Debate Resumed

Ms S.E. WINTON: The member for North West Central and everybody well knows that he lost that election on a primary count.

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Madam Acting Speaker, the member for Wanneroo is clearly not speaking to the motion that is before the house. If you could ask her to get back to the actual motion, the relevance.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Thank you, member for North West Central. There is no point of order. Go again, member for Wanneroo.

Debate Resumed

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you. I am sorry; I had to do the member first since he interjected straightaway.

I have only five minutes left. I want to highlight a couple of arguments that seem to keep coming up whenever the opposition jumps up, whether we are talking about health or housing. Next, I suppose crime will come up as the theme. On the one hand, members opposite are at great pains to remind us all that the only reason that many of us are in this place is because of the COVID pandemic. The election was all about COVID. We did not win because of any of our policies or any of the work we did over the last four years; we got here only because of COVID. That is all we ever hear, yet members opposite do not apply that logic when talking about important issues such as health or housing and acknowledge that we have been in the middle of a pandemic for the past 18 months and that that factors into the issues around housing or health. Members cannot have it both ways and say that we are here only because of COVID, but not acknowledge that COVID is impacting severely on our health system and housing sector. There is a skills shortage. That is directly because of the COVID pandemic. There is increased migration to Western Australia. That is exactly because of COVID. Those two factors impact on the housing issues that the government is facing. Members of the opposition cannot have it both ways.

Politics is all about the art of taking credit for other people's work. I think that the efforts of the member for Cottesloe yesterday were breathtaking. He suggested that because of his opposition and his pressure on the Minister for Health that somehow \$1.9 billion was brought into the health system. It was because of his strong advocacy as an opposition spokesperson. I reckon that members opposite have a cunning plan. I think they are targeting housing this week because at some time in the future when they know that the work that our Minister for Housing is doing will pay dividends, they will somehow try to also take credit for it.

I noticed that the Leader of the Opposition suggested that we should not mention the previous government's performance. But we have to do that because —

Mr P. Papalia: Because they are arrogant.

Ms S.E. WINTON: No; not because they are arrogant, but because the punters out there need to make a choice between the government and the opposition, so they see members opposite as an alternative.

Mr R.R. Whitby: No; they don't.

Ms S.E. WINTON: No; they do not, but they have to make a clear choice. They made that decision. Whenever I prepare for debates, I look at the issues the opposition raises. Let us look at housing and how members opposite did when they were previously in government. I am going to talk only about the people who were in charge. For about 12 months, there was Troy Buswell as Minister for Housing, then Bill Marmion for less than a year, then it went back to Troy Buswell, then it went to Terry Redman for less than a year, then it went back to Bill Marmion, then it went to Colin Holt and then it went to Brendon Grylls. None of the housing ministers in the previous Liberal–National government served more than one year and seven months in the housing portfolio. That is how much of a priority it was for the Liberal–National government. However, members of the National and Liberal Parties tried a little bit harder post-2017 in opposition. The opposition started with Peter Collier as the shadow Minister for Housing for a little while, then it swung to Sean L'Estrange as the shadow housing minister and then it came up with the idea that the member for Carine should be the shadow minister for homelessness and housing.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
