



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 13 March 2024

Legislative Assembly

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

PAPER TABLED

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

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS SERVICE CENTRE — ATAR CALCULATION POLICY CHANGE

Statement by Minister for Education

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Education) [12.01 pm]: Members will be aware of the recent announcement by the Western Australian Tertiary Institutions Service Centre, known as TISC, that it had decided to remove the 10 per cent bonus applied to mathematics methods, mathematics specialist and languages other than English in the calculation of the ATAR. At the outset, it is important to note that TISC is a company limited by guarantee, and its shareholders are Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University and the University of Western Australia, with the University of Notre Dame Australia being a participating university. Its primary purpose is to calculate students' ATAR scores and process applications for entrance to Western Australian universities. It is not a government agency. I met with the TISC chair and CEO in late February and expressed my disappointment at its lack of consultation before making such a significant decision. TISC acknowledged that there had been no consultation with the Department of Education, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority, the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia or Catholic Education Western Australia.

TISC provided two reasons for this change. First, it will bring Western Australia in line with other Australian states, as WA is the only state providing a "bonus" on top of scaled scores for certain year 12 courses. Secondly, it will "level the playing field" for students who may not have the option of, or interest in, studying one or more of the ATAR courses that currently attract a bonus. On this question of equity in WA schools, students enrolled in Western Australian public schools that do not offer the courses that attract the bonus can access those courses through the School of Isolated and Distance Education. I am concerned that there appears to be no analysis or research on the impact of the bonuses on ATAR course completions. It is very important that all students are encouraged and supported to study the most challenging courses that they are capable of completing as this will provide them with the greatest opportunity for success in their future careers. I want students to reach their full potential, and the education system must support them in doing so.

I have asked TISC to put on hold and review its decision until a proper consultation process is completed. This must include the broader schooling sector, including students, to fully understand the impacts. I have been approached by a lot of parents and students expressing their concerns about this decision by TISC. This is not an organised campaign, and each of the representations I have received has explained how this decision will impact them personally. I thank everyone who has contacted me and assure them that I will continue to advocate for this decision to be deferred, pending a proper consultation process.

RESOURCES INDUSTRY — MENTAL HEALTH AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

Statement by Minister for Industrial Relations

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Industrial Relations) [12.04 pm]: I rise to inform the house that the fourth report from the landmark study into mental health and workplace culture across Western Australia's mining industry was released today. The landmark study forms part of the Cook government's mental awareness, respect and safety program, which was launched in December 2021. Curtin University's Centre for Transformative Work Design is undertaking the four-year study to gather and evaluate data on sexual assault, harassment, mental health, drug and alcohol use, and mine safety issues. Curtin will present its final research report in 2026.

The Mental Awareness, Respect and Safety (MARS) Program Landmark Study: Insights from the worker survey and interviews report surveyed 2 550 WA mine workers and interviewed a further 60 workers, one on one, to understand their perceptions of workplace culture in the mining industry. Although most WA mining workers reported high levels of awareness in regard to physical safety, the survey found that issues such as burnout and sexual harassment persist. Reports of sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention are declining; however, covert forms of sexual harassment like sexism and misogyny remain. Bullying is showing signs of improvement but continues to disproportionately impact women compared with men. Overall, women and younger workers generally tended to report poorer mental health and wellbeing, but supports like mental health awareness training and informal check-ins were cited as helpful to protecting workers' wellbeing.

The Cook government remains committed to eliminating inappropriate behaviours in Western Australian workplaces, including the mining sector, but we cannot do it alone. The reality is that organisations, industry leaders, employers

and individuals all need to step up if we want to see meaningful change. We all have a shared responsibility to speak out against sexual harassment and other unacceptable workplace behaviours. The mining industry prides itself on safety as a core priority, but the issue of women's safety has been overlooked for far too long. Our government acknowledges that industry has made considerable progress in improving workplace culture over the last decade. Changing entrenched attitudes takes time, and it is clear that more work must and will be done.

CLEAN ENERGY NATIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Statement by Minister for Training and Workforce Development

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Training and Workforce Development) [12.07 pm]: I rise to inform the house that the WA government has lodged a proposal with the Albanese government to establish a clean energy national centre of excellence. In addition, we have applied to access part of the commonwealth government's "turbocharge" funding announced last year to fast-track development of clean energy training and workforce initiatives. The clean energy investment pipeline in WA is in the vicinity of \$200 billion, and projections show that the clean energy sector is expected to generate around 350 000 jobs from 2025 to 2050. Increasing the number of apprentices, particularly in trades such as electricians, engineers, mechanics, plumbers, air conditioning and refrigeration mechanics, and metal fitters and machinists will be vital to ensure we have the skills needed to reach our target of net zero by 2050.

Due to the size, scale and diversity of projects being delivered right across the state in solar, wind, hydrogen and batteries, our proposed centre of excellence will consist of a network of WA TAFEs. This will ensure that we have the right skills in the right places at the right time to capitalise on the huge clean energy investment and export opportunities. It will be complemented by the significant investment this government has already made—just under \$270 million—to upgrade TAFE facilities and equipment to contemporary industry standards. It will leverage off existing state-of-the-art infrastructure such as the Australian Centre for Energy and Process Training at South Metropolitan TAFE's Munster campus, the largest energy process simulation plant in the Southern Hemisphere.

More apprenticeships, new curriculum, industry partnerships, state-of-the-art simulation technologies and digital twinning are set to become a bigger part of the training and workforce development environment through the centre of excellence in collaboration with industry, unions, TAFE, universities and key training stakeholders. The centre will also support more Western Australians, including Aboriginal students and women, into clean energy jobs. Negotiations with the commonwealth are progressing, and I look forward to continuing to work with it on our proposal.

DIGITAL CAPABILITY FUND — SPATIAL WA

Statement by Minister for Lands

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Lands) [12.09 pm]: I rise to inform the house of an important initiative by our state government that marks a significant step forward in advancing Western Australia's digital capabilities. An investment of \$140 million has been allocated to propel the development of the Spatial WA program—a transformational digital platform designed to accelerate land developmental approvals and streamline the delivery of key infrastructure projects across the state. The funding, secured through the state government's digital capability fund, underscores our commitment to harnessing cutting-edge technology to enhance decision-making processes, improve efficiency and boost digital capabilities throughout Western Australia.

Spatial WA, which was developed by Landgate in collaboration with over 30 state government agencies, is set to revolutionise the way we utilise data. This program will create a spatially accurate 4D virtual representation of the built and natural environment, unlocking unprecedented insights and supporting key government priorities, including infrastructure delivery, planning reforms and emergency preparedness. One of the key features of this technology is its ability to combine spatial and non-spatial data, enabling the generation of analytical insights and predictive modelling, and the streamlining of digital workflows. This in turn has the potential to result in substantial savings for the state.

By providing precise location data related to roads, buildings, networks, pipelines and other infrastructure across various agencies, Spatial WA will significantly reduce waiting times for planning applications, enhance the efficiency of maintenance work, expedite land development, streamline approval processes and increase community engagement on infrastructure projects.

Over the next decade, the \$140 million investment from the digital capability fund will support the continued development and implementation of the Spatial WA program, solidifying its role as a cornerstone of Western Australia's digital transformation.

WA VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Statement by Minister for Volunteering

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Volunteering) [12.12 pm]: I am pleased to inform the house that a record number of nomination applications for the 2024 WA Volunteer Service Awards has been received. At the

close of the nomination period on 29 February 2024, a total of 1 311 nominations had been received—a huge increase from the 155 nominations that the government received in 2023. The WA Volunteer Service Awards commenced in 2012 with only two categories—25 to 49 years, and 50 years or more of volunteer service at a single organisation. The awards aim to recognise and acknowledge the amazing contribution that volunteers make in our communities.

The recognition and acknowledgement of volunteers across our state remains a high priority today. For 2024, the Cook government introduced new award categories to better reflect the breadth of contemporary volunteering participation and the diverse volunteering activity in WA. This expansion has seen younger volunteers represented, with volunteering service ranges expanded to include five years of service, all the way through to the lifetime volunteer award for 60 years or more of service. I am impressed by the response we have had this year and to see nominations come in from all corners of WA. With National Volunteer Week fast approaching, I encourage all members to join in the celebrations held between 20 and 26 May and acknowledge the generous contribution of volunteers Australia-wide. The theme for this year's National Volunteer Week is "Something for Everyone", which seeks to recognise the diverse passions and talents that everyone brings to the selfless act of volunteering. There are many diverse opportunities available to those who wish to give some of their time to support and share their skills.

I am personally looking forward to hosting the Volunteer Service Awards ceremony on 21 May, at which I will have the pleasure of recognising some of the award recipients, as well as attending various volunteering events in honour of Western Australia's generous volunteers during National Volunteer Week. Volunteers play a significant role in creating more connected communities for everyone to enjoy.

I strongly encourage people to seek out volunteering opportunities, to not only give back to their communities, but also stay active and foster new social connections.

VOLUNTEERING — STATE OF VOLUNTEERING REPORT

Statement by Minister for Volunteering

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Volunteering) [12.14 pm]: I am very pleased to inform the house of the release of the *Western Australia state of volunteering report 2023*. It is no secret that Western Australians are generous and kind-hearted, and this report gives us the data to back it up. The volunteering workforce is the largest industry by employment in the state, and its collective efforts contribute approximately 400 million hours a year. That equates to over \$63 billion a year of value for the Western Australian community.

I am proud to tell members today that 65 per cent of Western Australians volunteer, and 54 per cent do so in their local community, including in the most remote parts of our state. The research also states that 78 per cent of people aged under 25 years are engaging in volunteering, too. This amazing and selfless contribution has far-reaching impacts in the community and for the individual volunteer, who receives personal rewards that span a range of health, wellbeing and social benefits. I acknowledge and thank everyone who contributed to this report, led by Volunteering WA, including the Australian Institute of Project Management, the Department of Communities, the Centre for Volunteering New South Wales, Volunteering Australia, and all the volunteers and volunteer-involved organisations who shared their own experiences, expertise and insights. With this 2023 report, we now have an up-to-date benchmark for national comparisons to help inform future decision-making that will be embedded in rich statistical data and insights.

The Cook government is supporting and strengthening the volunteering sector with more than \$6 million allocated to the Volunteering Development Services program. This includes a recent \$2.1 million boost for regional volunteering that was announced last December.

As Minister for Volunteering, I am proud to see so many Western Australians generously volunteering their time across the state. The future of volunteering in Western Australia is bright, and the Cook government is committed to supporting the sector in the years to come.

CONTAINERS FOR CHANGE — CHANGE MAKER AWARDS

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment) [12.16 pm]: It brings me a great deal of pride to inform the house of a magnificent achievement. Through the efforts of Western Australian families, charities, schools, sporting clubs and individual recycling champions, our highly successful container deposit scheme, Containers for Change, has now received over 3 billion beverage containers. That is 3 billion, would members believe!

Some of these extraordinary recycling champions were recognised at the 2023 Change Maker Awards. I acknowledge their contributions to this incredible three-billion milestone. They include the school of the year, Kensington Secondary School; the individual of the year, Mr Viktor Strizek, better known in his local community around Nedlands as RecyclemanPerth—he is quite a character and quite a ferocious collector—Good Sammy Enterprises; the Goomalling Toodyay Containers for Change refund point; and the community participant of the year, the Western Australian AIDS Council.

Containers for Change commenced on 1 October 2020, fulfilling a commitment of this government to increase recycling, reduce litter, provide fundraising benefits for community groups and charities, and create employment

opportunities for small businesses and social enterprises. Prior to the commencement of our container deposit scheme, just 34 per cent of beverage containers were being collected for recycling. We saw this every day, with a significant number of containers simply thrown out of the car window, discarded as litter along our streetscapes. Now, Western Australians are recycling close to 64 per cent of beverage containers, and the amount of beverage container litter has been reduced to around five per cent. This is a huge achievement in less than three and a half years. Western Australians have now donated almost \$11 million to over 7 000 charities, community groups and schools that are registered with the scheme.

As good as these results are, there is still much more we can do on our mission to be the most successful container deposit scheme in the country, which is why we continue to innovate with new ways to improve community and business participation. Automated self-serve kiosks are now being rolled out across the metro area, already offering convenience and new levels of accessibility. So far, we have launched kiosks in Greenwood, Kingsway, Whitfords, Mirrabooka and Waikiki, with Byford opening next week.

There is a lot more to talk about, including the Containers for Change collect system, which provides more accessibility, with customers able to go to an app or website and get their containers collected from their homes, factories, shops and offices. This is a moment of change for Containers for Change. I again acknowledge that 3 billion containers is an extraordinary achievement. I am confident that 3 billion is only the beginning.

YOUTH PARLIAMENT

Statement by Minister for Youth

MS H.M. BEAZLEY (Victoria Park — Minister for Youth) [12.19 pm]: I am pleased to advise the house that applications for our 2024 Youth Parliament program are currently open. As I am sure members are aware, Youth Parliament is an annual youth advocacy and parliamentary education program designed to give young people aged between 15 and 25 the opportunity to have their voices heard on issues that matter to them. The Cook government, through the Department of Communities, is providing over \$60 000 to fund this year's program, which is run by the Y WA. The Y has been running Youth Parliament across multiple states for over 30 years—a tradition that we proudly continue in WA today. I am delighted to update the house that this year, the Youth Parliament program will celebrate its twenty-ninth year. It continues to go from strength to strength.

Last year, 58 young Western Australians participated in the program, which saw bills presented and debated on a range of important issues, from recycling and artificial intelligence to electoral reform. Participants in the program work in teams to develop legislation, discuss topical issues and present speeches in Parliament during a special sitting week in July. They each represent an electorate and act as either a member of the government or opposition. I have had the pleasure of sponsoring two Youth Parliament members in the past—Chelsea Brown in 2022 and Steven Thiele in 2023—both of whom represented my electorate as the youth member for Victoria Park. I look forward to sponsoring this year's participant as well. Youth members are also delegated to committees, based on their three areas of interest, and attend three days of training and online meetings related to their committees before attending a residential camp and participating in parliamentary sessions. Bills that are passed during Youth Parliament are shared with the government and opposition for consideration, giving these young participants a democratic voice.

I know that many members are already doing so, but I encourage everyone to promote the Youth Parliament program to young people in their electorate. Applications close on Sunday, 24 March. Our aim is to see a record number of applicants this year and to have many diverse young people represent every electorate across our state, including young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and young people from our regions. I am sure members will agree that political life can be demanding, but it is also incredibly rewarding, with many opportunities to make a difference in our community. The more we can encourage and support young people to participate in politics, the better, so that they have the opportunity to engage in processes that affect their lives. Our annual Youth Parliament is one important opportunity for them to do so.

PETROLEUM LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Third Reading

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Education) [12.22 pm]: On behalf of the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [12.23 pm]: I will keep my remarks brief. We had a reasonable go yesterday afternoon as we went through the Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Of course, this legislation had a fairly long and winding beginning, harking back to when the Liberal and National Parties were in government in 2013. I do not want to go over the issues that we raised, other than to say that there is some significant work to do to enact this legislation. That will include the regulations—we learned that the drafting of them has not yet started—and the framework for the acreage releases and information collection point or database that has been spoken about. There is quite a considerable amount of work to do. Going back to the consultation phase early last year, industry was crying out for urgency and really wanted to see this framework in place. I urge the government

to make sure that the department has the resources it needs to put towards developing these regulations and any of the guidelines and notes spoken about during the debate, so that industry can have a really clear understanding of its responsibilities.

This is not an insignificant piece of legislation. It is quite complex; there are a fair number of moving parts. I accept that, for large parts of it, we will simply add greenhouse gas exploration and the like to areas in which arrangements for petroleum and exploration are already in place. It is not an unknown area for many operators within the sector; nonetheless, we will be starting a potentially significant new industry or capturing an opportunity for the state, in the words of the Premier and minister, and we need to make sure that we have that regulatory framework right. I reflect on the comments of the member for Cottesloe yesterday about the strong framework that we have for mining oil and gas here in Western Australia. Indeed, we are looked upon as a jurisdiction of best practice when it comes to setting up those projects. International visitors come here and interrogate how we do that. Given that this government has a strong focus, at least on making announcements, on the impact of climate change and the effort required to mitigate it and assist our major emitters to do the same, I think it would bode well if we attached those resources to the department. We know that the department is already under pressure. We regularly hear from industry about the challenges that it faces in getting approvals through the department or with other elements on which it is required to interact with the department on a day-to-day basis for business. This will add another element, so that is something we will watch fairly closely.

Other than that, I think industry will welcome a speedy passage of this legislation through our house and the Legislative Council. I look forward to seeing the outcome of these discussions being put through in consultation with industry so that we get the framework and regulatory regime absolutely right from the get-go.

One thing I mentioned yesterday was the science out there that says that over the next 10 years, we will need to build at least 10 carbon capture and storage facilities to start to meet some of the targets that we have signed up to.

Dr D.J. Honey: A year.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: A year, sorry. I thank the member for Cottesloe; I was out by 10 a year.

It is with some urgency that industry is pushing for this to be a very clear process for them to participate in. With that, I will conclude my comments. I say again that the Liberal–National alliance is supportive of the legislation.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [12.27 pm]: First of all, I would like to thank the minister and his advisers for the way in which they conducted the consideration in detail stage of the Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. It was a great opportunity to go through the bill in detail, and the minister used his best endeavours to provide all the answers that we needed. I also thank the member for Central Wheatbelt for being the lead speaker for the opposition on this bill and for the excellent job she has done in presenting the debate on it.

There are a couple of areas that I want to cover. I think there is one major flaw in the bill. As I indicated yesterday, I think the bill is otherwise a good bill and that it is sensible regulation. I will be very specific; I am referring to clause 33(3) and the insertion of proposed section 67(4). Proposed subsection (4) will specifically ban the injection of a regulated substance into a reservoir. Helium and hydrogen are regulated substances. As I discussed a bit yesterday—I will not go on for too long today—hydrogen gas is a potential replacement for natural gas to provide long-term firming energy storage for renewable energy. The way that would work is that in off-peak times, we would use the ample excess renewable energy capacity to generate hydrogen. We would then store that hydrogen and, when there is inadequate sun and wind, we could use that hydrogen in fuel cells or burn it in gas turbines. With some slight modifications, even existing gas turbines can be used. Hydrogen can be burnt to provide the backup firming for the energy network whilst it gets through that period of low sun and wind. The fact is, if that is going to be done, very large quantities of hydrogen will be needed, and storing those in above-ground storage in pressurised tanks and vessels can be expensive.

One of the technologies that was proposed, and has been used a little bit, is to store the hydrogen produced from excess renewable energy in underground storage, be that salt caverns or, for example, a depleted natural gas well. Not all deposits are suitable for storing hydrogen, but many are. I know that the minister is very busy, but I forwarded him a reference to a CSIRO study that was done across Australia that looked at adequate reservoirs to store hydrogen. If we are going to transition to 100 per cent renewables and not continue to rely on natural gas to firm our power networks, we are going to have to have large-scale hydrogen storage, unless we go nuclear, and I know not everyone is enamoured of that solution. If we are going down a purely renewable energy path, the logical place to store the large quantities of hydrogen that will be needed is in those suitable depleted natural gas reservoirs and the like.

I am certain that this has somehow slipped into the bill. This is a very complex bill. As we all know, the previous minister was an eminent intellectual, and maybe he was aware of this detail, but I suspect that the former and current ministers were probably unaware of this. I am not critical of them being unaware of it. It is one line in however many hundred pages. It is a 500-page bill and it is just one little paragraph within that. I think it is actually a mistake within this bill. I think the government should use the opportunity in the time that it takes for this bill to go to the other place to relook at that. I cannot conceive why that would be done.

I might say that the other regulated substance it bans from being injected into the ground is helium. As I pointed out yesterday, I know that helium might not excite many people, but helium is a critical industrial gas. It is the only gas that can be used in cryogenic systems to achieve near absolute zero. For many scientific and even industrial purposes, the ability to cool things down to very low temperatures is absolutely critical. Helium pretty well only comes from natural gas deposits. It is the stable breakdown of the radioactive decay of the material in the ground and it accumulates in gas reservoirs. There are elevated concentrations of helium in many gas reservoirs, which is the only economic way to get helium to use for those purposes that I described.

Given that we are depleting these natural gas reserves and hence that source of helium, it may make sense for someone to reinject helium as well. I quite sincerely ask that the minister have a look at that and talk with his department. I am always prepared to be educated, but I cannot for the life of me see why those things have been effectively banned and that there is a penalty for doing them under this bill. I cannot understand why that has been done. If I am misreading it, I am very happy to be educated. I think I am correct in reading it. It is a pretty straightforward clause, but nevertheless, I am always happy to be educated. If it is the case, I earnestly believe that the government should reverse that and take it out. I think it slipped in somehow. I cannot imagine that anyone sitting back and looking at where we are trying to go with the renewable energy transition would agree with that. This is not a novel concept. In many parts of the world, people are either doing or are actively considering the use of underground storage for hydrogen simply because of the massive volumes that are required to firm renewable energy systems for when the wind is not blowing and the sun is not shining.

There is another area I want to re-highlight. The minister has indicated that the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety is looking at this, and, as I indicated, it has been a standout department for a very long time. It has had some excellent employees historically, but we will not dwell on that. However, there is seriously an issue with closure costs. Western Australia is the great mining province of the world. We are pre-eminent in the world as a mining province, but as a consequence, we are pre-eminent in mine site and processing plant closures, including oil and gas wells and the like. This could catch up to us and we need to make sure that the taxpayer and the ordinary public are not left carrying the can and that we do not end up with the government having multibillion-dollar closure costs across a whole range of industries.

I worked in mining for 24 years. Historically, closure costs have been effectively covered on a “good fellow” principle, if you like; that is, companies have made provision for it and therefore the money is sort of there. I am not necessarily sure that the money will be there. Very large and responsible companies may well have a cash provision set aside, but I think that for a lot of companies, the closure costs would ultimately come out of their future operating profits. Of course, if those companies go into decline, are not making money and shutdown, there is a real risk of the government having to pick up the cost of closures. I think this is an issue for all of us to look at. I know it is not a popular theme with companies. Accountants like to keep closure costs in the never-never so that it is not realised in today’s cash flow. I think there is genuine risk.

I recognise that there are many thousands of mines in Western Australia and a very large number of gas and oil wells. The minister has indicated that the department is looking at that and I am really encouraged by that. I strongly urge the minister to look at that to make sure that we do not burden future governments and communities with massive closure costs.

Otherwise, I highlight those two points. As discussed by the member for Central Wheatbelt, we obviously support the bill. Overwhelmingly, all the other parts of the bill are important for the proper regulation of geothermal sequestration and petroleum and to continue the great work that the state has done in having a first-rate world’s best regulatory framework. Thank you.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

PETROLEUM AND GEOTHERMAL ENERGY SAFETY LEVIES AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by **Dr A.D. Buti (Minister for Education)** on behalf of the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, and transmitted to the Council.

FIREARMS BILL 2024

Second Reading

Resumed from 21 February.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [12.38 pm]: I rise to contribute to the Firearms Bill 2024 as the lead speaker for the Liberal Party in the Legislative Assembly, understanding that our shadow Minister for Police is in the Legislative Council. As I understand, the shadow minister will move a number of amendments on this bill and has already flagged that he will move a motion to expand the scope of the referral to the Standing Committee

on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review to include policy and other considerations. The Liberal Party is not opposed to this legislation although, as I have flagged, we will seek to move a number of amendments and we particularly want to debate a number of considerations relating to unintended consequences.

Over the past two years, firearms regulation has been a highly debated and controversial issue that has sparked strong reactions from not only licensed firearm owners but also the general public. On the one hand, some licensed sport and recreational shooters are opposed to any proposed changes that would restrict their ability to use firearms lawfully. They argue that such changes would be draconian and would represent overreach by the government. On the other hand, there are those who believe the proposed changes to the firearms regulations do not go far enough. They argue that violence is a serious issue that needs to be addressed and that more needs to be done to limit the number of guns in our community, including stricter regulation of the use of firearms.

This debate has created division between those who view firearms as a legitimate tool for sport and recreation, which the opposition respects, and those who see a potential danger to public safety. Despite these differing views, public opinion is overall in favour of stricter regulation of firearms. Many people believe that measures such as background checks, waiting periods and limits on the types of firearms that can be owned are necessary to prevent gun violence and to ensure public safety. There is also genuine concern from licensed and lawful gun owners who, at every step of the way, continue to respect their responsibilities as gun owners, which the opposition understands.

It is two years since the Labor government made a significant announcement regarding the Firearms Act 1973, promising a complete rewrite of that act that would aim to address the loopholes and inadequacies that have been exploited for far too long. Over those two years, however, the number of gun-related deaths in Western Australia has risen, with more than 20 people having lost their lives to gun violence. The most heartbreaking of these incidents was a rural shooting that claimed innocent lives, perpetrated by someone who should never have had access to a firearm. The tragedy of gun violence is not limited to loss of human life; it also has far-reaching economic, social and psychological implications. The costs of health care, law enforcement and the legal system can be astronomical, and the impacts on communities and families are obviously devastating.

It is important to note that most gun owners are responsible, law-abiding individuals who use guns safely. Most, if not all, would agree that it is important that guns remain out of the hands of criminals or dangerous individuals who would use these weapons to commit horrific acts of violence. Although no law or set of laws will end gun violence, the Minister for Police and the Cook Labor government believe that 90 000 licensed gun holders and 360 000 registered firearms are too many, and that that number of firearms will increase the risk of firearm-related deaths, either through suicide or deliberate shootings.

The details surrounding gun numbers and licences will inevitably consume a considerable amount of debating time in both houses of Parliament. In addition, the regulations will undoubtedly receive considerable scrutiny, and so they should. But unlike the disastrous Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill, for which the government provided limited opportunities for scrutiny, the government has provided much more time for the public and Parliament to consider the merits of this bill.

The Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's *Review of the Firearms Act 1973 (WA): Project 105 final report* of 2016 clearly identified that the act lacked clarity, was no longer fit for purpose and needed significant amendment. Although there have been several amendments to the act, the most notable changes were made following the Port Arthur massacre and the introduction of the National Firearms Agreement in 1996. Since then, every Australian jurisdiction apart from Western Australia has enacted entirely new firearms legislation to better align with the NFA. It is understood that this bill will align Western Australia's firearms legislation more closely with legislation in other Australian jurisdictions. However, the bill also exceeds some of the concepts identified in the NFA and the Law Reform Commission's report, including limits on the number of firearms that a licensed firearm holder may own and mandatory mental health checks—two issues that I will discuss as I progress.

The bill will introduce a suite of licence types, each with a clearly defined purpose. These include individual licences, business licences, primary producer licences, collector licences, club licences, range licences, trade licences and government entity licences. The two licence categories I would like to discuss are individual and primary producer.

As I mentioned earlier, this bill exceeds some of the concepts within the NFA, imposing a limit on the number of firearms a licensed firearm owner can have. This means that the individual and primary producer licences will each have a limit of 10 firearms, and a limit of five for hunting licences. Elite shooters can apply for additional firearms. Although it is not expected that this will greatly impact on most of the current licence holders, the imposition of limits has caused some angst and anger amongst many licensed firearm owners, especially those individuals who like to hunt. They feel particularly aggrieved that they will be limited to five firearms for hunting purposes when they have done nothing wrong and have complied with the law. No-one likes limits and I fully understand their frustration.

I note that the government's position is that the introduction of an upper limit will reduce the number of firearms in the community and reduce the likelihood of theft. However, it is currently the case under the 1973 act that a licensee must demonstrate both genuine reasons and a genuine need to possess particular types of firearms, and

that firearms of a lesser class would be inadequate or unsuitable for their needs. I also note that it is currently the case that in addition to supplying evidence to support their genuine need, they must have secure storage that complies with schedule 4 of the Firearms Regulations 1974.

Part 7 of the Firearms Bill 2024 covers security and storage of firearms and provides explicit requirements for how firearms must be stored, in what circumstances firearms can be removed from storage, and transportation of firearms. If the intention of the legislation is to reduce the stockpiling of firearms and removing them as a high-value target for theft, one would think that strengthening the genuine reason and genuine need tests, alongside the proposed more stringent storage requirements and oversight powers, would be enough to increase public safety and limit the proliferation of stolen and illegal firearms in our community, rather than imposing further prescribed limits on law-abiding licensed firearm owners. The opposition will seek further clarification around that.

Another way of reducing firearm numbers without necessarily imposing limits is reform of the antiquated and exploited property letter system. Under the 1973 act, to obtain a firearms licence for hunting or recreational shooting, it was necessary to have written permission from a property owner to satisfy genuine reason. However, this process has been exploited since it was introduced in 1973. People have obtained property letters for a firearm without ever having met the property owner or having fired the firearm they applied for. There have even been cases of property letters being sold on the internet. This reform would give landowners clear oversight of who has authority to shoot on their land, and the ability to consider the suitability of a firearm's use on a specific property, thus placing a limit on the firearms that can be possessed under certain licences.

It is interesting that this reform of the property letter system and the introduction of a new primary producers licence has been supported by the state's peak farming organisations—in particular, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, the Western Australian Farmers Federation, the Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association, vegetablesWA and Wines of Western Australia. I note that both the PGA and WAFarmers have held the long-term view, which was included in their respective submissions to the Law Reform Commission, that any changes to existing firearms legislation should include a separate licence category for a primary producer. Primary producers, as opposed to sport and recreational shooters, often require a firearm to manage livestock or destroy vermin. This licence will enable them to apply for categories of firearms unavailable to an individual licensee that are more suited to primary production purposes. However, primary producer licensees will be limited to a maximum of 10 firearms. The primary producer licence will also enable licensees to nominate certain family members and employees as authorised persons. The licensee and authorised persons will be able to use the firearms on the property for which they are licensed, as well as other primary production properties with the permission of the owner or occupier of that property. The licensee will also be able to undertake hunting activities additional to primary production activities authorised under this licence.

Considering these comments, the Liberal Party is seeking to propose an amendment in the other place to expand the eligibility for individuals to apply for additional firearms. Currently, only sporting club shooters will be able to apply for such permits, but we believe that primary producers and recreational shooters should also have the option to do so. The proposed amendment would allow primary producers and recreational shooters to apply for additional firearms on an as-required basis after an interview with police to determine suitability. This would provide a more streamlined and efficient process for obtaining firearms, while still ensuring that proper safety measures are in place.

It is important to note that the Liberal Party is committed to upholding the strict firearms regulations and that this proposed amendment will not undermine that commitment in any way. Rather, it will seek to provide a more equitable system for those who rely on firearms for their livelihoods or recreational activities. I also note from my discussions with both the PGA and WAFarmers their objection to clause 57(3), which will place a restriction on granting a primary producer licence for a landholding for which another primary producer licence is in force. Given the complex and unique ownership structure of most farms and pastoral stations, this is not a practical solution, and it is my understanding that the two organisations have expressed their concerns to the minister, who has given an undertaking that he will remove this provision.

One other area of concern is the introduction of health assessments for both physical and mental health and how these will work. Part 4 of the bill lays out the fit and proper person requirement that must be satisfied before a firearm licence is granted to ensure that the person is suitable to safely and responsibly possess firearms and related things. Although not limited in what this may include, the commissioner may also consider the person's conduct, behaviour, views, opinions, attitude, character, domestic circumstances, honesty and integrity, as well as their close associates. They can also consider refusal based on physical and mental health grounds. Clause 153 provides that the commissioner can classify that the person is not fit and proper if the commissioner is satisfied that the person does not meet the prescribed firearm authority health standards spelt out in clause 148. Under this clause, all first-time and renewal applicants will be required to undergo a health assessment carried out by a registered health practitioner who will examine their physical and mental health. The health practitioner will then provide health evidence to the commissioner to inform a determination. Should any matters arise from the initial assessment, the person may also be directed to a specialist for further examination of whether they meet the standards that will be outlined in the regulations.

Although there is a clear need for a health assessment to be required as a preventive measure to reduce instances of a person's wellbeing being an impacting factor on firearms misuse, as there is for other licences such as pilot or dangerous goods drivers' licences, further detail needs to be provided about how these assessments will be carried out, especially for mental health. The Liberal Party also believes that this should apply only to first-time applicants and will be considering a further amendment to reflect this. Some of the concerns that I have heard from people are about the impact that this could have on farmers or gun holders seeking mental health support. That is why we would like some further clarification. Further amendments may also be put forward depending on the direction of the debate and subsequent information received during consideration in detail.

As I mentioned at the beginning, firearms regulation is an emotive issue amongst not only lawfully licensed firearms owners, including primary producers who use firearms as a tool and for hunting and recreational shooters, but also the public. Most gun owners are responsible, law-abiding individuals and they use their guns safely. However, overall public opinion shows some concerns about ensuring that firearms regulation is as good as it can be in favour of limiting the number of guns in our community. What is important in these reforms is the need for positive outcomes that will both ensure public safety and protect the legitimate use of firearms by law-abiding licensed firearms owners.

As I stated at the outset, our shadow Minister for Police is in the other place. I appreciate that there is a slightly different position between the Liberals and Nationals WA on this issue, but we both are committed to scrutinising this bill, and we will put forward a number of amendments, most importantly the motion, as previously flagged by our shadow Minister for Police, to extend the scope of the bill's referral to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review to include policy and other considerations.

I will leave my comments there. I understand that plenty of others will speak.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [12.57 pm]: I rise as the Leader of the Nationals WA to make comments on the important legislation that we have before us today. I say at the outset that the National Party has concerns with aspects of the Firearms Bill 2024 and we will seek as part of our contribution to ensure that the bill is properly scrutinised as it makes its way through the Parliament. It is our belief that complex legislation like this, which will presumably be in place for decades to come, should go through the utmost scrutiny in Parliament and, for that reason, we will move to ensure that the minister sends this bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation in the other chamber. I understand that the bill will go to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review, but that committee will scrutinise only the technical aspects of the bill rather than the whole bill. In some of the contributions that the minister has made in public, he has given the impression that the bill will go to the legislation committee, but I think there was confusion over whether it would be the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review or the Standing Committee on Legislation. The two committees have very different remits and terms of reference for scrutinising legislation. We will seek to send this bill to the legislation committee so that it can go through all the nuances of the bill to ensure that there is appropriate scrutiny of the many changes that will be made.

Members of the Nationals WA are aware of the need for public safety and responsible firearms ownership. We have always held the view that regulation and legislation are important to ensure the community is safe, but we do not agree with aspects of this legislation. This will lead us to have differences of view from the government that we will go through in consideration in detail; there are many clauses to discuss. We will be voicing our opposition to certain clauses, and our intention is to put forward amendments in the Legislative Council for further discussion and debate when the bill reaches that chamber.

I now outline some aspects that concern us about this legislation. Importantly, this measure relies in part on the results of the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's review of the Firearms Act carried out at the behest of the former Liberal–National government. In fact, backbench members of the National Party at that stage agitated to have that review conducted because they knew that the regulations and legislation at the time were clunky, outdated and were leading to time-consuming and expensive regulatory processes. They certainly needed to be streamlined. In order to achieve that, we were told at the time by the then Minister for Police that a review of the law was needed, because, at that time, the law dictated how firearm registration and ownership were regulated; that is, the act dictated the steps that needed to be taken to own and use a firearm. We are aware of that process and the need to undertake a review.

Some recommendations of the Law Reform Commission have been followed; others have not. For instance, the Law Reform Commission did not find there should be arbitrary limits on the number of firearms owned. In fact, it considered that very topic and came to the understanding that the limit was not necessary. As the minister has been fond of saying, in some ways this legislation goes beyond the National Firearms Agreement. I would have thought that we should seek to have legislation that is in line with that agreement rather than at odds with it. That is another area of concern.

Organisations representing rural industries that have been consulting with the minister certainly support some aspects of the legislation. The Nationals WA support some of those changes. Again, we will go through those aspects in consideration in detail, as they are too complex to delve into in the short time I have left to speak. Other people in the community have not been so well consulted. Certainly, the Western Australian Firearms Community Alliance

felt that it did not have the level of consultation required, and 13 000 people, in very short order, signed a petition demonstrating that they required extra time for consultation on this matter. The consultation period that was allowed at the end of last year was very brief, and it occurred at a time when it was especially busy in regional Western Australia, and it was difficult for people to take the time required to respond to such a large body of work. Those matters were of concern leading up to the development of this legislation.

Of course, we then had the typical process of the minister trying to heighten public concern. I think there was a raid on a gun shop in Midland or thereabouts weeks before this legislation was presented. Suddenly, newspaper reports appeared the day before the legislation was introduced. It was carefully orchestrated to give the impression that somehow there was some imminent threat to the Western Australian community that the minister was acting to abate. That is typical of the way this government operates. We have seen many media stunts in line with announcements around guns. There was a case of firing a very high calibre rifle at a place and defence authorities being concerned it was not safe to do so—but it went ahead. We also recall the publishing of a map to indicate where certain people live and could indicate where to find firearms. Instead of enhancing public safety, the government is working towards drumming up public concern and working to make people feel there is a problem when one really does not exist—because, by and large, the 90-odd thousand licensed firearm owners in this state are responsible. They have all received their licences and had their guns registered and licensed after going through a process to demonstrate a need and a place to store them. All these matters are already in the legislation. It is not as though, as has been portrayed in some areas, Western Australia is in some sort of crisis in which guns are rampant in the community, and those of us who question the government's motives are accused of encouraging an American-like gun culture. That is absolute nonsense. The National Party was the party that teamed up with John Howard and the late Tim Fischer when he was the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia to ensure the beginnings of the National Firearms Agreement, and, of course, we have supported responsible gun ownership ever since.

This is not about the proliferation of guns in the community, and this is not about enabling ownership for people who do not need a gun. But we are questioning many aspects of the legislation brought here. For instance, an arbitrary level has been set for the number of guns that a person can own. Also, it appears that if someone owns a gun that they use for a certain purpose, it cannot be used for another purpose. The minister may disagree, but this seems quite clear from briefings that I attended. If I want to shoot clay pigeons at a shooting club with a shotgun, I will not be able to shoot rabbits on the farm with the same gun. That seems to be contrary to the idea of having fewer guns. I would need to buy a competition shotgun and another shotgun to shoot rabbits at home, which seems to be counterintuitive. That is one of the aspects of this bill the Nationals WA has concerns about.

Another one, which is very concerning for smaller communities in regional areas, is the standards around dealerships, and the fact that dealerships will be expected to receive the majority of their income, as I understand it, from their trade in firearms and ammunition et cetera. However, many businesses in regional Western Australia are very mixed in their activities. A rural supply shop may put through millions of dollars worth of chemicals and products for the rural community, and only a few thousand dollars a year in trade in firearms and ammunition. That shop still performs a very important service for that regional area. The legislation outlines that a minimum standard of trade must be exhibited. We do not know what that standard will be because it has not been made known. However, I know from discussions with smaller dealers who provide a service to smaller communities—genuine dealers; not people trying to own guns by claiming to be dealers—that they are concerned that they will lose opportunity to carry out that trade under this legislation. Their concerns are entirely legitimate because the standard of the level of trade that will be required is unknown. The dealers provide a very important service in their local area because they will check and provide assurance that a firearm is serviceable. They also ensure that the local community can access the ammunition that is needed to control pests et cetera in the area and they provide a service when someone leaves to go overseas or elsewhere by putting the guns in the storage facilities that are provided. That is a public good. I am very concerned for those businesses. I have been contacted by a number of the dealers across the state in the smaller country areas who are concerned about what this will mean for them. As the minister knows, it is often quite difficult for regional people to access the services that people in the city area take for granted. If that ability and those services are taken away, it will be an issue for those communities.

That brings me to the point about the medical checks for physical and mental health that will be required. When the legislation was first proposed, it was to be a mental health check, but now it will be a health check that is a check for a person's physical and mental health. I am not sure what the difference is. A few other things in the bill concern me. One is that even if a practitioner, such as a GP, issues a certificate or examines a person, it will be up to the police to determine whether that person's examination met the standard. I am struggling to understand why the police will determine the standard of someone's health. If a GP said that a person is in good health, surely that would be the standard. We see in the legislation the use of that standard again and again, but I have no idea what that will mean in practice. When we first voiced our concern about this, we spoke of the problem in many areas of the state with accessing very limited health services. There are 90-odd thousand people who will presumably need a health check under the legislation. In the communities that I represent it is not uncommon for people to have to wait three or four weeks to see a GP. That would put even more strain on our health services, which we know is facing enormous stress under this government, but that stress is particularly acute in the regional areas. We know that finding

a GP will be an issue for those 90 000 licence holders and we might not be sure how people are being treated by the police with regard to what is a sufficient standard of health. That is in the legislation, but we do not know what it will mean for an individual.

In general terms, another thing that firearm owners have told me is that they would like to see more emphasis put on making sure that a person is a fit and proper person to hold a licence for a firearm of a certain category. They also want the ability to easily sell a rifle of a particular category and calibre that might be worn so that they can buy a new model of an equivalent standard. However, that has not been catered for in this legislation. As a consequence, people might hang on to guns that are getting a bit old and may be less safe because of the complication of having to buy a new gun to do the same task. There would be no difference in the fitness of the person or in the number of guns because they would be trading in an old gun for a new gun and there would be no difference in the type of gun. As a result, less safe guns might be in the community than there are currently.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr R.S. LOVE: Another area that we are in the dark over is the storage requirements. I understood that we were to be given some information about the storage requirements under the new legislation, but that has not happened, so we are none the wiser about what the storage requirements will be under the new bill. We know they will be in the regulations, but I understood that we were to be given an indication about whether everyone who has a gun safe with two or three rifles in it will have to buy a new safe and what the new standard will be. That is of material interest to people across the state. Even the cheapest gun safe is an investment of hundreds of dollars. As we know, people are already facing a cost-of-living crisis in Western Australia as they negotiate inflation and the rising cost of living. This is another impost that could be put on an individual even though they have a cabinet that met the requirements when they first acquired the firearm. We would like to have seen that in the legislation. I know there were discussions in the briefings about a safe from a particular hardware store that someone said they could get into in a few minutes. I do not know about that, but the minister could let us know during consideration in detail whether he has some guidelines or further information that can be provided because that would be very helpful as we negotiate through the legislation.

Another concern is the suitability of a property for a particular activity such as hunting with a particular calibre. Again, there is no explanation about how that will be determined, or none that has been provided to the opposition or members of the firearms community to whom I have spoken. There does not seem to be much understanding about that.

Another matter that concerns people is the minimum-activity requirements. We spoke earlier about the dealers who will have to meet unknown minimum requirements. There will also be minimum-activity requirements on a particular licence holder, which I presume could be policed only by having an understanding of a couple of things such as identifying when a person uses a gun. The minister may be able to explain how that will happen. Perhaps it will simply be done by recording how much ammunition a person uses. Of course, people can reload et cetera and it might be more difficult to ascertain that information than was first thought. That is an interesting new facet to the legislation that raises some issues. A person may also change their occupation and no longer need to use a firearm daily. I am sure that there have been many farmer politicians over the years who have had a firearm or two that they used far more often when they were on the farm every day rather than when they were in politics. I will not mention anyone here. Certainly, that change in occupation changes the regularity of use of the firearm, but the use and the need for it is still there because the pests are still on the property. One day, that person may be back on the property. We have a concern about that and would like to understand more about it.

The \$64.3 million compensation buyback scheme was announced before the legislation was passed. That meant that people could only suppose they would be able to retain their firearm. They do not have a clear indication from either the police or Parliament as to whether or not they will be able to retain their firearm. I would have thought that the buyback scheme would be left in place over a longer period of time, so that after having made an assessment of whether they want to retain the firearm, after they come under the ambit of this legislation, people could then make that decision, rather than having to make the decision before the full circumstances are known. It seems to be putting the cart before the horse.

Maybe it is a way of suddenly trying to buy back a whole bunch of guns and there is nothing more in it than that, but if the government is trying to compensate people who are caught up in the legislation by some of the change-of-use categories et cetera, then that would seem to be a back-to-front way of doing it. We have asked why the \$64.3 million limit was put in place. We have not really had an explanation as to why that amount was deemed to be appropriate. Many firearm owners expressed concern that the levels of compensation that are offered are not realistic in many circumstances. Who knows, under this new legislation it might be more difficult for people to sell their guns on the open market; there might be less demand. The changes might leave them out of pocket. The way the buyback was initiated is puzzling. We do not see any science behind it, nor do we see science behind the arbitrary numbers of guns that people can have.

I am pleased to see one particular measure in the bill about which the Nationals WA has advocated for a change in the legislation for a long time. Australia Post has been unwilling to handle—as it does in every other state—the

carriage of firearms, parts or ammunition. That is something that was brought about because of the need from the authority in Western Australia. We have a unique situation here. My colleague Hon Martin Aldridge and others had many discussions with police, including the former commissioner—the current Governor—around this matter and they were certainly understanding and supportive of the situation, but nothing had been done to undo the complication that Australia Post did not want to apply to be a body that can transport firearms or ammunition. My reading of the transport and commercial carrier parts of the legislation is that that particular situation will be undone and will now be resolved. We are very grateful for that, because we have taken up that challenge for many years. Many small dealers around the state and people in regional areas are most affected by that difficulty. Again, it is a situation that needed to be addressed.

We were not concerned about having a review through the Law Reform Commission because we knew that this legislation was decades old. I think it is 50 years old, but it was probably 40 years old back at that stage. We were happy to have it addressed. It has taken a long time to get here. The review was concluded at the end of the last government, and no legislation came forward, and now after seven years of this government—despite the fact that there has been some legislation in the firearms area—this is only now coming to the fore. Many aspects of the Law Reform Commission review have been followed, but unfortunately other areas have not. We will be seeking to get an understanding during consideration in detail why some measures that we mentioned were considered and others were not.

As I said before, in Western Australia we have a Parliament and we have processes within Parliament to study legislation and go through it carefully. I think members on the other side must remember the situation in 2023 when a piece of legislation was pushed through Parliament and it was very clear there had not been proper consultation. It had not been through all the processes that it should have been. This was the Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation. The failure of the government to allow proper scrutiny of that led to the failure of the legislation. That legislation was supposed to be preceded by a green bill; however, it was rushed through this place within 24 hours, if I recall, of it being made known to us. It was pushed through the other place and then pushed onto the community in unseemly haste, in a way that has caused uproar.

This bill has echoes of that. In order to avoid that, the opposition believes that this bill should go to the Legislation Committee in the other place, not the uniform legislation committee in its current form, because it has limited terms of reference. The Legislation Committee has met only once in the entire term of this Parliament. It has considered only one piece of legislation.

Second Reading — Amendment to Motion

Mr R.S. LOVE: I move —

To delete the word “now” and insert after the word “time” —

only after the minister gives an undertaking that he will request the minister’s representative in the Legislative Council to seek to have the bill referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation once the bill progresses to that house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Members, as a point of clarification, during the second reading debate on the Firearms Bill 2024, the question before the chair has been that the bill be now read a second time. The Leader of the Opposition has proposed a recent amendment to this question in accordance with standing order 170. He moved —

To delete the word “now” and insert after the word “time” —

only after the minister gives an undertaking that he will request the minister’s representative in the Legislative Council to seek to have the bill referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation once the bill progresses to that house.

The question now before the chair is that that word to be deleted be deleted.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [1.28 pm]: I rise to support the amendment that the Leader of the Opposition has moved. I will outline why I think it is prudent for the government to take the advice of the Leader of the Opposition. He has mentioned one of the pieces of legislation that was an utter debacle from a legislative and community perspective. I had a meeting this morning in my office with people who had been involved with that legislation and they are still smarting from the time that was wasted because the government was not willing to go through an ordinary and, I think, legitimate process to bring good legislation to the house.

In fact, yesterday I was on my feet making a comment on the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Safety Levies Amendment Bill 2023 and the Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, which had over 10 pages of government amendments—government amendments to its own legislation! If anyone thinks that I am cherry-picking, I have 19 pieces of legislation here in which the government has brought government amendments to its own legislation. I can list them all. Some amendments might be minor and administrative. Others, as we found out from a Standing Committee on Legislation report tabled earlier this week, proved that there is great merit in using our committee system appropriately. I will get to that in a minute.

The review of the Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill 2023 identified that some definitions were missing from that legislation and that the government, in fact, had introduced it into the wrong house! This put paid to the fact that the government brings in perfect legislation, because the record sits in front of me. I can list that legislation. The list includes the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2023, the Western Australian Marine Amendment Bill 2023 and the Duties Amendment (Off-the-Plan Concession and Foreign Persons Exemptions) Bill 2023. The list has grown! There are now 21 bills; I started with 19! It includes the Charitable Trusts Bill 2022, the Bail Amendment Bill 2022, the Directors' Liability Reform Bill 2022, the Workers Compensation and Injury Management Bill 2023, the Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023, the Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel National Law Application) Bill 2023, the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023, the Aboriginal Heritage Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2023 and the Electoral Amendment (Finance and Other Matters) Bill 2023. I will concede that the Attorney General made amendments to the electoral amendment bill that incorporated some of what the opposition and industry said, and other amendments were made during the process. We also urged the Attorney General to send that bill to the legislation committee. The list continues with the Western Australian Marine Amendment Bill 2023, the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Application Bill 2023, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2023 and what I mentioned yesterday. Sorry; I have gone back the other way. I should have said the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2021, the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2021 and the Administration Amendment Bill 2021. I can provide Hansard—the reporter is looking very concerned—with the list that was helpfully put together so we could highlight that we do not move this motion lightheartedly and it is not just a stunt. We are talking about a significant piece of legislation, and I would expect that the Minister for Police and his government would want to get it absolutely spot-on.

As a previous member of the Legislative Council and someone who was part of the legislation committee, I also speak with experience of why it is an important process and lever that the government can use to make sure all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed. Our government was never afraid to use it, even when we had a majority in Parliament. I was a member of the legislation committee that looked at the proposed stop-and-search law, which I saw reared its head again over the weekend and is apparently being considered by this government, which I find remarkable. Those laws were the subject of significant investigation and review and, ultimately, did not proceed. The legislation was reviewed by the committee, which ultimately found that the policy intent and the way in which the legislation was constructed would not deliver the outcomes the government sought. Was it a painful process for the government at the time? Yes; it was not ideal, but the processes of Parliament are here for a reason. They are here for us to utilise, and this government has used it once in this Parliament. In the previous four-year term, the government chose to refer legislation to the legislation committee 13 times. This iteration of the government—with its incredible numbers, ultimate power and arrogance, which came with the previous Premier's leadership—has not referred one piece of legislation, apart from the Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill 2023, which most people would say is fairly innocuous legislation, and I used to be the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I think that this is essentially the government saying, "Oops! We'd better put something through to the legislation committee so opposition members don't have the opportunity to stand and draw attention to it"—exactly what I am doing. The government sent it to the legislation committee. The committee has done its job and determined that a definition was missing in the legislation and that the government introduced a money bill into the Legislative Council, which is a big no-no and should not be done. The committee's recommendation is that the bill be withdrawn from the Legislative Council for debate and reintroduced into the Legislative Assembly. That is very simple legislation; it is not what we are contemplating in the reforms to the firearms legislation.

The member for Moore, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Liberal Party have outlined some concerns. Yes, the opposition will have the opportunity to go through it in consideration in detail, but that is not the same as referring legislation to a committee and giving the committee the opportunity to call witnesses and experts, and make sure that the community has the opportunity to make submissions, in addition to the work that has been done previously. The government should get it right because the track record of this state government says that it does not get it right.

I had to watch the Minister for Mines and Petroleum yesterday. It was not his legislation, so I will not heap too much on him. The previous Minister for Mines and Petroleum introduced the flawed legislation. This minister had to clean up the mess, and sitting here was pretty unedifying. The minister introduced 10 pages of amendments to his own legislation. Again, it was something that had been around more than 10 years and was contemplated by the previous government.

Does the minister think that he has this legislation spot-on and exactly right, or are we to assume that no amendments or what the opposition will bring to Parliament will be contemplated? As usual, as we saw with previous legislation going through this place and the other, it will just be rammed through on numbers. I urge the minister not to do that. It is a sensible request from the opposition to send it to the committee. If I am right, the committee is predominantly made up of government members, so the risk would be low, but we hope that they would approach their role as parliamentarians who are here to make sure that what we put through Parliament comes out the other end fit for purpose. They would make sure that the Western Australia Police Force, which will administer it; the licence holders and businesses that will be impacted by it; and people in the community who will rely on the legislation for their safety can be assured that the legislation will do what it sets out to. I do not think this an unreasonable request.

I remind the minister, when he stands to respond to this request, that the government itself has amended 21 pieces of legislation in this term alone. I do not think that one minister in this place has a clean slate on bringing legislation to this place without requiring some amendment. Perhaps the Minister for Regional Development, who is sitting in the corner, might have escaped that.

Mr J.R. Quigley: None of it was struck down as being unconstitutional as the former Liberal government's was.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The Attorney General would have to admit that it is unedifying for the government to amend its own legislation when the government has all the resources, time and capacity.

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Attorney General!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is incumbent on the government that has this much power in this iteration of Parliament to make sure that it demonstrates to the community that it is not simply being arrogant and ramming legislation through because it can. The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party have raised legitimate concerns. I do not live in great hope that we will see this agreed to, but the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party and I want it on the record. This government does not have a great track record, and it would do it well to agree to send this to the legislation committee.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [1.38 pm]: No. We will not do that. At the outset, I will reflect a little on the extent of the consultation for this legislation.

As the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Vasse observed, the Law Reform Commission commenced a public consultation process in 2014. It went for two years and resulted in a report that has, from memory, 123 recommendations. The Liberal and National Parties did nothing with that report. We then took government, and a working group consulted in our first term. It had members from different parties, including the representative of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party WA in the upper house, Mr Mazza. They worked on the proposed recommendations from the Law Reform Commission report. Then, in this term of government, we implemented part of the recommendations of that report in the first amendment to the act I brought into this place that more than doubled—almost tripled—the penalties for firearm theft and unlawful use of firearms, and, amongst other things, created a firearms prohibition order. Then, we commenced a two-year process to rewrite the act from the ground up in accordance with the key recommendation of the Law Reform Commission report. As the report recommended, we have made public safety the principal consideration of the new legislation. The approach for every part of the legislation flowed from that penning of the priority of the principle of public safety. Everything else in the legislation flows from that. Nevertheless, that said, there was almost two years of consultation in preparing this bill to come to this place. That is not to say that in consideration in detail any potential proposals, observations or suggestions from any party in this place will not be considered. That is what this place is for. We do not cede our responsibility to the other place.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is extraordinary that Hon Mia Davies would suggest that the only party, the only organisation, the only part of this Parliament capable of making amendments to or reviewing the legislation is some committee set up in the upper house. It is incredible that the member for Central Wheatbelt would suggest that. Nevertheless, as we have indicated, this legislation is not being rushed. It will be dealt with in a methodical, reasonable manner. It will go through this place, and the opposition can do its duty and assess every single clause, propose amendments to its heart's content, make suggestions and identify things —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, thank you.

Mr P. PAPALIA: — that it does not like and make suggestions on behalf of anybody. That is the opposition's job; that is what it is supposed to do. That opportunity will be afforded to the opposition.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr P. PAPALIA: Thereafter, the bill will proceed to the other place where, in the normal course of events, it will go the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review for three months of assessment—three months.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, please take your seat. Leader of the Opposition, I have warned you a couple of times. Please cease interjecting while the minister is on his feet.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It will have been scrutinised by the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party in this place, with all the resources and support available to those positions, including —

Ms L. Mettam: Resources?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member for Vasse is the Leader of the Liberal Party, and the Leader of the Nationals WA, the Leader of the Opposition, is here. They can seek advice and support from anybody. They can criticise the bill and propose amendments or suggestions to their hearts' content here. Then the bill will go through the normal course of events—it will not be rushed or pushed through. Having criticised me, the Leader of the Liberal Party appears to be trying to delay the legislation. Her spokesperson suggested that I was responsible for a school shooting and a murder–suicide in the wheatbelt because I had not yet passed the legislation. That is an incredible backflip and an extraordinary decision on the leader's behalf. Having done that, the Leader of the Liberal Party stood in this place, I do not know, not three quarters of an hour ago and said that this legislation had not been dealt with like the Aboriginal Heritage Act. She said there had been consultation and a proper process. Now, the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that there has not been and he wants to change the normal process into some other thing. We will not do it. The opposition has the opportunity to do its job in this place. When the bill goes to the upper house, it will go to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review, and thereafter it will be debated in the upper house in the normal course of events, as is normally the process for legislation. Any proposals can be dealt with at that time and place.

I will reflect a little on what the two years' worth of consultation involved. Despite the Leader of the Opposition's claim that the Western Australian Firearms Community Alliance had not been consulted, I am pretty certain it was consulted every week for the better part of a year and a half, with personal meetings with the police officers who were contributing to the drafting process. Every week there were personal meetings in their offices. Bearing in mind that that organisation represents only some of the licensed firearm holders, beyond that, as the member for Vasse indicated, there has been deep consultation with the bodies that represent primary producers in Western Australia. The Primary Producers Firearms Advisory Board has been consulted on this legislation, and it has contributed significantly to shaping it. There were also the WA Farmers Federation, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA, the Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association, vegetablesWA and Wines of Western Australia. All those bodies have contributed to the shaping of this legislation.

Other people have been consulted. The Leader of the Opposition was at pains to reflect on an electronic petition, on which the signatures could have come from anywhere.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, thank you!

Mr P. PAPALIA: That aside, a consultation paper was produced last year. A one-month consultation period followed and submissions were received. We did not get 90 000 submissions from the supposed 90 000 licensed firearms owners who the Leader of the Opposition claims to represent, but we got 6 681 emails, 5 135 of which were auto-generated from the WASCA site. There was auto-generation of emails that were essentially identical in content, although some words were moved around. For all intents and purposes, their argument—what they were proposing—was identical. They were still received and acknowledged. There were 1 546 emails that were not pro forma. The vast majority of them were against the legislation, primarily the three elements that the opposition has identified on its Facebook pages as being what it opposes, such as limits on the number of firearms. The opposition proposes an unlimited number of guns for everybody in Western Australia. That is what the opposition proposes because it opposes a limit. It is just not possible to oppose a gun limit and not be for unlimited guns. I am sorry, that is just fact.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: The discussion here is about the referral to a committee, it is not about the merits of the Firearms Bill 2024 itself. I ask the minister to come back to the point of whether this bill should be reviewed by the legislation committee.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): The point of order is not upheld. Please cease from interjection—yet again, I am telling you that.

Debate Resumed

Mr P. PAPALIA: I was talking about the Leader of the Opposition's criticism of that process and his justification for going to a different committee in the upper house for three months as opposed to the one it will go to for three months on the grounds that he feels that there has not been adequate consultation. During that consultation process we received submissions that predominantly opposed firearm limits of any description. They also opposed health checks and reform of the corrupted property letter scheme. That is fine because that is what they felt, but, as I said, even if we take into account the significant number of form letters, with a vast majority of 6 081 reflecting that position, this law is not just for people who own a gun. This law is not just for people who have a firearms licence. This law, in accordance with the National Firearms Agreement that John Howard championed in 1996 and 1997, makes public safety the principal consideration. This law is for the public, so the police sought to get an opinion from more than just those people who own a gun. Not surprisingly, that part of the population had a different view than the 6 081 people who do not want a limit on how many guns they can own.

That part of the population was surveyed with an accuracy of plus or minus 1.3 per cent and it confirmed that 72 per cent of Western Australians believe there should be a firearms limit. They believe that it should be five or

fewer, and another 16 per cent on top of that believe there should be none. That is 88 per cent of Western Australians, the ones who do not own guns. It was demographically representative and it was proportionally representative of gun owners who were canvassed, but 88 per cent of the public believe there should be limits to the number of firearms a person owns. Beyond that, we consulted with other people, because, again, that small number of people who own firearms and amongst those people the number who own firearms and are concerned about reform of the legislation, which is even smaller, are not necessarily very representative of a lot of people. We talked to a range of other people to seek their views. I am wondering whether either the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the Liberal Party talked to those people, because they have a view. I am pretty certain the Leader of the Liberal Party talked with at least some of them, but I do not think the Leader of the Opposition did.

Mr R.S. Love: I do not know who you are talking about, so I cannot tell you.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will tell the Leader of the Opposition. Did he talk to the Western Australian Council of Social Service? Louise Giolitto was CEO at the time we introduced the debate and began the consultation; did the Leader of the Opposition talk to her? I doubt it. Did he talk to Stephen Bendle from the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, established by Walter Mikac after his wife and two kids were shot at Port Arthur? Did he talk to them? They have a view. Did he talk to Sandy Lukjanowski from Injury Matters, the people who deal with injuries associated with gun trauma in Western Australia? Has he talked to them? These are people who have a view. Did he talk to Gun Control Australia's Dr Charles Watson, a neuroscientist in Western Australia, about his view on gun control and guns? Did he talk to Alison Evans, the CEO of the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing? She is in Western Australia and she is pretty high profile. She has a view. Did he talk to Kati Kraszlan, the Commissioner for Victims of Crime? There is not much of a positive response coming.

Did the Leader of the Opposition talk to Dr Ann O'Neill, a very high profile victim of gun violence who watched as her two children were shot to death by an estranged former partner and was then shot in the leg that was subsequently amputated? She is the founder of Angelhands and an advocate for gun control. Did he talk to her about her views about the laws? Did he talk to Dr Sudhakar Rao, the chair of the WA Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' trauma committee? Did he talk to him at Royal Perth Hospital? He treats people with gun trauma. Did he talk to the Public Health Association of Australia's CEO, Adjunct Professor Terry Slevin? He has a view. I doubt that the Leader of the Opposition talked to anybody other than the Western Australian Firearms Community Alliance. That is a concern, because that indicates a lack of consultation. That indicates that the Leader of the Opposition is ill-informed.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member is ill-informed. He does not know the public of Western Australia's view on firearms reform. He does not know that. All he knows is the view of a small portion of licensed firearm owners in Western Australia. That is pretty disappointing when we take into account what he is proposing by, firstly, delaying this legislation. The Liberal Party has been criticising me for two years for not having done it fast enough, and it is now trying to delay it. It then wants to delay it further in the upper house and the Leader of the Opposition wants to abrogate his responsibility to properly assess this legislation in the house where government is formed.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr P. PAPALIA: In the house where government is formed, he wants to relinquish that responsibility.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Leader of the Opposition, I have warned you so many times. I call you to order for the first time.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I would urge the Leader of the Opposition to consider that list that I read to him and seek them out for their advice. If he wants to claim that there has been inadequate consultation—he is absolutely guilty of lack of consultation—he needs to rectify that situation. He needs to talk to victims of gun violence.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: He needs to talk to the victims of family and domestic violence who are fearful of guns in the community, because that escalates and magnifies the threat to them. He needs to talk to people who advocate for victims of crime, like Kati Kraszlan. He needs to talk to people who have been campaigning for decades for firearms reform and are concerned that it has been undermined by the push for an American-style gun culture in Australia. He needs to determine whether he has the moral high ground on this. If all he is doing—in a desperate bid to get support of some people from the Queensland gun lobby who are funnelling money through WAFCA—is because he is so desperate for anybody to support the Nationals WA, then that is a sad indictment of the once proud National Party.

I will reflect. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned a true National Party leader, Tim Fischer. I met him in 1991 at the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Crete in Crete. He is a veteran, a courageous man who, had he not been there at that moment, may not have enabled John Howard to do the great reform that he did. If we had not

had Tim Fischer as the Leader of the National Party, if we had someone like the member for Moore, I doubt whether we would have had that reform. It is extraordinary. Ask anybody, except for the small number of people who the Leader of the Opposition talks to, what they think one of the greatest contributions John Howard made to Australian society was. Ask them that, and undeniably, almost universally they will say that John Howard's gun laws were one of his greatest contributions to the nation. They are thankful to this day for that. Australians are thankful we are not America. They are thankful we do not have American gun culture. Do not argue for it.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: I again refer to the fact that the minister is debating the bill not the motion for the referral to the committee. I ask that he be called to order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): The point of order is not upheld.

Debate Resumed

Mr P. PAPALIA: We will definitely not refer the bill to that committee. It will go to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review. You can do your job in this place. Make your case. I do not think you have got one!

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [1.59 pm]: I rise to also speak to the amendment.

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That was the close of the debate. How can she contribute when the debate has closed?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): She can; it has been checked.

Ms L. METTAM: We had already clarified that.

The ACTING SPEAKER: It has been checked; thank you.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: I support the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition in support of this piece of legislation going to the Standing Committee on Legislation—a committee that this government has used only once, which goes to the level of accountability and transparency that we have seen under this government. We know that it has a track record when it comes to amending its own pieces of legislation, which the member for Central Wheatbelt pointed out. We support this amendment to ensure that there are no unintended consequences from this piece of legislation. The minister talked about the bill being a product of the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia report.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 785.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

METHAMPHETAMINE — USE

123. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Premier:

Under the Premier's watch, Western Australians have now been dubbed the biggest methamphetamine users in the nation. Given the surge in meth consumption, with particular concern about a 40 per cent increase in regional WA alone, how does the government justify its efforts to combat this escalating crisis, especially considering the alarming statistics outlined in the recent Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission report?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

The level of meth use in Western Australia has been lower every single year under the Labor government when compared with the peak under the Liberals and Nationals in 2016. That is the fact of the matter. Under our government, every year meth usage has been lower than when you were in office. It is less than when the Liberals and Nationals were in government. Estimated consumption in 2016–17 was 1 547 kilograms. Estimated consumption in 2022–23 was 1 322 kilograms. That is the fact of the matter. That is a 15 per cent decrease in the raw numbers. When we factor into that equation a 12 per cent increase in population in that time, it shows a 24 per cent decrease in per capita usage. Some of the other facts that surround this debate are also illuminating. Over this period, we have also seen a significant drop in drug offences. In 2016, there were 35 932; in 2023, there were just 24 148. That is a 33 per cent drop—a massive reduction. We have seen WA's usage as a share of Australia's usage also fall. In 2016, WA accounted for 18.5 per cent of Australia's meth usage; in 2023, WA accounted for just 12 per cent. I think the facts speak for themselves.

We have these important statistics and facts to examine today for two reasons. One is our hard borders during the COVID-19 pandemic. During that period, we saw a dramatic reduction in the level of meth usage and number of meth convictions in Western Australia. I reflect on that period. At that time, two political parties in Western Australia were calling for that border to be torn down. That was you.

Mr R.S. Love: No.

Mr R.H. COOK: You cannot disown your past! Had we listened to you, not only would Western Australia have been devastated by thousands of deaths as a result of COVID-19, but we also would have seen a continuation of the flow of drugs across Western Australia's borders.

Visitors — Santa Maria College

The SPEAKER: Premier, if I can just interrupt you for one moment, before they leave, I want to acknowledge the students from, I think, Sacred Heart College in Sorrento on behalf of the member for Carine.

Government members: Santa Maria College.

The SPEAKER: Thank you.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr R.H. COOK: In addition, we have seen incredible drug suppression operations being carried out by the WA Police Force. Our hard borders severed the bikie-controlled drug supply chains during the pandemic and we saw meth consumption plummet. Subsequently, the state government introduced the toughest anti-bikie laws in the country and gave the police the power to conduct regular drug searches at 22 defined entry points in Western Australia. We see two things happening here—one is the impact of COVID-19 and our actions at that time, and the other is the laws that we brought in and the police operations that have been enabled by those changes to the law. That is why we have seen a dramatic reduction in meth usage under our watch compared with yours.

METHAMPHETAMINE — USE

124. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. How does the Premier reconcile his statements with the fact that wastewater research has shown a 40 per cent increase in meth consumption, and what is he doing to combat this?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I think I explained in rather great detail in my original answer that, overall, we have seen a dramatic reduction. Sure, meth usage continues to grow as a result of the fact that we continue to have the fastest growing population in the country. Of course, as we move into a post-COVID period we can see an uptick, but we can also see WA Labor's—my government's—laws in action, putting significant downward pressure on meth usage, which has always been lower than when you were in government. As a result of that, Western Australians are much safer.

GST DISTRIBUTION

125. Ms M.J. HAMMAT to the Premier:

I refer to the delivery of Western Australia's GST floor, which comes into full effect this year.

- (1) Can the Premier outline to the house how the GST floor is a fair deal and explain what it means for Western Australians and the rest of the country more generally?
- (2) Can the Premier advise the house whether he is aware of anyone who does not support the continuation of WA's GST arrangements?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question; it is an important one. I can elucidate to the house the real threat to WA's fair share of the GST. Yesterday, the Commonwealth Grants Commission released its GST relativities for the year ahead. Thankfully, the update factored in the hard-fought reforms that we achieved in 2018. Without those reforms, Western Australia would have received less than 12¢ in the dollar in 2024. That would have been a ridiculous outcome. Instead, thanks to our campaign, this year, as part of that deal, we are getting 75¢ back in the dollar. This means that we will now provide a \$2.4 billion subsidy to the other states in 2024–25 alone. Strangely, we do not get much thanks for that. We do not get much thanks from the eastern states for gifting them another \$2.4 billion of our GST, but we have learnt to expect that in recent years, as the Treasurer often notes. However, it is important to note that WA still has the lowest relativity of all states and territories, and that no state is worse off as a result of our 75¢ floor. That is an important thing to remember: no state is worse off because Western Australia gets its 75¢ in the dollar share. In fact, all states and territories, and the commonwealth, have been better off because of the higher-than-expected value of iron ore production in WA and the flow-on effects thanks to the strength of the Western Australian economy.

With all that being said, the Liberal Party has left the door wide open to scrapping our fair share of the GST. Former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said that there remained enormous anxiety around the cabinet table when discussing the GST deal, especially from Peter Dutton; former Liberal foreign minister Julie Bishop said that Peter Dutton fought against WA getting a better GST deal; and former Liberal cabinet minister Ken Wyatt said in 2018 that Peter Dutton's plan for our state's GST deal would be “walking back from and walking away from Western Australians”.

WA knows that the real risk—the only risk—to WA’s GST share is the WA Liberal Party. If we needed any further proof of the Liberal Party’s GST position, we heard this morning on Sky news Mr Dutton’s lieutenant and shadow Minister for Finance, Senator Jane Hume, a senior shadow minister in the Dutton shadow cabinet, refuse to back in WA’s fair share of the GST. Senator Hume was given multiple opportunities to pledge her party’s support for the deal, but she refused to do so. Instead, she said that it was a matter for the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Not so. Then she said that it is a matter for the government of the day. We know that the government of the day, the Albanese government, has pledged to never change the GST arrangements. Then she said, “We’re the opposition”—an admission that the Liberal Party under Peter Dutton is laying the groundwork to undermine WA’s fair share of the GST when it gets back into government. Perish the thought that that should ever happen. Even when asked point-blank whether the deal was fair, Senator Hume said that that was a decision made at the time, in the circumstances of the time, and that it was seen to be a fair decision at that point in time. We know that at some point in the future, the Liberal Party will try to undo our fair share of the GST. It is ominous stuff.

Finally, upon being asked point-blank whether the deal should change, the Liberal Party deflects and refuses to say. This is the Liberal Party’s position. The Liberal Party is the biggest threat to WA’s fair share of the GST. That is something that every Western Australian knows, and it is something that we will continue to remind them of. The biggest threat to WA’s GST is Peter Dutton and the WA Liberal Party.

METHAMPHETAMINE — USE

126. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Police:

I refer to *Report 21: National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program*, which was released overnight and references a 40 per cent rise in meth on the streets of WA, at 23 per cent above the national average. Will the minister admit that, firstly, Labor’s methamphetamine action plan and stop-and-search laws have failed to reduce the use of hard drugs on our streets; secondly, the use of meth will continue to rise under WA Labor now that it does not have the COVID border to hide behind; and, thirdly, WA Labor has failed to deliver on its promise to keep Western Australians safe?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for her question. I will answer them all together. The bottom line is what the Premier indicated. Every single year under us, meth consumption in Western Australia has been far lower than it was in the last year under the Liberal government in 2016, when, I remind the member, we saw the blaring front-page headlines “Meth City”. It was Perth they were talking about. We led the nation then. The Leader of the Opposition is wrong. Western Australia is not leading the nation in meth consumption. In fact, I think we are third or fourth behind a number of other states with regard to meth. Having said that, meth is a significant threat to Western Australia. It is the drug of choice in this state and it is the one that does so much harm. That is why we have done so much to empower the police to disrupt the organised criminals who bring it here. The Liberal government did not do that.

As the Premier indicated, we have taken a range of measures to empower the police, including the anti-consorting legislation and the toughest anti-insignia legislation in the country, and everyone has seen the disruptive nature of that legislation for the bikies; they are the people. When we talk about organised crime and the distribution of meth in the state, essentially, it is brought in from overseas by people in triads, mafia, cartels and the like and then distributed within Australia, particularly within Western Australia, by outlaw motorcycle gangs. That was confirmed during the COVID pandemic because of the hard borders, the reduction of trafficking into the state and the use of clever intelligence that resulted in some significant disruption. It did show that they are the people behind it. A lot of them are in prison now. It will not go away while we have organised criminals and those gangs. That is why we continue to go after them. We introduced amendments to the Firearms Act a couple of years ago that doubled the penalties for firearms theft and illegal use and also created a thing called a firearms prohibition order, which is essentially for searching without a warrant just about anywhere you want. The police have that; the gang crime squad can do that. When those people are handed one of those things, life gets very uncomfortable.

As the member has referred to, we created legislation to establish 22 search areas around the state—every international land, sea and air arrival point essentially and all the major ones across the land borders—to enable the police, again without a warrant, to conduct searches in prescribed areas. They are initiated and established at short notice with a senior officer based on intelligence. The police have those powers. They will be using them. They have started using those search powers, but they are only in the early days. They will use a range of those powers, and others, to ensure that they work to disrupt and dismantle organised crime gangs and their ability to distribute meth into the state.

It is not a simple thing and there is no single silver bullet. Despite all that, we have done a range of measures that the previous government never even contemplated. I find it a little bit frustrating to be criticised in here for not having yet solved the problem that members opposite looked at for eight and a half years and did nothing about.

METHAMPHETAMINE — USE

127. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Police:

Will the minister promise Western Australians that under this government, meth use will no longer continue to rise so dramatically?

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Landsdale, the interjection is unruly.

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

Sorry, Speaker; I kind of missed the start of the question. I assume that the member wants me to wave a wand and promise her that there is not going to be any more crime in Western Australia. We will continue to provide the police with all the power and resources they need to very effectively tackle this crime in particular—the introduction and distribution of methylamphetamine, but also other illicit drugs in the state through which organised criminals live off the pain and suffering of other Western Australians. It is disgraceful. I am glad that we have such a professional and capable police force. I am very happy to confirm that we will continue to provide it with all the support it needs to do its job.

CAUSEWAY PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST BRIDGES

Mr G. BAKER: Madam Speaker!

The SPEAKER: The minister for South Perth—sorry, the member for South Perth!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: You are very important, yes.

128. Mr G. BAKER to the Minister for Transport:

I will have to move seats!

I refer to the Cook Labor government's efforts to deliver a more vibrant, connected city.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on the Causeway Link Alliance's work to deliver the new Causeway pedestrian and cyclist bridges, including the plans to create a new digital canvas?
- (2) Can the minister update the house on the status of other alliances?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

Gee, that one was quite hidden! I thank the member for South Perth for the question.

- (1)–(2) On the weekend, we marked another major milestone in the delivery of the Causeway pedestrian and cycling bridges. We walked over the first part of the deck that has been laid on the bridge. The remaining 15 modules, ranging from 22 to 42 metres in length, will be lifted into place by the middle of this year. Of course, it is aimed at making the crossing safer and also more useable for the thousands of people who currently cross the Causeway on the 1960s slab that is about a metre wide and very unsafe. The new Causeway pedestrian bridge will be an iconic structure. Similar to the Matagarup Bridge, we wanted to make sure that it is an iconic structure that doubles as a tourism icon for the state, and that is why we have incorporated lights into the bridge. It will be very similar to the Matagarup Bridge, but even better with the ability to project across the cables.

We are delivering this as part of an alliance contract. As the member said, the alliance contract is going well, as are many alliances that we are delivering across the state. I will tell members which alliance is not going very well.

Mr R.H. Cook: Tell us.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is the one on the opposite side. In relation to the alliance of the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party —

Point of Order

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

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, I will just remind you that points of order are heard in silence.

Dr D.J. HONEY: This is drifting well off the original topic of the question.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe, I think you needed to listen to the original question that was asked. It was specifically asked by the member for South Perth.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The question was about alliances. As I said, there is no alliance in WA that could be more dysfunctional and broken. Watching the opposition has been like watching a series of *Succession* and seeing the Roy family tearing each other apart. Those who have watched the series know that we could not get a more dysfunctional family, and that is exactly what is in the opposition. No-one knows what will happen from one episode to the next. No-one knows who will be the leader at the end. Who could have predicted that the member for North West Central would swap from one side to the other? All those who know the series know cousin Greg. Do members remember cousin Greg? Cousin Greg in the upper house turned up on the doorstep and then found himself to be shadow Treasurer. I will not go into who we think Kendall is; that is a story for another day.

No wonder this dysfunctional family is prone to a takeover bid from outside Parliament when it is so broken and so dysfunctional. I am glad the alliances that we are delivering are working well—alliances between industry and government. There are six opposition members on the other side. It is a family that cannot get on with each other. A more dysfunctional broken alliance we will never meet.

POLICE — OPERATION REGIONAL SHIELD

129. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Premier:

It is now two years since Operation Regional Shield was launched. In those two years, we have seen police recruitment numbers plummeting, crime statistics in regional WA rocketing and regional WA becoming the meth capital of this nation. When will the Premier's government take these issues seriously instead of rushing bandaid solutions forward?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

Community safety is our highest priority—keeping people safe. We want the people of Western Australia to feel that they can grow in this beautiful state with great jobs and sustainable communities, living rewarding lives. That is why we put so many resources and so much emphasis into making sure that we have a police force that can continue to keep people safe. That is why the number of police under our watch has grown significantly. For instance, around the time we came to office, in February 2017, the headcount was 6 408 in the police force. In January 2024, it was 6 991—almost 7 000. We have recruited another 180 officers in the last 12 months alone.

It is true that when we have a workforce of such a significant size, we will have churn—people will come in and out of it. It is absolutely pleasing to see such a significant number of people wanting to become part of our police force. A total of 4 239 people have applied to join the police force, including 2 633 in Western Australia and 1 555 experienced international police officers, all wanting to get on the beat in Western Australia. We currently have 400 people in the academy at this point alone. A significant pipeline of recruits and development is taking place. We have doubled the capacity of the academy so that 1 000 recruits can come through in the course of this year. We have 6 744 officers, full-time equivalents—509 more than when we came to government.

The importance of Operation Regional Shield is that it provides us with the capability and the resources to continue to make sure we move these police officers around the state to areas where they are needed most. It has been a game changer in terms of making sure that we keep on top of outbreaks of antisocial behaviour. It has been extremely successful, and that is why we back it so much.

It is true to say that Western Australia is a great place to live and work. There are opportunities everywhere for people to take up incredibly rewarding jobs. That is the same for any police officer. We need to ensure that we keep our program of recruitment going, making sure that we continue to lift the number of people on the beat and continue to keep Western Australians safe.

POLICE — OPERATION REGIONAL SHIELD

130. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Two years after the Premier launched Operation Regional Shield to combat the crisis in the Kimberley, we had a crisis in Kalgoorlie and he deployed that operation there. When are we going to see a long-term plan to combat the rising tide of crime in regional WA?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I think it is very important to reflect on the level of criminal activity in Western Australia under our government compared with when the coalition was in government.

Mr R.S. Love: Take responsibility for what is happening in your government. It is happening under your government.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr R.H. COOK: That is right. Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition what has happened under my government. There has been a decrease in overall criminal offences compared with 2019 when crime peaked under the Liberals and Nationals. In 2023, compared to 2016, there was a 53 per cent decrease in dwelling burglaries; a 26 per cent decrease in motor vehicle theft; a 20 per cent decrease in property damage; and a 33 per cent decrease in drug offences.

We can see that not only are the resources, the policies of my government and the laws that we bring into being doing such an important job for Western Australians, but also we see amazing police officers day in, day out doing great work on behalf of this community. They are doing an incredible job on behalf of all Western Australians. That is the reason we have seen such a significant decrease in criminal activity under my watch.

INNER-CITY PRIMARY SCHOOL — HIGHGATE

131. Mr S.A. MILLMAN to the Minister for Education:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's work to ensure that every Western Australian student has access to quality education facilities.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on this government's commitment to inner-city schooling, including important improvements at Highgate Primary School?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how these improvements build on this government's commitment to deliver a new inner-city primary school?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Mount Lawley for his passion and commitment to quality public education in the inner city and throughout Western Australia. I can actually provide the member with some information. Yesterday, the member for Perth and I were at Highgate Primary School to make a very significant investment. That included a \$12 million investment in an innovative modular two-storey classroom complex that will cater for six classrooms, preparation areas for the teachers, staff kitchenettes and toilets for staff and students. It will be built offsite, causing little disruption to the school, and will then be brought onsite to install.

The Leader of the Opposition seems to be confused about what I am saying. It is not that difficult to understand. We build a modular unit offsite, we bring it onto the school site and then we connect it. Apart from that, we are also using part of the money to refurbish the toilets that are there at the moment. We have also reached an agreement with the City of Vincent with regard to exclusive use of the adjacent Birdwood Square for a recreational facility during school time. We have also reached an agreement with the city with regard to leasing some car bays so teachers will be able to park offsite nearby, which will free up an area that can be used for a green space, plus rejuvenate an existing green. After some power works have been attended to by the appropriate utility services, we will install two transportable units this year to help alleviate any issues, although the principal, who has been very supportive, said the school will probably need only one, but if two are needed, we will supply those two transportables.

One has to understand that inner-city infrastructure, particularly in an educational setting, is very challenging because it is a confined space. It is a very popular school. It has great student outcomes, so people want to go to that school. The density of the inner area is increasing, therefore there are enrolment pressures at Highgate. We have thought through this very carefully. We have worked with the school, the local member and the City of Vincent, and we believe we have come up with a very good interim solution because, ultimately, we have to try to ease the enrolment pressures at Highgate.

Part of that strategy is a new inner-city primary school. Last year we announced that our preferred site is the Queens Gardens car park opposite the WACA. It is an incredibly exciting project. We are looking at an investment in a primary school that will be the greatest single investment in any primary school in Western Australian history. We are seeking to invest over \$100 million—way in excess of \$100 million—on the new primary school in the inner city that will have state-of-the-art classroom facilities, an oval and sporting facilities that will be utilised by not only the students, but also the community. We will also unlock the development potential of the land that the City of Perth can utilise. At the moment, under the Chevron–Hilton agreement, it can be used only as a car park.

We know that the City of Perth wants an inner-city primary school because it is the only metropolitan council that does not have one. We know that the Lord Mayor has stated previously that he wants to work in partnership with the government. My understanding of a partnership—I probably should explain what a partnership is to members of the opposition because they do not know what a partnership is or how a functional partnership works—is that both parties work together and contribute to the project. It is not like a group project when one person does all the work and no-one else does anything; they actually try to work together. The state government will use taxpayers' money to build a state-of-the-art inner-city primary school for the people who live in the City of Perth, Churchlands and in the electorate of Roe. The member for Roe, along with the City of Perth, wants us to pay \$40 million for the privilege of building an incredible primary school that will benefit the residents of the area and allow them to use those facilities. We are to pay the City of Perth \$40 million for that plus it would get a \$27.5 million potential development lot because at the moment it cannot be used. I want to make it clear to everyone, because the opposition seems to be in the corner of the City of Perth on this one, that for the City of Perth to have the privilege of the most expensive and best —

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: This must be the longest journey I have ever heard in a question-and-answer session. Surely you must bring him back to order, Madam Speaker. He was asked about the Highgate school, not some other facility elsewhere in the City of Perth.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, I will respond to the point of order. Minister, it has been a very lengthy answer. The question was principally about Highgate Primary School. I will ask you to draw your answer to a close.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I did talk about the delivery of an inner-city primary school in the answer.

The SPEAKER: I am aware of that, thanks.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Dr A.D. BUTI: For that privilege, the opposition wants us to spend more taxpayers' money than we should. The City of Perth wants a primary school. It has stated that it is a priority. It stated in last year's City of Perth social and health and wellbeing strategy that the city engaged more than 1 400 people to identify what they wanted for the Perth community in 2040, and they wanted social connection, community, safety and security, built environment, inclusivity, accessibility, vibrancy, activation and culture. What better way to do that than by having a beautiful primary school that can be used by the community? Last year, the Lord Mayor said, "A modern city is a city that doesn't get in the way. We want a primary school at East Perth. We want to help make it work. We want to be delivery partners in a primary school for the City of Perth. We're all on the same page."

I am still confident that when the City of Perth sees the offer that the state's taxpayers are offering, it will agree to what we have proposed and we can get on with building an inner-city primary school that will alleviate enrolment pressures in other schools such as Highgate.

The SPEAKER: Minister, I think that was the longest answer we have had this year. I will concur with the Leader of the Opposition on that point.

SCHOOLS — KNIFE CRIME

132. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Premier:

As a result of that, I ask my question to the Premier.

It has been revealed that a year 2 student in a southern suburbs primary school was caught with a knife. This follows another stabbing incident at Carine Senior High School late last year. These shocking situations starkly illustrate the scary reality confronting teachers in WA schools. Teachers and students in WA should be able to teach and learn in a safe environment. Where is the education minister when our schools are in crisis?

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

Obviously, we have all been distressed by the reports of knives being used as part of criminal activity in any part of Western Australia. As a dad from Kwinana, I see that anxiety on a daily basis. People are concerned about these things. It is threatening and is obviously an important part of our overall community safety activities. The idea of young people bringing knives into schools and knives being used in major entertainment precincts is simply not good enough and it has to stop. That is one of the reasons that our school environments have such harsh rules at the moment, which are that any student responsible for violent behaviour is automatically suspended, any student who assists in that violent behaviour is automatically suspended, and any student who films and, in particular, posts a video of violent behaviour is automatically suspended. They are the toughest rules we have ever had in WA, and we make no apologies for that. It is an important part of making sure that our schools and workplaces are places of safety, which is the reason that we work closely with the State School Teachers' Union of WA and the Principals Federation of Western Australia to make sure that we have in place the appropriate rules that are necessary. My government will consider every option available to keep Western Australians safe, including laws that are already in place in other parts of the country. We will continue to monitor the situation and ensure that we keep people safe in our schools.

SCHOOLS — KNIFE CRIME

133. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Western Australian teachers are saying that there is no shortage of teachers in WA; rather, there is a shortage of teachers who are willing to work in WA. Instead of going overseas to find teachers —

The SPEAKER: Member!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: — when will the government —

The SPEAKER: Member! If you have a preamble to a supplementary, it will be ruled out of order in future. This is your last chance. You can ask one single, direct question as a supplementary if you want to.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: When will the Premier start supporting our teachers?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

Western Australian teachers know we have got their back. They know that we are supporting them in the workplace, the schoolyard and the classroom. They know that only a WA Labor government and my government will stand up for teachers in Western Australia.

FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY — FUNDING

134. Dr K. STRATTON to the Minister for Culture and the Arts:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to diversifying the Western Australian economy through the creation of new opportunities.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the establishment of the WA production attraction incentive will support the growth of WA's film and screen sector?
- (2) Can the minister advise the how this incentive will create more local jobs in WA's film production industry?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (1)–(2) Hello, Clarise! Yes, I want to answer that question. First of all, I want to give a shout-out to our magnificent Perth Lynx team that will go into combat on Thursday evening. If Perth Lynx win, it will bring home the women's national basketball title for Western Australia. We are right behind Perth Lynx and hope the team can prevail on Thursday night. We wish Perth Lynx the very best.

I am glad the member for Nedlands asked this question and I thank her for her support of the film industry in Western Australia. It is an industry that no other government like this government has invested in so heavily and so effectively over the last six and a half to seven years. We recognise that the screen industry in Western Australia is effectively a new manufacturing industry. It is about manufacturing stories, many of which are local, and opportunities for employment. When films are filmed in the regions, it supports other industries in that particular community because of the activity taking place there. We have already established a \$20 million Western Australian production attraction incentive program to attract high-profile productions to the state. I will go through a couple of those to remind members of just how successful that program has already been.

Recently, as part of the midyear review, another \$18.72 million was invested to focus on attracting major productions to Western Australia, supporting and marketing Western Australia as a film industry destination, nationally and internationally, and boosting local industry capacity. All of this is happening while construction has commenced on our film production facility in Malaga. Show business is good business for Western Australia. There is no doubt about that. The screen industry is one investment that will pay huge dividends now and into the future for Western Australia for those who are involved in the creative industries and for those young people who are studying in schools now and aspire to be involved in the creative industries going forward. This is a critical investment.

The member asked about jobs and the sort of productions that have been attracted. Season two of *The Twelve* starring Sam Neill and Frances O'Connor has been filmed particularly in regional Western Australia in York. That has wrapped up and that series will premiere very shortly, again, showcasing the Western Australian backdrop. Earlier this year, Nicholas Cage was in Western Australia in the south west filming *The Surfer*. I understand that is going to be a blockbuster when it comes out. Again, the backdrop has been the magnificence of Western Australia's south west.

When film production comes to a community such as Derby, which was lucky enough to have *Population: 11* filmed there, the community embraces it. It supports local businesses, be they restaurants, accommodation providers, carpenters or electricians; they are all part of the mix. When film production arrives in town, they are all involved, and local businesses are one of the biggest beneficiaries. We have seen this excitement in communities, whether it be Derby, Broome, Yallingup or the goldfields with the *Mystery Road* series, which was filmed there only a year or so ago. These things make a difference to those local communities. They are very proud of them.

Last Sunday—I will be very quick, Speaker, because I know you want me to wind up—I was very pleased to go to the Stan Original Productions' premiere of *Population: 11*, which was filmed in Derby with international actor Ben Feldman and Australian director Ben Young. That community is holding their premiere of *Population: 11* tomorrow night and I know that they are going to be absolutely excited to see that premiere in their community. At the Stan event, so many in the industry were highlighting how the talk of the town is Perth and WA. The talk of the town across the world is wanting to come here and film,

whether it be documentaries, series or feature films, and they are focusing on Western Australia because they know we are building our production facility and they also know that this government is absolutely committed to supporting the industry with a long pipeline of work to come.

Member for Nedlands, look at me when I am talking to you! I am really excited about this and I know she is too, and so should all Western Australians. To those young men and women who are at school now, whether it be primary or high school, who aspire to be an actor or actress or a person involved in directing or production, know that we are delivering an industry for now and into the future. It is a very important investment in the creative industries going forward. Thank you for the question.

POLICE — RESIGNATIONS

135. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the minister's comments yesterday that his government will break its 2021 election commitment to boost the Western Australia Police Force by 950 officers above the attrition rate over four years, and that this is likely to be an irreversible demographic shift.

- (1) Will the minister accept that his inability to address serious concerns within the Western Australia Police Force has created cultural problems leading to record resignations?
- (2) Is this irreversible shift a direct result of WA Labor policies?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for her question. It is a return to lower ground from the emotion the other day when I explained to the member—I think it was fairly obvious, but, nevertheless, I will do it again—that circumstances have changed. That commitment to growing the Western Australia Police Force to 950 above the attrition rate assumed a set of circumstances and it was made pre-COVID, before the post-COVID effects, and before our economy had recovered from the disaster that we inherited from the previous government. I think the Leader of the Opposition referred to the former Commissioner of Police Karl O'Callaghan saying a couple of years ago that 10 years before, the attrition rate was 25 a month, and I told the member that in the last six months it had reverted to around 25 and a half a month, on average. That said, it is possible, and in all likelihood probable, that those circumstances will not change because we are in a different time. People do not join the uniformed services for 20 years anymore. This generation does five to seven years on average in a career and then they transition. That is a normal thing. It is happening with not just the police, but right across an entire economy. I was referring to that effect. It is likely that that will not change. I said that when we came into office, we inherited a recession and we had the biggest deficit and biggest debt in history. That meant that public servants did not leave the public sector. That was true for the first couple of years. Then we did a lot of work to fix that budget—or we rebalanced it anyway. Then COVID hit and no-one left a public sector job because it was a secure position. Subsequently, right around the world in western nations, there was the great resignation. When COVID moved and people had the opportunity, they left. That build-up was significant here because it lasted effectively for four years, not just the two with COVID, because the previous government had destroyed the economy a couple of years before.

We had already anticipated the need to go out and recruit, and we have, and the member criticised it. It was the most successful recruiting campaign in the country. As I said yesterday, the Australian Defence Force is envious of what we are doing. We are targeting exactly the same sort of people and, as we heard from the Premier, we have thousands or more than half the number of the police force in applicants. More than 2 600 people in Western Australia and more than 1 500 overseas experienced officers have applied to join. That is an extraordinary effort. It means that people respect and value the police force and want to join it. As I said to the member yesterday, if it is the case that there is some cultural problem or some issue within the police force in terms of terrible morale, does the member not think that potential applicants might investigate that? Does she not think that it would deter them from choosing to work in the Western Australia Police Force before they travel half way around the globe to make that life change and commitment? Does the member not think that local applicants would investigate? It is not that difficult for a person considering joining to investigate and find out what people working inside the police force think. We are in a different environment, and I have asked the commissioner to prepare a study on what the environment means in terms of our need to recruit—potentially, we will have to recruit at a higher level than we might have in the past—and what other measures we have to take to try to retain people, because they are always looking at that.

POLICE — RESIGNATIONS

136. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Police:

I have a supplementary question. How much worse does this issue have to become before the minister pulls his head out of the sand and addresses the exodus of police and his broken promise?

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: A preamble and other attacks on the personality of a member should not be part of a supplementary question or any question.

The SPEAKER: I uphold what you have said there, Leader of the House; you are correct. I will not ask the member to repeat the supplementary question. I will assume that the minister has just the gist of it and he can respond.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

Thanks, Speaker. I am not that sensitive; I am okay to answer the question. The simple answer is that there are 508 more officers now than when the Liberal Party was in office. Considering that there are only around 7 000 members of the police force, that is a significant increase. We are committed to growing it by 950 members above attrition. It might take longer than we had hoped because of the circumstances, but it is happening. We are committed to it and the police know we have their back. But I have to say that anyone who has been watching Parliament in the last couple of days must be asking what the members of the Western Australian Liberal and National Parties think about our police force and why they do not like it. It is undeniable that all they talk about is some strange claim of bad culture inside what I think is the best police force in the country.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! Just pausing for a moment. Member for Bassendean.

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

137. Mr D.J. KELLY to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's nation-leading Plan for Plastics to end the use of single-use plastics in Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the Plan for Plastics has reduced the amount of waste going to landfill?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the transition to compostable coffee cups will further protect our environment?

Mr R.R. WHITBY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Bassendean for the question. His passion for the environment is well known and his involvement in the community to make sure it is part of the solution is also well known.

It is true that Western Australia leads the nation when it comes to transitioning away from single-use plastics. It is a recognised fact that we are far ahead of the rest of Australia in this regard. Plastic waste harms wildlife. It frequently causes litter, it contaminates recycling efforts and it can be consumed and become part of the food chain. In fact, I dare say that members in this chamber have microplastics in their systems, in their bodies, so this is a public health issue as well. This is a global challenge and Western Australia is leading the rest of Australia in transitioning away from single-use plastics.

As members know, a number of years ago as part of our plan we ditched single-use shopping bags—those cheap grey horrible things that littered the countryside—and that was well received by the community. As part of the second stage of our transition away from single-use plastics, we are now focusing on the ubiquitous coffee cup. We all love a coffee. Unfortunately, far too many coffee cups, at least in the past, have had a plastic lining inside them. They might look like they are cardboard, but in fact, if we tore away the lining and outer shell we would see that they have plastic in them. Again, this is an issue we are addressing. I would say that the first option for people who love a morning cuppa is to take a keep cup when they go to their cafe—keep their own cup in the car—or use an exchange cup in the cafe. If they do use a single-use cup, the solution is a compostable cup that breaks down in the environment and can be more easily sent through a recycling facility.

Recently, I was at the General Public Food Co cafe in Inglewood, sort of near the hoods of the members for Bassendean, Maylands and Mount Lawley—well inside their hoods. It makes a great cuppa. For four years, ever since the business has been open, it has been selling compostable cups and lids—ahead of this requirement. Some people who have tried these lids might discern a different sensation on the lips.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Too much information!

Several members interjected.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: But they get used to it, which is what I am trying to say! They get well and truly used to it. Look, folks, these lids do the job. They maintain a firm grip on the cup, they keep people safe from accidents with the coffee cup—I am trying to keep this as clean as possible!—and they are a wonderful addition. They will make our state stay cleaner.

Turning to the introduction of these changes, the Boomerang Alliance and the National Retail Association are working with us and retailers. Our approach has always been education first. We will not bring out the big stick. We want to encourage people along this journey, and it is working very well. The acceptance of retailers and customers has been excellent.

The end result of this is that the first stage of our Plan for Plastics has diverted 430 million single-use items from landfill. In its second stage that will increase to 700 million items removed from landfill. Over a 20-year period we will see 10 billion fewer single-use plastic items litter and impact our environment. This is a great outcome for Western Australia. It is nation leading, and it is just another of the good, progressive things that this government is doing for Western Australia.

The SPEAKER: Before I give the member the question, I remind people of the no-photography policy. If a photo has been taken with a mobile phone, I ask that it be deleted.

YOUTH CRIME — KIMBERLEY

138. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Police:

I refer to reports that Broome police have responded to a staggering 2 742 incidents since the beginning of 2024, as Broome and the Kimberley region continues to grapple with a youth crime crisis.

- (1) Does the minister believe that it is acceptable that residents in Broome have a 50 per cent chance of becoming a victim of property crime and a one-in-three chance of becoming a victim of a violent crime?
- (2) What additional measures will the minister put in place to ensure that these communities have an acceptable level of safety and security?

The SPEAKER: The very popular Minister for Police!

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

The SPEAKER: Premier, I have not excluded anyone from Parliament since I have been Speaker, but you could be a consideration!

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

(1)–(2) Where did those claimed probabilities come from? I know where they came from. Come on, tell me.

The SPEAKER: Minister!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! Minister and the members, you are able to ask rhetorical questions, but when you are in government, you answer them.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think they came from a website called RedSuburbs, the figures from which a journalist, a very junior journalist, has googled and put into a story in the *Broome Advertiser* as though they were fact, without verification.

That aside, I need to reflect on yet another attempt—not even an attempt—yet another attack on the Western Australia Police Force by the Liberal Party of Western Australia. Broome police do an extraordinary job. Superintendent Steve Thompson, who was formerly of the goldfields–Esperance region but is now in the Kimberley, is an incredible officer. He is the poster boy for our campaign to attract experienced overseas officers. He is an Irishman who came in the last wave of recruits. He and his wife loved Kalgoorlie, member for Kalgoorlie—interesting, but they did! They are the type of people who embed themselves in their community. He recently assumed the role that Craig Parkin, sadly, had to leave due to ill health. Superintendent Thompson assumed the role of district superintendent for the Kimberley and he has embedded himself in that community already.

The police there have been doing extraordinary things, as the member would have seen. There have been intercepts of sly grogging in recent times to focus on disrupting the flow of alcohol from Broome and Derby into dry communities in Halls Creek and Fitzroy. They have been handing out banned drinker orders as part of the reform that my predecessor, in the role of the Minister for Racing and Gaming, introduced last year to enable police to put hundreds of people on the banned drinkers register. The last I think I heard was that over 800 people are now on the banned drinkers register, which is now mandatory for packaged liquor outlets to comply with. The police are participating in, and contributing to, a range of other initiatives in tackling crime in Broome and over the entire Kimberley. They do an incredible job.

Part of what they are supported with is Operation Regional Shield, which, for some reason, the Leader of the Opposition does not like. Again, this is another criticism of the police. It is unreasonable criticism. It is an operational response. It has had an effect. It is doing good in assisting the local police getting additional assets—not only officers, but also other assets such as analysts and drones and any other police resources required to target the juvenile offending problem. But it does no good to anybody, particularly the people of Broome, for the Leader of the

Opposition to come in here and make claims about failures of policing in Broome. Broome is a wonderful town. The Kimberley is a beautiful place. It is a jewel in the crown of our tourism product in many ways, and we should be proud of it, and we should be respectful and reflective when we engage in discussions around these matters.

YOUTH CRIME — KIMBERLEY

139. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Police:

I have a supplementary question. Will the minister ensure that the police who do work really hard are provided with an adequate, holistic range of wraparound services they so need to help them in their jobs across the regions?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I am not sure what the member is talking about, but I know that only recently I was up in Broome with the member for Kimberley announcing a new initiative that was from the Department of Justice for an immediate-response night space to tackle the challenge of kids who are not necessarily committing crime but are out on the street at night-time being confronted by police and coming into the care of police as a consequence of being found late at night on many occasions. Now, the immediate-response night space with—I am trying to think of the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation's name—Crikey, one of the ACCOs in town, will provide a service whereby it relieves the police of the need of duty of care and it goes and finds a responsible adult for their child. In the event that it cannot, there is a space where the child can be cared for overnight and then brought to the attention of a range of other services so that the child does not escape the notice of those agencies that need to take care of them. That is the intent of the entire initiative, so that is a good thing to see, and I am assuming that that is the sort of thing the member is talking about.

I am disappointed that she did not note that we had already done that. We will be doing more, but it is a challenging, difficult situation. In some of the regional towns that we confront, we are talking about multiple generations and many decades of disadvantage and disempowerment and challenges that are not solved through any one initiative. But what the member can be rest assured of, and what I think the people of Western Australia know—they just know—is that the Cook Labor government is focused on that task, and it will continue to put everything it can into assisting those communities.

The SPEAKER: Members, that concludes question time.

FIREARMS BILL 2024

Second Reading — Amendment to Motion

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [3.04 pm]: I will conclude my remarks in support of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, just hold on for two seconds. Members, if you could keep the background noise down, that would be much appreciated.

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I conclude my remarks on the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition by indicating that we support the motion to move this bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation to ensure that the bill has no unintended consequences. As I stated from the outset, the Liberal Party is not opposed to this legislation, but the bill has a number of issues that we would like to see clarified. We will be moving amendments on some matters. We would like to see this scrutiny undertaken to ensure that there are no unintended consequences.

As the member for Central Wheatbelt stated, this government has used the legislation committee only once, and that was with a relatively inane bill—the Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill. This government believes it is beyond scrutiny and accountability. This is about ensuring that this important piece of legislation is as good as it can be. Although the Minister for Police referred to the Law Reform Commission—we support the fact that this is in response to the Law Reform Commission report—it was not the Law Reform Commission that drafted this bill; rather, it was drafted by the government and the minister with his team. As the member for Central Wheatbelt also pointed out, when it comes to drafting legislation, we have seen a number of bills presented to this house that have had to be amended on the floor by the government.

This motion is about ensuring that there are no unintended consequences and that the legislation is as good as it can be, and that the government illustrates its commitment to transparency, accountability and scrutiny on behalf of the broader WA public. Quite obviously, there is broad interest in this legislation, whether by one of the key stakeholders who supported it, whether the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and the Western Australian Farmers Federation that have been quite engaged in this process with the government in terms of considering what the amendments represent or whether some of those lawfully licensed firearm owners who have legitimate concerns. I will leave my comments there. I urge the minister and the government to support this motion, and I look forward to the response.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Deputy Speaker casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (6)

Ms M. Beard	Mr R.S. Love	Mr P.J. Rundle
Dr D.J. Honey	Ms L. Mettam	Ms M.J. Davies (<i>Teller</i>)

Noes (44)

Mr G. Baker	Ms M.J. Hammat	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Ms A. Sanderson
Ms H.M. Beazley	Ms J.L. Hanns	Mr S.A. Millman	Ms J.J. Shaw
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr T.J. Healy	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Ms R.S. Stephens
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr M. Hughes	Ms L.A. Munday	Ms J.M.C. Stojkovski
Ms C.M. Collins	Mr H.T. Jones	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Dr K. Stratton
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr P. Papalia	Mr D.A. Templeman
Ms L. Dalton	Ms E.J. Kelsbie	Mr S.J. Price	Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms D.G. D'Anna	Ms A.E. Kent	Mr D.T. Punch	Ms C.M. Tonkin
Mr M.J. Folkard	Dr J. Krishnan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms K.E. Giddens	Mr P. Lilburne	Ms M.M. Quirk	Ms S.E. Winton
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Ms S.F. McGurk	Ms R. Saffioti	Ms C.M. Rowe (<i>Teller</i>)

Question thus negatived.

Second Reading Resumed

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston — Parliamentary Secretary) [3.12 pm]: I rise to make a very short contribution to today's debate on the Firearms Bill 2024. I start by saying that as a regional member and someone who grew up in regional Western Australia, I am particularly interested in this legislation. Having grown up on farms and having friends who owned their own farms, I obviously know that firearms were, and are, a very important part of the job that farmers do. In my electorate of Collie–Preston, much of Preston lies within farming communities. I want to mention a couple of those places to give people an understanding of the sorts of communities where farming is particularly important. They include Boyanup, Burekup—the minister's home town, I believe—Capel, Dardanup, Elgin, Ferguson, Mumballup, Paradise, The Plains, Upper Capel, Waterloo, Wilga West, Worsley, Yabberup, Yourdamung Lake and Roelands. All those locations fit within the Preston part of my electorate. Farming is very important to those communities and the local economy. I note that the member for Roe and I share a border in the east of that very important farming region. Noting that those farming communities are very important in my electorate, I acknowledge that firearms obviously form a very important part of the job that farmers do in that region. Vermin control and the humane destruction of livestock are all part of the life of farming. The use of firearms by primary producers in those instances is incredibly important.

I also want to quickly note, as a teacher and deputy principal for 30 years before I came to this place, that emergency evacuation drills are done at school for fire, bomb threats and those sorts of things. Students and staff are prepared so that in the unlikely event of an emergency, everybody can be evacuated safely. It was not many years ago that a special practice was put in place in schools to prepare for an active shooter onsite. I had never really considered that to be necessary in Western Australian schools. Again, in the unlikely event of that being required, it is something for which we absolutely have to prepare our staff and students. The balance between community safety and responsible firearm ownership is incredibly important, and I wanted to highlight that during the debate on this bill today.

A number of people contacted my electorate office about this bill. I want to put on the record for the minister that one person who contacted my office a week or two before the buyback commenced was a retired farmer who had no use for his firearms anymore, and he could not wait to come to the local Collie Police Station to hand in those firearms and get some money for them. Another person, whom I know personally, got a property letter when he was 19 years of age and he is now in his 60s. When the police contacted him about the update to the legislation around property letters, he did not realise that the farm on which he was registered to shoot had been sold many years ago. He no longer knew the property owner, but he was quite surprised to find that he could still use that letter to go and shoot on that property. Again, I wanted to highlight a couple of examples of people who had contacted my office.

Something that was raised with me recently was clause 57, "Primary producer licence to be granted for landholding". I refer specifically to subclause (3), which states —

A Primary Producer Licence must not be granted for a landholding for which another Primary Producer Licence has been granted and is in force.

One issue that has been raised with me is family farms. A primary producer licence might be issued to the farmer who is maybe the —

Mr P. Papalia: The patriarch.

Ms J.L. HANNS: The patriarch—I thank the minister, although I was trying not to use that language. I could call that person the original farmer. Other family members—maybe a son and a daughter—might live on the same landholding in separate housing. As the bill currently stands, the family members in this example must not be granted a primary producer licence as one has already been granted for that landholding. For example, dad or mum is the person to whom the primary producer licence has been granted. In effect, that would mean that the son or daughter could not concurrently be granted a primary producer licence. That issue was raised with me by constituents and I wanted to highlight it here.

As I explained at the beginning of my speech, my electorate is very reliant on farming and I wanted to spend a couple of minutes highlighting that today. I commend the bill to the house.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.18 pm]: I rise to confirm the position of the Leader of the Opposition that we will oppose the Firearms Bill 2024. I add that had the minister and the government actually agreed to the bill going to the Standing Committee on Legislation, it might have been a different result. But here we are; we have seen it again. All the members of the government have just traipsed through and followed the minister. He would not even consider it. This was the opportunity to get things right. As the member for Central Wheatbelt pointed out, many mistakes have been made by this government. This was an opportunity for the Standing Committee on Legislation to look at the bill properly. It is disappointing.

I point out that there are some good elements of the bill and there are some that need rectifying, and the member for Collie–Preston has just pointed out one of those elements. We will be asking many questions. It is disheartening for the people of Western Australia when this government just pushes forward and does not think about decent scenarios in which the legislation committee might be able to improve the bill. Of course, we saw it with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021, which the government ended up backing away from. It is a real disappointment. I have said many times that this government’s tentacles are reaching into people’s lives, especially the lives of regional people. Whether it is in farming, fishery, forestry or firearms—the four Fs—this government loves to try to dictate people’s lives, especially if they live in regional Western Australia. It was funny; I was at the farm on Sunday night and a branch fell over the driveway. I went down and got the chainsaw and while I was cutting it up, I thought: how long is it going to be before this government wants me to get permission to cut up a branch on the driveway of my own farm? That is the way this government is going.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It is quite appalling. Many family businesses have been messed up by this government.

Nonetheless, we are talking about 90 000 law-abiding firearm licence holders. We are talking about a lack of clarity and a lack of consultation. We look forward to the consideration in detail stage. We know that the police force does not have the resources. We have heard the questioning over the last couple of days. We have heard the minister admit that it lacks resources, and no more so than for the digital licensing and registry system, as I pointed out in my contribution yesterday. I received this letter a couple of weeks ago —

In order to ensure a smooth transition to your new Digital Licence, the Firearms Act Reform Project Team needs to validate the following licence information:

- Residential Address
- Postal Address
- Storage Address/es
- Mobile Phone Number, and
- Email Address.

I was told that I needed to communicate with the team. What did I do? I rang the team—three times. There was no answer. The fourth time I rang the team, I thought that I would leave a message and see what happened. There has still been no reply. What worries me is the lack of resources and the lack of follow-up. I am one of the 90 000 licensed law-abiding citizens whom this particular legislation will be ruling over. These are real-life examples. From my perspective, we have had a lack of consultation. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, there are nearly 30 000 signatures on a petition asking for a couple of extra months. Those people are begging for a couple of extra months for some extra consultation and the opportunity to point out some of the issues that they have had to deal with, but this minister will not have a bar of it: “We’re cutting it off at the one-month mark.” We have seen no transparency. The minister quoted some figures in his response about the amendment. We have seen no transparency about those responses and whether this government has taken them on board and worked them into the legislation. Considering that there has been no transparency, I thought that I would provide some transparency and read some of the feedback from my constituents. According to my notes, the first person who has written to me says —

I’m looking forward to seeing how the over 6500 submissions have been considered and used to reshape the WA Government’s lazy and ill-thought-out Firearms Act Reform Consultation Paper released in October 2023.

2016 the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia published its review of the Act and made 143 recommendations, with community safety being the paramount consideration, but only 13 of the 143 recommendations of the LRC Report been incorporated into this consultation paper

Another one refers to the Law Reform Commission and says, according to my notes —

Recommendation 39: The renewal process should not require a license holder to reconfirm his or her genuine reason or genuine need or require a ‘fit and proper’ test.

Recommendation 54: There should be no upper limit on the number of firearms a single license holder may possess

Recommendation 56: The size of the property should not carry greater weight than any other consideration when determining the reasonable justification for a particular firearm

Recommendation 57: The place where a firearm may be used should not be restricted only to those properties that were the subject of the property letters

That is relevant to what the member for Collie–Preston just spoke about —

Recommendation 62: it should not be necessary to renew a property letter.

Another submission states, according to my notes —

Further evidence can be found contradicting the minister’s position below in the Attorney General Department’s submission to the Australian Government Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee where the department states clearly that **“Further, putting additional restrictions on the legal ownership of firearms would not necessarily reduce firearm-related crime.”**

In another submission, the person outlines that they use firearms for pest control, livestock management, land conservation, humanely euthanising animals and target shooting. They believe that these amendments should focus more precisely on the criminal misuse of firearms rather than affecting law-abiding citizens, like this person, who have responsibly held firearms for decades.

Another one refers to the buyback and states that the pricing schedule is laughable and there will be financial loss to the owners.

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It also says that it is extremely embarrassing and will stand neatly shoulder to shoulder with the now repealed Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. People like the member for Burns Beach can yell out; that is not a problem. I am trying to provide some transparency and give people an understanding of the feedback that regional members have been receiving from our constituents. Another one is from a former UK and WA police officer and states, according to my notes —

In my experience registered firearms owners are the most law abiding individuals you will come across

Most consider it (their firearm licence) a privilege

current police minister cannot justify his proposed actions by simply quoting “public safety” all the time

Another one states, according to my notes —

The Minister responsible has continued to ignore requests for consultation, and actively continues to vilify current licensed gun owners who have shown that they are responsible, compliant and law-abiding gun owners already subject to some of the strictest gun control measures within the country.

The list goes on. For the sake of transparency, I wanted to run through some of the feedback that our constituents have been passing over.

As I said earlier, the minister certainly loves talking about the American gun system and the rest of it. But he has failed to demonstrate how this bill will improve safety. Certainly, as I said, the opposition will be asking questions. The minister has tried to put fear into the state. That map was put on the front page of *The West* a couple of years ago, and the Leader of the Opposition referred to the media stunt in which the minister was out firing a large calibre rifle in Bullsbrook. This is all part of the plan to put fear into the people of Western Australia. This is why the opposition will be asking questions.

The member for Collie–Preston spoke about the fact that we share a border between our two electorates. I worry, being a regional member, when I see the rapid growth of our feral pest population, whether it is feral pigs, foxes, cats or kangaroos. I assure members in this place that there is an ever-growing number of feral pests. It is important to have high-quality licensed firearm owners with those different categories of licences with the ability to keep the pest population down. More pine plantations are being planted. I also worry about the fire control scenario. The two things I worry about in relation to those pine plantations are fire control and the feral pest population. That is a key element, and we cannot underestimate its importance.

We all know firearms need to be dealt with very carefully. As the person said I mentioned a minute ago, it is a privilege to own a firearm, and licensed firearm owners do not take ownership lightly. Certainly, I will have questions about the mental health assessments. As pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, it will be a challenge. I look forward to further explanation from the minister on how this will play out. We know there are challenges in our health system and our mental health system at the moment in getting access to appointments and the like. I am interested to know whether this will be similar to drivers' licences, for arguments sake, and how current firearms licence holders will be treated when compared with future new firearm holders. The opposition will ask those questions.

I certainly do not agree with what seems to have evolved over the years with the sale of property letters on the internet and the like. No-one would agree with that. Clarity is needed regarding farming properties, where, say, a farming family might have two or three different properties that could be located 10, 20 or 100 kilometres apart. How will that relate to firearms transfer? As the member for Collie–Preston spoke about, how will that work within a family scenario with mum and dad and children involved? How will it work? The opposition will ask these questions during consideration in detail.

As I said, the property letter situation is very important because when we have a feral pest population out there, we need a method to ensure we are not overrun, whether it be by foxes or cats that do a lot of damage to the native animal population. We need to understand how the property letters situation will be involved.

As I said at the start of my contribution, I am concerned about the buyback scheme being unrealistic. A lot of feedback I have received is that the actual value of certain firearms under the scheme is unrealistic. The proposed values could be okay in some cases with an old .22 or an old air rifle that has no particular collector's value or whatever, but I have had feedback of concern from many firearm owners that the value of certain firearms is much higher than indicated and is nowhere near catered for within the buyback scenario. I think the minister said that once the \$64 million runs out, or 1 August happens, the buyback will potentially wrap-up. I guess these are my questions: will it continue, and for how long, if the \$64 million figure is not used up? Is 1 August a definite cut-off point or will it be extended for months on end after then? Perhaps the minister could answer that in his response.

I am also concerned about storage regulations, as the Leader of the Opposition spoke about.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I know many conscientious licensed firearm holders at the moment have very good storage facilities. I have heard talk that we may go to four-millimetre thickness for storage cabinets or the like, instead of the current three or 2.5 millimetres or whatever it might be. I will certainly have questions for the minister on storage facilities and how that will play out. Of the 90 000 licensed firearm holders being talked about here, many have very good storage facilities in place now. I would hate to see something sweep through for the sake of an extra millimetre or the like. I will be interested in hearing from the minister and his advisers on that aspect.

I agree that some of the proposed transport arrangements in transporting firearms long distances are positive. There was that issue with Australia Post several years ago. A firearm shop in Esperance found it very challenging to transport firearms from Perth, arriving from interstate or overseas, to Esperance if they could not use those accredited couriers like Australia Post at the time. I appreciate some changes in that regard. The other disappointment is that we were promised to be given at the briefing some information on some draft regulations before the debate, but we have seen nothing. Once again, that is disappointing and very challenging.

Mr P. Papalia: That is not what the member was told. The member was told that we would talk about it in consideration in detail, and we would give insight into what the intent is with the regulations. We did not say we would give them to the member before the debate.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I was in the briefing, and my understanding was that there would be some provided. Anyway, we can beg to differ on that, minister. This is once again another scenario in which it is very challenging to debate legislation when a raft of regulations is somewhere in the background and we are not quite sure how they will evolve.

Mr P. Papalia: The member knows that is normal, right? Regulations are written after the bill is passed.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, I understand that.

Mr P. Papalia: I have offered to give the member insight beforehand for some of the ones that you are concerned about.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: As I said, it is challenging. We all recall the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill: we were told, "No, no; it's all okay. Don't worry about the regulations; that will be fine." Then we had the minister talking in this place about regulations that had just been drafted, which had many more implications than he was aware of, and we saw where things went from there. That is our experience. I am just trying to set out what happened.

As the minister knows, the bill is 20-odd millimetres thick. There are many pages to go through. Quite a bit of questioning will certainly be required.

As the Leader of the Liberal Party said, we hope there are no unintended consequences. We will certainly be asking questions about this bill, not only on behalf of licensed firearm holders, but also on behalf of many people in

regional areas and on the outskirts of the city. It is not just farmers and people in the regions who will be affected, but also people in the inner city. Many licensed firearms owners live in the central part of Perth and the inner suburbs. On behalf of all those people, the opposition will certainly be asking those questions.

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [3.41 pm]: I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the Firearms Bill 2024. I know that I have a short time in which to speak; the Minister for Police advised me.

We all understand that this is a complex piece of legislation and that there was a need for change. We also understand that given the size of the legislation and its level of detail, a lot of people will take a long time to absorb its content. The feedback that I have received is very much along the lines of what other members have said today—that was particularly the case from those in my region. The bill is a very big document. There is a lot to understand and consume. The short window of time that people have had to look at the legislation has not given a lot of those people I have spoken to in the regions the time to understand it. Although organisations and industry groups have been consulted, a large number of people do not belong to those groups. They feel that they need time for extra consultation and an extended period to understand the changes and consider what questions they would like answered.

I am very aware of public safety; I understand that is paramount. However, the feedback that I have received from business owners, pastoralists and even non-gun owners in my community is that most people who have been issued a gun licence are very much law-abiding citizens. They feel that there is an overreach. Given that they are law-abiding gun owners, they are asking a lot of questions about how they find out the statistics on the incidents that have occurred. Did they involve licensed guns? Were they stolen? They are trying to find out exactly how many law-abiding people have not abided by the law. That is a common question that I was asked. At the end of the day, people are asking for more time for consultation.

There is a level of discomfort in my patch around some of these changes. They have already been touched on, so I will not dwell on a lot of them. The justification around the gun laws is based on statistics that do not report the incidence of registered versus unlicensed guns. That is something that people want to source. The 2016 Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's *Review of the Firearms Act 1973 (WA): Project 105 final report* stated —

... Firearms Legislation should place no greater burden on firearms owners ... than is reasonably necessary in order to achieve the primary aim.

Mr P. Papalia: To keep people safe.

Ms M. BEARD: Yes, to keep people safe.

Mr P. Papalia: Public safety.

Ms M. BEARD: Yes, but most people are saying they believe that the people who have the licences are using them safely.

Mr P. Papalia: Public safety is the primary aim. All that flows from there.

Ms M. BEARD: Yes, but they are actually saying that they believe they are doing the right thing; they have been licensed for a very good reason, like we do with our car. If people do the wrong thing, it gets taken away from them.

Ms S.E. Winton: Once someone is dead.

Ms M. BEARD: Oh, gosh.

Ms S.E. Winton: That is what you are saying.

Ms M. BEARD: I am not saying that at all.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members.

Ms M. BEARD: Lots of people have contacted me, but I will quote a couple of people relating to a common theme. One person said that they understand the regulations will be coming but they do not know what they will be and a lot will depend on the regulations. However, they cannot find anything specific about storage upgrades or mental health requirements. They also said it appears that the commissioner has all the powers in nearly every instance and that even the appeal eligibility through SAT seems unclear. These are some of the things that people want clarified and they want to understand. Regarding permission to hunt on land, this same person said —

Whilst it's needed from a safety perspective. It is unclear how this will work without being an administrative nightmare. I have several people who shoot roos here for sustenance. 95% do the right thing and I consider it an essential service for grazing control. WAPOL have never been interested in pursuing those doing the wrong thing, even though the old act allowed for it.

They were interested to understand how that will change or what will be different in that regard. Regarding the professional roo shooter business licence, they said —

A licence like this is needed but it should allow for the use of semi-automatic ... for culling of large feral herbivores and pigs, especially from helicopters.

They were referring to open pastoral grazing properties. Some of these properties are a million acres in size. They continued —

Currently this is restricted to Ag department shooters only who cannot cover the state as required.

Often they need more. They have donkeys and camels, which are very destructive animals, on their properties. These are some of the things that they want to raise. This person is a primary producer. As someone with a primary producer licence, he has a target licence and a hunting licence. These are issues that have come from people in my area.

The other thing that people have raised with me, which has already been raised in this place, relates to the digital licensing system. People have queried how safe it will be and asked about its integrity, given what occurred with Medibank and Optus. They want to know how long the transition will take and whether people applying for licences in the future will be held up. People have also spoken to me about the story that appeared on the front page of *The West Australian*. They are concerned about the digital recording and licensing system and the provision of information.

I have a lot of active gun clubs in my patch. I understand that there is a category for elite athletes. However, every elite athlete does not start off being an elite athlete. I was given the example of someone who needs 14 clubs in their golf bag—certain ones for different greens, sand wedges for bunkers and chippers for all sorts of strokes. The same applies to people who shoot in clubs. They often shoot across multiple disciplines. That was raised with me by a lot of people.

Ammunition is also an issue for a lot of people. People asked how they will access ammunition and whether there will be minimum and maximum amounts, especially for people who live in regional areas and are a long way from the places they source ammunition. Transport was clearly an issue. As the member for Roe said, that has seemingly been rectified. There are 13 very active shooting clubs across my electorate, and they are keen to understand and have more information and more time to consult as individual groups with the relevant people to get a better understanding of the legislation. Rightly, many of them feel like they have been unfairly targeted in the sense that they are well armed to do what they are doing, they are trained and they have very rigid protocols in their clubs. They feel that in some instances, this bill may impede future competitions.

I have been asked a lot about the numerical gun limit. People are asking whether the number matters if they have five or 10 guns. A lot of people have said that we need to find a solution to the problems around the numerical gun limit. A large portion of gun owners hold a lot fewer guns, but some hold them for good reason. They are arguing that there should not be a difference in the maximum gun limits for people who are licensed and doing the right thing. That is the feedback I have had. Guns are the tools of the trade for people who live on large properties. They have very large properties of a million acres or more and they have large teams of people. Some of those people are concerned about how this might pan out for them being able to undertake what they need to do for pest control. Some of them compete as well. They are very active in that space and are also very responsible.

It is important for the professional and recreational hunters who partake in wildlife management plans to have an understanding of how this legislation will impact them and of the intricacies of what they will be allowed to do. There are a lot of factors to consider, including animal size, distance, terrain and ammunition availability. Guns are not just tools; they are essential instruments for keeping their properties the way they need to be. The hunters and shooters who participate in conservation and wildlife management programs use their skills to assist in the conservation of animals on all those properties. They deal with feral species in particular. They are actively working with farmers and landholders in various ways. Further north, there is a range of wild animals, including wild horses, camels, goats, dogs, foxes and rabbits. That takes multiple types of guns. I am not a gun owner. There are different guns for different species and different requirements. One person told me that rabbits and foxes will require a minimum .22LR cartridge, wild dogs and kangaroos require a .222 calibre rifle cartridge, and feral goats require a .22-250 calibre rifle cartridge. All those different types of animals are on those properties, which validates their point.

Each event that target shooters partake in demands specific firearms tailored to the nuances of the sport. Imposing limits on firearm ownership will not only stifle their passion, but also hinder the growth and development of a popular sport and sporting community. They cannot become an elite or professional shooter overnight. That needs to be considered when people aspire to be an Olympian or a top-level shooter.

The storage requirements are another sticking point. A lot of people have upgraded their storage units and gun safes recently. They are concerned that if they have to replace those, there will be a cost. They are also concerned about how long that will take and what the time line will be to do that.

The property letter regime has been raised with me. People are worried about the property letter regime and about providing digital submissions. Getting the internet, particularly further north, is nearly impossible at times. They hope that both options will be available. People cannot get a phone out in the middle of those million-acre properties because they are not within Telstra's range. It will not necessarily be possible for people to check property licences or confirm who is on their property, or whatever the case may be. They are concerned about the security of those property letters and the time frames around them. They are also concerned that bringing on this new system of

digital property letters and licences will be an enormous cost to them. They are asking me how long it will take and whether the resources will be made available to make sure that it happens in a timely manner. I am sure that will be able to be rectified at the consideration in detail stage.

Another issue that has been brought up is the physical and mental health checks. People are saying that is a concern. They are not opposed to them, but the difficulty for a lot of them is that an undue burden will be placed on an already strained healthcare system. I have heard that from people many times. Some people are very concerned that the checks will be very subjective. If someone does not like someone in a small community, or whatever the case may be, the outcome may impact them for the wrong reasons. It is difficult in a lot of regional areas to access GPs and it is a long way between hospitals or nursing posts. That is a consideration that people have asked me to raise.

The gun buyback has also been raised with me. Some people are happy with it because they have made money when they got back a lot more than the \$100 that they paid for it. However, others say they have guns that are worth more than what they would get back from the voluntary buyback scheme. They also asked what will happen if they do not volunteer to hand in their guns. Does voluntary mean voluntary, or will it be mandatory? That has caused confusion for a lot of people. One man said that if he was told that LandCruisers were recalled because they were no longer allowed on the road, he would not be happy if he got back only 10 per cent, and the same applies to his guns. There are a few concerns about that. I think there is a six-year window for the buyback. If someone bought a gun from a dealer 12 months ago and the dealer had bought the gun five or six years prior as part of a bulk buy, as they do, and the gun owner goes to get their money back, they will be told that it is outside the six-year period, even though the gun owner has owned it for only a year.

Another thing to note is that the law-abiding gun owners are telling me that a lot of non-law-abiding people have illegal weapons and the gun owners believe they should be targeted, as opposed to the people who are doing the right thing. Some people have not heard about the buyback deadline. I am interested to know whether the buyback system will be extended. Will there be a time line on that? What will happen when it expires?

In conclusion, the many people I have spoken to are unsure about the detail of the bill and the regulations. As we heard today from previous speakers, they believe that this bill is an overreach. They have a lot of unanswered questions and hope that consideration will be given for an extension of time so that, as people become more aware of the legislation over time with the increased publicity, they can come to the table and iron out some of their queries and concerns.

There is no detail in this bill and a lot of people I have spoken to are also scarred by the experience they had with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. They are incredibly nervous about this important bill, and we need to get it right. I look forward to receiving more detail about the legislation during the consideration in detail stage and to further scrutinising the bill. I hope that the minister considers sending the bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I do not find myself being able to support the bill at this time.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [3.58 pm]: I have two minutes. I might start, although I could repeat myself when we return to the Firearms Bill 2024. I want to make a contribution to this legislation. Many of my constituents have spoken to me about it. Contrary to the Minister for Police's characterisation of people who have concerns with the bill being gun-toting American-style yahoos, they are actually sensible licence holders who take their responsibility very seriously. They are tools of the trade for many people. I am a regional member of Parliament, but I have spoken to people who reside in the city and do vermin and pest control for local governments and private organisations. They have a good understanding of what is required for them to do that effectively. I dislike the narrative that the government is painting. It is a very reductive debate; it is good and bad. The government is discounting the thousands of law-abiding licence holders who do the right thing and share the same sentiment as the government, which is that community safety is paramount. They are aware that it is a privilege to have a licence or be granted a licence, because every sensible person believes that community safety has to be a priority and it must be at the centre of that regulatory and licensing regime. I have had no argument from anyone on that front. Yet, the minister —

Mr T. Healy interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I dislike the snide remarks coming from the left, because, once again, we have the black and white thinking from members who, I am sure, are not going to stand and contribute to the debate. Unless the member is going to do that, I do not wish to take his interjections. We, on this side, have not sought to marginalise or demonise anyone in the community who has a different view. I understand that some people have a particular perspective.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

CRIME AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Motion

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

That this house condemns the Cook Labor Government for overseeing a crime and community violence crisis that continues to spiral out of control, with violent crime at record highs and Western Australians at their wits' end, exhausted by the escalating cycle of crime in their communities.

This scenario has played out time and time again in Western Australia. It has become all too familiar to see pictures of communities in disarray and of shocking crime within Western Australia, and a failure by this Labor government to address this rising crime and violence across our community. Violent crime deserves to be condemned. Violent crime is at record highs and leaving Western Australians feeling vulnerable and exhausted in their own communities. Surely, the government's primary concern must be for the public safety of its citizens. Its citizens are its responsibility and this government seems to be unable to fill that basic obligation to ensure public safety. Again, we see denial. The former Premier denied that the state was responsible. In February last year, he claimed that the state was not a parent and that others had the responsibility, but, clearly, the state is obligated to put in place measures to ensure community safety and a plan to address the crime issues right across our community. As recently as 8 February, the current Premier claimed in the news that Perth "does not have a youth crime problem" and he blamed the media for the disregard of safety. The Premier has said that it is not that the community is feeling threatened, that there is violence or crime, but that it is the media that is reporting it. I happen to agree with him that the filming of violent crime is an issue, but it needs to be addressed by the government. The government has to take responsibility for it.

The Western Australian Police Union, in response to the Premier's comments on 8 February, stated that it has —

... denounced remarks made by Premier Roger Cook today regarding youth crime. Premier Cook emphasises the importance of police presence on the streets for enhanced protection, however, this assertion is flawed, as police are already actively patrolling and are themselves impacted by youth crime.

The police are saying that they are at their wits' end. The level of offending by 10 to 14-year-olds has increased, as has the level of that violence. The police union president said —

"I disagree with Premier Cook's assertion that Perth does not have a youth crime issue.

The police, who the Minister for Police says he supports, are at odds with what the Premier is saying. The police have said that they are at their wits' end. The Premier is saying there is nothing to see. We know that police recruitment and retention is in crisis. Despite all the promises we have heard to bolster those numbers and all the publicity and announcements, last year more police resigned than were recruited in Western Australia. This is ongoing and the lack of morale is leading to the exodus of experienced police officers. I am pleased that other people are coming into the police service, but if we lose those experienced officers, we lose the leadership of the organisation, and the effectiveness of the organisation must surely suffer as a result.

The findings of the *WA public sector census 2023* painted a grim picture of police morale with only 47 per cent of officers recommending the force as a place to work. That is a crisis of confidence. That is indicative of a government that has failed to recognise and take on the issue. It failed to accept that there is a need to make an impact upon the surging crime rate and antisocial behaviour, and the incidence of non-family and family-related violence and assaults that has spiked, particularly in regional areas where it is hard to fill police jobs.

I will look at the statistics on some of these matters since this government took office. In 2017–18, in regional Western Australia, there were 14 537 offences against the person. These are things like homicide, sexual offences, assault, threatening behaviour, deprivation of liberty and robbery. In 2022–23, the same statistics for regional WA stood at 24 672 offences against the person, a 69.64 per cent—nearly 70 per cent—increase in violent crime in regional Western Australia since Labor came to power. In 2017–18, in the metropolitan area, there were 29 476 offences against the person, and last year, there were 37 691. That is, again, a steep 27.8 per cent increase in violent crime in the metropolitan area since the Labor government came into power. They are the official statistics that are collected by the Western Australia Police Force, so I have no doubt that those statistics are correct.

The situation across the state is getting out of control. When the Labor government has a problem with violence in the community, I find it ironic that it actively recruits cage fighting-type events, and I know that some of the ministers here have been involved in this sort of thing. When the Premier and the Minister for Tourism are all saying that this is a wonderful thing, does the government not think that that is signalling to the community that sometimes violence is okay? I find it perverse that the government comes in here and talks about its effort to control violence, yet it stages cage fighting events.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr R.S. LOVE: It stages cage fighting events. I think it is actually —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: I literally cannot hear the Leader of the Opposition over the interjection of two ministers in the chamber.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): I cannot hear him either. This is not a point of order. Leader of the Opposition, are you taking interjections?

Mr R.S. LOVE: I appear to have no choice.

The ACTING SPEAKER: No, I can manage them.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Thank you. I would like them to be quiet and then they can make their contribution.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Ministers, if you could please desist. Go ahead, Leader of the Opposition.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.S. LOVE: We know what members opposite think about it. They think that that stylised violence is okay, but what signal is that sending to the community? I think the government needs to step back from that and look at what it says to young people who are being exposed to that sort of thing. Mixed martial arts is stylised, and it is contained within the area, but, by goodness, it is pretty full on. I would not like to be in the ring with one of those fighters. I think the violence is quite real, and it signals something to the community. It concerns me. I do not consider myself a wowser. As a kid I used to sneak in under the tarp and watch the boxing tent at work and watch the locals be beaten up by the professional boxers, but that was then. We do not do things now as we did in the 1960s and 1970s. Time has moved on. It worries me that this government seems to think that it is appropriate to promote those types of things. It is not some sports promoter bringing in the fighters; it is the government making it happen. I have serious concerns about that. I know the ministers are all scribbling away and they will come back with statistics about the dollars that event might bring in, but I do not know; I think it might help lead to a general view in the community that violence is okay.

Violence feeds violence, and when a community loses control it is very difficult for it to get out of that cycle. We have seen that with the instigation of the Operation Regional Shield measures that initially went into the Kimberley to attempt to bring under control some of those areas, and has since been deployed in other regional areas. From talking to people in those regional areas—the Kimberley, Kalgoorlie—I know the common thing now is that young people steal vehicles, do burnouts and maybe other things with the cars and eventually burn them out, and they like to film all this and put it on TikTok. I would like to minister to explain to me whether he has had any communication at the federal level about something being done about those platforms carrying the violence and spreading it so that kids in Townsville can watch kids in Alice Springs and Broome burning cars and compete with each other. It seems that that is outside the state government’s responsibility—it is the communications portfolio—but it is part of the state government’s responsibility to take whatever action it can to quell the violence, and if that means talking to the federal government about restrictions on the type of things those platforms show and allow to happen so they are held to account, that needs to happen.

We do not allow some measures seen to be promoting hatred in the community. A whole range of things are no-go areas in discussion and communications under the laws of any civilised country. Filming violent crime and competing with other people in the country over the level of that crime is an obvious failure of governments at all levels to get things under control. I am not blaming the state government for that, but it is a discussion that needs to be had. It is a discussion the government needs to have and take some responsibility for.

This government has a long and complicated history with its failure in youth justice. The inability for there to be proper rehabilitation and support of young people before they get into a cycle of crime and into Banksia Hill and unit 18 is a problem this government has failed dismally in addressing. That failure was finally recognised by the incoming Premier when he promoted—I suppose it is, rather, a shift sideways—or put the Minister for Police in charge of those matters and relieved the former minister of that responsibility. But, really, we have not seen anything of consequence since that has helped the situation. People in the Kimberley, for instance, may be better suited to being given some sort of on-country help so they do not come down to the university of crime in Perth but stay on their own lands with their own mob and get support there rather than getting into that downward cycle.

There was a promise to begin doing that in the Kimberley in 2017. When the Labor government came in, that was an election promise. An announcement that was made, I think as recently as 13 March, by the Minister for Regional Development said that an on-country facility would be developed in the Kimberley. It is another announcement, but, according to that announcement, it will not be in place until the second half of next year. Hang on, that would be the third term of the Parliament by then —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: No, it is the Parliament. This is the second term. The Labor Party has two terms of government, then we will have another term, so that will be the third term of the Parliament that will open. As shadow Minister for Regional Development, I look forward to being there to open the facility. When this government came in in 2017, it had a lovely time opening all the things that we had initiated through our government in our time. This government always carries on about the Skywalk in Kalbarri. Guess who got that going—it was not the Labor government.

Mr P.J. Rundle: Another good royalties for regions project.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Yes, it was another good royalties for regions program. The Labor government tarnished the name of the program but accepts all the baubles and glory of the very fine projects that the coalition government initiated. I am sad to say that as a member of Parliament I have had probably had fewer openings of things like that with a plaque on the wall than I would have liked. Most of them have the name of Hon Darren West as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Regional Development written on them. They are projects that the Labor government never funded or supported but that it ended up being able to open. Anyway, we digress.

We will get back to crime, because the government's record on crime —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.S. LOVE: I never got much practice.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, thank you. Leader of the Opposition, if you could direct your comments through the chair and not at them, you would probably get less reaction.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Certainly, I will direct my comments through the chair.

This government makes all this noise about wanting to solve the issues of all the crime and violence we see, but time and again it denies that there is a problem.

Again, today in the Parliament questions were asked about the consumption of methamphetamine in Western Australia. We know that Western Australia has the highest level of meth consumption in the entire country.

Mr P. Papalia: It does not; you are wrong.

Mr R.S. LOVE: It does; the report today shows that. There has been a 23 per cent increase—more than any other state.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Police!

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, thank you!

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister! Sorry, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The minister will have the opportunity to correct the record, but I have the original source of the information, so we will see who was right and who was wrong in the end. There has also been an increase in meth consumption in Western Australia's regional areas over the last two years, so the problem is getting worse. It is not a problem that is getting better; it is getting worse. For some time, my daughter was a dental nurse in a community in the regional areas and, honestly, seeing 19 and 20-year-olds having all of their teeth removed is shocking. Sadly, in many communities I represent meth is out of control, and I say that without any shadow of doubt. I am told that by the residents. I know the police do their best but the situation is real and problematic, and it will not be solved by a government that sits around and says there is not a problem. There is a problem; we know there is a problem. We see the problem. We know there are points where drugs are dropped off. The local people know it. How come it keeps going on? I fear that if the government denies there is a problem, there is no pressure applied to the problem. I wonder whether that is why the problem is continuing at such shockingly high levels in Western Australia. The meth crisis in those places is the worst of anywhere in the state. We know some of the stories about why that was: the drug comes out of the system more quickly than other drugs, and people who had access to cash and had jobs for which they had to be drug tested regularly may have used the drugs recreationally and then were able to go back to work, whereas using some other forms of illicit substances or even alcohol would result in them not being able to go to work. I think that accounts quite a bit for why Western Australia took off in that way. We know that is a problem. Do not deny it is a problem; it is a problem. The government needs to act to address the problem instead of sticking its head in the sand like some latter-day ostrich and denying that there is a problem.

As the member for Roe highlighted, we know that there is concern in the school system. We know that even at school, people are not safe because students are bringing in knives and parents are threatening the teachers when they have a problem with their child's behaviour. The frequency of these incidents is growing all the time. The government cannot continue to deny that crime and violence across Western Australia is not becoming uglier and uglier.

A few weeks ago, I went out to Kalgoorlie—I think the Minister for Police went out a week or so after me—after the big power failure and all the trouble out there. I went out there thinking I would be talking about power and communications but found that everyone wanted to talk about the crime situation. Indeed, the day I was out there,

at eight o'clock in the morning, there was a big incident with 50 or 60 people involved in a confrontation on the main street of Kalgoorlie, which had to be dealt with by the police. That situation was pretty confronting. I spoke to the business owners in Kalgoorlie and Boulder, which is not any less affected, and people have just given up expecting the police to be able to control it because it has become too much. The minister did go out there, and I acknowledge that Operation Regional Shield was extended to Kalgoorlie, but this had been going on not for a week or two weeks but months. People were not being listened to and businesses were feeling unsafe in their workplaces. This government talks about introducing measures such as the legislation to increase penalties for assaults on retail workers, which is good. I do not have a problem with people feeling safe in their workplace. But I wonder: why cannot everybody feel safe in their workplace? The people walking to the shop should also feel safe, not just the people working in the shop. When I talk to people on the streets, they say they feel unsafe as well.

The statistics that have been quoted from time to time are a bit misleading. At one stage, the Premier was saying that the number of cars that had been stolen had diminished. It is a bit more difficult to steal cars, generally, than was once the case, but in many regional areas, it certainly has not diminished; it has spiked. What happens is often people break into the house and steal the keys. If the car has an effective anti-theft mechanism, they just break into the house and get the car that way, so there is no safety, really, in having a high-tech car because often the thieves will simply just break into the house and perhaps that is even more dangerous for the individual, rather than if the thieves just jumped in the 1974 Ford Falcon and started it and went off, but that is often not what happens.

People are also reporting that their community is being well represented in the press or on some of the websites where people discuss where they should go. Grey nomads, for instance, are well known for having those types of sites where they discuss where is a good place to stop, where to get a free cup of tea or where is a good campsite and that type of thing. Some towns where the violence has increased have been put on those sites such that it is putting people off going there. I am not going to name them because I do not want to tarnish any community's reputation. I would encourage all people to get out to regional WA especially and have a look because there are many good things to see right across our state. However, for the safety of the people within those communities, it is time that the government started to take seriously the concerns that people bring.

As I say, the Premier does not take it seriously and denies that there is a youth crime problem. The previous Premier denied that the state had a responsibility towards solving those issues and that it was all down to the families in those regional communities. If these are the types of views of a government, we will never see solutions put in place. People are calling for solutions to be put in place. I notice the Minister for Police is here and also the Attorney General, who has some influence over the justice situation. I would like to see them outline how they are going to address that in new and innovative ways, because we know that what they have been doing until now has led to a worse situation. There are high levels of crime. There is huge uncertainty in communities about their safety. Communities are finding it hard to find staff for nursing, teaching and even policing positions because people do not feel safe there. We need to ensure the safety of our communities. That is the primary responsibility of any government. In Western Australia we have a Labor government that seems to believe it does not have that responsibility. It seems to think that somehow the community has that responsibility and it does not.

The government talked about putting in place solutions seven years ago, but it has still not delivered them, despite the fact that it has had huge budget surpluses gifted to it by the unexpectedly high mining royalties from iron ore being consistently above what Treasury felt was a realistic expectation. As a result, there has been no shortage of money. It has nothing to do with, as we hear from the government all the time, the budget surplus that the government has delivered. The government did not deliver it; the mining companies, employers, workers and everybody who contributes to taxation delivered it. The former coalition government in Canberra delivered it by fixing the GST problem, despite the nonsense we hear in this place around that issue. We know that despite all that largesse and all the money in the government's coffers, it has not been able to get on top of youth crime, youth justice and meth and other drugs, and violence keeps escalating across the community.

The government puts measures in place from time to time such as Operation Regional Shield, the no-go areas in Northbridge et cetera, but all those are just bandaids applied to little cuts that have manifested on the body of the Western Australian state. The government is not actually treating the disease that is, I think, a growing lack of respect for our police from across the community. The government has withdrawn from many of the regional centres the support staff and the decision-makers who can actually make a difference in the community. This government has consistently done that, and we have seen that lack of local empowerment play out, and then we see Premiers going out and blaming the people in those communities.

When the federal Labor government came to power, it made an ideologically driven decision to end the cashless debit card, claiming that there was no measurable benefit from it. Following its withdrawal, there was certainly a measurable loss. There was a loss of certainty that children would have food on the table. There was a loss for some elderly people, who were prevailed upon to provide cash to other people to use for drugs or alcohol. That was what that program was all about—to ensure that very vulnerable people got the resources that taxpayers were providing for them and that those resources would not be taken and used by others for drugs, alcohol, gambling and what have you. That was the basis of it. For the life of me, I cannot understand how any political party could

say that that was anything but a well-intentioned program that was delivering benefits for the community, yet Labor, at both the state and federal levels—at the state level it denies that there is an issue or a problem—actively conspires to make the problem worse.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.30 pm]: I also look forward to contributing to today's motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition —

That this house condemns the Cook Labor government for overseeing a crime and community violence crisis that continues to spiral out of control, with violent crime at record highs and Western Australians at their wits' end, exhausted by the escalating cycle of crime in their communities.

I think that sums it up pretty well. We can look at the pattern that we have seen during the week, including during the matter of public interest debate yesterday on police numbers when the Minister for Police admitted that he has not been able to get the resources happening that he would have liked. There are a few examples that I would like to focus on today. I want to focus on the community violence part of this motion, which is a flow-on effect from issues in our school system, such as school violence. My worry is that we will lose teachers from the workforce. That will be a flow-on effect of behavioural problems in our schools and the intimidation and challenges felt by teachers, principals and other school officers. I know that there are challenges for the Minister for Education, the director general and the like, but our schoolteachers are crying out for help. The government needs to recognise that. That is why I asked the Premier a question today about school violence and what he is doing to support our teachers. He said, "Oh, we support our teachers", but that was all he gave me.

I will produce some figures—some members might find them tedious—that demonstrate the crime wave in our schools. Our teachers and principals are crying out for help. This is having an effect on our teacher workforce. That is the worry for me. In my question today to the Premier, I read a quote from a teacher, who earlier this week said that it is not that there is a teacher shortage but that there is a shortage of teachers who want to teach and who want to go to school each day. They do not want to go there. There are 830-odd public schools in the system and the director general has the challenge of putting out fires every day. That seems to be the issue. There needs to be a structured approach to supporting our teachers. We have a lot of students with a limited authority to teach who are out there teaching. They have challenges with behaviour management. How will the system deal with behaviour management and their inexperience? That is another challenge. The teacher shortage is perpetuating that scenario.

I want to go back briefly to the article in *The West Australian* of Thursday, 8 February 2024, in which Premier Roger Cook boldly claimed that Perth does not have a youth crime problem—an attitude that we also saw from him today. That claim was in response to sickening vision of an 11-year-old violently assaulting a 69-year-old man. I do not know what planet the Premier was on when he said that there is no youth crime problem. That attack came after several incidents involving teenagers over the past month, including two 15-year-old girls who were charged after allegedly bashing and stomping on a woman in Bayswater before stealing her car. As I said, I do not know what planet the Premier was on when he said that we do not have a youth crime problem, but I can assure him that a lot of this is emanating from the school system. It is absolutely essential that our staff—our teachers, education assistants and principals—receive support.

I will take up the issue that the Leader of the Opposition raised towards the end of his speech. I also brought up this issue in my contribution to the third reading debate on the liquor control bill and got yelled and shouted at. The former Minister for Racing and Gaming did not do the shouting; other members were shouting. I brought up the issue of the cashless debit card and the overuse of alcohol in the Kimberley and other regions in the state. I cannot believe that the federal Labor government took the line to ban the cashless debit card, basing that decision on talk about civil liberties. The federal minister spoke about someone having to go in and swap their underwear in a store and it was not quite right and it was not fair. What about the kids in the Kimberley, the Pilbara and the goldfields who want a meal on the table before they go to school? That is all they want; they want some breakfast. The cashless debit card was a way to get a meal on the table for some of those children who otherwise would not get it. It was very disappointing to hear the federal minister give that example when children up there need that support and need food on the table.

I am worried about the number of teachers who are prepared to walk away from their career due to rising violence in our schools. This government needs to focus, because what we are going to see, and are already seeing, is that the government will scramble to fix things. The Minister for Education comes in here in February every year and says, "We have a teacher in front of every class." The government might get close to that by merging classes, bringing in relief teachers and all those things, but I can assure members that there is a serious issue. We have seen the figures, which I will quote. Teachers are losing the desire to teach because of the increasing violence in the community and their school communities. It is very interesting. A national survey undertaken by the University of Melbourne in 2020, prior to COVID, estimated that between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years. I have certainly heard the figure of 25 per cent of graduates leaving within the first five years, but nothing like 30 to 50 per cent. Of course, we know that regional and remote schools in Western Australia are finding it very difficult to attract teachers. If this government continues to ignore violence issues within schools and refuses to step up with an effective plan, teacher numbers will continue to fall. That is pretty straightforward.

We have seen recent articles about the scenario that I put to the minister during question time today. We have seen the article in *The Sunday Times* by Bethany Hiatt, the education editor. Since the initial letter that she received from a teacher who was worried about being killed at the hands of a student, Bethany Hiatt has been inundated with similar stories from educators across the state. One of those was penned by a primary school teacher who said that she was prepared to walk away from her career due to the day-to-day horror that she witnessed. She revealed that she regularly dealt with children as young as five years of age who threw scissors and chairs, smashed windows and threatened to stab teachers and other students with pencils. Of course, earlier today, I referred to the year 2 student in a southern suburbs school who was caught with a knife a few weeks ago. This illustrates what our teachers are confronting every day. I think this quote sums up the education system better than any other quote I have seen in a long time: there is no shortage of teachers in WA; rather, there is a shortage of teachers who are willing to work in WA.

I will probably talk about this later, but the Teacher Registration Board seems to want to put up barriers and make it as difficult as possible for some of our semi-retired teachers, who have a lot of experience, to re-register. We have many relief teachers in the regions, but the Teacher Registration Board seems to want to make it as hard as it can for them to re-register. I find it quite bizarre that there are students with a limited authority to teach in the system. Some are in their third year of study, but now we are hearing about some who are in their second year of study. Those students have a limited authority to teach, yet the Teacher Registration Board is holding teachers with 25 or 30 years of experience out of the system and making their life as hard as possible. It is quite bizarre. I hope that the director general and the Minister for Education look at that. It is a source of teachers that could be tapped into, but they are not going to go with it because it is too hard. The Teacher Registration Board does not seem to want to ease up at all.

Ms J.L. Hanns: Are you saying that you don't want people to stay current in their profession and maintain their professional development so that you can bring the most important aspects of your teaching into classrooms?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, that is right; I know all that. I question it when there are second-year students with a limited authority to teach in the system. It is very concerning. That was a side issue.

Getting back to the teacher shortage that is gripping our state, I want to present some figures I have. It is interesting that an unusual survey was done by the Western Australian Secondary School Executives Association. It is unusual for a survey to be done unless there is an issue. Where there is smoke, there is fire. I want to refer to some of the figures that came out of that survey, along with some of the figures that were extracted by Hon Donna Faragher in the Legislative Council. It was revealed that there were 2 275 incidents of assaults or threatening behaviour against public school staff, including teachers, and they were reported through the Department of Education's online notification reporting system. In an ABC article in May 2022, the former education minister claimed that a rise in the number of reports of threats or violence to the department was due to its great work in getting principals to report more. The rise in the statistics was not about a rise in violence in schools; it was great because principals were reporting it more. It really does make me wonder. The 2022 figures tabled in Parliament revealed that reports of assaults or threats of violence in public schools had risen by 25 per cent over the previous five years. Principals and deputies said that they were targeted 1 400 times in the previous year, which was almost twice the number from five years earlier. Disturbingly, the number of incidents involving a weapon or physical object had nearly doubled from 661 to 1 060. Instead of being shocked, the former minister applauded her department for reporting better. To be honest, it is quite bizarre.

We then saw the 10-point plan "Let's take a stand together" and the No Voice to Violence campaign, which we supported. The current education minister has launched his 10-point plan, which of course we also support. However, I worry about the resources that are going into supporting our teachers and students onsite. As we know, every student deserves to learn in a safe environment and every teacher deserves to teach in a safe environment. What extra resources are going into the system to get those students who cannot be managed out of the classroom so that the rest of the students and the teachers in the classroom are safe? Are the minister and the director general putting more resources towards student services? Are they increasing the number of behaviour management centres? There are certainly some in the metropolitan area, but I can assure members that there are no behaviour management centres out in the bush, so it is survival of the fittest at times in that regard.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: This is what it is about. It is about getting those students out of the classroom and supporting teachers in the event that they have those types of students in their class. I can understand why teachers are leaving the profession. I can see the challenges that the administrators have in suspending students. I can see the arduous process that principals have to undergo to exclude students, with the requirement for masses of documentation and community panels. All this stuff is to protect the student who is doing the wrong thing and their family. What about the 95 per cent of students who are doing the right thing? Do not make it quite so hard.

There was an article in *WAtoday* on 29 November headed "'They are not safe places': Perth's most violent schools revealed" by Holly Thompson and Rebecca Peppiatt that I thought was appropriate. It stated that there were 114 instances of students taking prohibited weapons to school in 2022.

It was reported that the president of the State School Teachers' Union of WA, Matt Jarman, said —

... members were increasingly worried about their safety at work, and the union received hundreds of calls per month asking for help.

The union received 800 calls a month from members in the categories of violence. The article also stated —

The union's report also revealed 86 per cent of teachers had considered leaving the profession in the past four years, up from 80 per cent two years ago.

Twenty-five per cent of graduates are looking to leave the profession within five years. Thirty-one per cent of teachers surveyed said they had been the victim of physical violence at least once this school year. The list goes on. As a result, the State School Teachers' Union had to get Carmen Lawrence and her team to produce the report entitled *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia* that highlighted the challenges that our teachers and principals are up against. The section relating to antisocial behaviour and aggression towards staff states —

There appeared to be general agreement among teachers, school leaders and parents who provided evidence to the Panel that aggression in various forms, both between students and toward teachers, is on the rise.

...

Reports such as this have prompted the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to develop a national strategy to address the abuse of teachers, school leaders and other school staff.

There are more figures. It continues —

The study showed that threats of violence from students towards principals has increased from 17% in 2011 to 32% in 2017. A 2019 survey of 560 teachers across Australia found that 71.4% of teachers who responded reported being bullied or harassed by a student in the previous 12 months.

I think the following quote from a primary school teacher in the city sums it up —

Teachers are expected to do everything (teach, counsel, protect, deal with social concerns, coach sports, dress-up for book week, and Easter etc) and be accountable for every word spoken, every event conducted or not conducted during school time and out of school time. If a student wrecks the room, attacks the staff, disrupts the learning of multiple students—often the parents are called in to take the child out for lunch, blames the teacher/school/staff and then the child returns to the school to the next day to repeat the process.”

That is the way our teachers are feeling. I think that quote sums up the situation very well.

I congratulate the State School Teachers' Union for taking up the challenge. It obviously saw the need to commission Hon Carmen Lawrence, a former Premier, if you do not mind, and member of the Labor Party. The union asked her to report on the issues that it faces.

From my perspective, I think this government needs to address these issues. In this motion, we have linked community violence to the school violence issue. It is emanating at times. I congratulate our teachers, principals and education assistants, who, by the way, do not get paid anywhere near enough. I am sure the member for Collie–Preston would agree with me. Our education assistants definitely do some pretty hard yards at times. I would certainly like to see a government with \$3 billion, \$4 billion and \$5 billion surpluses reward our education assistants for some of the work they do, especially special needs students, and for some of the other challenges they face in classrooms, including violence at times. I understand that it is a challenge but this government has the resources. It needs to start to learn. I can come into this place next year or the year after and ask the Minister for Education whether a teacher is in front of every classroom. This is a real issue that is confronting us now. Our teachers are saying that they have had enough and they need more backup support. It is not good enough. This government needs to take a good hard look at itself. I will leave my contribution there.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [4.54 pm]: I rise to support the excellent motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition —

That this house condemns the Cook Labor government for overseeing a crime and community violence crisis that continues to spiral out of control, with violent crime at record highs and Western Australians at their wits' end, exhausted by the escalating cycle of crime in their communities.

It is quite clear that the Cook Labor government is failing in law and order. If we think about the responsibility of any government when it comes in, at the top of the list is to keep people safe. The number one responsibility for a state government is to keep people safe within their state. The number one responsibility for the federal government is to keep the country safe—that is, to prevent other people coming in, crossing our borders and causing mayhem. They are prime responsibilities. We have seen the Cook Labor government failing its most important responsibility.

I am fascinated by the response to this debate by those on the other side. The first thing we normally hear—these lines are just trotted out—is that we are attacking the police, so therefore we are bad. We have made it very clear on this side that we think the police are marvellous. I worked extremely closely with the police for six and a half years as a forensic scientist. It was my first job out of university. I know what police have to go through and I know the

difficulties they face. All the difficulties that I observed in my early career are even greater now given the much more complex society in which we live. Let us make it very clear that we are not saying anything about the performance of police in this debate.

The second thing we hear from government members whenever we raise issues of crime, particularly regional crime—we heard it today—is that we are not in Parliament legitimately raising the issue of crime; we are talking down the communities. The government would have us come into this place and only say, “No problems. Nothing to see here; everything is wonderful in every part of the state.” Clearly, we would be failing in our job if we did that. Our job is to come into this chamber and alert the government to the failures in the system. There is no greater failure in regional Western Australia than the deterioration of crime, particularly north of Geraldton and even coming to Geraldton. It is an absolute catastrophic crisis. As we have heard from other members, it is also creeping into the wheatbelt and other areas. We have seen a massive deterioration in crime in those areas.

We love the regional communities in which we live. I grew up in the bush. The reason we raise those issues in this place is not to talk down those communities but in a desperate hope that this government will do something to save those communities from spiralling out of control due to crime. Then we get the normal hackneyed stuff that we are not telling the truth and even though we provide numbers, they are not really the numbers for some reason or another. There is an old management saying that the fish rots from the head. In relation to crime, we have made it very clear where we sheet home the blame for the deteriorating situation in communities right across Western Australia, and that is with the minister. I am certain that members know that the minister is a well-meaning person. It is not a personal reflection on the minister, but as the minister responsible for this department, he is failing at his job because the crime rate is not improving; it is getting worse. The great majority of Australians are law-abiding people. They get on with life and do the right thing. However, a minority does not behave peacefully in a law-abiding way, and they cause mayhem in various ways. The majority of people have no inclination to steal or assault and they do not deal in drugs and the like; they just get on with their normal lives. We know that far too much crime causes enormous pain in the wider community and inflicts personal and financial distress on people. In the worst cases, we see people seriously injured and even murdered.

Unfortunately, the Labor Party has a long history of being soft on crime and not dealing with it adequately. I will not go into it —

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I can go into the philosophical aspect of it if members like.

Mr J.R. Quigley: Go on.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It seems that at its core the Labor Party believes that criminals are victims too, and therefore we should not have to deal with that. I have some sympathy —

Mr P. Papalia: That is literally what Hon Peter Collier said. Your police spokesperson wants to shut down detention centres.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Minister!

I have some sympathy with the view that some societal factors lead people to commit crime. That is one area that I want to cover in this debate today because nothing that I have seen from this government has dealt with those societal factors. That is particularly true in regional areas. I have been in Parliament for coming up to six years on 17 March, and I have another year here. Over that six-year period, I have seen a massive deterioration, particularly in the communities in the north that I have visited. That is during this government’s tenure. I have absolutely no doubt whatsoever that it is caused by societal factors. Equally, there have to be consequences for people’s actions. One of this government’s problems is that it comes late to these matters. Whenever we have raised this issue in the chamber, we have heard personal insults from government members. We heard the most disgraceful, tawdry attacks on the member for North West Central, right from the start when she became a member of this chamber, and we heard it again today. She is a fantastic member who is doing a fantastic job highlighting the issues in her community. The government brings it back to a personal attack. All the crime committed in Carnarvon was due to her husband owning a hotel in Carnarvon, apparently; it was not due to the government’s failure to do its job properly. It is disgraceful. That is the level of debate. The government does not deal with the substantive issues; it attacks the person who is dealing with it properly. A headline in *The West Australian* of 22 February is “Jail time for shoplifters: New laws to FINALLY help retailers”. The government is seven years into its term of office and the situation in those communities has been deteriorating for seven years. Now, in the final straight before the election, the government will do something. Now it will bring in some measures.

A member interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: It would have been good if the government had been working before now. The member might say better late than never, but I contend that we have been raising the issue of deteriorating law and order since I have been a member of Parliament, particularly in those regional communities. We have been told that it is not happening and that what we are seeing is not true. The member for North West Central says that people are reporting

this to her but the government questions whether it really happens. Somehow or other, the government's spin is that it is not true. Now the government is addressing it and we will see increases in maximum penalties and maybe an increase in penalties for repeat offenders. Those who are caught shoplifting for a third time will potentially be subject to a higher series of penalties, but nothing will ensure that there will be minimum consequences for committing those crimes. I am sympathetic to the courts having some latitude in the application of the law, but it is very clear—we hear this very consistently in regional communities—that although the kids are not going to school and are not learning much, they are very aware of the thresholds before certain penalties will apply to them. They are also very aware when the police will take action based on how much material they shoplifted, for example. The article to which I referred caused outrage because Rodd, the criminal who had been charged, said that at the time he was aware that his petty theft would not result in a jail term and that he had no intention of changing his behaviour.

I am sure that the Minister for Police and the Attorney General will say they have done something, and I have a strong suspicion that we will support the government on that and perhaps encourage it to do more, but this is seven years into its term of office. It is not two years, once the government got its feet on the ground. The government is taking action only when it is going into an election after conducting polling and realising that law and order is a major issue that will affect its vote. I am fascinated with what I hear from the Minister for Police in this chamber in particular and what I hear on the ground in the communities. I think it was about a year into my current six-year stint when I was told that police officers in Kalgoorlie had been directed not to charge youths who had stolen less than \$500 worth of goods. The shop owners told us that. Members might think that because those kids did not go to school their numeracy skills might be lacking, but they can add up to \$500 very quickly. One of the contributors to the closure of shops in Hannan Street in Kalgoorlie, of which there have been a number, is the large amount of theft and the children not being charged. The kids know they can come back again and again and nothing will happen to them because the police simply will not charge them. When I see the statistics showing that crime has gone down, I wonder how much the statistics have been reduced because the police have been directed to not charge offenders. I believe that has to be a substantial contributor because what we see on the ground is not reflected in the statistics for petty crime in particular. We hear in the north of the state that the police have been directed that if they see a youth driving a car, the police cannot even follow the car, never mind chase it. We all understand that police carrying out high-speed chases and the like —

Mr P. Papalia: You are straying out of making unsubstantiated claims to actually spreading misinformation.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister will have every chance to respond. I am intrigued why police tell people that is the case if it is not true. That is my concern.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: In these towns —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: — the police would not pursue those kids.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: For goodness sake! I do not mind a bit of interjecting, but the minister can take a breath.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Lilburne): Thank you very much, members. There was argy-bargy between the member on his feet and the minister. Let us allow the member to continue with his presentation, but he certainly invited feedback.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am very happy for the minister to make a rejoinder in his contribution, and I am sure that he will.

The youths were so frustrated that the police would not pursue them—we all understand the problem with high-speed chases—that they embarked on the practice of attacking police in their vehicles by running into them to try to engage with them. As I said, the minister reflected in his comments that that is not true, but that is what we hear on the ground in the areas. I am fascinated to hear what is being told to police out in the field compared with what we are being told in this chamber, because the escalating crime in those areas indicates that what well-meaning people in those communities are telling us is true and that those children do not feel there is any consequence to crime whatsoever, and that is fuelling crime in those communities.

As I said, we suddenly have this sort of belated “We’re going to be tough on crime” stance. I heard the Premier almost sounding like he was from a conservative government when he suddenly said that he would be tough on crime. I am not sure it is from a deep concern about crime as opposed to a deep concern that the polls are showing that crime is a weakness for this government. We have seen a real increase in the rate of serious crimes. Let us look at Western Australia Police Force statistics. Selected offences against the person excludes family-related offences, but these are serious offences. Selected offences against the person had a 17.9 per cent change from the five-year average in 2023–24. Family-related offences had a 39.6 per cent change on that five-year average. Sexual offences were up 29 per cent in 2023–24 versus 2016–17; assaults in the family were up 42 per cent; non-family assaults were up 27 per cent over that period; threatening behaviour in the family was up 81 per cent; threatening behaviour, non-family, was up 27 per cent; and robbery was up 34 per cent. Interestingly enough, dwelling burglaries were

apparently down 44 per cent. I am absolutely intrigued by that because I am not aware of a single thing that the government has done that would have driven that. I am happy for the minister to inform me. I would be very pleased if the government had done something to successfully drive down the rate of burglaries. Perhaps it could duplicate a similar philosophy in other areas of crime.

Seriously, those serious crimes are escalating out of control. That makes me wonder whether there has not been some different way of treating the statistics or, indeed, whether there is not a difference now in how people are charged for some of those other crimes. If the minister has had success in some areas, that is very good, but that is not the experience we and families and others are seeing in those communities. I think there are some good reasons.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to car theft. As immobilisers have become more common, we have seen a reduction in those car offences, so I think that is a real statistic. But one of the things we see, according to the data, is that drug offences have fallen from around 34 000 to 22 986. That is a drop of 34 per cent. That sounds pretty encouraging. But then we see the data on drug levels in selected sewers around the place. I heard the minister calling out before, making all sorts of allegations against the Leader of the Opposition in the quotation of his statistics. For the minister's education, I have printed out a graph here and I am happy to give it to the minister. I am happy to give a copy of the whole report. Looking at methylamphetamine consumption per capita, we see the doses per 1 000 people a day. I might say a frightening amount of the material is used. In the latest results, only one state is above Western Australia and that is South Australia. Otherwise, Western Australia is the top, but in particular regional Western Australia has the top consumption of anywhere in Australia.

If we look at the graph and the data, we see that it is just an escalating trend. It is increasing. We have heard the minister talk about his methylamphetamine taskforce and the like. It is readily apparent that that is failing. We heard his excuse—"Oh, well!" It was funny when the border closures were in place, the government boasted about what a fantastic job it was doing of stopping drugs. Now they go, "What can we do? The border's open. We're not stopping it." What's the problem with methamphetamine? I am sure the Minister for Police is aware. This may be something that is contributing to the lack of morale in the police force. Methamphetamine predisposes people to violence.

As I have pointed out before in this place, a number of my relatives work in the medical sphere. Especially for young doctors who are required to work in emergency wards, it is a nightmare. I think it is absolutely fair to describe it as a nightmare for young doctors in the emergency departments because an enormous percentage of presentations in emergency departments are people who are severely affected by drugs and undergoing psychosis. They are extraordinarily violent, and they are violent towards the doctors, the nurses and the guards in the hospitals. I am certain that that is exactly what police are experiencing out there in the field—that is, people who are going through psychotic events and who are uncontrolled in their attacks and their behaviour and uncontrollable because of that. It is an enormous worry.

The minister says that the government has these initiatives but it is clear that they are not working. Again, I do not pretend that these are simple problems or things that are easily resolved. I know that there are complex social interactions in all this. That is the job of government. There is no point claiming all the good stuff. Just a brief detour, but it is a bit like the crisis we are going through in a number of downstream industries at the moment. Government members are happy to be out there with their hard hats and fluoro vests when the private sector is building new industries, but when the private sector is struggling and they are closing down, the government goes, "Nothing to do with us." It is happy to claim the upside, but not the downside. Members opposite are in government, and it is tough, but what are they doing about that? In particular, what are they doing about those more complex social issues that are a significant contributor to that?

We see the headline-grabbing actions by the government. We hear about Operation Regional Shield. It is reactive. When there is a crisis in a town and metaphorically the place is burning—in some cases it is, or certainly cars are—people are harmed, buildings are destroyed, and shops and livelihoods are ruined. Then a force comes in to clean up the place. There was a spike in charges because of that. How do we get there in the first place? What is blatantly clear is that we have inadequate police resources, particularly in regional areas. It is all right coming in after the event—the cavalry coming over the hill, flag flying—but it is after the event.

We heard about Target 120. I have heard so much about Target 120 in this place. I have not heard an update, but I would be fascinated to hear exactly how many individuals are participating in it, because I suspect in most communities we could count them on the fingers of one hand. I have said in this place that I reckon Target 120 is a great program. The trouble is that it is hardly in effect. This is sometime down the path. I would be very pleased if the Minister for Community Services can tell us we have had an absolute spike. I do not have time to go through it, but when we look at the simple health issues that could be resolved and are not being resolved and will absolutely contribute to youth going into a life of crime, it is heartbreaking. It is clear, years down the track, that those programs are not working.

The minister can try to spin it all he likes, attack members in this place and say how dare we raise this issue and the like. Instead, the minister should put his focus and the government's focus on dealing with the root causes and

stopping crime in those communities. There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that the government takes this softly, softly approach because it wants to boast, on the one hand, that it has lower juvenile incarceration rates and the like, but, on the other hand, the communities are paying the price. The price is being paid by the communities; the price is being paid by those kids. People who enter a life of crime do not have happy lives. In fact, they invariably have tragic, sad lives. By not stopping those kids or sending them an early clear message that a life and path of crime is unacceptable, we are encouraging them. It is the old safety slogan: the behaviour you accept is the behaviour you walk by. I believe that is what we are seeing by this government. I believe that that is a substantial contributor to the problems that we are having. I might say, with being soft on crime, how disheartening it is for the police when they arrest criminals and then they see those criminals released. It is disheartening for the police when, instead of someone serving the proper sentence for the crime they have carried out, they simply get a fine and go back out on the street.

The government embarked on a program of not jailing people who did not pay fines. If we are talking about a single mum who had a parking fine and she is really doing it tough and she cannot pay that fine, it would be cruel to send that single mum to jail. That would be wrong. That is someone who already has it tough in life. It would make life tougher not only for her, but also for her kids. That is wrong. When we talk about people who have actually committed crimes—that is, they have stolen, they have robbed and they have bashed—but they get a fine and then they do not pay the fine and then we say, “Oh, we can’t jail them”, that is wrong. That is sending a message to the criminal, as we heard before: “Keep on doing it”. If they are only going to be fined, I encourage the minister to have a look at that. I fully support not jailing people for trivial things—they are not trivial; they are important—such as parking fines and the like. In situations in which someone has actually committed a crime, they have only been fined and then they do not pay the fine, if there are no consequences whatsoever for that bad behaviour, people will keep doing it. We know that with our own children.

I think that is an issue that the minister has to look at. My colleagues will make a contribution and I do not want to take up much of their time, but I want to finish on the issue of morale in the police force. The minister came in here and said, “Oh, there’s no problem”. His idea is that the only reason we are struggling to retain police is because suddenly people have started having shorter careers in the last couple of years. Yes, there are other jobs outside. However, my experience of people who go into the police force is that it is a bit like nurses and teachers; that is, they do it as a vocation. Yes, it is a job, and, yes, they have to feed their family; however, they do it as a vocation. I find the people who go into the police service, like people who go into the Army, do it because they have a strong sense of community and community service. The minister cannot hide behind them. There are fundamental issues with the morale of the police and the police force and the minister needs to get to those root causes. In coming into this place and saying, “You’re wrong and it is all of these other things”, I genuinely think the minister is missing the point.

That is the principal problem and that is the principal reason that the minister cannot achieve the police numbers he wants. That is because too many police are leaving. As I say, I do not believe those factors he has mentioned are true. It might be true for a few, but there are fundamental issues in the police force that are causing police to leave. I will finish on that.

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [5.23 pm]: It disappoints me that every time I stand up, the minister mistakes any comments I make about the police as me having a dig at them. I am absolutely not having a dig at them. I speak with the police daily when I am up north. I have long conversations with them regularly when they are off duty. I have admiration for them. I want to put that on the record. When people raise the issue of morale, it is actually because they are doing a goddamn hard job. They are doing the jobs of multiple people. They are psychologists. They are mental health helpers. They are looking after kids. They have so much on their plate that clearly they are overawed at times. I make the point that I dispute that whenever it is raised, and that is why. The police are wearing multiple hats and often without enough support.

Crime is spiralling out of control, but so is police fatigue because they are flooded with situations in which they do not have the tools and resources to be able to combat that. We all know in the north that youth crime always escalates in the summer. It is summer, warm and everyone is out and about. That goes with the territory. It has become incredibly difficult. I think the member for Cottesloe touched on Target 120. It is a great program, but a number of kids fall through the cracks with Target 120. If the parents and kids do not both agree to it, the kids slip through the cracks. That is an issue for many of those children.

The member for Roe touched on issues in education. I speak with teachers daily and they have issues regularly. I spoke with one teacher who had an incident with scissors. She can no longer have scissors in the classroom. Windows are broken and then kids get suspended. When they are suspended, I chat to them on the street, and they tell me that they are out for 10 days. I believe we need to look for alternatives in education for kids in those locations. Clearly, the mainstream is not the right fit. A solution needs to be found in conjunction with each community. We understand that it is a difficult situation, and we understand that there is no silver bullet. We say this all the time.

I had a conversation with a lady about housing last Friday before I left the north. She and five other seniors live in some units for which I asked the housing department in the past whether it could provide fencing. It does not provide

fencing around houses. People are really nervous. One man has had his front door smashed down twice. People are coming in and heckling them for money. There are kids ranging from five to 12 years running through their yards. The residents park their cars out the back, which they are not meant to do. They want a front fence and a camera. Housing and safety are big issues in some of those towns. People are not feeling safe, particularly older people.

The member for Cottesloe touched on the impact on small businesses and industries. Any negative press has a chicken and egg impact. Caravan park owners in a couple of towns have told me that they are down 50 per cent over their high season. That means that for them to get through the summer to the next high season, they are in struggle town. Some of those businesses may not be sustainable. That is the reputational damage that comes from this, and I am sure there are places right now having this experience. It does not augur well for those people.

I touched on this before when I spoke about police; if there are no consequences or accountability for youth crime, the youth will continue to do what they are doing—and they are. They behave badly and nothing happens. I think that is part of it as well. In the end, people give up phoning and reporting it. I imagine the police feel the same way.

The Woolworths supermarket up north went into lockdown last weekend. The guard was threatened with scissors, as was the lady who cleans the shopping centre. The window got smashed and the security alarms went off. Every flashing light in town turned up. It was harrowing for the people who were in there. This sort of thing is happening and there are no consequences. They will probably do it again. One lady said, “They were the group that were throwing cans of baked beans around last week.” This is where accountability and consequences are crucial to making a change. Retail workers are afraid to pull people up when they walk out with shopping trolleys full of food. I was told the other day that some of the kids go in and take meat, and then one of the adults knocks on people’s doors and sells a fillet steak for \$10. That stuff is happening. It is really sad and it does not set them up for a good future. I feel particularly sad for the retail staff; they really have nowhere to go. I acknowledge that changes to retail legislation are being made. That has to happen because people no longer want to work in these places.

People on the ground are questioning the empowerment of magistrates and considering what they might be able to do about the lack of accountability or where they might be able to go. That has to come out of a collaborative discussion across many groups and people, but it definitely needs to happen if we are to help the youth who are causing all these issues. People are also grappling with children out at night. I see them as well. I live on the main street, right in the middle of town. I see five-year-olds out my window at three o’clock and four o’clock in the morning, and I see them night after night. I have often asked for a safe house, and I am really pleased to hear what the minister advised me today about Broome. I think that we need an abridged version of that in a lot of these towns because those kids are really vulnerable. They have a right to be safe, and a lot of them are not safe and have not eaten, either. From where I sit, the safe spaces and safe houses cannot come quickly enough. I have raised the need for wraparound services before as well, and I think it would help police immensely. Police tell me it will.

The women’s refuge in Carnarvon, which is one of the few refuges in the region, is backed up to capacity most of the time, so Carnarvon needs a transitional housing arrangement. There is no men’s refuge. With the increase in drug use, people do not have to be a rocket scientist to see—I can see it in some of my communities—that the drug and alcohol centres and mental health supports are probably not as robust as they could be, and that needs to be addressed.

To make a change, it should not be about who did or did not do what. We have to take some proactive steps to try to make changes for the kids who are not safe and are on the streets. They have nowhere to go, and a lot of them are hungry. I know that if my kids miss one meal, they become ratty. Some of these kids have not eaten for a couple of days, so they act accordingly. That is part of their concern, and they have told me that. They need a bed at night, hence my request for a safe space. In most towns, it is not a large cohort of kids; it is a small cohort. I have been told in this house before that it is more difficult than that, but I would argue that they would be safer in some kind of organised, structured safe space than running around and sleeping on the streets for three or four nights.

I know I have to hand over to the member for Central Wheatbelt. In closing, a lot of this is determined by the population size and economic conditions of each location, and they will be different in each town. They are different in Geraldton. I hear horror stories from Geraldton, but Geraldton is a bigger city. Obviously, it will be on a lesser scale in a smaller inland town or somewhere else. It is interesting because a lot of people in inland towns tell me that they do not have enough for their kids to do. They say it is okay on the coast because kids can go swimming and fishing, but their kids do not have anywhere to go or anything to do. In some of the smaller inland towns, some of the youth crime is because of a lack of things to do; they really are looking for something to do, so they get up to no good.

It is not up to the police, by any stretch of the imagination, but I believe that they need a collaborative assistance package to work with all the other services, resources and facilities and to help make their job easier.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [5.33 pm]: I rise to speak to the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition —

That this house condemns the Cook Labor government for overseeing a crime and community violence crisis that continues to spiral out of control, with violent crime at record highs and Western Australians at their wits’ end, exhausted by the escalating cycle of crime in their communities.

I am the member for Central Wheatbelt. I want to comment about my electorate, perhaps wearing my shadow women's interests portfolio hat. I will also reflect on some conversations and experiences I have had travelling around the state. I reiterate the reflections of previous members about communities' emotions about the level of ongoing crime and the seemingly revolving door of offenders who are often well known to authorities.

Attorney General, is there any chance I could crack on and make my way through this without competition? Thank you.

Mr D.A. Templeman: We were reminiscing.

Mr J.R. Quigley: Sorry!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Far be it from me to stop the reminiscing. It is a little tricky to make a contribution while you are having a natter.

Reflections have been made by previous members, not just today but also in other forums in this house, on the concerns, anguish—anguish is probably a good word—and frustration, particularly of those who have been continual victims of crime. It can also be by proxy. People read the news. They have been tourists in communities that they previously visited and saw as safe places to visit, but they have seen some of those communities become, quite frankly, unsafe. People I know quite well have horrifying stories. I will not name towns, but they are in the north of the state. Someone broke in while they were in their hotel room and the police turned up, a couple of nights running. The police are well aware of the people who are breaking in, but the advice at the time was: "It is best to get in your car, drive out of town, sleep in your car for the evening and come back the next day because we cannot guarantee that you will be safe this evening." I do not think that was an isolated incident. It was from someone who I know well and who has spent a lot of time in some of those regional communities. The government is doing us a disservice when it dismisses community concerns and says that the opposition is trying to inflate them. I have attended forums with people and local members from around the state, and the stories are pretty similar.

Business owners have had it up to here; they have reached their limit on how many times they have seen the same people thief or be abusive. It has made it untenable for younger staff members in particular. I know that legislation before the house will deal with some of those issues, and it will be interesting to see whether that will have an effect on preventing that kind of behaviour. I was reading some articles and community members' reflections after a forum that was held not very long ago in Kalgoorlie. A barrister said, "Quite frankly, I am not sure that some of the people who are perpetrating these crimes are reading the fact that they will end up in jail if they get three strikes." A deeper and more challenging issue needs to be dealt with. In government, it is good to be able to say, "Look what we are doing", and point to the legislation, the latest taskforce or the police operations because the government needs to react to what is happening in the community. This is often after it becomes untenable for the government to leave the police officers who are struggling on the ground with the limited resources they have, like Operation Regional Shield. It does not solve the deeper issues.

The question is how to keep communities safe. I have to agree with some comments made by the member for Cottesloe: this Labor government seems very reactive and piecemeal. For part of the government's tenure, it had the coverage of the COVID pandemic, which pushed some of these things down in people's consciousness. They did not go away, and people living in those communities were still experiencing them. I am talking mostly about regional communities that I am familiar with. I will not pretend to talk about issues that I do not have the authority to discuss. Particularly in the areas that I visit regularly, these issues did not go away. They were overtaken in the hierarchy of need, particularly during the COVID pandemic when it was all about how to keep safe and well and healthy, but those issues were still there. In some cases, domestic violence behind closed doors—we have spoken about that—was heightened and it became very difficult for women and children in certain circumstances.

I want to talk about family and domestic violence before I sit down, but I will finish up on the challenge that I think every government faces. There has been a bit of a difference between the previous Premier and this Premier's narrative around how to deal with some of these particularly challenging young people. I think that neither approach has delivered satisfaction to the community. The chasm for the community is that somewhere between the police doing their job, the justice system dealing with those who are repeat offenders and the continual loop that they see being played out, they do not see any change. They do not see any difference in the outcome. That causes a disconnect in the community and great anger and frustration.

There was an article on this by ABC Goldfields on 8 February. Operation Regional Shield arrived in Kalgoorlie; there had obviously been a significant uptick in concern in the community. Most of the residents will say, "The police do what they can, but it's not fair to blame them." This article reported on some stories that were presented at the forum that was held. The article states —

Newsagent Tania Parkes was assaulted by a would-be shoplifter, while other business owners have taken to social media to report rock throwing, assaults, and vandalism.

This is in Kalgoorlie. To a lesser degree, I could reflect on similar incidents in some communities in my electorate. I have met with a number of small business owners in shopping centres in my community and had very similar conversations, to the point at which at least two small business owners in Northam are on the cusp of saying that they will not continue to operate.

[Interruption.]

Mr P. Papalia: It's not mine!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No, it is not!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Lilburne): Thank you very much, members. Thank you. Member for Central Wheatbelt, please excuse that interruption and please continue.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: They will not continue to operate and are finding it very challenging to deal with some of the repeated offensive behaviours. Quite often, it is groups of young people who come in at the same time. I have had discussions with some of the biggest stores and been told that there are clearly cost-of-living pressures impacting households, so theft of food and essentials such as clothing—pretty basic stuff—has escalated. We are talking about younger people who are potentially on the shop floor. I know that Coles and Woolworths has a strategy that if something happens in their stores, the staff will not confront the offenders, because they are quite rightly concerned for their workers.

Dr D.J. Honey: They'll get charged with assault, as well.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is right. In shopping centres, we have Coles, Woolworths, Aldi and the bigger stores with the ability to absorb some of those losses; then we get the smaller vendors and businesses that are operating in the same area, and they cannot afford to take the same approach, because a loss of their stock or an assault on their staff would mean they could quite likely lose their livelihood. It is not unusual for local members to receive very impassioned approaches, and I have had many on these matters, because of business owners' sheer frustration in seeing the same people turn up in their shop and do the same thing, only to be turned back out. It is not ideal.

I have had conversations with people who say we should simply lock these offenders up and throw away the key. Unfortunately, we all know that when we are talking about youth offending, Banksia Hill Detention Centre is not ideal in making sure that there is a pathway to rehabilitation for all offenders. Particularly under this government, it has been very challenging. My pushback to some of the people who say that to me is that we do not necessarily want to send people to Banksia Hill for them to learn only how to be better at doing what they did to be sent there in the first place, come back and do it again. This requires a concerted effort on a whole raft of levels. I never want to simplify the challenge that we are faced with, but the reality is that we are coming to an election. We are going to see an increase in rhetoric from both sides of this Parliament on crime and community safety, and I do not think that this government has done enough. I think the challenge is that there are too many silos in government. They do not talk to each other, and they have not been able to work with not-for-profit agencies or fill in some of the gaps that would support families to in some cases reduce the amount of offending by young offenders.

Peter McCumstie has been a feature of the north for many, many years. He is shire president at the moment, but he has held nearly every role in the community he is from in the north of the state. He is a very sensible person. He said straight out that wraparound services in the town that he is from are non-existent, with agencies other than police maintaining only a very small presence. That would be the case in most regional communities outside the regional centres, and that is not acceptable. The overlap of the Department of Justice and the Department of Communities is disparate at best in regional communities. We have repeated calls for a better connection, even though we were told at the beginning of this government's tenure some seven years ago that the machinery-of-government changes were going to break down silos and barriers and give greater coordination across portfolios. I would question—in fact, I would refute—that the changes have delivered that outcome. It was purely a political move by the incoming government as opposed to doing what people hoped and wished might happen, which was that silos within government would be broken down. In that case, I think we are letting down businesses, families and communities. There is a disconnect between what communities expect and what this government is able to deliver.

I want to talk briefly wearing my shadow Minister for Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence hat. In the middle of last year, a crisis meeting was called. This government is very fond of taskforces and crisis meetings, and that reactivity that other members have reflected on. They were dragged to the table after there were some absolutely shocking incidents of deaths of women in the community. I know that the Premier and ministers hang their hat on the fact that Western Australia is the first state to have a Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, and they regularly talk about the investment of around \$200 million into family and domestic violence services. An investment of \$200 million sounds a lot until we compare it to the surplus that we talk about every year that this government is posting. It is a drop in the ocean when it comes to the overall state budget, and yet we hear regularly from the Labor government that it is something that they are focused on and delivering. Although the services involved in this sector will say that they have seen greater attention on family and domestic violence, and I am not going to dispute that, they will still say that not nearly enough money is being spent and there is a lack of coordination. The high-level working group that was delivered as a result of the taskforce has some serious work to do to deliver an outcome. In 2022–23, family and domestic violence-related assaults rose by more than 15 per cent in this state. When we look to comments by people who work in the sector like Alison Evans, the CEO of the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing, her accusation at the time was very blunt. She said, "Government missing in action." She compared the investment of \$572 million that the Victorian

government made in 2016 into family and domestic violence services. The Premier was quoted at the time as saying that the government had invested \$200 million since 2017. This government has posted multiple serious budget surpluses. It has created a minister, yet was required to have a crisis summit last year and is still saying that it has invested \$200 million. The minister can stand and hark on, and I am sure he will, about the previous government's record, but we are seven years into the Labor government. Everything that is happening in this state —

Mr P. Papalia: You said “he”. Do you mean me? Am I the one?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Are you standing up to respond?

Mr P. Papalia: I thought it was multiple.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Okay, I am sorry. I made an assumption, Minister for Police. I will broaden my attack! Whichever minister stands to respond, I am sure will hark back to the previous government's investment, I think unfairly judged, but that is for another day. I would simply say that we are now one year out from an election, seven years into this government, and I do not think it washes in the community with the stakeholders, and the people who are immediately impacted that we are talking about what happened eight, 10 and 15 years ago. After seven years of this government with massive budget surpluses family and domestic violence in Western Australia is a serious and significant issue.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I acknowledge that a taskforce has been set up. I am happy to see an update on the work that has been done and I assume there will be additional funds in this year's state budget to try to address some of these challenges. In September last year, Dr Evans, whom I spoke of before, pointed out that because of the housing crisis that this government has presided over for the last seven years, an increasing number of women and children are being forced to make the horrific choice of staying in a dangerous situation that they cannot escape from because there is nowhere to go. Of the 4 932 women who reached out to homelessness services up to June last year, over half had also experienced family and domestic violence. They had nowhere to go. Dr Evans, being very blunt in her assessment, pointed out in this article —

... the gap that creates between the talking points of the Premier and his ministers and the reality on the ground.

On one hand we are saying to women and children that we are here to support them so they can leave—we should all aspire to say to every woman or family member who is in that situation that they should be able to do that—and ensure that the perpetrator leaves, but we need to put that into action. The housing crisis means that they cannot do that, and we have overextended services for women and families, particularly in regional communities and also metropolitan areas, that are simply not able to assist. It is very clear that during that post-separation period there is a heightened risk for women if they have identified the issue and tried to leave. Unfortunately, they are left in limbo and the likelihood is that there could be violence or even death. Unfortunately, that is what prompted the taskforce in the middle of last year. A key part of the taskforce, as I understand it, is addressing the walls that exist between different government departments. Again, I go back to the machinery-of-government changes and the significant amount of taxpayer dollars spent on reshuffling the decks when this government came to power over seven years ago, and now we need to form a taskforce to break down those walls. It is either wasteful and ineffective or it is window-dressing. It is disappointing because in the middle of all this are the people we are supposed to be looking after and providing avenues for. It is disappointing.

I have acknowledged that there is a Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and I have acknowledged that Western Australia was one of the first to create such a minister, but the statistics say that the violence that women and children in these situations are experiencing is significantly high. I think we are third after the Northern Territory and Tasmania. It is not a great record to hold. When we talk about violence and crime, we quite often talk about what we can see in our communities. Domestic violence is, by its very nature, behind closed doors. Although the government says that it is seeking to change the culture and build understanding within its own agencies, unfortunately I have had to intervene for a number of constituents and ask departments to assist in the provision of housing for someone seeking to leave a violent partner. That is quite challenging in a small country town. The first response should be, “Yes. How can we help?” Unfortunately, it was not. This is a broader community problem. I am not targeting an individual here. There is much more work to do to get people to understand what is at stake when someone builds up the courage to put their hand up to say, “I require assistance.” It is certainly not an easy proposition, particularly in communities in the wheatbelt; they tend to be small and everyone is known to each other. I would never ever create a hierarchy of any woman who finds themselves in that situation; it is just devastating.

I will finish my comments by saying that this government, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, is failing on a number of fronts to create a community in which people are safe, that allows them to get on with their daily life, be productive and feel safe in their schools—as the member for Roe pointed out—as a business owner and even in their own homes. For a state such as Western Australia, with the significant resources that this government has and the capacity for it to draw on its networks, it is very, very disappointing. I call on it to do more.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [5.56 pm]: I thank members for their contributions. I have to reflect a little on the irony of being berated for violent crime and a violence crisis on the same day that the Nationals WA and, effectively, the opposition opposed legislation to create safer communities through better gun laws. I find that extraordinary. I need to take the member for Central Wheatbelt to task, because she is a reasonable person most of the time. I think she has a blind spot on this. I grew up in the country too, and I know that the natural inclination is to adopt a defensive response to anyone questioning a process around access to firearms. We are unique in the country in imposing a limit on the number of firearms an individual can possess. That is absolutely reflective of the National Firearms Agreement, which recognised that in Australia, the possession and use of firearms is a privilege, that privilege being conditional on the provision of public safety. That is the central element of the law that we are proposing. The member for Central Wheatbelt has joined with her colleagues—I normally expect more of her in terms of reflection on what is being proposed—in aligning themselves with people who believe there should be unlimited guns for anybody who gets a licence. That is their stance; go and ask them. It is the same for the member for North West Central. Go and ask them. Am I wrong? Do they not believe in unlimited guns for anybody who wants them and is able to get a licence? It is not very difficult right now. All they have to do is buy a property letter from someone, often in the member for North West Central’s electorate, but also in the member for Central Wheatbelt’s electorate, to then get a licence.

There is no in-person encounter with a police officer like there used to be before 2009 when the member came into government and it was changed and centralised to be an entirely online process with only a theoretical, not a practical, test. We are changing that. The point is that members opposite have aligned themselves with people who believe that there should be no limit. The opposite of a limit is unlimited. The member is angry with me for using the words “American gun culture”. What is American gun culture? It is a person having any number of guns they want.

Member for Cottesloe, go to a pub in Cottesloe and ask someone at the bar if they want us to have an American gun culture. Just go and ask them.

Dr D.J. Honey: You know that they have semiautomatic and automatic weapons and we don’t.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Member for Cottesloe.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, member. It is no longer that.

Ms M.J. Davies: He’s inviting interjections, Acting Speaker. He also debated something that I have not even spoken on.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am responding to the member for Cottesloe’s interjection.

It is no longer about semiautomatics, although the member for North West Central advocated for people on farms who want semiautomatic rifles. It is not going to happen, by the way. Professional Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions shooters are allowed to use semiautomatics for culling vermin, but we are not going to allow just anyone else to use them because that would undermine and erode the purpose of John Howard’s National Firearms Agreement, as would allowing what has been going on.

There has been a significant growth in the number of firearms without a commensurate growth in the number of firearm licence holders. That means people are stockpiling weapons. Fewer than five per cent of people have the vast majority of the firearms. At the same time, in Western Australia, 65 per cent of the people who have firearms reside in the metropolitan area. They are not all going shooting vermin on someone else’s property. They are acquiring firearms because they can under the lax laws that have been in force for a long time. That means that throughout our suburbs, there are people whose sole genuine reason for firearm ownership was achieved through buying or acquiring a property letter from someone who enabled them to do that. They potentially acquired it as a practice of buying their firearm from a store or dealer, but it was potentially bought from someone they have never met for a property they never intend to shoot on and have never subsequently shot on. That means there are unnecessary firearms in the community. The two members are opposing this legislation solely based on the advocacy of some people who would like an unlimited numbers of firearms.

Again, it is doubly ironic that the member for Central Wheatbelt concluded her speech with a reflection on family and domestic violence and the horror of it. Ask Alison Evans what she believes the single biggest threat to a woman in a domestic violence situation is with regard to the likelihood of her being murdered. What is the one factor that elevates the risk that she contends with or confronts regarding the likelihood of being murdered? It is the presence of a firearm in the household. Ask her. I know the member talks to her, and I respect that. I am absolutely sure that the Leader of the Opposition has not spoken to the people on the list that I read into the Parliament earlier today. That is why he has so fulsomely and wholeheartedly embraced the idea that it is somehow wrong to limit the number of firearms someone can own.

That is only one thing we are doing. The other thing that the opposition rejects is the reform of the property letter process. I think the member for Cottesloe recognises that that is completely corrupted.

Dr D.J. Honey: The buying of property letters is wrong.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. It is ridiculous.

People are buying property letters for the sole purpose of having a gun in the suburbs and in country towns. It is not just the suburbs.

Ms M.J. Davies: I acknowledge that that is not right.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, but the member's party opposes that—read the Facebook page. The National Party opposes reform of the letter!

We were requested by the entire Primary Producers Firearms Advisory Board, and particularly the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, to reform that process and change it. The member's party rejects that. She has stated the three things that she is really rejecting: a limit on firearms, the reform of the corrupted property letter system and the health check. I have repeatedly said that we will talk about this part of the legislation in the consideration in detail process. I look forward to that. A health check with a mental health component is akin to the sort of thing required for a heavy haulage truck driver's licence or a dangerous goods truck driver's licence. Another analogy for a recreational shooter who does not shoot for a profession is something akin to requiring a medical check for a recreational diver's licence. It is not a terrible thing. It might actually identify a reason why someone should not go ahead with the practice they are about to embark upon.

The mental health component of the health check is not envisaged to be an onerous thing. There seems to be a bit of an inconsistent fear that people will be driven away from getting a mental health check because they will have to get a mental health check. I do not understand it myself. The argument that is being put is a bit odd. If someone wants to retain or acquire a licence to possess and use a firearm—because it is a privilege—there will be a requirement for a health check. It will have a mental health component. If someone does not want to get that health check, they will forgo the privilege of having a firearm. It is not some attack or assault. The language that has been employed, particularly by the member's colleague Hon Louise Kingston in the upper house, is provocative and angry. It misinforms and encourages people to be outraged about something that is not even going to happen with the different elements that have been proposed. It is not just those three things. There are a lot of changes in the legislation because there had to be. It is the first rewrite in 50 years and the first time since the National Firearms Agreement to make public safety the central consideration.

The first paragraph of the National Firearms Agreement contains the observation that “firearm possession and use is a privilege that is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety”. If the member read this bill, she may find that the same thing is said in the first paragraph. We are reflecting John Howard's National Firearms Agreement for a reason. The elevation of public safety to a primary consideration is central to everything else that flows in the legislation. It means that we can make reasonable decisions around what pathway to go down and not allow everybody to have a firearm. There will be disqualification orders. That will be an interesting thing. Do members know who will benefit most from disqualification orders? Family and domestic violence victims will, because disqualification orders for serious offences will result in the people who have committed serious offences not being able to hold a licence. They will have to surrender their firearms for a period of time. That is a good thing, but the member's party has chosen to oppose it, and that is disappointing.

The member for North West Central referred to gun clubs. I am glad that she is talking to them. Can she please tell them that their peak bodies had the opportunity to engage with the police? They were meeting with them every single week as part of the West Australian Field and Game Association. If gun club members have not received any information from those discussions, and if there has not been any discussion around advocacy that they might want to take back to the process, that is entirely the responsibility of the peak bodies. We had two meetings with them in my office right at the outset of the process. They were all invited as individual representatives; the West Australian Pistol Association, the West Australian Rifle Association and the Western Australian Clay Target Association were all invited to my office. We had two meetings and then they decided that they would go and join this new organisation WAFGA. They then ceded their voice to the Sporting Shooters' Association of Western Australia, so Paul Fitzgerald from that association is the only one who speaks. If they do not get to put the case for their members or they do not convey to their members information from the meetings they are having, that is unfortunate, but it does not mean that there has not been consultation. It means that those bodies chose not to participate in a fulsome way. They go to the meetings. Every week they are sitting there and they get the opportunity to listen, talk and make suggestions and proposals, but if that has not been happening, that is the reason.

I think the member for Cottesloe—it may have been the member for North West Central—made an observation about law-abiding firearm owners. We see the acronym LAFO all the time.

Dr D.J. Honey: I haven't spoken on the bill.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It might have been the member for North West Central. I concede that the vast majority of firearm owners are fine; they do not break the law and they are law abiding, and that is fine. The member for North West Central said that people were asking her about the statistics on the number of licensed firearm owners who had committed crimes as opposed to those who had not. I ask the member: what threshold would be okay? I will make a little observation for the member. The biggest mass shooting in Australia since Port Arthur was the Osmington shooting in 2018. The shooter was a law-abiding firearm owner right up until he killed his entire family and

shot himself. Right up until that point, he was a law-abiding firearm owner. His name was Peter Miles. He shot Katrina Miles, who was aged 35 years; her four children, Tay, Rylan, Arye and Kayden, who were aged between eight and 13; and Katrina's mother, Cynda. They were all murdered, and then he shot himself. He was fine right up until that point. He was a law-abiding firearm owner.

There was also Nick Martin's assassination. The chap who did that was a law-abiding firearm owner and a licensed firearm was used.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Minister, I am learning a lot and this is a very erudite speech, but it is reminiscent of a reply to a second reading debate, which I suspect you will be giving tomorrow. I am wondering whether you might address the actual motion before us.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Acting Speaker, I am reflecting on how the motion is about violence and violent crime, and I am suggesting that there are probably few more violent crimes than being shot to death —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Sorry; I am speaking. Your idea of relevance might be a bit different from mine, but I will give you some latitude. Proceed.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Thank you.

Nick Martin's assassination was by someone who was a law-abiding firearm owner, right up until he was not. He was actually up to no good elsewhere, but for all intents and purposes in Western Australia, he was law abiding.

There was also the Two Rocks school shooting last year—the very first school shooting in Australia. The shooter's dad was a law-abiding firearm owner. The shooter was law abiding and had done no wrong, right up until he did that. He took his dad's firearm to school and fired rounds at schoolchildren at the school.

Then, last year again, there was the Kellerberrin murder–suicide, member for Central Wheatbelt. Right up until Lachlan Bowles took one of his licensed firearms to work, shot his colleague and led the police on a chase before shooting himself, he was a law-abiding firearm owner. I am not saying that law-abiding firearm owners are a problem; I am just saying that they are not immune from using firearms for crime. Similarly, they are not —

Ms M.J. Davies: I appreciate what you are saying, and I am very close to that community, but —

Mr P. PAPALIA: I know. There we go. What I am saying —

Ms M.J. Davies: No, but that could still happen under your legislation, so it's not right to draw those conclusions.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Here is the thing, member. We will be making them do things that they do not currently have to do. There will be other hurdles in place. It will not be as simple as it was. There will be more onerous demands placed on firearm licence holders, and some of them do not like it. For many, it will not mean any big change. If someone is a gun enthusiast who shoots regularly and is already a member of a gun club, I do not think they will notice much. Most of the licensed firearm owners in Western Australia have far fewer than the 10 firearms we are talking about for competitive shooters or club shooters. There is an avenue through which people can get more guns if they aspire to competition; we will talk about that. I know that issue was raised by a number of members.

Ms M.J. Davies: Perhaps during the legislation!

Mr P. PAPALIA: But this is about violence. On the same day that we started debating this bill, the member's party went out on the steps of Parliament House to say that it is going to oppose this law because of the freedoms of gun owners; that is pretty much what the statement was. The member's party is opposing limits. Why? It is because some people do not want limits. It is opposing health checks because some people do not like health checks.

Ms M.J. Davies: Minister, there will be an opportunity to debate that during consideration in detail.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, there will be.

Ms M.J. Davies: Just for the record, I haven't actually made my second reading contribution yet.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Okay; I will move on.

Ms M.J. Davies: I feel like I'm being targeted for something I haven't actually said yet!

Mr P. PAPALIA: We have to stop using shooting language, but it is less about targeting the member than it is about appealing to the member. I respect the member's professionalism and desire to help the community, as I do the member for North West Central. I understand where the member is coming from, but I think she is being grabbed by a few people who have got the wrong end of the stick. It is not necessarily what they think, but even if it were, maybe what they think is wrong.

That aside, I will move on with the discussion around violent crime, particularly with regard to family and domestic violence. With regard to breaking down the siloing of agencies that the member referred to—I think the member for Cottesloe did also—police in the last few years have significantly shifted their method of operation, and a key element of that is the creation of a permanent State Operations Command Centre where other agencies are co-located.

The Department of Communities is there, the Department of Education is there, the Department of Justice is there and the St John Ambulance dispatcher is there. There is a clinician from the Mental Health Commission. That, increasingly, is doing exactly what the member suggested needs to be done—breaking down the barriers across different departments, enabling access to different databases, and real-time provision of situation awareness to police on the front line, who are invariably the first people at an incident or issue. The presence of other agencies means that they can advise or divert other services to those people in real time. That has been enabled only in recent years through the creation of the State Operations Command Centre and increased connectivity. All our police officers are digitally connected with mobile phones that increasingly will have access all across the state, particularly in the regions, through the rollout of satellite communications. That is for everyone—550 police cars and 129 police stations. There will be a footprint within range of which our police officers in the regions will be afforded exactly the same sort of support from the SOCC that people in the metro area get. It is changing things and it is happening rapidly and in real time.

I probably should apologise for not having arranged for people to see the SOCC. We have only just formally opened it. It had been open in Maylands for a while. It has now moved to Wellington Street, which has greater connectivity. In the future, we will ensure that police have the capacity to get greater access and use more data. The SOCC is changing policing and changing our relationship across government. The Minister for Community Services would be able to tell the member about it. At Christmas, we saw some really incredible advances made in providing good real-time support to FDV incidents in particular at a time of year when, in the past, everyone went on holiday except the cops. That has changed. It is partly because we can enable that through this capability. It will get better. It is improving all the time. The Department of Justice people who monitor the people with bracelets are co-located there. Numbers will grow with the expansion of that program.

Commissioner Royce, the Commissioner of Corrective Services, intends to move his corrective services operations centre in the Department of Justice into the SOCC. He will physically move the staff there and that will enable further access to databases and intelligence sources that will improve policing and our ability to address violent crimes and the people who perpetrate those crimes. It is rapidly changing. It has improved dramatically. There is another thing going on with the nature of offending post-COVID and whatever has caused it. It is something that is not isolated to Western Australia. It is everywhere, particularly in the western world. Through the ability of police to respond to it and coordinate with cross-government activity, the focus on solving or reducing crime is improving all the time. It is worth looking at the SOCC. I probably will formally forward invitations to people because I think that is a worthwhile activity.

The final thing I would say is that I want to reflect on the Banksia Hill Detention Centre because the member referred to it and said that it is not the place to which we want people to go. I understand what the member said because historically—it is probably still true—one in three juveniles who go through the front door of detention ultimately reoffend as an adult in such a way that they are incarcerated in adult prison, and if they are Aboriginal, reoffending and recidivism results in them being in there for a long time. But I need to say that Banksia Hill is not what it was seven months ago. Members can ask the President of the Children's Court and Eamon Ryan, the Inspector of Custodial Services, and they will confirm that. It has vastly improved. Both those people are in the stakeholder group that receives regular briefings on out-of-cell hours and school and other interventions and provision of support. It is not a place that should be used as an excuse not to incarcerate people.

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Attorney General, keep it down a bit, please. Yes, you can walk in front of the speaker!

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am not advocating huge numbers of detainees being incarcerated, but I share the member for Cottesloe's view that there need to be consequences. Beyond that, I am not sure that sentences have in recent times—there are a number of reasons for it, potentially—been long enough for us to get effectiveness out of what is now a world-class facility, and it will continue to improve. It is acknowledged and recognised that if we want to try to change someone's behaviour, it is better to divert them earlier if we can. However, ultimately, if they are offending in such a way that the community has to be protected from them and they have to be incarcerated, the likelihood of them having a successful intervention and changing their behaviour is diminished if they are in there for only short periods of time. That is a problem. We have a really good school in Banksia with excellent teachers. It probably has better staff than any school in the state. The ratio of staff to students is good. They are really well qualified and capable of teaching that challenging cohort. They have the techniques and ability to do it, but they quite often say that they will just be at the point of teaching a kid and they will lose them. We are looking at how we can try to ensure that kids transition back into a decent school system. But a lot of these kids are not going to school on the outside. Seventy per cent of them are functionally illiterate and functionally innumerate. That is a challenge.

I wanted to conclude with the observation—I say it everywhere I can—that Banksia Hill is not what it was. It certainly should not be used as a reason for not incarcerating someone. There was a time not long ago when I heard magistrates say that they would not send a child to Banksia Hill because that would be more damaging than if they were not to send them. That is not true. The people there are good, dedicated people doing an incredible job.

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Community Services) [6.27 pm]: I, too, rise to make a small contribution to this motion, which the government will not be supporting. It takes me back to the last Wednesday we had private members' business, and it seems to me that this opposition continues to kick own goals when it comes to thinking about what kind of motions it ought to bring to the house. On a day when it has been made clear that the Nationals WA, as a key alliance partner in an alternative government, is not going to support one of the most significant reforms that will have a significant impact on violence in communities, it is quite breathtaking and so contradictory that it is hard to fathom.

I want to make a contribution on a few areas within my portfolio focused on working as part of a whole-of-government response to deal with violence in communities and also, most importantly, our attempts as a government to stop the violence before it starts. Our government is also very much focused on preventing violence and supporting communities in making sure that we prevent violence before it starts.

I want to start at the beginning by making some remarks on the taskforce that all members in this place know has been established because the member for Central Wheatbelt made some comments about it. I can reassure the house that this is a taskforce like no other. To diminish it like it was some other working group, inquiry or taskforce that kicked something down the road could not be further from the truth.

The Family and Domestic Violence Taskforce is made up of significant non-government sector partners and key stakeholders from various agencies within government. They come together to talk about the prevention of family and domestic violence and what more all of us can do—the government, the sector and communities—to deal with a scourge on our society. I want to emphasise to the house that the taskforce work is very significant and all the feedback I have had so far from all members of the taskforce is that this government has been on the right path in the last seven years. No-one within the taskforce has said that we have to throw out all our thinking and strategy around family and domestic violence and start again. Our strategic approach to dealing with family and domestic violence—members opposite are right—started with this government having a strategic approach to the prevention of family and domestic violence. Our government placed a priority on this issue by creating the first ever Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. It has also made a significant investment of some \$300 million since 2017. That is significant and has made a significant difference in dealing with a significant and complex issue within our community. To diminish that investment diminishes and disrespects the incredible contributions that have been made by our community sector partners each and every day over seven years. Those community sector partners have been given that \$300 million of investment to provide critical services each and every day throughout communities in this state over the last seven years. Members opposite diminish the work of those people —

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Ms S.E. WINTON: They diminish the outcomes that community sector —

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe!

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe!

Ms S.E. WINTON: Members opposite are diminishing the outcomes that are achieved every single day by our community sector partners and the important work that they are able to do each and every day in all communities throughout the state as a result of the \$300 million investment into this important area.

I will not steal the Attorney General's thunder, but, of course, a very important part of the family and domestic violence story is around the important reforms that seek to protect vulnerable people from violence in our community. Our record has been unmatched by any previous government in this state. The reforms are making a difference each and every day in protecting vulnerable women and families. The taskforce's work is coming towards completion. Members would know a significant investment of over \$72 million was announced by the Premier during 16 Days in WA. Again, it focuses on areas that we know make a difference in continuing to support crisis supports for vulnerable women and children. Importantly, it also makes further investment in the important work around perpetrator responses, changing men's behaviour to stop the cycle of offending and, of course, in the primary education and primary prevention spaces so that we can change the prevailing attitudes that are still out there in our community and allow that violence to occur.

I also want to briefly mention Target 120, because it came up in debate this afternoon. Whenever I get an opportunity to speak about this program, I take it. It is a significant, innovative program that is making a huge difference in local communities. The issues surrounding youth offending or youth disengagement in communities are complex and there is no quick solution. The solution we know that does work is if we back in local communities to provide them with the resources and support that they need to wrap around young people and steer them into alternative pathways. They can support them to re-engage with school, to get training and to think about future career paths. Target 120 is a complex but very rich program that engages on a very deep level with the individuals who come

into the program. I often try to explain it. Someone only needs to talk to the people who deliver Target 120. It is not about just working with one individual young person. The issues are complex and that young person has a family, has siblings, and all those people are also supported as part of the Target 120 program. We have invested over \$43 million, which will see the program continue to rollout throughout the state in 20 locations, fully funded until June 2025. Each and every day, the people who work within this program around the state are making significant differences to young people's lives and, importantly, as part of that, are keeping communities safe.

The Minister for Police spoke around the State Operations Command Centre and the family domestic violence response teams. I want to make a couple of comments on them to back in what he said about the work that police do. When we talk about violence in our community, police are absolutely critical in keeping communities safe—but it is not just a police responsibility; it is a responsibility of the whole of government and a variety of agencies. The new State Operations Command Centre, which I was privileged to visit recently, is exactly that. It is not a police station. It is a place where a variety of agencies come together, sit together and work together and are able to share data and intelligence to wraparound families to support them—not only to respond to crime and violence, but also to go in after the event to support families and make sure that the cycles do not continue. Incredible work is happening in that area. Likewise, our approach to policing is changing in the way the family and domestic violence response teams operate. There are some 17 of them around the state and I visited a couple of them. There are police officers co-located with Department of Communities' staff as well as community sector organisations and child protection staff. Crime sheets from the night before are triaged and prioritised. It allows those agencies and people to go out to families to support them after a crime event to make sure that the families are safe and to support them to make sure those acts are not repeated. It is a different way of working together. It is a real privilege to be working with the Minister for Police and his agency as we take a whole-of-government approach in responding to violence and focusing on preventing violence in our community.

Finally, the last thing I want to say before I give the call to the Attorney General—no, Madam Acting Speaker (Ms M.M. Quirk), I do not give him the call; I will not take that away from you!—is about the announcement we made this morning around Marlamanu. It was a really significant announcement that will see a diversion program that was asked for and designed by Aboriginal people. They want to have control and to work on solutions for young people in their communities. The program has some \$18 million and will see up to 16 young boys aged 14 years to 17 years supported on country with structured educational programs and wraparound services. Each of them will be held to account, not only for their actions but also for changing their ways. Importantly, all that comes together through being mentored and guided by Aboriginal leaders on a working pastoral station. This government is interested in these kinds of things and in working collaboratively among various ministerial portfolios because we know that is where the true solutions lie.

When I talk about all the programs in my portfolio, their common theme is that they require one to have good working relationships with cabinet colleagues. They require having the same purpose of mind and agreeing about policy development. We have not had any of that from the other side in seven years. The opposition has never offered any alternatives or solutions to the problems that vex society. The opposition just harps on without an alternative. We have less than a year until the election. The opposition needs to present an alternative to the community if it does not think the government is doing well enough. It cannot just tell us that we are not doing well enough; it has to tell us how it would do it better. It is unable to present that because it is so totally dysfunctional that it does not agree on policies.

Mr R.S. Love: We don't need to tell you anything.

Ms S.E. WINTON: No, but opposition members do not even tell each other anything.

In the media it was reported that opposition members do not like sharing policy ideas because they are scared that they will steal each other's homework, go to the media and steal each other's policies. How can opposition members be in an alliance when they cannot even share their ideas with each other? How is it possible to go to Western Australians and say, "We would be a better government because we have better ideas," but not be able to work together in the cabinet room? How could that possibly work? The Leader of the Opposition cannot keep a straight face when I pose that question: how would it work? If the opposition has developed wonderful policies, do not tell us; that is fair enough, but opposition members cannot even tell each other and cannot get on the same page.

We talk about violence in this state. On the very day that we introduce one of the strongest, nation-leading reforms that will make women and children safer in our community, the Nationals WA opposes it, yet its alliance partners will support it. What are women and children who want a safer Western Australia supposed to think about voting for you mob as an alternative government?

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler — Attorney General) [6.42 pm]: When members have been around for as long as the Acting Speaker and I have, we have seen it all before.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Thanks for reminding me.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That is okay, Madam Acting Speaker. You have been wonderful over the journey. We see things that have changed and then changed back to how they were, like some sort of fashion. When I was a young man, people wore stovepipe jeans and then they wore flares. Then, the fashion went back to stovepipes. Now, looking at the Academy Awards, I have to buy huge, flared jeans again. This is what happens in Parliament sometimes.

When I first came to Parliament in March 2001, Dr Geoffrey Gallop had just come to power, and I was on the back bench, where I watched things until 2008. As I recall, the lovely man the late Hon John Kobelke was the Minister for Police, and Hon Jim McGinty was the Attorney General. The opposition was led by Hon Colin Barnett, although the leadership changed a few times before he snatched it back and took the opposition to victory in about September or October 2008. During that period, when the Liberal Party was in opposition and the Gallop government reigned, the opposition was after the government all the time because it was soft on crime. “Labor is soft on crime!” The opposition was after Labor because it was doing nothing about bikies, this and that, and it was soft on crime.

When the opposition got to government, it did not know what to do. When I think about it, it reminded me of the crazy dog that chases the car wheel down the street, barking at it like mad. When the car stops at the Stop sign, the dog does not know what to do with the wheel. That is exactly what happened with the Liberal–National coalition when it assumed government; having barked “Soft on crime!” at the Gallop government, as it does now, it did not know what to do when it got to government. It did not have a clue how to stem crime; it had no idea.

The opposition, then and now, embarked on what a former Chief Judge of the District Court—the first woman to be appointed a judge and who became a very distinguished Chief Judge—said about the body politic: they operate on a policy of fear. If you can scare a population enough on race, ethnicity or anything, it will be more accepting of any stupid or extreme solution you want to introduce. Like the dog that arrived at the Stop sign and caught up with the wheel and the car, the Liberal coalition government came to power and stopped barking because it was on the Treasury benches but was bewildered about what to do. I recall that Attorney General Hon Christian Porter said that the government would crush crime by introducing the criminal organisation anti-consorting legislation and have the capacity to declare bikie gangs outlaw gangs. We all know that they are outlaw gangs, but the government was going to go through the exercise of declaring them gangs and double the penalties for anyone who was in the gang, so they had to prove the person was in the gang. It was just laughable, and I said so in this chamber at the time. It was very slick salesmanship, but it had no effect. The bikies and outlaw motorcycle gangs that are the retailers and perhaps also wholesalers of methamphetamine, which is wreaking so much havoc in the community, blossomed.

Dr D.J. Honey: It looks like they are back in business.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Member for Cottesloe!

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The member is right: “blossomed” might have been the wrong word. They increased in number and criminal activity. Does that suit the member for Cottesloe? It went through the roof. We all remember that every other week a house was blown up because they were cooking methamphetamine. Roofs were being blown clean off houses. What did we do? We said we would come into government and bring in the harshest law to suppress outlaw motorcycle gangs, and we did. They do not go around flaunting themselves in public anymore. They still commit crime, and the police know who they are, but the community feels a bit relieved. If people go to a cafe now, they do not have three rebels sitting next to them with their tats and patches.

Let us get to sex crimes and dangerous sex offenders. Remember, as I said, I can still remember stovepipe jeans, going to flares and now back to stovepipe jeans. I remember it all. When we get to sex crimes, I remember that just about every other week there was an article in the paper about some sex monster who was being released. Madam Acting Speaker, you were in the Parliament in 2016 when I introduced a private member’s bill to reverse the onus of proof for a dangerous sex offender’s application for release. They had the most ineffectual and hopeless Minister for Police at the time. Members will remember Hon Liza Harvey. She was just one of a team, but she did not know what was happening. When I introduced this legislation, which was and has proven to be very effective, I can remember Hon Liza Harvey over here as the police minister speaking on behalf of the most ineffectual Attorney General the state has ever had to suffer, Hon Michael Mischin from the other chamber, saying, “The Liberal government will oppose this reversal of the onus of proof; it is not necessary and not required.” We got to government. We were not the dog barking at the wheel not knowing what to do once we got there. When we got to government, we had a whole list of bills that were ready to go. There was the no body, no parole legislation. Then we introduced high risk serious offenders legislation, which not only reversed the onus of proof for dangerous sex offenders who were seeking release, but also broadened the scope of the legislation past dangerous sex offenders to capture all serious criminals who have arrived at the end or served their finite term of imprisonment but would present a danger if released into the community. Now we have a whole section down at the State Solicitor’s Office called the HRSO section that triages these cases and decides whether it is appropriate to obtain an order for continuing detention.

Madam Acting Speaker might recall that Hon Liza Harvey and Hon Michael Mischin said at the time that it would be unconstitutional to reverse the onus of proof on these applications. That was taken to the High Court by one of these offenders after we took out an order against them, and the High Court upheld the constitutionality. I say this to members opposite about government amendments: they are good. That is what this whole Parliament is about.

We listen. If the previous government had listened, it would not have wasted millions of dollars on the Bell Group Companies (Finalisation of Matters and Distribution of Proceeds) Bill 2015. We were here in the Parliament saying that it was unconstitutional, but Hon Mike Nahan knew better and proceeded with it and set the Solicitor-General of Western Australia on a fool's errand to Canberra to defend it, and he was hit out of the park, the poor man. I think it damaged him at the time. In his opening, or shortly after he opened, they said, "Well, what about the list of priorities in the Income Tax Assessment Act? Does this not sort of lay to waste this whole thing?"

Anyway, we listened. The previous government never listened. It was stubborn and it did not know what to do, and that is why crime rose. It also refused point blank to help child victims of sexual assault by opposing a private member's bill that I brought into this chamber in opposition to lift the statute of limitations. They opposed it, even though the member for Roe was in support of it. I think he crossed the floor, from memory. He had the integrity to cross the floor. After we came to government, one of the first things we did was lift the statute of limitations. It nearly made me vomit on the carpet when I saw all the members of the Liberal Party who had opposed the lifting of the statute of limitations rush to the back of the chamber to shake the hand of the victims and say "well done". They were just dripping in hypocrisy. It was shocking.

Now we come to some of the bills that we introduced to stem crime in our community. I have already spoken about the Criminal Law (Unlawful Consorting and Prohibited Insignia) Act, which the bikies hate. We as politicians look for third party endorsements. Members all go out and get photos taken near a school or with someone in their community at a sporting club, looking for third party endorsement. No-one has a better third party endorsement than I have, have they? I have the bikie Troy Mercanti walking into court with a T-shirt that said, Mr Squigley, eff your laws. What a third party endorsement! The bikies hate it. I have a little amendment in mind just to turn it a bit tighter on them, subject to —

Mr P.J. Rundle: Why don't you stay on for a few more years? You should stay on for a few more years to finish it all off.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I am going to stay on long enough to make sure that this community understands the rubbish that members opposite go on with prior to the next election—this rubbish of fear. I will be here to call it out. This is just a fear campaign to make the population scared so that they will vote for members opposite. They would not vote for them rationally. I worked on stations on horseback up in Mardathuna and in Hill Springs up in the Murchison, and you have to scare the cattle along to keep them moving. That is what members opposite have to do with the population. Crack the whip, put the fear of God into them, and then say, "You've got to vote for us, we're the solution to your problems." Just whip, whip, like we used to do out there at Mardathuna. Not that I was very good; I cracked myself a few times, but anyway, that is another point.

We also introduced a presumption against bail for anyone charged with terrorism. We withheld parole. That was a really good one. We are talking about being tough and not letting crime get out of control. We brought in a law that meant that anyone who was a mass or serial killer may stay in prison for life, because the Attorney General—that is me at the moment, and I have done it—can prevent the Parole Board from considering parole for one of these abominable creatures. I have done it. The Attorney General can say, "No, he killed three people. He's done 25 years, he's up for parole; don't even consider it." That is how tough we got. They hate it.

In 2020, we gave the courts the power to impose orders permitting GPS. I want to talk about GPS. I have 60 seconds. Members opposite try to scare this community about GPS; they did not put one on during their eight years! Then we ran a trial to see that we could do it and make it effective, then members opposite started criticising us that the trial was running too long, because it ran for a year. We cannot satisfy them! What they have to do is scare the people. It is their only hope. Just like we used to scare the cattle, they have to scare the people, and then they might squeeze a couple of votes out of frightened folk. I meet people from all around the world who say, "What a wonderful city; what a wonderful, safe place to come and raise our children." That is what they say to me in Butler when we have so many people coming here.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Attorney General, in accordance with standing order 61, even though I have enjoyed your trip down memory lane, this business is interrupted and adjourned.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm

