



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTIETH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2020

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 20 May 2020

Legislative Assembly

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THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson) 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.

CORONAVIRUS — COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Statement by Minister for Mental Health

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Mental Health) [12.03 pm]: I rise to update the house on the work that the McGowan government is undertaking to protect the mental health and wellbeing of Western Australians throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has implemented a range of initiatives to support the community, including the Think Mental Health “Be Positive. Be Connected. Be Active.” campaign, which focuses on self-care and wellbeing strategies and provides people with information on further help, should they need it; an extension of the “Alcohol.Think Again” “Glassbody” campaign in an effort to reduce the risk of alcohol-related harm; the launch of the Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service, which is a specialist telephone consultancy service that provides clinical advice to health professionals relating to patients’ alcohol and other drugs use; and ongoing work to increase service providers’ use of telehealth and audiovisual communication.

The government has also established a mental health, alcohol and other drugs community services task force to support the sector in providing continuity of services to clients, while also providing solutions to key issues that are identified during the COVID-19 response. The task force is chaired by the Mental Health Commission and aims to keep people with mental health and alcohol and other drugs issues supported in the community and out of hospital, provide leadership and support during the COVID-19 period, and determine key issues that are identified during the COVID-19 response.

The government also welcomes the recent release of the “National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan”, following the national cabinet meeting on 15 May 2020. The principles and many of the objectives of this plan align with work that is already occurring across Western Australia, including through the “Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025”; the document “WA State Priorities: Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs 2020–2024”; and the “Sustainable Health Review”. The “Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025” remains contemporary and is our plan for guiding work in the mental health and alcohol and other drugs sector. In addition, the McGowan government, through the “Sustainable Health Review”, is committed to building a mental health and alcohol and other drugs system that is well balanced, integrated, sustainable, and grows the right mix of services across the community to support a positive recovery journey for all.

WEAR ORANGE WEDNESDAY

Statement by Minister for Emergency Services

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Emergency Services) [12.06 pm]: Thank you very much indeed, commissioner.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: What did you call me?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Commissioner!

The SPEAKER: Do I get more pay?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I think you do. I have got to stop having these meetings; I keep calling everyone commissioner!

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the house about Wear Orange Wednesday, or “WOW Day”, held today to recognise our 2 000 State Emergency Service volunteers. This celebration turns our state a brilliant orange each year to remind us all of the excellent work of our highly skilled SES volunteers. SES volunteers are from all walks of life, ages and backgrounds. They dedicate their time, day and night, to help the community during natural hazards and other emergencies. In the past 12 months, SES volunteers have put their lives on hold to respond to more than 330 incidents and 1 500 requests for assistance. Their selfless dedication to the WA community is immeasurable and deserves our acknowledgement and thanks.

Volunteers assisted local communities during tropical cyclones Blake and Damien in the north west. They provided support during the major bushfires that affected Yanchep, Norseman and the Stirling Range. Volunteers have also conducted major land searches for missing people at Noreena Downs station, Bluff Knoll and Esperance. When storms hit the south west land division earlier this month, SES volunteers dropped everything to respond to more

than 500 requests for assistance from Perth to Busselton over a 48-hour period. Our SES volunteers have also played an important role during the COVID-19 pandemic response by working alongside WA police at vehicle control points to protect our regions. They have also provided logistical and organisational support at the state health incident coordination centre.

Tonight, 16 iconic landmarks across the state, including Parliament House, will shine bright orange to recognise SES volunteers' selfless commitment to helping others. On behalf of all Western Australians, I would like to thank our SES volunteers for their dedication and commitment to continuing to help keep the community safe.

CORONAVIRUS — CORRECTIVE SERVICES — PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Statement by Minister for Corrective Services

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Corrective Services) [12.08 pm]: I rise to provide an update to the house on the Department of Justice Corrective Services' preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I can advise the house that the Department of Justice COVID-19 task force has ensured that prison facilities across the state have in place prison-specific pandemic emergency management plans. The aim of pandemic plans in each facility is to ensure the safe and secure containment of any infected prisoners while maintaining essential services for prisoners' health, safety and welfare. The plans identify how each prison is to manage a pandemic in four stages: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Stage 1—prevention sets out the communications plans for the management of the pandemic, the resources required and ensures that the local management plans are current. The pandemic plans are subject to ongoing review and continue to be adjusted based on medical and other advice, including from the Department of Health, the Western Australia Police Force and the State Emergency Coordination Group.

Stage 2—preparedness implements enhanced infection control measures through a combination of social distancing by limiting visitors, reducing prisoner and staff movement, enhanced cleaning and ventilation regimes, targeted use of personal protective equipment, the screening of visitors, staff on shift change and prisoners on reception. Stage 2 also requires the prison to identify minimum staffing levels as staffing capacity is reduced and to secure emergency stock holdings. Each prison has an identified isolation unit where any prisoner displaying COVID-19 symptoms is placed, in isolation, and is subject to COVID-19 testing.

Stage 3—response outlines the response to a confirmed COVID-19 infection in the prison. This stage will move towards restricted prison regimes matching reduced staffing profiles while increasing internal communications with prisoners and external communications for reassurance. This stage will also include further control of all movements at the prison gate.

Stage 4—recovery includes the careful removal of restrictions to return service provisions and prison movements back to normal regimes.

I am pleased to advise the house that, to date, there are no recorded COVID-19 infections within the prison estate. This is a credit to the effective management and planning conducted by the Department of Justice in response to COVID-19 and the quick action taken by the Commissioner for Corrective Services in reducing the risks to the estate.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [12.11 pm]: I move —

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable private members' business to have priority from 4.00 pm to 8.00 pm on Wednesday, 20 May 2020.

As was highlighted when I gave notice of this motion, the house will be debating important legislation this evening, which will therefore require an evening dinner break at 7.00 pm. This motion has been moved to accommodate the three hours of private members' business this evening.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [12.12 pm]: I appreciate that we will soon debate the substantive suspension of standing orders relating to the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2020, which relates to the extension of this evening's sitting hours. I will save my comments for that debate. I appreciate that if the government intends to bring this legislation forward, it will be debated in this place for some time this evening and of course warrants a dinner break, ensuring that private members' business continues to be held for three hours. I appreciate the motion.

Question put and passed.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PALLIATIVE CARE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Establishment — Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [12.13 pm]: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the private members' business notice of motion relating to the joint select committee on palliative care in Western Australia to be moved and dealt with during time when government business has precedence.

When we come to this item shortly, which is listed on the notice paper under private members' business, notices of motion, item 14, the member for Thornlie will move the substantive motion for the establishment of the Joint Select Committee on Palliative Care. The motion that is before the house at the moment enables the motion to be moved by the member for Thornlie to be debated during government business and not take up the time of private members' business, which would have eaten into the opposition's time later this evening.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [12.14 pm]: Again, I appreciate the motion moved by the Leader of the House, which ensures that the member for Thornlie can move the motion that seeks to establish a Joint Select Committee on Palliative Care. I understand that standing orders need to be suspended so that the motion can be dealt with in this place quickly and then be sent to the upper house, because, of course, it is a joint select committee. Although we have taken some time getting this to the house, I look forward to the motion being moved by the member for Thornlie at a later stage of today's sitting.

Question put and passed.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2020

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [12.15 pm]: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2020 to be introduced without notice and to proceed without delay between the stages.

Obviously, the government has determined that the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2020 is very important and we wish to bring it before the house today. The bill obviously has important considerations for the planning and development industry throughout Western Australia. Although I am not the minister responsible, I know that the bill is very important; it is certainly focused on COVID-19 recovery and ensures that businesses in Western Australia are supported as we move into the recovery phase. It is intended that the merits of the bill will be debated from 8.00 pm this evening. The Minister for Planning will present the bill and give her second reading speech early this afternoon, as per the business program. The second reading will then be adjourned. The bill will then be brought on after private members' business, which will conclude at 8.00 pm this evening. The motion that I gave notice of late yesterday, in suspending standing orders, achieves the same outcome in process as effectively declaring the bill urgent. The government intends that this bill will be introduced by the minister shortly, second read and then be adjourned until a later stage of today's sittings to be debated at 8.00 pm. I remind members that it is expected that we will sit into the evening tonight and, depending upon the debate, again tomorrow. That is the intention of the government for this suspension of standing orders.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [12.17 pm]: With regard to the motion moved by the government today, I am not even sure why Parliament bothers sitting anymore. I do not know why we have a motion before us to suspend standing orders that seeks to bring the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2020 through the house. Members would appreciate that the opposition was provided with the legislation at 10.50 pm last night. The explanatory memorandum was provided during the briefing. I appreciate that the agency briefed us at five o'clock yesterday. As we were told at the briefing, this legislation is the most significant change to Western Australian planning laws since World War II. It is a significant bill.

The media release outlines that there has been wide consultation. The Premier and the Minister for Planning were at a media event today suggesting that there has been wide consultation with industry, yet the Legislative Assembly has yet to be apprised of it. We are yet to see the bill. The opposition spokesperson for this bill, Hon Tjorn Sibma in the other place, received notice of this legislation only yesterday evening. It is extraordinary that we have been asked to form a position on a bill that we have not yet seen. Indeed, we are yet to come to a Liberal Party position on the legislation, and we are not able to do so until this evening. It is extraordinary. Personally, I think it is quite disgraceful that the government treats this Parliament with such contempt that it is introducing this very significant bill and we have not been given an opportunity to go through it, as intended. It appears that we will keep moving standing order suspension after standing order suspension so that the government can continue to ram through its legislative agenda under the guise of COVID or by whatever other means. The Parliament has faced this situation many times before; 53 bills have yet to pass Parliament. A number of bills are still yet to be introduced even though they have been flagged by the government. We are yet to see any cogent handling of legislation in this place or any respect shown to the Parliament. I suppose that is the government's attitude now. It does not care and Parliament no longer matters. I do not know why we bother sitting. This is a significant bill. We heard in the briefing with the Minister for Planning and her agency that this is a most significant reform that the government is seeking to undertake. The process, I think, has been very unbecoming and very disappointing. At the very least, the opposition in the Legislative Assembly is not being afforded any sense of courtesy or diligence by having an opportunity to go through the legislation, as we would usually expect in the normal time frame. I appreciate that the minister has suggested that this is COVID-19 legislation and the Leader of the House also said that in his contribution. However, the PDF of the bill is 103 pages. It has been brought into this place today and the government expects it to be dealt with tonight. What is the point? Why are we here? Does the Parliament even matter anymore to this

government? Effectively, the Premier calls the opposition terrorists for the position that it holds on bills. A state of emergency is in place and Parliament has been cast aside as the government seeks to ram through legislation at will however it wants and without due regard to the process that has guided the state for some time. I find that remarkable and disappointing.

The opposition will not support the motion to suspend standing orders. I expect to hear from the minister about why this legislation is so important and needs to be dealt with so quickly. That is not to say that we have not addressed the bill itself; we do not have a party position on it yet. The Leader of the Opposition has made it clear publicly that we are not in a position to form a view until six this evening when our party has the opportunity to meet. We will be expected to deal with it at eight o'clock while continuing to serve the people of Western Australia as their elected representatives. We have been given very little time by this government. It is a disgrace and the process is a sham. I do not know why we bother sitting anymore. We might as well wrap it up and go home. That is the contempt that the government has for this place, and it is disgraceful. We will not support the motion.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Planning) [12.22 pm]: I will outline some facts about the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2020 and, in particular, I will outline some of the claims that were made to some of my advisers in the briefing held between 11 o'clock and 12 noon because, personally, I am offended and I think my staff members were offended. Let us go through the facts. We are in the midst of an unprecedented crisis, as it has been described. No-one could have foreseen the pandemic and it has had a significant impact on our economy. We all agree with and appreciate that. Yesterday, we were lectured by the opposition. The shadow transport minister said that we have pre-pandemic thinking and that we need to start thinking about the economic recovery in a post-pandemic way. The shadow Treasurer, in his opinion piece in the paper today, said that we have to get on with it and cut the green and red tape. We put forward an action plan for reform over many years. We announced it last year.

Point of Order

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Can I seek some clarification? Is the minister meant to be updating us on the urgency for the suspension?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am. It is an economic crisis; that is a pretty good reason.

The SPEAKER: It is a motion.

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: Point of order, Mr Speaker. The member is on his feet, addressing the Speaker, and the minister interjected.

The SPEAKER: Sit down. I have already ruled on this. It is a motion that is being discussed and the minister is giving an opinion. Your point of order is not a point of order.

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There is an economic crisis. We are getting calls from everywhere about how we are going to encourage investment. We set out a plan of direct government investment in infrastructure and facilitating private investment, and this legislation is a key part of it. Why is it urgent? It is urgent because we are in the middle of an economic crisis. That is why we have brought it in. We could have used the COVID-19 temporary order, because it is COVID-19 related. We are here today to talk about this bill because of COVID-19. If it were not for COVID-19, we would not be here today talking about it and my staff and Parliamentary Counsel would not have spent the last number of weeks working 24/7 getting this ready. They have worked hard to try to help the state deal with the economic crisis. It is as simple as that.

The opposition cannot say on the one hand that we need to get on with the economic plan, while on the other hand stop us from implementing a key part of that plan. I understand that the legislation has a number of elements to it, and that is why we sought to brief the opposition as soon as we could. Does the opposition really want me to go through the efforts that we undertook to get hold of the shadow Minister for Planning? We have the records—the call register and emails—of us trying to get a hold of him to brief him, which was not until just before 2.00 pm yesterday. The manager of opposition business understands that because I went up to him and said that we could not get hold of the shadow Minister for Planning for a briefing. I said that we needed a briefing as soon as possible. I thank the manager of opposition business, who was then able to facilitate a briefing, at which we gave people the explanatory memorandum at the briefing and, soon after, the bill. I remember asking the leader of opposition business, “Do you want a copy as well or should I just send it to the shadow planning minister?” The manager of opposition business said to just send it to the shadow planning minister, and we did.

Later that night, the manager of opposition business said that he wanted a copy too and we give it to him. That is what happened and that is what we did. We gave a briefing last night and created an open-door session today to allow members to go in and go through it again. In addition, the way we have staged this is that we will bring on the second reading speech now and have the second reading debate later. We have all agreed to go into it tomorrow; we are not trying to get it all through today. We all understand that. I know that it is complex. COVID-19 has challenged all of us as ministers, legislators, advisers and bureaucrats. It has put enormous challenges on all of us. We could

have done nothing and not tried to embrace that challenge. I could have sat in my office and not brought in this legislation. My advisers could have had a much better last three or four weeks. They could have seen their families and probably would not have had to work every weekend. We are doing this because of the economic emergency.

Claims were made in the briefing about who was sent the legislation and who was not. I will tell members who was sent the legislation last night. The manager of opposition business, the shadow planning minister and the Western Australian Local Government Association are the three bodies that received the legislation last night.

Mr D.T. Redman: Not the National Party.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I know, and we will follow that up today.

We tried to do the right thing and to provide briefings. The shadow Minister for Planning did not return calls. We had to go through his office but we still did not get a response. That is not my responsibility, I am sorry, but we made the attempts. Like I said, I would like to live in a perfect world. We all would. We all wish this crisis had not hit us. We all wish the economy was emerging as it was planned to do, but that is not the case. We could have taken the easy path and I could have taken the easy path of not doing anything. I know that doing stuff takes a lot of hard work and sometimes it is challenging. But this bill tries to address many of the challenges the state is facing. I am happy to engage on all levels as we go through the bill. We can discuss it and see what we can work out together. I really believe that this is a tool that we need because we cannot have projects sitting around for years. We must make sure that we address some of the issues in our planning system. As I said, 90 per cent of this has been consulted on for years. If members do not support it, that is fine.

Mr D.C. Nalder: You're playing wedge politics.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No, I am not playing wedge politics, it is called —

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Honestly! This opposition does not understand what hard work is.

Mr D.C. Nalder: Due process.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Due process? Some of the claims made again by the member for Cottesloe, who just cannot help himself, against my staff and a seasoned director general are disgraceful. They are shocked.

Dr D.J. Honey: What were the claims?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: You stand up and say it.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Cottesloe!

Dr D.J. Honey: You're casting aspersions.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: You stand up and say it.

I want to take this issue seriously. I want to work with members because I want to get these reforms through. Yes, we all would have liked more time, but this is a COVID-19 crisis; this is an economic crisis. We all would have liked more time to do everything.

Mr D.C. Nalder: You've taken weeks and aren't giving any time for parliamentary scrutiny.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: They were drafting it. It takes weeks to draft legislation. Actually, it takes a lot longer.

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The shadow Treasurer was quoted in the paper today as saying that we need to get on with it and cut red and green tape—but not now. This bill has to go through the upper house as well. How long do members want this bill to be in the chambers for? There is an economic crisis now, member.

Mr D.C. Nalder interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am not taking interjections.

There is an economic crisis now. As I said to the manager of opposition business, I am willing to work with the Liberal Party to get this bill through. I am willing to sit down and go through things. Please do not play politics with this on every level, because it is not worth it. We need to drive an economic recovery through government investment facilitating private sector investment. This process will see decision-making rest with the Western Australian Planning Commission, the pre-eminent planning body in the state. Members, it is like I said: we all would have liked weeks, months or years to consider this, but we do not have that time. Please take this seriously. I am happy to engage with members opposite and work through the bill to try to get these great reforms up for Western Australia.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [12.32 pm]: I will speak briefly. Just now the minister outlined very well why we are seeking to suspend standing orders to bring on the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2020. As members know—it was in our press release—the bill is far reaching and will be long term. These sorts of reforms, to promote investment and get jobs, activity, economic activity, construction, quality design and

important building projects underway across Western Australia, have been talked about for many years. One of the great frustrations of my political career, and many people's political careers, is how hard it is to get through red tape and how hard it is for people who just want to get on and do quality projects to get through government processes. It has been a huge frustration for many people. This bill will assist developers, householders and small businesses to get through it. It deals with all three groups. A good aspect is that it will allow for significant job creation in Western Australia. One issue that has been raised regularly at the national cabinet level, in particular by Dr Steven Kennedy, the federal Treasury secretary, and Dr Philip Lowe, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, is that we need to put in place reforms that promote investment and activity. One thing they talk about is fiscal policy, which is essentially the government spend on capital works and the like to bring forward capital works. The government is moving heaven and earth to do that as quickly as possible, but it is also looking at the measures it can put in place to enable private investment to be brought forward. That is thoroughly endorsed by everyone at the national cabinet level, Liberal and Labor alike. We all agree. We have expedited the drafting of this legislation over the course of the last few weeks. Ordinarily, it would take a long time to draft something like this. During the COVID-19 crisis, over the last three months, a lot of drafting processes have been expedited and the Parliamentary Counsel's Office has been marvellous. It has worked hard and around the clock; it has accepted that these are extraordinary circumstances. Emergency legislation and all sorts of other legislation that would ordinarily take months and months, if not years, to draft have been drafted in a matter of weeks and months. It has been a great effort across government to get us to that position.

This legislation is a major reform. It went through cabinet on Monday and was approved by the government on Monday. We want to get it through Parliament. Members understand about parliamentary timetables. If we do not urgently bring on this bill, by the time it gets through this house and to the upper house, and through whatever processes that house puts in place around it, this bill could not be dealt with by the upper house before the end of this year. We have a crisis now. There is 10 per cent-plus unemployment in Western Australia. Without JobKeeper, it could be significantly higher than that. This is a crisis, which is why we need to deal with things quickly. These are extraordinary circumstances. Ordinarily, there would be time for all sorts of government processes and considerations and that sort of thing, but this is a crisis. We have a crisis in unemployment that we need to deal with urgently.

Government spending cannot solve everything. The Western Australian government spend is about seven per cent of our state's economy. If the government ups its spend by one or two per cent, it will not solve the problem. Private sector investment is needed so that important projects, which may well have been held up—there are many of those—can get underway. This legislation will allow that to happen—that is what it is about. Members can be critics, but please accept that we are trying to do the right thing by investors, builders, construction companies and young people who do not have jobs and who need jobs in Western Australia. We are trying to do the right thing by them with this legislation so that we can urgently get some activity into the state's economy. That is what this bill will allow for. Ordinarily, it would not have happened this quickly—the bill would not have been drafted or gone through cabinet and caucus this quickly—but we are in an economic crisis, the likes of which we have not seen since 1929. One thing that can assist us to deal with that crisis is this bill, which will allow for investment, activity and jobs. That is the choice members have. Parliamentary niceties and things that might have been —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I just say to the opposition that this is an urgent, job-creating bill. Members are either in favour of that or they are not. That is the choice they have to make.

Mr S.K. L'Estrange: Disgraceful.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton): Thank you, member for Churchlands, I call you to order for the first time.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA) [12.38 pm]: The Nationals WA will not be supporting the suspension of standing orders, not because we do not support the need for urgent consideration of this bill, but because the time lines outlined today are unsustainable. We still have not seen the bill, yet we are being asked to debate what is quite an extensive bill. In fact, it is an overhaul that has been spoken about since 2013. I was told last night that provisions have been discussed in the community and kicked around for a long time, but we have not seen them. We have no idea what is being put forward, except what was outlined in a PowerPoint slide presentation and the explanatory memorandum, which, to be frank, my team has not yet had time to consider. There is no way we can come forward with a view on this bill. Our record in dealing with the COVID situation and supporting the government in its moves has been very good, I believe. We have supported most of the legislation the government has put forward to be considered under the COVID-19 temporary order. I know this is not the temporary order we are talking about, but our usual support for the need to deal with matters urgently is an illustration of the fact that it has been given on most occasions. Most of those matters have been flagged the week before. Before a matter went to cabinet the government would give us some indication of what we would be dealing with and tried to give us an understanding of the dimensions of the legislative program for the following week. On this occasion, as the Nationals planning spokesperson, I got a text yesterday in the middle of our party meeting, which

I chair, so it is pretty hard for me to take text messages at such times, but I communicated with the minister. A briefing was arranged for the dinner break last night when, after a few delays, we got a briefing. I want to put on record the National Party's appreciation for the work of the minister's staff and of the department. I have no issue with their dedication and their professionalism. I am certainly not making any comment about their hard work or the candour with which they discussed the Planning and Development Amendment Bill, although I have not yet seen the bill. As the spokesperson for planning for the Nationals, it is very hard for me to hold a considered discussion on this bill today because tonight, after private members' business, the house will be sitting. It is not that the government wants to debate this urgently, it is the unrealistic nature of the time line in which it wants to consider it. The government has to give us time to read the bill and time for parties to have a discussion about it.

It is one thing for us to discuss it in this place but as the government knows, there are two houses in this Parliament. We, as a party, generally discuss and try to arrive at party-wide determinations on legislation so that we can have some level of consistency between what happens in this chamber and what happens in the other chamber. Even if sometimes what has been outlined in this place does not exactly happen in the other place, it is usually because other factors have interfered along the way. As a party, we try to consider everything together but there is no way we can come to a considered view about this legislation. If the government had suggested that it would give us time to have that discussion so we could maybe discuss this tomorrow, that might have been something different. That would have been a realistic time line that we could have met. However, we do not have the opportunity to do that. We cannot discuss it tonight because the bill will be in the house. One of us will have to speak on it at some point. I do not know how long it will be in the house for. I suspect quite a few members on both sides will want to make a contribution. I guess, to push it through, the government might want to narrow down the number of members who want to make a contribution. However, it will be an important matter to a lot of members because a lot of members are sensitive to planning issues and to the economic issues the Minister for Planning has outlined. However, where is the opportunity for us to have consultation with key groups in the community? There is none. We do not know what we are talking about. I will say upfront that I have spoken to some interest groups, one of whom the Leader of the House might know well, who are not very happy with some of the provisions in this bill and we have to discuss some of their concerns.

What was outlined to me last night is not some sort of 18-month bandaid of a COVID bill around the type of thing we have been discussing but legislation that will put in place some of the infrastructure and framework for long-lived planning reform. There will be some element of, if you like, a COVID or urgent response in the provisions around the Planning Commission sitting as the approving authority on development approvals. That will occur instead of going through local government, normally a report will be written by the local government reflecting some input from the local community through a consultation process and then being put through a development assessment panel, here we will see a referral system from the government straight to the department, which will then write a report, which will be provided to the Planning Commission, which, as I understand it, will have extraordinary powers to override schemes and other planning policies and procedures that are not open to any other organisation. That is an extraordinary power to give to a department and it deserves the full consideration of the house. Given the economic environment, it deserves to be urgent but also to be detailed. I do not know that I can give it a detailed examination when I have to make a considered response to it tonight and I have not even seen it. I think that is bordering on the ridiculous.

As I said, some of the architecture will remain. We have been told another tranche of legislation will come through to, if you like, complement some of these measures and that means, in effect, a lot of the provisions will not be in place for 18 months for the COVID response; they will be there for as long as it takes to have the next review of the act, which will be, goodness knows, in 20 years—a long time off. It is a very, very important bill because these matters will not affect just this period of economic uncertainty when we need this recovery process. It will affect the way communities interact with the planning processes for the next generation, basically. Given we know that one of the most important issues to communities is a properly planned environment, every member will have experience of what happens when planning goes wrong in their community and there is a dispute between local government, a developer and the community about planning matters. These are very fraught considerations at times and they need to be fully considered and the government is not giving us that opportunity so we will not support this. As I said, perhaps we might have supported it if a more realistic time line had been outlined. However, I cannot meet these time lines to bring to this house a proper, considered response from the Nationals about the bill, which we have not yet seen, so the Nationals will not support the motion.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Leader of the Opposition) [12.47 pm]: To say that as an opposition we are somewhat furious at this government's motives in trying to ram through this legislation is an understatement. The Premier and other ministers come in here every day and tell us how irrelevant we are. They have complete contempt for this Parliament and the parliamentary process. There is absolutely no need to be ramming this bill through as an urgent bill. Next week was to be estimates week, but the house will sit next week. If this bill had been read in today and debated next week, that would give the opposition valuable time to consult with the Western Australian Local Government Association and community groups because every single member in this place knows that planning is a sensitive issue in their electorate. Give us a week to consult with the people who will be impacted and who want to

have some input into this legislation—one week. We could debate it next week. The Legislative Council will convene on 2 June. If the government treats members in this place and the other place with respect, they will deal expeditiously with legislation. If the government thumbs its nose at the parliamentary process and treats us with contempt, things will happen such as referral to committees because the members in the upper house, quite rightly, take great umbrage at being treated as though they are not democratically elected members of this place representing their constituency. For the minister to stand in here and accuse my members of being unavailable is outrageous.

Hon Tjorn Sibma, in the other place, was called on Sunday afternoon. He is a father of two children, a 10-month-old and a three-and-a-half-year-old. He got a phone call not from the minister, who has his phone number. The minister did not do the decent thing of personally calling the member of Parliament on a Sunday, but rather got one of the poor, overworked government officers to call him and have them suffer the embarrassment of having to negotiate a briefing on a bill that has not been passed by cabinet, and of which the member could not even be given a draft copy. The bureaucrats were embarrassed. The staffer called and left a message that said, “I want to talk to you about a bill that I don’t know the name of.” For goodness sake, what do you expect? He made himself available on the Monday, and the minister still did not have a bill for him. For the minister to come in here and say that the honourable member was unavailable is contemptible and untrue. The minister owes Hon Tjorn Sibma an apology for utterly misrepresenting his availability. He answered that phone call on Sunday afternoon and said, “What is the point of having a briefing if I can’t even see a draft copy of the legislation?”

Our partners in opposition, the Nationals WA, were not even afforded a phone call. That is a contemptible way to treat people who have been elected into this place. I will not be lectured by the minister saying that we are in a COVID-19 emergency. Yes, we are, and we as opposition have been absolutely cooperative. We have passed laws through this place in one-day sittings—laws that prohibit people from leaving their homes during a lockdown and apply penalties to people who do. We agreed to that, on the say-so of the Premier. He said he had advice that it was needed, but would not provide us with that advice. We have passed residential tenancy and commercial tenancy legislation to protect tenants, because we knew it was needed. We knew it was urgent. We passed bills expeditiously through both houses of Parliament to get that legislation in place. Legislation is sitting on the notice paper at the moment that will allow commercial tenants to basically throw contract law out the door and walk away with no responsibility. There will be no ability for a landlord to exercise their right and bank guarantee. That legislation is sitting on the notice paper. Thank goodness the government did not try to declare that urgent, because it would have had the same pushback, but it would have used its numbers to barge it through. That is the problem that we have with the abuse of process, and that is why we are furious. I was angry at this being pushed through Parliament under the guise of COVID-19, but I became actually quite furious when I found out that members of the Nationals were not even given a phone call to ask if they were available for a briefing on one of the most significant planning reforms this state will ever see. This petulant Premier comes in here, stands up and says, “Do the right thing.” I wrote down what he said. He said that the government is doing the right thing by developers. He is sorry if we set aside parliamentary niceties. Parliamentary niceties—that is what we are! That is what all of us are. Members of the government are also parliamentary niceties. Wonderful—I thought that we were part of a democracy.

The Premier said that he is doing the right thing by developers. He said that we should show some respect and do the right thing. Respect is a two-way street. If the Premier wants us to show some respect for this process, he should show some respect for us. Each one of my constituents has elected me to represent their interests. This legislation will effectively allow a development like the twin towers at Scarborough to be approved by the Western Australian Planning Commission. A lot of my constituency were aghast at that development, but that is what the minister is asking us to pass here. We are talking about developments of \$30 million or more. If the government wants us to declare this bill urgent, why did the minister not stand here and say, “We have a backlog of 50 developments over \$30 million that we want to get approved urgently so that they can come online”? How many of those developments that have to be passed need to be approved within the next three weeks? If this legislation had been left to the normal process, we could have debated it next week, it could have gone to the Legislative Council, and we could have this through by 30 June. How urgent is it for people to be able to put up a pergola or a patio without approval between now and 30 June? The minister has not articulated that. The minister has not articulated why we have to completely trash parliamentary process and agree to a bill that we have not seen and have not had time to consult on or meet as a party room to consider. I hope the Premier is not running government this way. “Sign this contract! We will send you the details later.” That is what he is asking us to do. He is asking us to go in without even seeing the contract, without even seeing the bill, and just agree to it, because we are in an emergency. Government knows best, centralised power is best; that is what it is bringing in. This might be significant red-tape reform, and we are all for that, but it does not mean the Premier has to subvert the due consideration and processes of this Parliament in order to get it through.

In closing, I want to say that the opposition is absolutely furious at the contempt that the government has shown for this Parliament and every individual member, and, by virtue of the fact that our constituencies elect us, for the community of Western Australia. Every single one of the people we represent in our electorates expects us to stand up and do our job, consider legislation, consult appropriately and make sure we understand it before we pass it through this place. We are not here to rubber stamp legislation from a government that has become arrogant in the extreme. Just because the government wants something and has the numbers in this place does not mean we have to

lie down, have our tummies tickled and agree to it. The government is a disgrace, and the minister should apologise to Hon Tjorn Sibma for misrepresenting his availability to consult on a bill with no name, a copy of which he could not be given.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [12.56 pm]: First, I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for an outstandingly well-presented argument. This is a disgrace, this process is a disgrace, and we have been treated with absolute contempt.

At the outset, I will deal with the minister's utterly false assertion that I made any assertions or claims against the director general of Planning. I ask the minister to come into this place and table those assertions. Those sorts of allegations from the minister can harm my reputation, but, in this case, it is good fortune that there were other people as witnesses in that room. We will see the truth of whether that was the case. There were no allegations made or aspersions cast against the director general of Planning, but I can say that we expressed deep concern about the minister and the process that has been brought forward in dealing with this bill.

When I stood for Parliament and campaigned, I doorknocked extensively, because I took my campaign extremely seriously. One issue that came through loud and clear from the constituency in my electorate was that those constituents were extremely concerned about the way planning issues were dealt with and the way planning decisions impacted on them personally and on their communities. The minister would know that there is substantial concern in my electorate and electorates on the coast and the river about the style or types of developments that are occurring and approvals that are being granted. We know, as the Leader of the Opposition outlined, for example, in Scarborough, there was considerable contention against a development that I think had an 18-storey height limit that ended up as a 34-storey development. I know that there are many members on the minister's side of the house who have deep concerns about planning issues in their area. I know that the member for Mount Lawley has come into this place and expressed concerns. I know that the member for Bassendean has concerns in his electorate. I know that other electorates on the minister's side such as Baldivis and Joondalup have expressed concerns. The electorate of Wanneroo has expressed concerns about development decisions in its area.

Planning is an extremely important matter, and planning decisions impact on nearly everyone in this community. Imagine a process where we are going through what has been hallmarked as the most substantial change in planning laws for 90 years, and I get to see the bill an hour and a half before we come to discuss it. I have no possible chance of reading that bill. I will be in this chamber for three hours this afternoon going through the environmental protection amendment bills and dealing with those thoroughly. I will have no chance to read this Planning and Development Amendment Bill, so I will be trying to skim a 90-page bill that relates to this most serious matter that affects my electorate.

Government members and the Premier have come into the chamber and told us that somehow the speedy passage of this bill will make a difference to our domestic economy. That is clearly an absolute falsehood. Let us look at our local economy and the projects that will go ahead. The minister should know this: how many vacant new residences are there in Western Australia? There are thousands. In fact, there are tens of thousands. Essentially, other than projects that had commenced, developers are putting approved developments on hold. No great backlog of developments is coming through. Why? It is because they have no customers. Even the twin towers development in Scarborough is on hold. In fact, that development has not gone ahead. There is no demand of any significance for new residences.

I will talk about commercial properties. When members walk down the centre of their communities, and when I walk down the centre of Claremont, they see and I see that more than half the shops are closed. If we go to shopping centres, we see that numerous businesses are closed. There is no screaming demand for new shopping developments; it is quite the opposite. Agents will have an enormous job to occupy the thousands and thousands of premises that are now vacant. No building of commercial properties will be required because those premises are available.

I will talk about function centres. We have literally thousands of function centres and venues across this city and this state that are completely empty. It will take months, and even years, before many of those centres get going again. The contention that somehow there is an enormous backlog of commercial and residential properties, function centres and other businesses that have stopped trading and are just waiting to get going is utterly untrue. The truth is—the minister knows the truth—there is no backlog of developments. If the government really wants to get those developments going, it should tell us what they are. As the Leader of the Opposition said, "Tell us what they are." The simple truth is that when I asked that question in the briefing, no-one could give me a single example of anything that is being held up at this stage, and that is because we do not have a requirement for the substantial building of dwellings. We recognise that the government can go and build roads and bridges, and that may improve the economy and provide some jobs. We recognise that, we accept that and we think that makes good sense, but to say that somehow rushing this bill through Parliament in this way, on an issue that for many people, including people in my electorate, is the most significant issue that they face, is utterly disingenuous.

The opposition has partly discussed this issue, but we have not had the chance to have a party meeting on it because of the timing, although some Liberal Party members will meet this evening for a short time. However, when we have talked about this issue—we have said that large parts of this bill have been around for a long time, and some of them go back to our government—there may be things that we want to progress, but there are also new parts to this bill.

I had the opportunity to call the president of the Western Australian Local Government Association. The government said that it had consulted on this bill. I directly asked the president of WALGA, “Have you been consulted on this bill?” Her very clear answer was no. I was told—I will quote almost directly—that there had been consultation on parts of the planning process and that on some of the issues that go back a long time there had been a high level of consultation, but there had been no consultation on this bill. I rang as many local council presidents as I could in the time that I had available and asked them whether they had been consulted on this bill. They said no. In both cases I asked, “Do you have concerns about this bill?” They said, “Yes, we have deep concerns about this bill.” WALGA has deep concerns about some sections of this bill. It has a deep concern that local governments will be completely bypassed. I suspect that more than a few members on the government side of the house would, if they were not being bullied into submission, have deep concerns that major planning decisions could be made in this area without the ability for their councils to influence them, outside some vague reference to consultation. I suspect that they would have deep concerns about that. If this legislation goes forward, I suspect the short-lived member for Mount Lawley would have deep concerns about the contention that the Premier, on his own volition, could insert his hands into this process and bypass councils.

As I said, I think anyone who dwells on that would have concerns. It may be that that is benign and WALGA’s concerns are misplaced. It may be that the concerns of the mayors whom I have spoken to are misplaced. We could ascertain that if we had mature reflection and time to consider this bill. For example, the WALGA council members cannot get together until Monday. WALGA cannot give a considered, joint response to this legislation until after Monday, yet we are being asked to ram this bill through now. It will be rammed through. Imagine getting a bill at 11 o’clock in the morning, spending all day in Parliament—in my case, I will be, and other members will be as well—and then having to debate this legislation at eight o’clock tonight. Does any member think that is a proper process that will give proper, mature consideration to the greatest change in planning laws in 90 years? It is absolutely unsustainable. It is unconscionable to do that. These matters need to be appropriately and calmly considered. We need time. I need time to talk to my local mayors and councillors and ask them whether they have concerns about this legislation. I need time to talk to community groups. A couple of community groups in my area have deep concerns about the way planning decisions are being made right now and about planning decisions that the minister has made. I need feedback from those people, and I will have no opportunity to get that feedback.

The problem is that by doing it this way, something that could be quite reasonable and fair is suddenly cast into the light of being something that is dubious and sinister. Why is the minister doing this? Why is it so urgent that we cannot have even one week to consult, consider this bill in detail and determine which parts we support or whether we support the legislation? What is so urgent that we will have to have a midnight run? We are going to ram this legislation through Parliament in the middle of the night. What is so urgent that members of Parliament, who will be here all day, will have to debate this legislation into the middle of the night? It raises the immediate concern that the minister does not want scrutiny of this bill. The minister does not want the community to debate this bill and does not want councils and WALGA to understand the parts of this bill that may remove them from planning decisions. That raises the concern that this is some sort of shifty deal. I do not know whether it is because I and others have not had a chance to look at it, but it raises that concern.

We heard the Premier talk about parliamentary niceties. What a disgraceful thing to say to members of this place. This is the most major planning reform in 90 years and we are told that the government does not have time to set aside appropriate time for consultation and review—the government does not have time for parliamentary niceties. That is our role. When I was elected and came into this place, the feedback I got from residents and electors in my area was that they wanted me to deal with planning issues, to express their concerns in Parliament and to try to have influence on any legislation in this area so that it could be improved and the amenity of their area would not be destroyed by inappropriate high-rise development and the like. It is a disgrace to call the most major planning reform in 90 years receiving proper scrutiny, proper time for analysis and proper debate a parliamentary nicety. This is not COVID-19-related emergency legislation. Nothing allowed by this legislation will make any material difference to this state’s immediate economic position.

Some ministers in this place do things properly. Yesterday, the Minister for Finance brought in the Procurement Bill 2020. It is excellent legislation that will improve the way in which government can procure goods and services. That bill will actually help economic development in the state and save the government money. The government will have more money to spend on other important goods and services—those businesses that have been absolutely destroyed by COVID-19, that are still closed and may never restart. That money could be used to provide proper medical facilities. If the government wants a COVID-19 crisis, there is one. Do members opposite know that medical staff going to hospitals still do not have adequate personal protective equipment? They still do not have it! We are months into this crisis and they still do not have —

Mr D.J. Kelly: What a load of rubbish!

Dr D.J. HONEY: The Minister for Water can say that it is rubbish, but I spoke to a doctor on the weekend who attended a hospital and had to have an argument and a fight to obtain a mask to go into that hospital.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Which hospital?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I do not have to go through that with the minister here. I can tell members that there are still restrictions on personal protective equipment. That is a COVID-19 crisis. If the government came forward with a bill on that, we would agree to it. The government is using the COVID-19 crisis to try to jam this bill through in an utterly inappropriate way. There has not been adequate consultation with key stakeholders in the community, such as the Western Australian Local Government Association or individual councils. We need feedback from them and we need to know whether they think there are issues with this bill before we can possibly support it. I absolutely and totally, along with my colleagues, reject any contention that this is an urgent matter. This matter needs proper consideration. If the government were genuine in what it is trying to achieve with this bill, it would read it in now and give us until next week before we debate it, once we have consulted on it, analysed it and had time to have internal discussions. I will finish on that note.

I am dumbfounded at the Premier calling it parliamentary niceties. The Premier has a high level of support in the community for the way that he has dealt with the COVID-19 crisis, but that does not justify him treating this Parliament and the processes of this Parliament with contempt.

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton) [1.12 pm]: I would like to say a few words about this motion. I am not going to comment much because most things have been said. I want to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on an extremely good contribution and, of course, the member for Cottesloe. First of all, it is quite clear to everybody who honestly looks at this bill that it is not an urgent bill. Over the last few months we have gone through the most dramatic infringements on personal liberty in the history of Western Australia. We have shut down businesses, locked people in their homes, and altered property rights. We have done everything, because we had to. As a nation and as a state, we had to address the greatest pandemic in the state and nation's history, at least since the Spanish Flu of 1918–19. By the way, we have done a great job. But people gave us the right to put those restrictions on their behaviour because it was necessary. We convinced them, and the Premier has done a great job in convincing them, as has the Prime Minister. But they also told us not to go too far or do it excessively, and to restrict our actions only to things that were true emergencies. This bill is not.

As the member for Cottesloe said, most of this bill has been around for years. It is probably very good stuff. Much of it is based on a green paper prepared for the minister by Evan Jones, and it has been sitting on her desk for two years. The government had legislation ready to go some time ago, which it split out. This is not urgent and there is no case for urgency. The Premier stood and told us to get with it because it is an emergency. This is not China. We are a democracy. We are in a pandemic, but there are restrictions and limits on the behaviour of a government—even one that is generally doing well on this issue—to infringe on people's rights.

Let there be no doubt about this: planning goes to the fundamental nature of our economy. It deals with property rights, the value and amenity of our homes, and what we can do in our businesses. Importantly, planning is also the most difficult area of government because it is an area that is ripe for corruption if not done well. There is a reason that other states such as Queensland and New South Wales ban developers from contributing to political parties. A lot of developers make their wealth from advantageous planning decisions, which are made by government entities—sometimes under political influence. In this state, especially since the WA Inc days, we have systematically gone through a process of developing a planning system that is complex and is ready for reform—I agree with that—but that is transparent. The system involves transparency and community consultation, and ensures that all affected parties have input into the strategic process and the structural process.

We have gone through a long and tedious process of making sure that everyone who is impacted can have a say, and we should, because it goes directly to people's livelihoods, businesses, families, assets and retirement. This motion obviates that. We, as guardians of our electorates, are elected to represent the issues of our electorates in this Parliament. It is not a nicety—that is why we are here! To describe the Parliament of Western Australia as a nicety and talk about tolerating us representing our electorates is an affront to not just us, but also our communities.

As the member for Cottesloe said, it is not as significant an issue in my electorate as it is in some others, but it is one of the top issues. It is controversial, difficult and ongoing. It affects people's livelihoods to the core. Yet here we are. I first heard about this legislation yesterday. I think it was in a five o'clock meeting. The minister did not show up, but people from the Western Australian Planning Commission showed up. The chairperson of the WAPC has been there for a while and is a very competent lady. We asked for the bill, but they did not have it. We asked for the title, but they did not have it. We asked for briefing sheets, and the minister's adviser flipped through them and gave seven of us seven different sheets. We had no time to scrutinise the detail or ask an intelligent question. We did not get an actual briefing, but we were told that because of COVID-19 this would be declared an urgent bill for the next day of sitting, and the government was going to ram it through, hopefully this week, which means in a day and a half. That is outrageous behaviour!

We want to support measures to address COVID-19, but this bill has nothing to do with that. It is a joke to claim that this is related to the COVID-19 emergency. We want to constructively assist and support the government in reforming the planning system, but we have to make sure that the many things that we have not seen or had time to scrutinise fit objectively with the needs of the community and make sure that the issues that the communities we represent here are addressed. We have to make sure that there is a maximum level of transparency. I cannot, in

the next few hours, have any confidence that this bill will do that—I cannot. The government will probably go to the media and say that we are trying to block this bill, block reform and block removing red tape, but we are not. It is the process. The government is politicising the planning system, which is the exact opposite of what should be done. We were told, although I have not had time to scrutinise it, that the government has a super development assessment panel in the Western Australian Planning Commission for projects worth over \$30 million and projects deemed strategic by the Premier, with, we understand, almost no restrictions on what defines a strategic project. This super-DAP, which has no third party appeal process, can expedite the decision-making process and has the power to override local planning schemes, although the head of the WAPC said that this power was unlikely to be used. That is a very powerful thing and requires extreme accountability and transparency. Are the deliberations of the WAPC's super-DAP transparent for everyone to look at? No. Is the decision-making process of the WAPC open to public scrutiny? No. What is a special project? I can give an example of why we would be worried about that. The government also has something called “unsolicited bids”, by which a developer or proponent can come to the government with a project. Many other state governments have this too. The Barnett government received unsolicited bids, but they were restricted to land purchases. A firm or a proponent can come to the government and put in an unsolicited bid for a project that is not out for tender, and if the government thinks that the bid has advantages, the firm or proponent gets the right to develop the project. This process lacks scrutiny, it lacks competition and it lacks contestability. The government might say that an unsolicited bid will be treated as a special project, and it goes through the super-DAP and gets an expedited approval process without any scrutiny. By expediting this bill, the government is trying to inhibit us in this place from ensuring that proper processes are put in place to make sure that there is maximum transparency and that we can effect amendments if there is not. Why is the government doing that?

As the member for Cottesloe pointed out, there is not a huge backlog of residential and high-rise developments sitting out there ready to go. There are thousands of empty apartments. Many, many major developments that have already received approval are in abeyance. The reason is a lack of demand. We had no population growth before COVID-19. We had excess capacity in the housing market, excess capacity in the high-rise market and excess capacity in CBD properties and restaurants and everything. That is why the whole development industry was struggling and had basically been in recession for years. Now, as a result of COVID-19, one would predict that we are going to have a reduction in our population. All the temporary migrants are going to go. We are not going to have any significant permanent migration. By the way, there are hundreds of thousands of temporary migrants. Who knows what is going to happen with international students? If anything, we are going to have zero population growth for a time, and we still have a backlog of excess demand. There is no urgency. There is not a queue of projects out there. This process has the potential to advantage some projects over others. Someone could come to the government with a project that could then be defined as a special project. The Premier would send through the DAP process and the project would be expedited, both in cost and preference from the government, over another one. In other words, this will erode competitive neutrality. Is the government going to advantage some projects over others? There is the potential for that. We are not going to be able to suitably scrutinise this because the government is not allowing us to. The government is not allowing us to effectively scrutinise fundamental aspects of the planning system—that is, to make sure that one set of developers does not get a leg-up in the process over another. Is that what the government wants?

This is totally unnecessary. In my view, there is a need to expedite planning for mineral developments, resource developments, roads, infrastructure and things of that nature—fair enough, and we are open to that. Those things are also complex and would need parliamentary scrutiny, but the government might do that; I would not want to rule it out. There are a few developments of a commercial nature that might have advantages over some others so we would not rule them out, but we are not going to be able to effectively ensure that the checks and balances of transparency and competitive neutrality are in place in this bill to make sure that it is a bona fide reform as opposed to a distortion of our planning system. I tell members that our planning system has loopholes—it is very difficult, it is opaque and insiders have a huge advantage in being able to use those loopholes.

As others have expressed, including the Leader of the Opposition, who, again, gave an excellent speech, our view is that there is no need for this. We will sit next week and we will commit to expediting the debate on this bill. That will give us a chance to talk to our constituents, developers and all other interested parties—there are some indications that the government has not done that. In other words, it will give us the days to make sure that we can do our job—that is, to scrutinise some of the most important legislation to be put through this house in an appropriate and constructive manner. We have to ask about its urgency, given that this is clearly not a COVID-19 bill. Claiming that this is a COVID-19 bill is equivalent to Xi Jinping saying that there is no need for an inquiry into the COVID-19 pandemic; it is similar. Ridiculous! We ask the government to put off this debate until next Tuesday. We will make a commitment to put the bill through the house—the upper house is a different story; the government will have to deal with it. We will do the right thing and expedite the passage of this bill through the Legislative Assembly.

To go back to my starting point, this is the first time, and it is a serious error, that the government is going beyond the remit the public of Western Australia has given it to address this pandemic. The public does not expect and will not agree to the government using the leniency it has been given to restrict their livelihood by pushing through legislation that is not needed and not associated with COVID-19. To call on the Parliament of Western Australia, as the government has done, just shows that it has no respect for democracy and governance in this state.

MRA. KRSTICEVIC (Carine) [1.27 pm]: I just want to say a few, very quick words. I agree with all the statements that have been made by members today—the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2020 has been handled in an appalling way. I believe that as a result of the strong commonsense arguments of opposition members, the government has had a slight rethink about the way it wants to do this. My understanding is that we will now support the motion to suspend standing orders for this bill and that there is some agreement that the debate on this bill will be finished by close of business on Wednesday next week. It is also our understanding that government members will give their second reading contributions tomorrow and that opposition members will start their second reading contributions on Tuesday next week, which will give us some time to consult and the opportunity to talk about this bill in our party room so that we can get a position on it. That would make the opportunity to have a reasoned debate on this legislation a bit more realistic. I am sure many members of the Labor Party are also grateful for the work the opposition has done in pulling on the reins of an executive that has lost control of the way in which it manages its business. On that note, I look forward to debating this bill.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [1.30 pm] — in reply: I thank members for their contribution to the motion to suspend standing orders. I want to make some comments. First, some members opposite highlighted in their comments that the intention was for the bill to pass tonight. That is not the intention. I made that very clear in my introductory comments when I moved this motion. I highlight this important fact: we are in essentially uncharted and unprecedented times. The government has had criticism from the opposition and others that it has to get things moving; it has to get things done, created. Internationally and nationally, this government has been recognised for the way it has dealt with this crisis. The leadership of the Premier has been recognised throughout the nation for how this state has responded to the crisis that has decimated other communities throughout the world. Because of the strong leadership of the Premier, this government has responded to these unprecedented experiences and it has been recognised for its response. It has been recognised for the introduction of strong borders and for requesting the community in the early part of this challenge to essentially be confined to their homes.

An unprecedented number of people have lost their jobs and an unprecedented number of businesses have had to close, some of them overnight. That has had an impact on people's livelihoods, on people's families and on people's businesses. When we are faced with unprecedented times, we have to act, and sometimes we have to act quickly. That is what this government is doing with the bill that will be introduced today. Yes, it is not ideal, but we have to act. We have to respond and we have to make sure that we put in place, under the conditions with which we are faced, the very best possible response, and that includes legislation. Legislation has been introduced in this place and we have debated it. The government has attempted to ensure that the opposition, which plays an important role in our democracy, has the available information as timely and as quickly as possible. That is what we have been trying to do all the way through.

I want to highlight why this bill is seen as urgent. It is seen as urgent because of the time factors we face with the other place. We have had some COVID-19 recalls, if you like, of the Parliament to deal with urgent legislation. We have had these sittings in our parliamentary calendar and we are using them for important government business, including the bill that the minister is attempting to read in. We have constraints within our democracy that we do not control in this house, and that includes the constraints of the other place. I want to step through that so that members understand why this bill has been introduced today, why we ask that it be considered urgent, and why the time line is constraining for us.

The fact of the matter is that this place sits this week. Next week the upper house is not programmed to sit. Unlike this place, the other place has not two parties in opposition, but several independent or other smaller minority parties with which they are required to negotiate temporary order responses, for example. We have already seen, with the bill for which the Minister for Health was responsible and which was passed by this place, a refusal by the other place to see it within the constraints of a COVID-19 bill; therefore, that bill's progress through that other place was slowed. This bill needs to go through this place, and we have agreed behind the Speaker's chair for us to deal with it so that it passes this place by close of business Wednesday next. We agreed that today the minister will second read the bill. We will not need to sit this evening because government members who wish to speak on the bill will be able to do so tomorrow. On Tuesday and Wednesday next week, we will have opposition time for contributions to the second reading debate, the consideration in detail stage and the third reading of the bill for it to pass this place and be transmitted to the other place. Of course, the other place is not sitting next week; therefore, the other place will not have the opportunity to deal with the bill then.

Members should remember the constraints of the Leader of the Government in the other place to get agreement, because its temporary orders require agreement for legislation to be seen as a COVID-19 bill. I am not saying it is impossible, but it is very difficult for the leader of government business in the other place to achieve that. After this week, the other place will not sit until 9 June, which is when it would receive this bill. Because the expectation is very clear that it will not take this as a COVID-19-related bill, as members opposite in this place have not, that bill will be required to lie on the table for a week in the other place. That means the bill will not be able to be debated in the other place until 16 June at the earliest.

We need to get this bill through the house before the winter recess in July. It is very important. This is about creating an opportunity for jobs to be re-created and restarted and for construction jobs to be programmed. They are all things that we all understand. I am sorry, but the opposition does not understand that we are in a crisis, that there are people without work, and that when JobKeeper ceases, as we expect it will cease, more Western Australians will be out of work. We have to have in place legislation that will allow us to support our communities, be they in the remote parts of Western Australia or in the metropolitan area. That is why we are doing this. Yes, it is not perfect, but it is important, because we are constrained by things that we cannot control in the other house of Parliament.

I want to acknowledge the sensible comments of the member for Moore, unlike the hysteria of some opposite. People in Western Australia are out of work now, and many will be out of work when JobKeeper concludes. For goodness sake, members opposite, see why we are doing this. See why we are doing this. Yes, scrutinise it. The minister has already highlighted today that she has an open-door policy. Members should go in and talk to her staff; do not abuse them. They should talk to them and go through the details of the bill. They should consult whom they need to consult and present their second reading contributions. Many of the aspects of this bill have been talked about for years, but this is the time to make these decisions; this is the time to do it, because we have to act on behalf of families in Western Australia who are suffering and will be suffering in the coming months. That is what governments do. That is what good, strong Premiers do. That is what we are doing and that is why this bill is urgent. I ask members to support this motion and to understand that this is not a normal time. It is not. Please support the motion and understand the reasons behind it.

Question put and passed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [1.39 pm] — without notice: I move —

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be debated forthwith —

That the Assembly's vote earlier today regarding precedence of private members' business be rescinded.

Having just passed the previous motion, this motion, of course, will allow us to not need to sit post-8.00 pm, which means that we no longer need a dinner break and that we can adjourn the house at 7.00 pm.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [1.40 pm]: I am pleased to offer bipartisan support for the motion, given that the government has now seen sense and has given members of the opposition the opportunity to consult with their communities and return to the second reading debate on Tuesday next week. We look forward to supporting this motion so that we can get out of here at the regular programmed time.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney): Members, as this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need the support of an absolute majority in order to succeed. If I hear a dissentient voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [1.41 pm]: I move the motion.

Question put and passed.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PALLIATIVE CARE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Establishment — Motion

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Thornlie — Parliamentary Secretary) [1.42 pm]: I move —

- (1) That a joint select committee of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council into palliative care in Western Australia be established.
- (2) That the joint select committee inquire into and report on —
 - (a) the progress in relation to palliative care, in particular implementation of recommendations of the Joint Select Committee into End of Life Choices;
 - (b) the delivery of the services associated with palliative care funding announcements in 2019–2020;
 - (c) the delivery of palliative care into regional and remote areas; and
 - (d) the progress on ensuring greater equity of access to palliative care services between metropolitan and regional areas.

- (3) That the joint select committee consist of six members, of whom —
 - (a) three will be members of the Assembly; and
 - (b) three will be members of the Council.
- (4) That the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly relating to standing and select committees will be followed as far as they can be applied.
- (5) That the joint select committee report to both houses by 19 November 2020.
- (6) That the Legislative Council be requested to agree to a similar resolution.
- (7) That, subject to the Legislative Council agreeing to the above paragraphs, the following Legislative Assembly members be appointed —
 - (a) the member for Dawesville;
 - (b) the member for Moore; and
 - (c) the member for Thornlie.

I have moved this motion as it is part of the wonderful work that was done by this Parliament when we passed the laws on voluntary assisted dying. That debate and discussion ranged through all sorts of issues relating to end of life and much discussion was had about the importance of palliative care. As is outlined in the motion, the recommendation of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices referred to the need for members of this Parliament to be sure that palliative care receives the necessary funding that it deserves. It is very much a part of that suite of end-of-life choices that needs to be available to people. In many ways, this committee will hold the government to account and ensure that regardless of whether people are in the metropolitan area or in a regional area, they have access to the very important services for palliative care. It is important.

When I first came to this topic, I had the notion that palliative care was mostly about managing pain, but I think it is fair to say that it is about so much more than that. Yes, it is about supporting someone with their physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs. A quality palliative care system can help someone in so many ways deal with their trauma and sadness—all the emotions and all the physical feelings that go with meeting one's end. It is indeed very important legislation.

It is important to note that next week is, in fact, National Palliative Care Week. Interestingly, the theme for National Palliative Care Week is "Palliative Care ... It's more than you think". That is a very worthy theme. It is important to say that for many people, palliative care is a bit of a mystery; they are not aware of it. Part of that general enthusiasm for the voluntary assisted dying legislation has now been informed. There has been an enriching of people's level of knowledge on end-of-life choices. There is a reality that for many people, palliative care will in fact be the means by which their life ends; that will see them through. For most of us, that will probably be the case, but of course we know that there is a fairly small group for whom the pain is so extreme and the likelihood of their death is so near that a sensible voluntary assisted dying mechanism is absolutely appropriate, and that is what this Parliament has passed.

I am really honoured to be involved in this committee, following on from the tremendous work done by the Minister for Health, the member for Morley and many other members of this place who worked hard on the debate and provided valuable contributions last year and ensured that we could consider end-of-life choices at its very broadest and made the commitment to establish this committee, which, I have no doubt, will do a very diligent job of looking at the arrangements for people, whether they are in the Perth metropolitan area or in a remote community. Ensuring that people, wherever they live in Western Australia, have access to palliative care is an important right that we have to ensure.

I have mentioned that we need to ensure that there is greater community understanding of palliative care. That will also be part of our work. Essentially, this will be about holding the government to account and making sure that the Department of Health and various hospitals and experts recognise that palliative care does not necessarily have to take place in a hospital; it could very well take place in a home, a nursing home, a primary health care clinic or a hospice. A whole suite of people is involved in palliative care, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, social workers, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational and speech therapists, psychologists, dieticians, spiritual and pastoral practitioners and, indeed—it is very important to note this during National Volunteer Week—palliative care-trained volunteers, who help people go through the whole end-of-life experience. These volunteers play an important role, and I acknowledge their contribution during volunteer week. No doubt, their work is very challenging and rewarding, and emotional at times too.

The work that this committee does will be important. I am honoured to be part of the committee and I look forward to working with my colleagues from this place—the members for Moore and Dawesville. We await word about who will be joining us from the Legislative Council. I have no doubt that this committee will be very thorough in its investigations and will be able to provide this Parliament with the reassurance that palliative care is properly resourced and accessible to Western Australians when they need it.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [1.51 pm]: I wish to address the motion moved by the member for Thornlie. The opposition supports the motion. I think it is important. Similarly, I look forward to working with the members for Thornlie and Moore, with whom I already serve on a committee, and members of the Legislative Council. I understand that those members are likely to be Hon Nick Goiran, Hon Alison Xamon and Hon Kyle McGinn, but it is up to the Council to decide. I look forward to working with them as we consider an issue that was fleshed out during the voluntary assisted dying debate and issues relating to the equitable provision of palliative care. They are important issues. It is important to ensure that a committee look into these issues. I do not know how much day-to-day or regular committee work it will take. I do not know what the schedule looks like just yet; I think it will be a good one.

Given that we have a couple of minutes until questions without notice —

Ms S. Winton interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I will be two or three minutes. It is interesting to look back at what happened during the voluntary assisted dying debate. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019 is a significant piece of legislation. The debate took a significant toll on a number of members; it certainly took a toll on me. I really look forward to being part of the process going forward; it will be very important. The only thing I would say is that all members made significant contributions in this place. Hopefully, their involvement in this issue will continue, whatever that looks like. I support the motion. I think that the committee will be very important. I appreciate that it has been moved.

The member for Morley has been talking us through this. The committee was supported by the Minister for Health and the government during the debate. I am genuinely interested to see how long the committee will last, and whether it will extend into the forty-first Parliament. The issue of palliative care and its rollout during that time will remain. What will that look like in the forty-first Parliament? Will this committee last for some time, as the assisted dying regime is put in place after its enactment? I am appreciative of the opportunity that my party has given me to serve on this committee, and consider it a very important issue. I commend the motion.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA) [1.53 pm]: I rise to say very briefly that I am also pleased, on behalf of the Nationals WA, to have been put forward to serve on a joint select committee into palliative care, along with the members for Thornlie and Dawesville and the unknown members of the other place, who may be known very shortly. I had some reservations about the voluntary assisted dying legislation, but I have no reservations about the need for palliative care and for it to be equally available to people in regional areas as it is in other areas. Part of the terms of reference of this committee relate to not only ensuring that the investment by the state is undertaken in a targeted way but that services are being delivered, especially to those rural and remote areas of the state where the need is greatest. Country members of Parliament, like me, will understand that when we leave Perth, levels of disadvantage and restriction of access to medical treatment quickly emerge. In fact, on the outskirts of Perth, the City of Swan and the City of Wanneroo and their respective representatives would also face some of those challenges. As we move further and further out, those challenges multiply. By the time we get up to the Kimberley, the Gascoyne and some of those other remote areas, the challenges are very stark.

I look forward to the work of the committee. I commend the motion to the house. I understand that we need time to vote on it. I will sit down and leave the house to make its considerations.

MS A. SANDERSON (Morley — Parliamentary Secretary) [1.56 pm]: I rise to support the motion to establish a joint select committee into palliative care. I think this is an important mechanism to ensure that the work of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices is carried out. Just to clarify the genesis of the committee, the committee was committed to by the deputy leader of the Legislative Council during the voluntary assisted dying debate. A number of members have, rightly, expressed concern about the delivery of palliative care. The end of life choices inquiry found that people who live in regional and remote areas, in particular, virtually have nil access to palliative care, and that was a significant health and end-of-life equity issue.

The government accepted all the recommendations of the end-of-life choices inquiry, and has made huge progress in implementing those recommendations without question. It also announced further reforms and funding for palliative care, including extra money for Silver Chain, the development of the northern suburbs hospice, increased funding into regional areas, setting up increased home care in those regional areas, and supporting our Aboriginal and Indigenous community in navigating palliative care services. Those services tend to be very fragmented, even if they are able to reach them. This is a really good opportunity for Parliament to get oversight of government announcements and how measures are being implemented. It is also important that the work is done across both houses.

I am not sure that the standing orders enable joint select committees to continue, although the clerks will advise me about that. I understand that all select committees are dissolved and any ongoing work that they have has to recommence in the following Parliament. It would be up to the next Parliament, however that may look, to determine whether it continues that work. I think there is some good work to be done in the next few months. The committee will certainly hold hearings and interrogate the Department of Health about how it is delivering a lot of those commitments. That will serve not only the Parliament, but also the government well in attempting to deliver its recommendations. I thank members for the support of the committee and look forward to reading the report when it is tabled in November.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Local Government) [1.59 pm]: I will make a brief comment to take us through to question time. As the member for Thornlie highlighted in his presentation, which has been re-affirmed by other members who have spoken, this is a very important committee. I want to reflect on the debate of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019 and the issues that were raised around the consideration of palliative care. I am reminded of the comments by the Minister for Health during that debate about the ongoing importance that Western Australia places on palliative care in the suite of services and considerations for people who are nearing the end of their lives. In speaking to this motion, I want to put on the record that the members who will be charged from this house to deliberate on this select committee's work will be undertaking very important work because, from memory, when the VAD bill was debated in this place, palliative care was one of the key issues that was highlighted and raised by a number of members as one that they were concerned about. I ask that members support the motion and I wish those members who have been charged with the responsibility of representation from this house do that appropriately.

Question put and passed.

**PARLIAMENTARY STAFF — CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE
KEITH BARKER — RETIREMENT**

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson) [2.01 pm]: Just before we have the first question, I have something I would like to read out. On behalf of all members present, I wish to record my sincere thanks to all staff who work at Parliament House for the tremendous effort they have made over the last couple of months in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have worked hard to ensure that sittings have run smoothly, both inside and outside the chamber, and have adapted their practices to accommodate the new social distancing requirements. The Western Australian Parliament is fortunate indeed to be supported by such dedicated, committed and professional staff.

I would also like to farewell Keith Barker who retired on 1 May, after working as a pastry chef at Parliament House. I would like to thank Keith for his work over the past 30 years and wish him all the best in his retirement. He was particularly famous for his parliamentary scones and will certainly be missed by many.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

CORONAVIRUS — ECONOMIC RECOVERY

319. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Premier:

I refer to the very concerning Australian Bureau of Statistics data released last week that 62 000 Western Australians lost their job in April. Given that a further 67 000 are on JobKeeper payments, and without it, up to 129 000 Western Australians could be out of work, when will the Premier release his economic recovery plan to address the jobs crisis?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

As we have said the whole way along, the economic situation confronting the state is very dire and very serious. This has developed over the course of the last 10 weeks, as it has in every economy around the world. Clearly, we have had to confront the COVID issue and how to manage it, both in a health sense and an economic sense, over the course of the last 10 weeks. I think the outcomes, and certainly the health outcomes, have been nothing short of outstanding in Western Australia. But it comes with economic outcomes. The government has put in place a whole suite of measures to support economic activity across the state, whether it is tax cuts; stimulus spending; waiving of rental and licence fees; freezing fees and charges on households; tourism grants, and all sorts of measures across the state—whatever it may be. As we come out of this, the government will announce many economic measures to support economic activity in the state. There are basically three things the state can do. Firstly, we will progressively loosen up the restrictions put in place over the last few months. We will progressively loosen those restrictions at a speedier rate than the eastern states have. The reason we can do that is our hard border with the east, which allows us to progressively loosen the economic restrictions quicker than the eastern states can. If members look at New South Wales, they will see that its restrictions are far more draconian than those in Western Australia. If we look at Victoria, its restrictions are far more draconian than those in Western Australia, and for Queensland and Tasmania the restrictions are far more draconian than those in Western Australia. As time goes by we will loosen our restrictions at a quicker rate than will four other states—five, including South Australia. Secondly, we will announce further stimulatory measures as time goes by. That has been coordinated by the recovery coordinator, Ms Sharyn O'Neill, in conjunction with various apparatus of state, in particular Treasury and Mr Michael Barnes. We will announce further measures along those lines. The third component is reform, making sure we can unleash further private sector activity in Western Australia. We have to embrace reform sometimes, and the planning reforms we announced today are the major plank of reform in Western Australia that will unleash investment and activity out of the COVID crisis. They have been talked about for decades. We are basically allowing for more development and allowing households and small businesses to get on and do what they do more easily without red tape. We are allowing developers to develop, for goodness sake, and making it easier for the them to get through

the planning processes. That is what this is about. On an average basis, the development industry in our state economy is about \$25 billion a year. It could be significantly more than that. Private sector development in Western Australia is about 80 per cent of all development and government is about 20 per cent, yet there seems to be a focus by some people that it should be all government. I do not know what has happened to the Liberal Party. It seems to think it should all be government —

Mr D.C. Nalder: Who said that?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Listen to yourselves!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Twenty per cent is government, and we are doing more and will bring forward more, but private sector development is 80 per cent, so if we can increase private sector development, which is what we are trying to do, we can create more jobs.

Mr D.C. Nalder: No.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr Speaker, honestly. That is what we are dealing with.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Perth is back, and I call him to order for the first time. Members, I know everyone is getting back to work and the excitement is coming on, but the Premier —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! The Premier is on his feet; I want to hear his answer.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There are three components, as I said: relaxation of the measures we have put in place, more speedily than the eastern states; stimulatory measures, of which the government will bring forward more; and reform. A planning reform initiative is the major component of that. It is actually a great day for Western Australia that we have managed to come up with a set of reforms that will cut red tape and allow businesses, households and small businesses to get on and do what they do best.

CORONAVIRUS — ECONOMIC RECOVERY

320. **Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. Given the scale of unemployment in Western Australia and with JobKeeper finishing in September, which is just three months away, exactly when will the Premier release his economic recovery plan to address this crisis?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

We are constantly putting in place measures around economic recovery; that is what I just said to the Leader of the Opposition. It is a constant and ongoing process. It is not as though one day we come out and say, "Here's the one thing we're doing." We do different things every single day.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you have had two questions.

Mr M. McGOWAN: This government works extremely hard. The public sector is working overtime to assist us in this. We are working cooperatively with industry. As I said to members yesterday in the house, one of the most important things we can do is create confidence. At the last national cabinet meeting the Treasury secretary of Australia said that the most important thing we need to get back in Australia is confidence for consumers and investors. That is what we are doing. Our measures to ensure that we keep infection rates low in Western Australia is all about keeping people safe and creating confidence for people to go to cafes and restaurants and spend, and to go to retail outlets and buy. Confidence is about the legislation we are bringing forward today for the development industry, households and small businesses to get out there and invest and build without unnecessary red tape. That is what it is. When members ask me what we are doing, I say that we are doing things every day, including today, and today is a red-letter day, because we are cutting red tape in ways never done before in Western Australia. I would urge everyone to embrace it.

PLANNING REFORMS

321. **Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI to the Premier:**

I refer to the devastating impact that COVID-19 has had on the WA economy. Can the Premier outline to the house how the McGowan government's proposed planning reforms will support the state's economic recovery from COVID-19, and can the Premier advise the house what these reforms will mean for major projects and how they will support local jobs and local businesses like those in my electorate of Kingsley?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Kingsley. Clearly, Western Australia and the world are in an extraordinary time. We have seen a shock to the economy like never before in any of our lifetimes. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost, businesses have closed, and it is the greatest economic crisis in about four generations. As we go through this, it is important that we put in place some bold and ambitious reforms that will provide business confidence and drive investment. That is what the planning reforms we are bringing forward are all about. They are to kickstart our economy and provide confidence, and, given the crisis that we face, these reforms are absolutely urgent. We cannot delay and prevent significant investment from occurring in Western Australia.

The burden of economic recovery cannot rest solely on government. Western Australian government spend is about seven per cent of the state economy and 93 per cent is from elsewhere; therefore, unleashing some of that other investment is very important, particularly in the area of building and construction. As I said earlier, about 80 per cent of investment in infrastructure comes from the private sector.

The reforms that the Minister for Planning and I have announced today will establish new investment application processes for significant job-creating projects, which would be in place for around 18 months. They will temporarily establish the independent Western Australian Planning Commission as a new decision-making authority for all development proposals of state significance. These reforms are not about automatic approvals, but making sure that decisions are made quickly based upon good decision-making practices and proper consultation, both environmentally and with local authorities.

Projects that will go before this process will be over \$30 million residential and non-residential commercial projects, and projects can be referred into this process by the Premier on the recommendation of the Minister for Planning, particularly for regional or tourism projects that might fall under the \$30 million threshold. We think that will be very important in the case of regions, where some projects do not meet that threshold.

As I said, there will still be public consultation and consultation of local government, and the Western Australian Planning Commission must engage with the Environmental Protection Authority on all significant development processes, as well as the Heritage Council of Western Australia for any that require heritage protection. It is not about encouraging speculative projects, but supporting projects that have a degree of investment certainty and that need to get through processes quickly.

If we are serious about getting our economy back to strength, serious reforms need to be put in place. As I said, these are the sorts of things that are discussed in the national cabinet: how do we get projects through the red tape as quickly as possible? This is an important one. The other one is a proposition I put to the Prime Minister about aligning the EPA and the environmental protection and biodiversity conservation processes so that they work well together. Obviously, the Prime Minister is keen on that. There has been some slowness at the commonwealth end, which I think is understandable in the context and the environment, about putting those processes in place, but certainly the Western Australian government is keen on both, not to reduce environmental protection, but to reduce duplication in environmental processes.

Today's reforms are once in a lifetime reform. They are bold and ambitious. They are about creating thousands of jobs at a time of great uncertainty.

STATE ECONOMY

322. Mr D.C. NALDER to the Treasurer:

Given the state budget was to be released last week, will the Treasurer table the Treasury's latest figures on the state's finances to give the public and business community an understanding of Western Australia's finances and impact of the COVID-19 crisis on our economy?

Mr B.S. WYATT replied:

Suffice to say, the impact of coronavirus on the Western Australian economy has been dramatic. I think that all datasets that we are seeing, whether from the Australian Bureau of Statistics or, indeed, private sector economists, highlight the unemployment numbers and revenue statistics for the government. Very shortly, we will update with the March quarterly report to the Parliament. I think that will highlight a very small impact as at the March quarter, but, clearly, the June quarter is where the majority of the impact will be felt. Unsurprisingly, June and perhaps September will be the two most dramatic quarters. In the next little while, we will get a better understanding of what the June quarter will start to look like. Those figures change on a daily basis. Once I have confidence that the numbers that we can put out are, indeed, reflective of the impact on the finances on the broader economy, we will certainly do so.

STATE ECONOMY

323. Mr D.C. NALDER to the Treasurer:

I have a supplementary question. I appreciate that response, and I look forward to the March quarterly report, but would the Treasurer be able to share with the house the actual impacts on revenue that are occurring now, to give us a sense of how much it has fallen against the current budget?

Mr B.S. WYATT replied:

The point I made a minute ago is that the March quarter will highlight that the impacts that hit the finances will flow for the June quarter. The point I made before is that we will not see a stark difference for the March quarter, but all revenue sources other than royalties are declining and will continue to decline. Royalties, as we are all aware, I suspect, are holding up, primarily driven by a high iron ore price, but all other revenue sources will certainly decline. Once we have an idea of when that is on a trajectory that we have confidence in, I will certainly provide that information.

Mr D.T. Redman: I was first, Mr Speaker!

The SPEAKER: Okay. You have a ribbon on already, but I will give you another one. We will go in the correct order. Member for Baldivis.

PLANNING REFORMS

324. Mr R.R. WHITBY to the Minister for Planning:

I refer to the work being undertaken by the McGowan government to drive Western Australia's post COVID-19 economic recovery, including through its proposed major reforms to the state's planning system. Can the minister outline to the house how these reforms will support small businesses as they recover from COVID-19, and, in particular, can the minister advise the house how these reforms will cut red tape and streamline the planning processes for those businesses, particularly those in the electorate of Baldivis?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for Baldivis for his question and his support for cutting red tape and supporting small business in Western Australia. As the Premier outlined, today we announced a wideranging set of reforms to our planning system. It basically covers major projects down to shade sails. It is a comprehensive set of reforms and it goes in a number of parts. The Premier has outlined major developments having a much more streamlined process to support major investment in Western Australia.

Before question time, we heard the member for Cottesloe say that we do not need any more buildings because there are empty shops, discounting the construction sector from our economic recovery. That is not what I would call very strong economic long-term thinking for the state. What we need to do over the next year or two years is build infrastructure and support private sector investment, because we know that we have the opportunity to develop more tourism projects for Western Australia. For example, regional WA would be a real focus. We have the ability to support short to medium-term jobs for long-term private investment that will help attract people back to WA when it is deemed safe to do so. This is about not only the short term, but also the long term. We look forward to the Liberal Party supporting the bill and working with the private sector to really make sure we can develop good projects around Western Australia.

Of course, it will support small business. As I said, we will make it easier for change of use. Again, we know that at this time small businesses have to change and adapt, and we are going to make it easier for them to do so. There are significant costs in relation to cash in lieu for car bays. That is something the member for Perth, in particular, is quite passionate about. Small businesses face these sorts of challenges every day. A few months ago, I was presented with the case of a business that wanted to make a change of use from office to consulting rooms. The council was going to charge the business \$73 000 cash in lieu for the car bays. That project never happened, even though council officers had recommended not applying that charge. That change of use never happened, the office is still empty and the tradespeople who could have had that job do not have that work. We are faced with these types of examples all the time. We need to make it consistent across the state, too, so we do not have something on one side of the street that is different from something on the other side of the street. That will be fundamental in trying to get our tradespeople back at work. That is one example that I know about, but imagine that magnified across Western Australia.

In relation to home additions, we are going to make it easier to get those underway. There will still be building approvals, but, really, we want to make sure that we remove the planning approval requirements. We will work to widen the criteria to exempt more types of additions from needing planning approval and widen the criteria on single residential homes so that they do not require planning approval.

There is a whole range of measures to support the Western Australian economy. I was proud today to introduce such significant reforms for WA. This is about facilitating investment. This is basic microeconomic reform. It is cutting red and green tape. It is everything that people have been calling for and it is here today. As I said, government cannot build everything in this state and it never has. We have a record number of contracts in the transport portfolio, but let us facilitate private sector investment. Let us get some exciting new projects that will employ people now and create new projects for Western Australians and the world to enjoy in years to come.

DALGARUP COUPE — HARVESTING

325. Mr D.T. REDMAN to the Minister for Forestry:

I refer to the decision to stop harvesting in the Dalgarp coupe, near Bridgetown.

(1) Who first raised the issue of potential old growth in the coupe?

- (2) What involvement did the minister, the Forest Products Commission and the Minister for Environment have in this decision?
- (3) On what basis was the decision made to stop harvesting in the coupe?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for Warren–Blackwood for the question

- (1)–(3) The member is correct; the Dalgarpur 0118 forest coupe is about 15 kilometres west of Bridgetown. I am told the coupe is 174 hectares. It was initially assessed, as is usually the case, by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. It identified 75 hectares of previously unidentified old growth, and that was then reclassified and set aside from harvesting. Since then, the Forest Products Commission has begun harvesting in that coupe. There is in fact only about 14 hectares of forest left to be harvested.

While that harvesting was taking place, members of the community spoke directly to FPC, which was doing the harvesting, and raised with my office and I understand with the Minister for Environment's office that potentially some identified old-growth forest was still in the area to be harvested. DBCA is now reassessing the remaining forest to see whether there is any unidentified old growth that had been missed in the assessment done previously.

DBCA is not my department. The Minister for Environment is responsible for DBCA, and it is through that department that a decision was made to temporarily halt harvesting in that coupe and to make an assessment. It is not uncommon. If the member looks back at when assessments of forests on the harvest list have been made, he will see that it is not uncommon for areas of old growth to be missed. As indicated, when DBCA did the original assessment of that forest, it identified 75 hectares of previously unidentified old-growth forest and that was set aside from the harvest plan.

As a government, we are committed to not harvesting old-growth forest. I think the community is very comfortable with that position. I know members opposite do not support that position, but we, as a government, made that commitment a long time ago and we continue to abide by it. All that is happening, member, is that that assessment is being done by DBCA. When that assessment is made, a decision will take place.

I have to say that last night I looked at a couple of letters the member for Warren–Blackwood had written to me asking me to halt harvesting in a coupe near Pemberton because of some complaints he had had from members of the community there. The member for Warren–Blackwood cannot have it both —

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren Blackwood, you have a supplementary.

Mr D.J. KELLY: When we stop harvesting to check for old-growth forest, the member for Warren–Blackwood is not happy. When we go ahead and harvest in Pemberton, the member writes me letters saying not to do it. The member for Warren–Blackwood cannot have it both ways.

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren–Blackwood, I will take away your supplementary.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The member cannot have it both ways. The member for Warren–Blackwood is a classic. He writes me letters complaining about things that he did when he was in government. It is one of the classics of opposition: he writes me letters all the time complaining about policies that he put in place when he was Minister for Forestry or Minister for Water. It is a little comedy routine the member has.

We have clear policies in this area. We do not support the logging of old-growth forests. We do support logging jobs in the forestry industry. What is happening in Bridgetown at the moment is that we are simply reassessing the coupe to make sure that no old-growth forest has been previously missed in the assessment of that coupe.

DALGARUP COUPE — HARVESTING

326. Mr D.T. REDMAN to the Minister for Forestry:

I have a supplementary question. Does the minister accept that his earlier decision to take two-tier karri out of the 2020 harvest plan and the current decision to stop harvesting in the Dalgarpur coupe on the basis of a protest from a small group signals uncertainty to an industry that is responsible for more than 3 000 jobs in Western Australia?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

The member has asked me questions about the decision not to harvest for 2020 areas of two-tier forest. I think the answer I gave the member then is pretty much the same as the one I will give him now. There has been more recent investment in the forestry industry than ever happened while the member for Warren–Blackwood was the minister. We have had a major company, Parkside Timber, that has come from Queensland to set up shop here in WA. It has bought two mills that frankly were on the verge of closure. It has come here and started to invest. When I met

Mr Robert Tapiolas from Parkside Timber when we made that announcement, he was very supportive of the way that we are managing the forestry industry here in WA. My suggestion to the member for Warren–Blackwood, if he is genuine about supporting those jobs, is to get a bit of balance in his arguments and his commentary. Really good things are happening in forestry in Western Australia. Putting aside the impact that everyone is facing because of COVID-19, there is good investment and there is a future. But, as we on this side have always said, forestry needs to be undertaken in a way that people have confidence that the balance is right. We need to protect jobs, but we also need to protect those areas of the forest that the community values very highly. That is why we on this side of the house do not support logging in old-growth forest and we are prepared —

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Member for Warren–Blackwood, it is every time! What happened in Bridgetown is a great example. There is a coupe —

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren–Blackwood!

Mr D.J. KELLY: Only 14 hectares of that coupe are left. We have simply paused logging to make sure that no old-growth forest has been inadvertently missed, because once it has been logged, that is it; it is not old-growth forest anymore. All we have done is pause logging to make that reassessment so that the community can be confident that old-growth forest is being protected. At the same time, if members opposite stop talking down the industry, great investments, such as we have seen from Parkside, can continue and jobs can be protected.

SIR CHARLES GAIRDNER HOSPITAL — EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

327. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the response to COVID-19 and the work that continues to happen to ensure that hospitals are prepared for any increased demand. Can the minister outline to the house how the expansion of the emergency department at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital will further help our hospital workers manage any increase in cases of highly infectious diseases, particularly during the upcoming flu season?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question. Health is an important issue in the electorate of Bicton, and I acknowledge the great work that the member has done with her community to raise health issues.

I had the great opportunity to go to Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital this morning to meet with the doctors and nurses who are working on the front line in our emergency department. I was there to open the five-bed fast-track area and isolation room at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital as part of an expansion that was originally prioritised for the COVID-19 response. Charlies is a world-leading medical facility, and these expanded areas are expected to help the emergency department staff with the patient flow of the 6 000 presentations they have each month. The \$900 000 expanded capacity area will fast-track those patients with low acuity injuries and illnesses, such as those in categories 4 and 5. It will provide them with the opportunity to get assistance quickly so that they can move through and out of the ED and get on with their lives. It will take around 20 per cent of patients away from the main ED environment, which will be an important contribution to patient flow. Patients will be able to be seen without entering the main emergency department, which is a loud and busy place. This will keep the bays in the emergency department free for more complex patients.

This upgrade was fast-tracked to make sure that we were ready for COVID-19, but we will now be ready for the 2020 flu season. Part of this facility is an isolation room that can accommodate up to three patients at any one time. That will ensure that patients who come into the ED who are exhibiting infectious-like diseases can be accommodated in a more appropriate environment. Charlies is one of our specialist infectious diseases hospitals. During the Ebola outbreak, it received between nine and a dozen patients. Its staff are qualified and are experts in the area. This new facility will go a long way towards building on that expertise and specialisation to make sure that they are well equipped to deal with any issues that come their way.

The negative pressure room will enable suspected infectious patients to be assessed and treated in a controlled clinical environment. It is about putting patients first, which is always the priority of the McGowan government. While I am talking about putting patients first, I remind everyone to go to their general practitioner to get their flu jab. The campaign I recently launched with the WA Primary Health Alliance called #SeeYourGP is a reminder to people, particularly those over 65 years of age, to make sure that they get their immunisation or flu jab for this year. Of course, the McGowan government continues to lead the nation in flu vaccination programs, with all primary school-aged children now eligible for a free flu jab. Although the flu jab will not protect against coronavirus, it will protect people who are more susceptible to falling ill to the flu and may need care in our hospitals.

This latest upgrade is another important element of making sure that our hospitals are ready to receive patients and put patients first, which is the McGowan government's priority.

COMMERCIAL TENANCIES — MANDATORY CODE OF CONDUCT

328. Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS to the Premier:

On 20 April in this chamber, the Minister for Commerce stated that Western Australia's version of the mandatory code of conduct for commercial tenancies would be available within a month. Now that it is one month later, why is this code of conduct still not available, and how does the government expect landlords and tenants to properly negotiate without it?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I raised this matter with the Minister for Commerce recently to ensure that as much haste as we could possibly put into getting that ready was engaged in. Some consultation processes have been going on with industry. The latest advice I had from the Minister for Commerce was that it would be available to be operational by around 28 May. We are obviously doing as much as we can as quickly as we can. That is another example of legislation that we put forward quickly in order to get an outcome as soon as possible to support people in the community who may well be suffering. I am very keen to have that code of conduct in place as soon as possible. As we know, the legislation was amended by the opposition in the upper house to reduce the number of businesses that it will apply to, which is very unfortunate, so there are potentially a whole range of businesses that it will not apply to in the broader community. That is a very sad thing for those businesses.

COMMERCIAL TENANCIES — MANDATORY CODE OF CONDUCT

329. Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Given that the national code was agreed to by the Premier at the national cabinet on 3 April this year and that the lack of a code is harming businesses and hurting the economy because landlords and tenants have no certainty, why is it taking the government so long to simply introduce a Western Australian version of the national code?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I do not know whether the member has noticed, but we have been doing things very quickly. We have been drafting legislation and regulations very quickly—in time frames that were never dreamt of before. As the member said, the legislation was passed last month and we expect to have the code of conduct for landlords and tenants in place later this month. It has been a frenetic and frantic period of activity, and I think that is quite understandable. As I outlined to the house before, for instance, our planning legislation was drafted in record time. It was a matter of weeks for significant legislation. I would like to thank Geoff Lawn and all the drafters for all the work they did to get it to that stage. Whether it is commercial tenancy laws, residential tenancy laws, laws to deal with criminal conduct by people in the COVID-19 environment, emergency management regulations or emergency regulations that are put in place by the emergency coordinator or the Commissioner of Police, everything is being done in a very rapid fashion. This is another example of that.

CORONAVIRUS — CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

330. Mr J.N. CAREY to the Minister for Culture and the Arts:

I refer to the impact that COVID-19 has had on businesses and workers in the WA arts sector. Can the minister update the house on what WA's creative industries have done to adapt to the challenges during this time, including any innovative approaches taken by businesses and workers?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I thank the member for Perth for his question. It is a very important question, because, as we know, when COVID-19 struck Western Australia and, of course, the nation, and we saw almost overnight immediate closures of theatres, performing spaces and hospitality spaces and places, the impact on our creative industries was immediate and severe, and remains so because many creative industries people require audiences, and those who require live audiences need crowds of people to be able to experience their creative talents. All of our performing arts venues and spaces are closed at the moment, as are our galleries, museums and other cultural institutions. We know that our creative people have been very much hurting during this experience. That does not mean that they are not continuing to be creative with their works, and that is the great thing about Western Australia's creative talent. Whether they be dancers, performers, visual artists or people involved in virtual reality, programming and gaming, all those sorts of creative industry talents continue to demonstrate innovation. It is a good question from the member for Perth, because in his community in particular he knows the impact that the COVID-19 experience has had on our creative talent right across the metropolitan area and the regions.

I want to highlight a couple of important things. Our main performing arts institutions such as West Australian Opera, West Australian Ballet and Black Swan Theatre Company have continued to produce during this time. WA Opera is currently demonstrating its innovations through the *Ghost Light Opera*—some people may have been experiencing that. Every Saturday, WA Opera hosts an aria, obviously online, for opera enthusiasts. The West Australian Ballet continues to move its public dance classes online and is also featuring a range of dance interviews on social media

and showcasing a 12-part digital series of short contemporary works that people can now watch from the comfort of their home. The West Australian Symphony Orchestra has had the *Let the Music Play On* experience, which focuses on utilising some of our magnificent musicians from WASO so they are still being seen, and the experience can be had via digital means. Although the Black Swan Theatre Company has had to cancel its 2020 program due to COVID-19, it continues its creative developments through *The Cherry Orchard*, and that work is ongoing. The Art Gallery of Western Australia has released a virtual exhibition and tours of current exhibitions such as *Pulse Perspectives*, which is the year 12 perspectives exhibition. That was the last event I was able to attend before COVID-19 struck earlier this year. A number of Western Australian artists are focused on those experiences.

The Fremantle Arts Centre had the popular *Revealed* art market, which is where a number of our magnificent Indigenous artists, particularly from the Kimberley and the north west, used to have their showcase. That could not happen this year, but those experiences have gone online so that we can continue to support Aboriginal artists in Western Australia. As we know, we have some magnificent Aboriginal art, with high-class artworks being experienced through those independent Aboriginal arts centres. Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts, Australia is a very well known Western Australian experience of disability arts provision, and it continues to develop programs. Spare Parts Puppet Theatre in Fremantle continues to demonstrate some innovation through opportunities for children in particular. Co:3, one of our dance companies, has ongoing works. There is the Awesome Festival. Our Perth Festival and our Fringe World Festival are already looking at how festivals might look in January. We know that during this COVID-19 period we have not been able to gather in large crowds. In fact, I still find it quite remarkable that the last time we gathered in a big crowd was on Canning Highway as part of *Highway to Hell*, and within two weeks we were closed down; we had closed down a whole range of things.

I will finish with this: the State Library of WA opened on Monday, like many libraries across Western Australia, and over 300 patrons were there. Of course, they adhered to the 20-person rule, but over a rolling period of hours, 20 people were replaced by 20 more people. Over 300 people were in the State Library. That was happening in libraries throughout Western Australia. Libraries are critical cultural institutions throughout communities all through Western Australia, because they are central hubs for people to remain connected to their community, to access resources that they need and to feel that they belong. As we recover from this challenge, our cultural institutions and creative industries will play a key role in recovery, because we know that people will emerge from the experiences of COVID-19 in a variety of ways, and one way that we need to ensure they reconnect is through cultural experiences and institutions. That is why they play an important role. That is why we absolutely support our creative industries people—our artists, artisans, dancers, performers and writers. All those people are a rich part of our story, and they will be back. As the Perth Theatre Trust said in its campaign, “We will be back after this interval.” They will be back and they will be back even stronger.

WATER CORPORATION — SERVICE CHARGES

331. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Water:

I refer to the fixed water service charge faced by businesses in the regions shut off to visitors for toilets not being used, with examples of costs being billed in the period in, for example, Carnarvon at \$3 551 for 30 toilets, Geraldton at \$6 794 for 64 toilets and Shark Bay at \$2 832 for 27 toilets. When will the minister remove the toilet tax that is crippling regional businesses?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member—I was going to say for “Claremont”, but I will say “north west coastal”—for the question. Before I answer his question, I might take this opportunity to thank the staff at the Water Corporation, Aqwest and Busselton Water for the efforts they have put in during the COVID-19 crisis. Those three water utilities are part of the army of unsung heroes in the state who have ensured that essential services continued during this crisis. I know they put a lot of work into ensuring continuity of supply, so I want to take this opportunity to thank them. It is my first opportunity to thank them for the work that they do.

In respect of the member for North West Central’s question, I made the comment that the member for Warren–Blackwood has a habit of writing to me and complaining about things and policies that he had in place when he was in government. The member for North West Central’s question and his complaint are another good example of the Nationals WA doing just that. He has been raising a campaign, if we can call it that, about the way the state charges for wastewater. The way we currently charge for wastewater is exactly the way that the state has done it for many years, including when the Leader of the Nationals WA and the member for Warren–Blackwood were Ministers for Water. For eight and a half years the National Party charged for wastewater services for business customers on the basis of the number of fixtures. The National Party, when in government, thought this was a perfectly reasonable way to charge for wastewater.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party!

Mr D.J. KELLY: Now that the National Party is in opposition, all of a sudden it is a policy —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Now that the National Party is in opposition, it thinks it is a policy that needs to change.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, you will have the opportunity for a supplementary question.

Mr D.J. KELLY: I will give the member for North West Central an example, because either he is being disingenuous or he just does not understand how the policy works. The state government has just upgraded the Water Corporation wastewater treatment plant in Margaret River. It cost \$19 million to do that so the economy in Margaret River, largely tourism and the like, can continue to grow and so that when accommodation providers expand their businesses, the wastewater system is able to accommodate it. Of course, the wastewater system has to accommodate that level of peak flow. We cannot increase the size —

Mr V.A. Catania: Don't you charge for the water in and out?

The SPEAKER: Member for North West Central.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The member for North West Central has no idea. Does he expect us to charge the little coffee shops or the little businesses in Margaret River that have one or two fixtures to pay for the \$19 million expansion of the Margaret River wastewater treatment plant, or should a greater share —

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren–Blackwood.

Mr V.A. Catania: What about on consumption?

The SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, I gave you a couple of opportunities. I call you to order for the first time. Members, I am sure the minister is going to get to the point.

Mr D.J. KELLY: It is completely hypocritical of the member for North West Central to criticise and call for a change to a structure of payment for wastewater charges for business that for many years, including when the National Party had two ministers —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The Leader of the Nationals WA interjected a little earlier and asked whether we were going to do some different things for people as a result of COVID-19. I previously said that is an issue we are looking at in the same way that we have done a range of things.

Ms M.J. Davies: They're going out of business.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The Leader of the Nationals WA says that it is not happening quick enough.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Nationals WA, I call you to order for the second time. It is question time, not question and answer at the same time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: When the Leader of the Nationals WA was sitting on the throne as Minister for Water, she was perfectly happy to administer this so-called toilet tax and when people wrote to her and complained to her about it, she sat on the throne and wrote back that it was a perfectly reasonable thing to do.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister, through the Chair.

Mr D.J. KELLY: She wrote back to all those people who complained and said that it was a perfectly reasonable way to charge for those services.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members will get a supplementary in a moment. Minister, I am sure you are getting near the end.

Mr D.J. KELLY: We are currently looking at what we can do about the COVID-19 circumstances and when we make a decision, we will announce it.

WATER CORPORATION— SERVICE CHARGES

332. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Water:

I have a supplementary question. Can the minister explain to the owners of a motel in regional Western Australia why he allows the Water Corporation to continue charging them \$7 746 per billing, per period, for 73 toilets—that is \$46 000 a year—in addition to water in and water out charges when occupancy is sitting between five and 10 per cent?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I am not sure what more I can say to the member for North West Central. He should understand how the system works. Accommodation providers pay more for their sewerage charges, basically based on the size of their property. The more room they have, the more they pay. That is exactly the way the National Party charged for those services in Carnarvon when he was in government. To not do that, to charge all businesses the same, regardless of the number of fixtures they have, would mean an increase in wastewater charges for every other business. If he wants the little cafes in Carnarvon —

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren–Blackwood, I am sure you will be a very good radio commentator when you finish, but not here.

Mr D.J. KELLY: If accommodation services, seasonal businesses, produce a peak flow, the wastewater system has to be able to cope with peak flows.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.J. KELLY: Members opposite in the National Party know that this is exactly how the system operated when they were in government. They know that if we do not charge this way, it will mean that every other business in town will have to have its charges increased. If that is what the member for North West Central wants, he should write to me and we will look at it.

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

333. **Ms J.M. FREEMAN to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:**

I refer to the increased risk that face some victims of family and domestic violence due to isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Can the minister outline to the house how the government is making it easier and less stressful for victims of family and domestic violence to seek protection from perpetrators?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I thank the member for her question. Over the past two weeks in Australia, five women have been killed violently: two of those women were in Western Australia. We still have a lot of work to do to address the high levels of domestic violence. Unfortunately, those high levels are likely to be exacerbated by the conditions around COVID-19; that is, the fear and uncertainty around the pandemic; the extra pressures that go with social isolation and lockdowns; the controls; the opportunities for perpetrating violence that we see in a shutdown environment; and perhaps some added financial pressure as well. For that reason, the Attorney General and I worked to expedite elements of the very comprehensive legislative reform that is before the Western Australian Parliament. Members would be aware that we have moved a raft of reforms through the Legislative Assembly and that the Family Violence Legislation Reform Bill is soon to be debated in the upper house. However, provisions were contained within that comprehensive bill that we had an opportunity to put into force to try to give some extra protections to victims of domestic violence under the current pandemic conditions. Those provisions are now law and are in force. Those provisions go to the question the member for Mirrabooka raises. It meets an election commitment that the government would make restraining orders easier and less traumatic for victims to obtain. As a result of the protections that were put in place, the Family Violence Legislation Reform (COVID-19 Response) Act amends the Sentencing Act, the Sentence Administration Act, the Bail Act and the Restraining Orders Act so that restraining orders can now be applied for online. That still needs to be done through a registered legal service such as Legal Aid, the Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal Family Law Services or community legal services. However, anyone can contact those agencies by phone or in person and be assisted with their lodgement of the restraining order application. Of course, people can still lodge an application directly with the court.

Just this week the regulations relating to substituted service also came into force. That means that a state of emergency is one of the conditions by which the police can allow that substituted service for a violence restraining order that has taken place and that can be put in force quickly. The other provisions that have been put in place allow for the court to impose a requirement that an offender be subject to electronic monitoring; that a judicial officer include electronic monitoring as a home detention bail condition. There is a separate offence for a breach of a family violence restraining order and an increase in the penalty for a breach of a family violence restraining order from \$6 000 to \$10 000.

We are taking this issue seriously. We have a dedicated minister, but we also have a dedicated cabinet and a dedicated government that is not only cooperating and backing up that cooperation with a combined effort across portfolios, but also harnessing the will of the community to put an end to these high levels of violence. As an example of that, I would like to acknowledge a couple of corporates that have stepped up during the current pandemic. Woodside has contributed, I think, \$500 000 to some domestic violence and homelessness services in the current crisis. Newmont Corporation contacted the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services and offered some financial assistance. This is on the back of other efforts by a number of large organisations to not

only support victims who might be working for them, but also take an active role in preventing domestic violence. An example is Rio Tinto, a large employer in Australia and a large employer of men, which is doing active bystander training amongst its workforce. These are all examples of a combined effort, but an effort that is led by the McGowan government, which is determined to stop the violence.

CORONAVIRUS — HOUSING STIMULUS — STAMP DUTY

334. Mr A. KRSTICEVIC to the Premier:

I refer to the opposition's bold short-term stimulus initiatives. Will the Premier support a 75 per cent stamp duty cut of up to \$50 000 for a six-month period to stimulate the housing sector, which is under threat because its pipeline of work is drying up?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

We understand that the housing sector has been under significant pressure over the past three months. It is very concerning. We have had a range of conversations with industry and we will continue to work with industry on measures to support the sector. Yesterday, the Minister for Housing announced that we will bring forward as quickly as we can the \$150 million housing investment package that the government had scheduled for commencement in July. That will engage private sector builders to undertake some of that building work on new housing construction across the state for social housing for Homeswest tenants. I look forward to that work getting underway, which will be a fillip to the industry.

On top of that, as part of phase 1 of our COVID-19 response, we are the first state government in Australia to reopen home opens and display villages for inspection. It was obviously widely welcomed by industry that we were able to get that activity underway. We find with housing villages that, most of the time, people who want to build a new house want to see it before they do. There are various ways to do it these days. Sometimes it is through a home open or a housing display village, while at other times it is through a set of computer-generated images. Whatever it is, our home villages inspire people and give them the opportunity to see what it might be. We reopened those, and we were the first state government in Australia to get that activity underway. Also, the planning reforms that we are bringing forward today will provide a huge boost to industry across the state to allow for private sector investment to get underway.

In terms of other initiatives, we are currently working through what else the state government can do, and we will no doubt make further announcements in the future.

CORONAVIRUS — HOUSING STIMULUS — STAMP DUTY

335. Mr A. KRSTICEVIC to the Premier:

As a supplementary question, why is the Premier allowing a 75 per cent stamp duty cut of up to \$50 000 for apartments, but not for housing?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

Last year we announced a range of measures. We cut payroll tax and stamp duty, and the opposition seemed to complain about it. It was a specific initiative pre-COVID-19. The opposition was seriously angry about our stamp duty cut and our payroll tax cut. We further cut payroll tax this year, providing land tax relief or payments to landlords who do the right thing by their tenants.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Every time we cut taxes, the opposition gets more and more angry. Something seems to be under the opposition's skin. I do not know what it is, but opposition members seem to be very angry. I am going to get out there in the community in coming days and weeks to try to work out what has got them so wild. I will start with Dawesville very shortly and catch up with people throughout the Dawesville community. I love Dawesville and the small business people down there. I look forward to heading back down there again very shortly.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have done stamp duty cuts. Obviously, that was for off-the-plan developments to get activity underway in some of those very large employment projects. It was widely welcomed by industry. The only people who seem unhappy about it are state opposition members.

The SPEAKER: That is the end of question time.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2020

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Ms R. Saffioti (Minister for Planning)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Planning) [3.06 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce legislation to continue the reform of Western Australia's planning system. This bill introduces a number of changes to help us build a better planning system, create better outcomes for the community, cut red tape and create more simple and consistent planning rules across Western Australia. This legislation has been brought forward now to help Western Australia's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has created an economic shock that will be with us for a long time to come. Every jurisdiction in Australia is seeking to rebuild economic stability and create greater investor confidence. Although direct investment by government will play a key part in our economic recovery, we must all do more to facilitate private sector investment in our economy.

Planning reform is an enabler of better investment outcomes, together with community outcomes. As stated, many of the initiatives in this legislation have been under development for many years. Many were part of the action plan on planning reform that I released last year, while others were part of previous reform packages. The package of reform is in three streams—legislative, regulatory and policy. We are seeking to modernise the Planning and Development Act 2005 to focus on strategic planning and create new processes for significant projects; introduce changes to the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015 to cut red tape, support small business, improve community consultation and provide greater consistency across state and local governments for the community and industry, all in order to get people back to work; further reduce the number of development assessment panels and create a new special matters DAPs in the medium term through amendments to the Planning and Development (Development Assessment Panels) Regulations 2011; and update our state planning policies to strengthen a focus on good design in planning and development and create a more flexible, responsive and contemporary planning system.

These reforms will significantly reduce administrative processes at all levels of government and for users of the system, and remove barriers to enable development, create and protect jobs and support business. They will provide greater clarity and consistency across the system, especially for the community, and reduce the administrative burden on the state's 134 local governments, saving time and money.

The Planning and Development Act 2005 is now a 15-year-old act that needs updating and repurposing, particularly in the current climate, to respond quickly to new and emerging issues and to correct the mistakes of the past. The majority of the amendments have been in consultation in some form over many years, but are being brought forward to ensure that our planning system can deal with the challenges of the post COVID-19 recovery. They are the latest in a decade of changes and the culmination of more than three years of consultation across all stakeholders and the community to deliver high-quality and sustainable development and create new employment and business opportunities, and communities.

In the last two and a half years, we have undertaken an exhaustive consultation and engagement process with a range of stakeholders and local government. This included the release of an independent green paper in May 2018 to encourage robust debate and discussion, which resulted in 5 800 individual responses and 254 submissions, including 49 submissions from local government. As a state government, we thoroughly considered these submissions in detail and organised further face-to-face meetings, consultation, presentations and briefings before releasing last year's action plan in August 2019. Since the "Action Plan for Planning Reform" was released last year, a clear road map for planning reform has been in place, with a further range of briefings provided to industry, state agencies and local government on the plan and proposals to streamline processes and establish a more strategically-led planning system. We have also, more recently, discussed these reforms with WALGA on the proposals that will most impact the operations and functions of local government; key industry groups and planning practitioners on the planning approval pathways for significant development and measures to streamline processes; and selected state government agencies on proposed measures relevant to current processes. In alignment with the national cabinet process, I have also been meeting fortnightly with my federal, state and territory planning ministerial colleagues to ensure we are contemporary with other jurisdictions.

The feedback of stakeholders has been considered in the development and drafting of this bill. Collectively, these amendments will provide for a more strategic, streamlined and transparent system. The planning system and outcomes have been the subject of a lot of debate in recent years. Blame for a lot of what the community sees as "bad developments" has been laid at the feet of this government by some sections of the community. In fact, many of the developments that people are citing as bad developments are a result of the planning system that this government inherited.

Decisions of the past, at both the state and local government level, that have led to community concerns include the wholesale up-zoning of suburbs, which has created streets and streets of grouped and multiple dwellings, with little or no trees or vegetation; the introduction of the multi-unit code for all blocks zoned R30 and above, and then revised upwards to R40, which allowed for a complete change of streetscape, with no design guidelines, no defined

vegetation elements or deep soil zone requirements and limited setback requirements; the up-zoning of blocks of land not adjacent to activity centres or public transport; the lack of any prescription of height, built form or guidelines about community benefit and density bonuses; the refusal of some local governments to put in clear design guidelines or design review panels to get the best design outcomes out of proposed developments; and councils operating with outdated schemes that do not facilitate orderly development.

We have already acted on a number of fronts to address these concerns. For example, I have rejected scheme amendments that allowed for the wholesale up-zoning of suburbs. We have worked with councils like Subiaco to develop schemes that removed potential up-zoning of many parts of the suburb, and create hubs of density adjacent to district centres or public transport. We have introduced DesignWA—a suite of guidelines to underpin minimum design standards for the whole range of housing types. DesignWA for apartments is in place, while draft guidelines for medium density will be released shortly. We are introducing new measures to improve development assessment panels’ transparency, reporting and accountability.

Our reforms are based on three basic premises: planning creates great places for people; planning is easier to understand and navigate; and planning systems are consistent and efficient.

We intend to progress the legislative amendments in two phases due to their volume and complexity and the urgent need for reforms to support economic recovery from COVID-19. Phase 1 includes proposals that will result in immediate changes, creating a more streamlined, efficient, transparent system with greater certainty for all stakeholders. This bill for phase 1 includes 26 proposals to improve our planning system with robust and responsive measures that support rigorous and streamlined assessment. Phase 2 will facilitate a strategic re-focus of the system that may clarify existing interpretations of the law or require further regulations or reformulation before being able to be implemented in practice. The most significant change introduces a new planning approvals pathway through a substantial change of role and responsibility for the Western Australian Planning Commission.

These reforms include a new category of planning consideration—“significant development”. To help us recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and generate economic activity, the commission will become the new decision-maker for significant developments for the next 18 months. This temporary change in approval authority will enable us to prioritise developments and projects that have investment certainty, are well designed and are ready for construction to commence to create jobs at a time when we need them the most—getting Western Australians back to work faster. This proposal is similar to measures adopted in other states, although in many other states the minister is the decision-maker.

A significant development proposal must have an estimated cost of \$30 million or more involving 100 or more residential dwellings or be a commercial development with a minimum of 20 000 square metres of net lettable area of commercial floor space, excluding warehouses.

As not all developments and projects fit neatly into categories, the reforms also propose an additional pathway in which the Premier, on recommendation of the Minister for Planning, can refer any proposal deemed to be of state or regional significance to this “significant project” pathway. This is important to allow for consideration of regional and tourism projects and initiatives that may not meet the criteria but are considered important to assist in COVID-19 recovery. Significant developments by their very nature are complex and require input from myriad technical experts and authorities as part of the assessment process.

Enhancing the approval powers of the commission will enable the strategic assessment of a broad range of matters to ensure the state is seeing projects get off the ground that are in the best interests of the public and deliver broad economic, social and environmental benefits for the state. Consultation with local government and the wider community will be at the very heart of this assessment process, with due regard given to any submission received. The commission must also engage the Environmental Protection Authority on all significant development proposals. The bill states —

In considering and determining the development application, the Commission must have due regard to —

- (a) the purpose and intent of any planning scheme that has effect in the locality to which the development application relates; and
- (b) the need to ensure the orderly and proper planning, and the preservation of amenity, of that locality; and
- (c) the need to facilitate development in response to the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- (d) any relevant State planning policies and any other relevant policies of the Commission.

The management of referrals to state government agencies and departments, and their responsiveness, will be a critical role for the commission in ensuring timely decision-making through this significant development pathway.

Proposals will be lodged directly with the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage for assessment and it will provide recommendations consistent with a “responsible authority report” to the commission. Importantly,

when the commission makes a decision under these special powers, that decision and its conditions will take priority and be binding across all other government approval pathways. An applicant's right of appeal through the State Administrative Tribunal will apply as normal. Due to their extraordinary nature, these powers will have a sunset clause of 18 months from assent of this bill to allow time for the necessary regulatory changes to establish a special matters development assessment panel to take over this responsibility.

Development assessment panels have operated in Western Australia since 2011 and were established under the previous government's planning reforms to improve decision-making through a better balance between technical advice and local knowledge. The "Action Plan for Planning Reform" proposed changes to the DAP system. I recently announced the first stage of these changes, with the number of panels reducing from nine to five. The intention is to further reduce the number to no more than three and include the full-time appointment of DAP members, which will address a number of longstanding concerns to address perceived conflicts of interest and increase the efficiency and consistency of these decision-making bodies.

The bill proposes to establish a new special matters development assessment panel to consider complex proposals. This panel would sit alongside the proposed geographic three-panel configuration, which will continue to consider applications within their specific geographic areas. The new special matters panel will provide for a more streamlined and strategic assessment of significant development proposals to deliver a broad range of benefits to the state, create jobs and underpin our economic recovery and growth into the future. It will improve industry and community confidence in our planning and development system through a greater degree of consistency and transparency and help position Western Australia as a place for investment, business and tourism.

It is envisaged that the assessment process will be undertaken centrally by the Department of Planning, with key referral agencies such as Main Roads to provide critical advice at the early stages of assessment to resolve any potential planning concerns or issues. In the design and planning of significant developments, all applicants will be strongly encouraged and advised to engage key stakeholders and the community as early as possible to ensure the best possible planning and design outcomes. The Planning and Development (Development Assessment Panels) Regulations 2011 will be amended to include criteria including which matters the special matters DAP can determine, and the assessment process. Membership of that panel will be considered as part of the regulatory changes; however, it is envisaged that it will include the state Government Architect, the president of the Western Australian Local Government Association and the commission chairman among its members. Further consultation will be undertaken on the special matters DAP, as the regulation is drafted.

Well-designed buildings and public spaces are essential to creating great communities and cities. Density needs to be done well, not just for the sake of it. By establishing mechanisms and processes for design review and developing new policies, we are putting good design at the heart of all planning and development. This is a significant and defining difference from the previous government's reform program that failed to tackle design outcomes. We have made a number of significant changes. Our state government established a state design review panel and encouraged the expansion of local design review panels. For the first time in our state's history, we launched the biggest change for apartment design in Western Australia by introducing Design WA. This suite of design benchmarks significantly lifts the design quality of apartments across all local governments, which will create more livable buildings. In particular, it sets a prescribed requirement for deep soil zones, to encourage greater retention of tree canopies.

But more is to come. With more than 800 000 new homes forecast to be required over the next 20 to 30 years, a new medium density policy will guide how the state will accommodate a growing population through a diversity of well-designed housing options within established suburbs. I believe it is fair to say that a proliferation of poorly-designed group dwellings, single and double-storey multiple units, and three-storey buildings have in recent years generated significant community concern and distrust. The Design WA precinct design policy and guidelines will elevate design review and ensure a high level of community participation early in the process. It will specifically apply to the planning and development of complex areas that may include a mix of commercial, retail, residential and tourism uses; higher levels of density; an activity centre designation or character and/or heritage value. We understand that good design is more than appearance, taste and style. It improves the urban environment, benefits local communities and leaves a positive legacy for future generations. It has to be at the heart of planning and development in Western Australia.

To help facilitate strong economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to be far more cognisant of the barriers and hurdles facing our small businesses. Although no doubt the rules established to govern elements of our planning system were well intended, we have now seen many of these rules inhibit small business growth. In particular, in these times, the ability of small businesses to continue to adapt and change will be essential to their ability to survive. The proposed reforms will significantly cut red tape and remove barriers that delay development through regulatory and administrative roadblocks. The changes will provide greater clarity and consistency across the system and greater capacity for the state's 134 local governments to focus on strategic planning, saving time and money. Collectively, the proposed amendments will ensure local planning is easier to navigate and understand, include community feedback earlier, provide greater consistency in how planning provisions are applied, and improve efficiency. I would like to assure the house that consultation will be undertaken with local governments on the proposed regulatory changes.

These reforms and associated changes to the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015 will result in a streamlined and coordinated approval process, including a quicker process for simple development applications and the ability to consider a deemed approval if an application is not dealt with in the statutory time frame; a wider range of small residential projects becoming exempt from planning approval, including minor extensions, patios, carports, shade sails and pergolas, making home improvements easier for home owners; and an expanded and simplified deemed-to-comply pathway, which will mean that a broader range of single house developments that comply with the R-codes will become exempt. The cash-in-lieu framework will be made more consistent across the state, allowing for a clear and consistent approach for cash-in-lieu payments, and the proposed regulations would also abolish shortfalls of up to 10 car bays, which can have a significant financial impost and considerations for any small businesses wishing to establish or grow. The reforms will also result in reduced hold-ups in the referral process and a clear mechanism for a development proposal to proceed if set timeframes are not met or responses are not received, and stop-the-clock mechanisms, including setting a maximum number of days or set circumstances for applications; and online publication of planning documents, removing the requirement for presentation of hard copies in a physical location. There will also be a greater number of exemptions for change of use applications to support businesses wishing to establish or adopt a more flexible approach to their business operations. Although this is currently allowed in some local government areas, the reforms will ensure that it is consistent across the state.

The McGowan government is committed to better community engagement in the planning system. The growth and development of the state is a shared responsibility for all of us. The aim is to engage the community earlier in setting the planning framework for the communities where they live. Although in many instances the focus falls on an individual project, the aim is to ensure the framework or scheme has been developed with community consultation, guided by a local planning strategy to develop livable and attractive precincts. These reforms propose three key components to improve community engagement and consultation in the planning system: firstly, elevating local planning strategies; secondly, consistent and transparent consultation practices; and thirdly, ensuring real community benefits flow from major developments. These reforms will elevate the status of local planning strategies to ensure all local governments have a clear, contemporary and consolidated planning and development vision for their local area. These are to be developed with the community, engaging with them long before any development is proposed and the bulldozers are at the fence, so to speak. Further, these reforms will introduce a statewide consultation process for all development applications, including mandating a radius model for major development applications, and scheme amendments. It makes little sense that consultation processes are immensely different across the state. This creates a lack of equity for the community and leads to significant confusion. We will also introduce new requirements for onsite signage displaying an image of the proposed built form for all developments over a certain value. Finally, many local schemes do not clearly define community benefit. Until now, there has been a lack of guidance from the state government on what should and could be achieved under the definition of “community benefit” when providing bonuses to development in the area. As a result, many communities have seen no real community benefit delivered from significant projects. This will change through these reforms.

I also want to make very clear that the proposed reforms are not about giving the Minister for Planning all-encompassing powers. These reforms cannot compare with other states, where planning ministers can call in and determine any major development or project in their respective planning systems. By establishing mandatory consultation processes for all local governments across Western Australia, we are in fact providing greater access to the planning system for the community.

Members might ask how these changes will translate to real life. They will save time and money through reduced waiting times, removing unnecessary paperwork and reduced confusion for the community, local government and business. From a small business owner wanting to change their business offering, a homeowner adding a new patio, a local government updating important community infrastructure, the community having their say about how they would like their suburbs developed in the future, to our regional towns benefiting from more strategic development, these changes will go a long way to supporting projects that will help shape our communities and provide innovative opportunities to grow business, connect people with places and encourage the growth of new industries.

The continued reform of Western Australia’s planning system is essential to preparing our state for strong economic recovery from COVID-19 and to ensure strong development outcomes into the future. Design is at the heart and focus of the planning system, with wideranging reforms that will drive better designed precincts, apartments, neighbourhoods and medium density. Under the previous government, infill targets were set without any regard or benchmarks for good design. We are fixing this. Cutting red tape and introducing greater consistency across our planning system will alleviate the regulatory and administrative burden on local governments, saving time and money and providing for a greater focus on local activities and operations that more directly support their communities. Allowing greater flexibility for businesses to adapt by increasing the number of planning approval exemptions will help small and medium-sized businesses to get back on their feet, creating jobs and helping to rejuvenate activity and town centres. Community engagement is key to this reform package. Early engagement in the preparation of planning strategies will enable communities to help inform and shape the vision for their local area, ensuring that this vision is then translated into planning scheme provisions and reflected in development on the ground. The growth and development of the state is a shared responsibility between all of us. This pandemic has brought a need

to act swiftly and begin to implement this reform package as a key driver of economic recovery. I call upon all members to take this opportunity to continue to effect real change to our planning system to create the communities that members and their constituents want to live in.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr A. Krsticevic**.

CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Third Reading

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Child Protection) [3.30 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

I want to make a couple of comments. It was remiss of me not to make some of these comments at the conclusion of the second reading debate, so I apologise for that. I want to take the opportunity to speak in the third reading debate, because the bill before us contemplates significant changes.

The Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019 is based on very clear objectives to strengthen the Children and Community Services Act. The first of those objectives is that child safety is paramount. Child safety forms the central tenet of child protection practice. It is an expectation of both the community and this government that child safety should be central to everything we do. Changes to expand mandatory reporting reinforce that children's right to safety and protection from harm is paramount.

The second objective of the bill is that it will promote stability and continuity for children in care. This is crucial, because a child's significant relationships and the stability of their placement is central to their wellbeing. The bill implements recommendations from the review of the act, which again prioritised that a child's significant relationships and the stability of their placement is paramount. This bill also strengthens provisions for shared responsibility of government agencies to prioritise the needs of children who are or have been in care.

The third objective of the bill is to make positive changes to cultural connection and safety. These changes are very important because, shamefully, over half the children in our child protection system in Western Australia are Aboriginal, and connection to community and culture is essential for those children. The evidence tells us that connection to culture for Aboriginal children is a protective factor that is associated with better outcomes across emotional, social and physical health. The McGowan government remains committed to the best interests of children and young people in Western Australia. We will not shy away from the work that needs to be done to protect children from harm, particularly the harm of sexual abuse, and this bill clearly demonstrates that.

As I said, this bill is a result of a statutory review of the Children and Community Services Act 2004, which undertook extensive consultation across the state. That review made 70 recommendations, 53 of which involved amendments to the act. This bill implements 41 of those 53 legislative recommendations, with the remaining 12 recommendations requiring further work, particularly those that fall under the Attorney General's portfolio. The opposition has been provided with a table that shows which clauses implement the legislative recommendations of the review, although this table does not include the 17 non-legislative recommendations that are currently being implemented through policy in the work of the Department of Communities. The bill implements recommendations 7.3 and 7.4 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse, as well as two further recommendations made by the royal commission that were captured in the review.

The opposition also raised a number of issues that were covered off during consideration in detail, including the resourcing implications of the bill and the approval of Aboriginal representative organisations. I will not reiterate those issues because, as I said, I think they were covered off during consideration in detail. I will, however, speak briefly about another matter that was raised during consideration in detail, which is that some stakeholders have concerns about the bill because they believe it should be strengthened to legislate family-led decision-making. The government recognises that family-led decision-making is important; however, it did not form part of the recommendations of the review of the act. We recognise that some Aboriginal stakeholders want to move to this way of working. We recognise that, but we are currently not at a stage to be able to implement it. It would be premature to legislate for an Aboriginal family-led decision-making model when it has not been piloted in this state, especially as it would not require legislative change to begin implementation here.

I acknowledge how important it is to work in partnership with key stakeholders in this important sector to progress reforms. The amendments contained in the bill have been called for by many Aboriginal stakeholders. The bill responds to the recommendations of the statutory review of the act, which included significant community consultation, including consultation with Aboriginal people and their representatives throughout the state. Importantly, external members were included on the review panel, including respected Noongar Glenn Pearson, who has worked in child protection and is head of Aboriginal research at the Telethon Kids Institute. There was also consultation during the drafting process with individuals and organisations, including the Noongar Family Safety and Wellbeing Council and the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care's Western Australian body, Family Matters.

The McGowan government has demonstrated its commitment to exploring family-led decision-making, including funding the Noongar Family Safety and Wellbeing Council since 2017 to do a number of things. One of the stated outcomes of the funding provisions was to work with the Department of Communities to build and develop Aboriginal family and community-led decision-making processes across social policy areas of government. I want to make that clear: we have had significant consultation in the review of the act, including with a number of Aboriginal stakeholders and individuals throughout the state. We consulted with Aboriginal people in the drafting instructions in the lead-up to the bill. Since 2017, we have funded the Noongar Family and Safety Wellbeing Council, and one of the stated outcomes of that grant was to work with the Department of Communities to build and develop Aboriginal family-led decision-making. We have committed on the record to pilot Aboriginal family-led decision-making. I want to make clear our government's commitment to work in partnership with Aboriginal people and their representatives and to trial different ways of working. However, we do not want the perfect to get in the way of the good. We believe that the changes encapsulated in this bill form crucial foundations to working in partnership with Aboriginal people across the state for better outcomes for Aboriginal families, and particularly for Aboriginal children. I fundamentally refute that this bill has not been informed by Aboriginal views around the state. As I said, it will build important foundations on which Aboriginal families and their representatives can build to deliver child safety and wellbeing.

Let me be clear: this amendment bill will strengthen laws to build stronger connections to family, culture and country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Proposed new section 81 requires consultation with a family member about the placement of a child in care. Currently, there is no provision for such consultation. This bill requires that three prescribed bodies, including a member of the child's family, are consulted. Currently, the law requires only one body to be consulted, with family not being a prescribed body. Furthermore, the new provisions will act only as a minimum, and the requirement in practice will be to consult with a number of members of a child's family.

This bill legislates the requirement for cultural plans when currently there is no such requirement. It makes changes to the Aboriginal child placement principle to prioritise Aboriginal children in care being placed in their community and remaining connected to community and culture rather than being taken off country. It is incredibly disappointing that some of the misinformation being circulated in the community is causing unnecessary upset about what are in fact significant improvements that will be made through this amendment bill.

I turn now to mandatory reporting. Given the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, priority has been given to implementing the mandatory reporting changes to ministers of religion. We make no apology for that. We have committed to extending mandatory reporting to other recommended groups as well; however, we have prioritised ministers of religion. The royal commission's final report, volume 7, "Improving Institutional Responding and Reporting", states —

Many of the religious institutions we examined in our case studies had institutional cultures that discouraged reporting of child sexual abuse.

The report goes on to state —

Obliging people in religious ministry to report child sexual abuse to child protection authorities may help overcome cultural, scriptural, hierarchical and other barriers to reporting.

Western Australia is on a journey of child safety and there is a continuum of maturity between different occupations. The early childhood sector, for which I have responsibility as minister, is heavily regulated while religious institutions are not. We need to bring different organisations along the maturity spectrum of child safety to ensure that we build their capacity to respond to this important issue.

As I mentioned during the consideration in detail stage, 58 per cent of survivors told the royal commission that the abuse they experienced happened in an institution managed by a religious organisation. This stark figure highlights why in the first instance we are fast-tracking mandatory reporting in this group. In 2016, there were over 1 800 ministers of religion in Western Australia. It will take time to roll out training and build the capacity of these institutions so that people understand their obligations under the act. I cannot stress how important this training is. We do not want people who have an obligation to report suspected child abuse trying to conduct disclosure interviews or to counsel children. The responsibilities of these people will be made explicitly clear during training.

We have a responsibility to ensure that we get these reforms right. The royal commission was careful to note —

Obligatory reporting models should complement, rather than replicate, each other. Government and regulatory and oversight bodies should minimise duplication and complexity.

We have said from the start that responding to the royal commission will be a reform journey of five to 10 years. We will consult with other professions and consider these reforms in the context of the broader obligatory reporting models, because the McGowan government is committed to this work, as it is to child safety. Other professions recommended by the royal commission such as youth justice workers are usually working in professional fields that have clear reporting procedures and codes of conduct and a duty of care for action to take when a worker

suspects any type of child abuse, not just sexual abuse. The same could be said, for instance, of psychologists. As such, the government has prioritised the areas that have less oversight and fewer formal procedures in place to ensure that children in our state are kept safe.

Regardless of mandatory reporting laws, we all have a responsibility to ensure the safety of children and should report any concerns of abuse or about the safety of children regardless of whether we are mandated in legislation to do so.

This bill is important. It has taken a lot of work and several members have reflected on the amount of work it has taken. I thank all members who have contributed to debate on this important legislation. It is important that everyone in our community takes responsibility for keeping children safe. I also thank all the people and organisations who have attended consultations and provided submissions. I would particularly like to thank the staff who assisted in the review process and helped develop the bill before the house today. I know that there has been much public interest in these amendments and I would like to place on the record again my thanks to all those involved in the royal commission and those survivors who stepped forward and shared their experiences to inform the decisions that we make in this place. I would also like to thank the hardworking staff in the Department of Communities who every day work to keep children in our community safe. I commend the bill to the house.

MR S.K. L'ESTRANGE (Churchlands) [3.44 pm]: A key aspect of the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019 is that it will add to the existing legislation to better protect children in Western Australia. That is a very important goal. Every child in our state, indeed every child in our country, has a right to feel safe and a right to be able to enjoy growing up free from negative interruption, be that through violence or sexual abuse. Any legislative improvements put before this place that minimise the risk of that happening to children is incredibly important.

As I outlined in my contribution to the second reading debate and during the consideration in detail stage, one of my key concerns is that the bill does not adequately address the royal commission's recommendation 7.3, which I see as a key recommendation. No doubt the other place will look closely at that key recommendation. I reiterate the point that the recent royal commission came to an unambiguous conclusion that identified a moral and professional imperative behind mandatory reporting. Recommendation 7.3 states —

State and territory governments should amend laws concerning mandatory reporting to child protection authorities to achieve national consistency in reporter groups. At a minimum, state and territory governments should also include the following groups of individuals as mandatory reporters in every jurisdiction:

- a. out-of-home care workers (excluding foster and kinship/relative carers)
- b. youth justice workers
- c. early childhood workers
- d. registered psychologists and school counsellors
- e. people in religious ministry.

One of the commissioners observed —

One of the benefits of this recommendation is that more individuals who work closely with children — and who therefore have a moral and professional imperative to report known or suspected child abuse and neglect to an external government authority — would be both obliged to report and protected in making a report to child protection.

During the consideration in detail stage, we went through that in quite some detail and the minister gave responses. I made the point, as did the member for Moore from the Nationals WA, that not including those other groups of people could well be a missed opportunity in this bill during this term of this government. We also noted that the bill does not properly address 29 of the recommendations put forward in the statutory review of the act. Those recommendations were explained during the second reading speech. Again, as we outlined in the second reading debate, some of those recommendations may well be important to improving this bill. We know that the minister received a highly critical assessment of the legislation from Richard Weston, CEO of Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care – National Voice for our Children. The minister addressed some of that criticism in her third reading speech today, but it will certainly need to be looked at quite carefully. Why is it that such a significant stakeholder group is clearly so unhappy with consultation on this bill and the outcome? I am not going to go into detail on that. The minister alluded that more needs to be done, and I will leave that to the minister and the government to work through. It is never a good look to bring legislation to this place when a key stakeholder is saying that it is not good enough.

Notwithstanding these concerns, it is important that ongoing reforms and improvements are made that will have, what I would call, a material impact on improving the lives and the safety of children, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances. That material impact is critically important. I am not going to judge the department's performance; other people in that industry have done that in the media. I am not privy to the department's performance or its internal machinations. All I can say is that if the work we are doing is focused on improving children's safety, that is where the focus should be.

The minister made several references in the second reading speech, during consideration in detail and in her contribution to the third reading to the key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. This bill addresses the past aspects that were highlighted by the royal commission, and so it should. The key thing that I have been saying, and the opposition has been pushing for in this place throughout the debate, is that we not only address the past, but also do better to address the future. I think the future is being missed here. The past, and all the horrible and horrific stories of the past that came out during the royal commission—some of which occurred in the last 10 years, some of which occurred in the last 30 to 40 years—are being addressed by this bill. But the children who are going to be the most vulnerable in the future may be in groups who have contact with workers in these other areas that have been missed by this legislation. We have seen it on the news and we have heard reports that child sex abusers often look for opportunities to be abusers, and those opportunities exist wherever children congregate. It makes sense to be concerned about where the future major statistics of child sexual abuse may come from. If abusers are not in the ministry but are in other areas, such as early childhood centres, or are registered psychologists or school councillors, we need to make sure that we futureproof the child safety mechanisms so that mandatory reporting exists for those areas as well. That is the key concern that I have had throughout the debate in this chamber, and it continues to be my key concern. We need to futureproof our safety mechanisms for looking after children as well as addressing concerns from the past.

The Legislative Council will no doubt take up the challenge of working through this bill in a fair bit of detail. I do not doubt that it will look quite closely at the debate that we have had in this place and the concerns raised by external stakeholders, such as the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care in particular and its recommendation that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation in the other place. I will leave it to our parliamentary colleagues up there to decide what they want to do with that.

The most important thing to conclude with here is that all leaders and workers in organisations that interact with children have a duty of care to protect children. We need to make sure that the horror stories and issues of the past are not repeated in the future. We also need to make sure that we look at where children congregate in the future to make sure that they are safe. I conclude by saying that I commend all people throughout Western Australia who work with children—our childcare workers, youth justice workers, school counsellors, out-of-home care workers, psychologists, teachers, nurses and families—who all do their best to make the lives of children the best they can be. We thank them for that work. Most of us in this place had pretty gifted childhoods. We did not experience the horror stories that have come out through the royal commission and things such as that. Many of us were the lucky ones, but some were not so lucky. The goal is to make sure that we, as a state, create legislation that supports all those workers and the people who do what is right to support children, and that we reinforce their good work so that those in the community who do not do the right thing by children can be stopped swiftly and mandatorily reported on so that children can be made safe as quickly as possible and do not remain in harm's way as they grow up. There is a lot in this bill, but there is a lot more still to be done in this space to support the good work of trying to keep children safe. I, too, thank all the workers in the Department of Communities who work in child protection for their efforts. Be they public servants dealing with the finances of the department or frontline workers dealing with the children and the families who are having difficulties, all that work is incredibly important to the children and to the state of Western Australia.

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean — Minister for Water) [3.55 pm]: I want to make a few comments about the extension of mandatory reporting requirements to ministers of religion, which I think is one of the most important parts of the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019. I recently gave a radio interview about my experience with Brother Daniel Virgil McMahon, who was the principal of the primary school that I attended, Christian Brothers College Fremantle. I also made a second reading contribution. Since then, I have been contacted by about half a dozen former students of Christian Brothers' colleges, who have all had stories of sexual abuse. One of the things that has surprised me, given that Brother McMahon was known to the Christian Brothers to be an abuser back in the 1990s, is how little information is available about him online. One of the reasons that I am speaking now is to put a little of that information on the record so if there are other former students who are considering their options, they might find this information useful.

As I said, Brother McMahon was the principal of CBC Fremantle when I was there during the early 1970s. I now know that he abused students at CBC Fremantle. My understanding is that another brother who also taught at CBC Fremantle is currently in jail—Brother Best. Brother McMahon taught at Trinity College in the city. I have spoken to ex-students who were abused by him at Trinity. He also abused students at Aquinas College, and I have spoken to some of them. He also abused students at CBC Highgate. Through the 1970s and 1980s, he taught at a number of schools in Western Australia and continued to abuse students. I understand that he also taught at the Christian Brothers College in Geraldton. After teaching at those schools, he became what the Christian Brothers call the vocations director, so his role was to identify students who might be candidates to become Christian Brothers. The very nature of that role meant that it gave him the opportunity to spend unlimited amounts of time with individual boys. For someone who was a paedophile, that must have been the ideal job. He left the Christian Brothers in about 1990, went to Tasmania and was ordained as a Catholic priest. He followed the pattern that we see of many abusers in the Catholic Church; that is, they get moved from school to school and parish to parish. In this case, he went

from being a Christian Brother to being a priest in Hobart. I am not aware of whether he abused anyone in Tasmania, but given his history over two decades, one would have to think that that was certainly possible. I understand there was a police investigation into his abuse of students here in WA, but he passed away in 2012 before any charges could be laid.

One of the common themes that ex-students have raised with me is why teachers and brothers who saw the way that Danny McMahon conducted himself did not do anything about his behaviour. When I was at Christian Brothers College Fremantle, it was certainly amazing to me that the other brothers and lay staff did not realise how unsuitable he was to have any responsibility or any authority over children, yet no adult did anything. Why did others not speak up? I think that theme continues.

The member for Thornlie, who saw Brother McMahon when he was at Trinity, said he was known there as “Basher” McMahon. The question is: if a 14-year-old boy could understand that, why did the teachers at Trinity, responsible adults, not see that and do something about it? Again, when he went to Aquinas College, the comment was made that everybody knew what was going on. His hobby was to cultivate budgies, so he had a birdcage, and he used it to attract students. The comment was made to me that Mr Hann, who was the headmaster, knew, and did nothing.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

CORONAVIRUS — SMALL BUSINESS — RELIEF AND RECOVERY MEASURES

Motion

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

That this house calls upon the Labor government to immediately address the shortfall in support for Western Australian small businesses and industries suffering because they are unable to access relief and recovery measures.

We have moved this motion today, and I am going to outline the reasons that small businesses, particularly tourism businesses in regional Western Australia, are suffering at the moment due to, obviously, the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has affected everyone from all walks of life. Every which way that we operate in society has been affected.

I want to talk about small business. More than 224 000 small businesses operate in Western Australia, employing around 490 000 workers and contributing billions of dollars to the Western Australian economy. There are more than 50 000 small businesses in regional Western Australia. Nearly half the jobs created in Western Australia are created by the small business sector, and small business accounts for half of WA’s private sector industry employment. Small businesses in regional towns and communities support local economies and communities, and that is why we want people to buy local and support our businesses. Before COVID-19, small businesses were faced with a range of challenges.

The higher cost of doing business is generally different from region to region, and I will explain the difference between the southern and northern parts of Western Australia. Due to the geographical location, remoteness and distance, and low populations, a growing number of small businesses were already struggling to cope with the rising costs of doing business in some regional areas. These businesses are required throughout the regions to underpin the economic growth of a town and tourism growth and to ensure that we can grow our populations. As I said, in the south west we now have the cooler season and in the north west we now have the warmer season. During the warmer season, occupancy in the north west of Western Australia can be five to 10 per cent. That rate is higher in the south west, because it has a cooler climate and people go there. During the period of April to September, tourism in the north west is at its peak. That is when people make their money for the next six months to ensure they are able to pay their bills and continue on to the following year.

There are rising costs for businesses in many regional areas with small populations and low occupancy rates, and there is therefore less ability to absorb them. Infrastructure in some locations is not keeping up with demand and increased visitation. Maintenance of roads and recreational facilities is one of the issues that regional towns face. Water costs for regional businesses can be more than three times higher than those of an equivalent business in Perth, making them uncompetitive, unsustainable and beyond industry benchmarks. One example is a caravan park enduring a 50 per cent increase in water costs in a four-year period. Insurance premiums are enormous. Sometimes insurance does not provide adequate cover, but insurance costs are going through the roof in regional WA. In some cases, businesses cannot find an insurance provider to cover their business. One issue I am dealing with is a business that has four-wheelers that is unable to get insurance, which obviously affects how it can run, if it can at all. Staffing and changes to employment requirements make it harder to attract people to remote locations. That also tests business owners to ensure that they can work those long extra hours to make the business work. There are electricity, fuel, transport and freight costs. There are increasing lease costs, and rents and rates. There is an inability to get training without significant cost. Often people have to travel to Perth to do that training.

I turn to airfares. The National Party has been leading the charge to try to reduce airfares. Before COVID-19, when a lot of towns had a regular air service, people were paying \$1 000 return to fly to Carnarvon. People living in Paraburdoo or Tom Price would sometimes pay \$2 000. People in Karratha pay \$1 000 for a one-way flight. That

is unaffordable and unimaginable, especially when transport in metropolitan Perth is subsidised to the tune of \$1 billion a year to make sure that bus and train tickets are affordable. Aeroplanes are the buses and trains of regional WA, and now with COVID-19, having a regular transport service catering not to tourists or workers, but to people coming from regional towns to visit specialists in Perth for health reasons, has become an issue. There are limited taxi services, and the list goes on. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses and communities in regional Western Australia advocated for boundaries to be shut to stop people and tourists travelling around, as did I. We managed to make that happen, and I want to congratulate the Premier for making the decision to close our regional communities to people travelling from one area to another. I think that has worked and has prevented COVID-19 from becoming rampant in our regional communities, which could have happened if those borders had not been closed. Most regional businesses accepted a mandatory lockdown or closed as a result of social distancing and no patronage during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some are not able to take advantage of the four-to-six-month tourism season as a result of effectively being in a drought with no income and no ability to keep their doors open or provide a limited service to their community. For businesses in remote regional areas with small populations, particularly in the north of the state, this will be the situation for the next 12 to 18 months, with most not being able to meet their fixed operational costs, such as water, electricity, shire rates, fees or insurance, with little or no income over that extended period. Small businesses in locations such as Exmouth, Coral Bay, Carnarvon, Shark Bay, Monkey Mia, Broome and Kalbarri need support, as potentially freezing fixed costs versus waiving costs over the next 12 to 18 months will be the difference between businesses closing down, never to reopen, or staying afloat over the summer season into the next high season and into the future. There is a difference between waiving costs, deferring costs and freezing costs. The government has frozen future increases; this is a future increase. Water and power prices are the highest they have ever been, particularly in regional Western Australia, where a future charge does not mean much to a small business when it is paying high costs. As I said, the water charge is three and a half times more than it is in Perth. Businesses need their costs waived, not frozen or deferred.

With many regional businesses considering their immediate future, consideration needs to be given to a business assistance package for those meeting the criteria to preserve the future of our regions and tourism, allowing businesses to survive over this very difficult period. Deferring water bills or power bills just adds a debt to those small businesses. Those deferred power and water costs need to be waived. The only way to help our small businesses recover is to remove those overheads, remove that debt, for something that the government can control—namely, water and power. Water is probably one of the biggest charges in the tourism industry, particularly for a hotel, motel or pub. In question time in Parliament today, we asked the Minister for Water about the toilet tax. Thirty toilets can cost \$3 501 without a toilet being flushed. It is a toilet tax on a business—a hotel, motel, or pub—that is closed with the inability to have any cash flow, but it must still pay thousands of dollars to have the pleasure of having a toilet, albeit one that is not being flushed. I asked a question of the minister in question time today and he spoke about it paying for a sewage treatment plant. However, places such as Carnarvon or Exmouth have had basically no sewage go through because they have had no patronage. They are paying for a toilet but have an occupancy rate of five or less per cent with no-one flushing that toilet. Therefore, I do not think the sewage ponds are working overtime. Perhaps the minister can explain in more detail how the toilet tax has come about and why the toilet tax exists, and explain to businesses why they are paying not only for a toilet but for water going in, and when the toilet is flushed, they pay three and a half times more than is paid in Perth. It is a massive impost for our businesses. For businesses to try to survive over this period, we must flush away the toilet tax. I would like to see it removed totally because how can we justify having a toilet tax and charge for water in and water out? Is that not what the sewage treatment plant is for? The water sewage treatment plant is paid for by charging for water going in and out. Perhaps the minister can look at a consumption charge based on a toilet and how many times it is flushed. What is the difference between having 20 toilets and 20 patrons using those toilets or having one toilet and those 20 patrons using that one toilet? Can the minister please explain what is the difference and how that impacts on a sewage plant?

When it comes to electricity charges, a lot of businesses in the north west were happy to receive that \$2 500; however, the power bill for many businesses in the north west is about \$3 000 a month. For those who are on the Synergy line and below the twenty-sixth parallel, such as Northampton and Kalbarri, where air conditioning is still essential, \$2 500 is not being applied to those businesses that are suffering. This is just like the case with businesses in Shark Bay, Carnarvon, Coral Bay, Exmouth, Broome and other parts of the Kimberley—areas in which the Minister for Local Government said, “Spend, spend, spend. Spend your reserves. Don’t pass on any increase in rates.” However, local governments are in financial distress. Their income cannot be reliant just on those who pay rates. They have other areas they need to consider, such as airports. The Shire of Carnarvon generates its income through the airport, as does Exmouth. They rely on income from the airport to be able to cater, not only for their ratepayers, but also the influx of tourists. Places such as Exmouth do not have a population of just 2 500 to look after. Often they have to look after 10 000 people. The cost of their services is higher, yet their rate base caters for only 2 500 people living in the town. They know they have an influx of 10 000 tourists at any one time during the peak season. Shires waiving rates and fees is often not possible, but if businesses cannot pay for water and power, and cannot pay their rates, ultimately how will the shires recoup those costs? The shires also need to have some financial support to ensure they can survive into the future when people are not able to pay their rates.

As I mentioned, some places in the north west are lucky to have two air services a week. Trying to operate a business in some of those regional towns is basically impossible because of not being able to get their workers on the plane if they live in Paraburdoo or Tom Price. There are charter planes for the resource sector, but it is often very difficult to get their workers on the plane or they must pay exorbitant amounts of money. Likewise, people who need chemotherapy treatment or who must come to Perth for a health check face these difficulties. These are some of the issues that face regional Western Australia. Airfares and air services are a major problem now, they were a major problem before, and will be a greater problem into the future, affecting small businesses and people who live in Western Australia.

I have mentioned insurance premiums. Many businesses pay \$5 000 a month to insure their property, even though no-one is going in, or very few people are going in. The costs for insurance, water, power and rates are overheads that businesses just cannot afford.

Let me look at the toilet tax. I am going to read a response from the Water Corporation to a client who wrote to it because they were finding it difficult to pay the service charges—the toilet tax. This is the response from the Water Corporation —

Firstly, I am very sorry to hear your Business has been affected ... I do hope the situation in Carnarvon improves quickly for you.

In regards to being able to waive the service charges, this is not something which we can do. Currently the State Government has announced a freeze on any price increases for the 20/21 Financial Year, this unfortunately does not provide any room to not make payment.

We appreciate that a sudden change in circumstances can add financial stress. We have a financial assistance program called Time Assist, which I believe will be helpful to you.

Time Assist allows you put your account on hold for up to 3 months. You will still receive bills from us during this time, however you won't be charged any interest and no recovery action will take place.

However, when a water bill is deferred for three months, 11 per cent interest is charged after those three months. Once people start paying their bill again in three months' time, there is an 11 per cent interest charge.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is what is written here. When a business's turnover has reduced to five or 10 per cent, the owner starts to realise how much these water and other service charges cost their business. This is something that businesses in the north understand because of the seasonality that exists there—the money they make in six months has to last 12 months. The cost of water is a problem for a lot of businesses.

Interestingly, the Water Corporation has also said to businesses that they should not get a plumber to disconnect and reconnect toilets for the next three months. This has been issued by the Water Corporation —

A recurring issue for businesses relates to the Water Corporation charging toilet fees for accommodation providers when their toilets are not actually being used and they have no income to pay the fees. Water Corp advises:

- Water Corp have submitted a proposal about this issue.
- In the meantime, they recommend operators DO NOT pay a plumber to disconnect and reconnect their toilets/outlets as this is quite costly.
- Instead, operators should contact Water Corp ...

Businesses can pause their accounts for three months and they will not be charged any interest during those three months. It continues —

Water Corp is going to contact Tourism WA next week to share the results of their 'proposal' which will hopefully be good news for accommodation providers.

I look forward, minister, to hearing some of that good news that the Water Corporation is sharing with some of the businesses.

Tabling of Paper

Mr D.J. KELLY: On a point of order, I ask the member to table that document.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): He is a member of the opposition; it is only ministers who have that obligation, minister.

Debate Resumed

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have someone's bill with a service charge of \$3 196.99 for 30 fixtures—a service charge! Perhaps the minister can explain that service charge.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I think it is important to explain what that service charge is all about. As I said, people are paying for water going in and water going out. I look forward to the minister explaining that service charge for a lot of businesses in regional Western Australia.

A \$14.4 million tourism recovery package was announced by the government to support 1 600 eligible tourism businesses. We asked this question in the other place —

- (1) Please provide a breakdown of how many eligible businesses are located in each region.

That is regional tourism operators —

- (2) How did the government decide which industry accreditations or memberships will be eligible for the tourism recovery program?
- (3) Will the government expand the program to also include tourism businesses that are members of peak industry bodies such as the Australian Hotels Association, Tourism Accommodation Australia and the Caravan Industry Association of WA?
- (4) Will the program extend to include tourism businesses registered with visitor centres or local tourism associations such as the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association?

Or it could be the Carnarvon tourism association, the Exmouth tourism association or the Broome Visitor Centre. The response was interesting. Twenty of the 1 600 businesses are eligible to receive some of that \$14.4 million. I note that the Minister for Tourism is not here for various reasons, so perhaps someone can provide an explanation on his behalf. The answer states —

- (1) Tourism Western Australia calculated the likely percentage of eligible businesses within each region as follows: Destination Perth, 25 per cent; Australia's South West, 28 per cent; Australia's Coral Coast, —

I have just explained the coral coast, which extends from Cervantes up to Exmouth —

12 per cent; Australia's North West, —

That is from Exmouth all the way to the Kimberley region —

18 per cent; and Australia's Golden Outback, —

That is from Mt Augustus all the way through the wheatbelt and goldfields and down to Esperance —

16 per cent.

Here we have it. A \$14.4 million package was announced to assist small businesses in the tourism industry, but they have to be a member of the Tourism Council Western Australia. As the Minister for Tourism said, they have to be a genuine tourism operator. So, to be a genuine tourism operator, they need to be a member of the Tourism Council WA. If someone owns a hotel and is a member of the Australian Hotels Association or if someone operates a caravan park and is a member of the caravan industry association, and they are accredited, they pay thousands of dollars to be a member of those organisations, yet that is not good enough. In the minister's eyes, they are not genuine. They need to have paid a \$90 membership fee to the Tourism Council Western Australia and they need to have been a member of that organisation prior to 31 January. That is pretty strict and limiting criteria. Those criteria have left many tourism operators high and dry. I quote from an article in the *Midwest Times* titled "High and Dry: Tourism firms don't qualify for cash help" —

A Kalbarri tourism operator has blasted the State Government's tourism funding package, claiming most operators in the town are excluded.

That is the feedback I have got from businesses on the coral coast, where 12 per cent of businesses can apply for that tourism package. Another article titled "Tourism relief misses mark" states —

"Kalbarri is a ghost town right now, we were able to remain open under the Jobkeeper program but 95 per cent of our business is gone," ...

...

Mr Jessop said he was buoyed by the announcement of the package but was shocked to learn it applied only to members of one of the State's eligible tourism organisations.

...

"Most of us in Kalbarri are members of the local visitor centre, they directly represent us. Why wouldn't this membership qualify us?"

That is the question that the government needs to answer. Visitor centres in Western Australia accredit a lot of businesses and industries, such as the Australian Hotels Association, the caravan industry or whatever industry people are a part of. Businesses are given the tick, but they have to pay a \$90 membership to a tourism council, which captures only 12 per cent of their business. This equates to only 20 per cent of businesses in the north west and 16 per cent of businesses in the outback; most of it goes to Perth and south west businesses.

As I said earlier, there is a difference between the south west and the north west. The south west has had its high season whereas the north west's high season is now. The Premier has opened up some regions, allowing Perth residents to visit the south west, so those businesses are more fortunate in recouping a lot of those costs that they have missed out on during the pandemic. They have gained a lot more because suddenly they will have two Christmases in one year whereas the north is still waiting for that. Later, I will go into a little more detail around opening those regional borders.

A lot of the chambers of commerce have commented on this situation. People have written to their regional chambers and the Minister for Tourism. The Carnarvon Chamber of Commerce writes —

We just wanted to gain an understanding of the reasoning behind the eligibility criteria of having to be a member of their RTO, which as far as I know is a Govt funded organisation. We know of thousands of regional tourism businesses who won't be a member of their local RTO—but will be a member of their (non-Government funded) industry member-driven organisation, or their local chamber, or their local visitors centre or just not a member of anything at all. We just wanted to know why this particular criterion was put in place as we think it will automatically rule out thousands of regional small businesses which genuinely need help. We have had over 50 calls and/or emails about eligibility restrictions since the Fund was announced.

Operators of caravan parks, for instance, whether they are in Kalbarri, Coral Bay or Exmouth, are all saying the same thing—they are not eligible for the tourism package. I have an email from one business, which states —

Like many businesses ... in the state ... we closed the operation of our business on March 16th 2020 and have lost 100% of our income due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

All future bookings have been cancelled and refunded and we have lost majority of our future income by means of group coach bookings with retirees from the East Coast and Perth, as well as travelling nomads and caravaners. At the moment our future is unclear.

...

The recent announcement by Mark McGowan and the "Tourism recovery package" bought real hope—yet when we read the terms and smaller print, found that we did not qualify, which feels quite unfair.

We proudly operate ... and have run this for 8 years, the business itself has been established for over 40 years ...

That is from a Kalbarri operator.

How do we move forward? How do we assist these businesses? It is interesting to note—I will read the article in a moment—what has just come out from the ABC Kimberley about the Kimberley region. As I said, we fought hard to close the borders to stop COVID-19 reaching regional Western Australia. That has worked. I congratulate the Premier and the state government for doing that. I also called for the borders between the Gascoyne, the midwest, the Pilbara and the south west to be opened up. I thought the other regions would be opened up to the south west. The Premier made a decision to open up Perth to the south west, putting an unfair advantage on a lot of other areas, such as the north west, that rely on tourism during this period to get them through the next six months. That was a shock to a lot of people, but that has happened. Our tourism areas in the north west—from Geraldton and further north to Broome and the Kimberley, and inland—want a certain date for the borders to be opened to allow for those tourists to plan, book and come north. That will allow those businesses to plan for the influx of tourists, which will occur. Those businesses need help. A lot of those businesses will not be able to gear up because they do not have the cash flow and they will miss out on a lot of these packages that were announced by the state.

What do we need? We need our borders opened to allow Perth people to go north. That needs to be done now. We need a certain date from the Premier to give hope to our businesses so they can plan. We need to be able to allow those people to decide where they are going to holiday. Obviously, we want people to holiday in their backyard. We want them to go to the south west and the north west. The Premier has to allow for that certainty on a date so that people can make a booking, put down a deposit and know that they will not lose their deposit, and for a business to take that deposit, knowing it will not have to refund that deposit because they are uncertain about when the regional borders will open. That is the cry from businesses from Exmouth and Coral Bay all the way down to Geraldton.

Today we heard an announcement from the Kimberley. Kimberley community leaders have issued a 12-point plan to reopen the region, with a goal of lifting travel restrictions on 18 June. The ABC Kimberley Facebook page states —

"There is far greater awareness across the region of the need for hygiene and clear protocols, including those relating to isolation, to manage any infection that may occur," a statement from the Kimberley Regional Group reads ...

The success is evidenced by the fact that it has been 41 days since the last confirmed case of COVID-19 in the Kimberley, and no cases have been recorded amongst our residents and Aboriginal population. Lifting the border restrictions to reunite the Kimberley with the rest of Western Australia will enable families, businesses and communities to move

firmly into the recovery phase of this COVID-19 pandemic, improving the mental health of people and the outcomes for our economy. This plan has been backed by all four local shires, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services and the COVID-19 Aboriginal task force. They have all endorsed the Kimberley opening up on 18 June.

Local leaders and local Aboriginal community groups are all saying that it is time to open the regions because we all know about the economic impact on those communities. When small businesses close, it has an effect on the local economy. Generally, people leave town. When regional towns lose their population, it affects the school and the hospital. It affects the teachers, doctors and nurses and those services. We cannot afford to lose any more of our services in regional WA. It is absolutely critical that we have an economy in our regional towns and that we have services in our regional towns for locals and those tourists who want to travel to parts of regional WA.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I need to remind the minister and the Treasurer that their conversation is being interrupted by the member speaking. You might want to speak up a bit, thanks.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

I will end on this, as many other colleagues will talk about their patches right around regional Western Australia. How do we move forward? How do we work together to ensure that our regional communities can survive? The Premier has made a call to allow Perth to go to the south west, to allow those businesses to survive and for people in Perth to travel out. We now need those businesses in the north to survive. We need people from Perth and the south west to go to a warmer climate to experience what the north has to offer, to ensure our businesses and our regional communities can survive. We need a firm date for when the borders will open; it is absolutely critical. As I read out, the Kimberley wants its borders open.

If the decision to keep them closed is based on medical advice, the government should table the medical advice to allow us to fully understand the difference between Albany Health Campus, Geraldton Health Campus, Karratha Health Campus and Hedland Health Campus. What is the difference between those health services in the north and the health services in the south west? If that is the sticking point, the government needs to improve services in regional WA. However, there is no difference. The member for Collie–Preston is looking at me blankly, but there is no difference between the health services in the south west compared with the north west when we compare the distance of Albany to Perth with the distance of Geraldton to Perth and the health services that it provides. Open our borders and allow for people to head north to the warmer climate. Allow people to survive the next few months. It is going to be difficult, but tourism operators need everyone's support to get through this difficult period. This is why the government needs to look at its small business package and reflect on what is happening. It is missing the mark. The \$14.4 million will not help the majority of those small businesses that are in the tourism game. The Minister for Tourism has called those operators non-genuine, but they are genuine tourism operators.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA) [4.42 pm]: Before I begin my contribution today, I would like to pay credit to members of the State Emergency Services throughout the state of Western Australia, including the very energetic SES members who are up in the Kalbarri area and look after all the tourists who go missing in Kalbarri National Park in my electorate of Moore. As of the next election, Kalbarri will sadly be in another electorate and I will have no excuse, other than as a tourist, to visit that beautiful town. I wish all the members of Kalbarri SES and every other SES organisation in the state of Western Australia all the very best, and I thank them for their services.

We know that the people of Western Australia generally are suffering under the current COVID situation. That is why the Nationals WA have brought this motion today, which states —

That this house calls upon the Labor government to immediately address the shortfall and support for Western Australian small business and industries suffering because they are unable to access relief and recovery measures.

A number of weeks ago, just before the Easter holidays, National Party members and members of a number of parties urged for an end to travel into some remote and regional areas. At that stage, there were very good reasons. People had concerns about the paucity of health services in some of those areas, the distance to tertiary health services, the fact that many of the communities have vulnerable and elderly people, and some of the remote Aboriginal communities are great distances from health services and tertiary hospitals, with extra challenges for some residents of those areas. A number of my colleagues made a call that borders be imposed to stop people from travelling throughout the state. Since before the Easter break, borders were put in place and last Monday they were revised. In fact, just prior to the Easter holidays, I put out a video in which I loudly called for people to chuck a U-ey, head back and not come to the tourism towns, such as Dongara where my office is, and other communities in my electorate including Kalbarri, Cervantes, Lancelin and a host of others. In fact, I received calls from shire councils that were concerned about how they could guarantee community safety in their caravan parks and camping grounds, expecting to see an influx of tourists. I remember going to a meeting at the Jurien Bay office of the Shire of Dandaragan, where local business owners, who would normally be talking about how they could attract tourists into the town, were talking about how they could guarantee community safety in the face of the expected onslaught of visitors. There was a challenge and a need to put out a system of hard borders within the state to ensure that people from Perth did not go visit regional areas when there were good reasons at that stage for the borders to be in place.

In the case of my electorate, which spans both the wheatbelt and midwest components, the borders between Perth and the wheatbelt were heavily policed. On Toodyay Road, the Great Northern Highway, the Brand Highway and Indian Ocean Drive, there was pretty well a constant police presence, and they turned away a number of people, although I saw some people go through who I thought perhaps looked like they might be obvious tourists, with South Australian plates and camper tops on their LandCruiser. That puzzled me a little, but I was not the one doing the interrogation, so I will have to accept that they had good reasons to go through.

Since Monday, we have seen a change to the border situation that is hard to justify. The member for Geraldton is in the house, and I was in the house when he called for an explanation of why these borders have been put in place for his electorate of Geraldton, a substantial community with substantial health services, located about the same distance from Perth as Albany, and with about the same size community with similar services. People can go to Albany from Perth, but they cannot go to Geraldton from Perth. This was puzzling him. My electorate surrounds Geraldton, so it is an issue that I also find puzzling. When we look at the difference in the electorate of Moore between the wheatbelt component and the midwest component, it is quite puzzling. There is very little difference between, say, Coorow and Watheroo or between Buntine and Latham. It is hard to understand why one community is shut off from Perth and the other is not.

As a local member I am now taking a lot of calls from people who are facing a hard border between the wheatbelt and the midwest. There are border controls on Brand Highway, Indian Ocean Drive and at Wubin. In fact, the stop at Wubin is stopping people from quite legitimately going back to their farms as far north as Maya, which is at the end of the wheatbelt and a considerable distance from Wubin. That is an issue. I responded to an email from a person who has family coming up on the weekend from Perth to visit them at Buntine, and the constabulary at Wubin told them that they may not get through. They should be able to get through because they are only going into the wheatbelt, but why it is any different between Buntine and Latham, which are just up the road in the midwest?

That devastating impact has been felt quite starkly in the town of Green Head. I have here a letter that I received from Rachel Griffiths. The Griffiths family own the Green Head local store. They are quite happy to be quoted. I will read a little from this letter and also paraphrase from a conversation I had with her dad, who is the owner of the shop. The letter states —

Hi, we are in Green Head, 30kms north of Jurien Bay. It has now been confirmed on Sunday night that road blocks are being setup on Indian Ocean (between Jurien and Green Head) and another one on the Brand Hwy (past Badgingarra). It's been confirmed in Jurien there will be an increase of police by 145%. Personally and the majority of people we know will have to go through the Indian Ocean block twice a day for school drop offs/pick ups, work, banking, regular shopping, doctors appts, hair appts etc.

She says that, firstly, if the Perth region, including now the wheatbelt region, has an outbreak of COVID-19, there is absolutely no way that it will be stopped from coming into Green Head because of the legitimate traffic that is going between the two towns. The letter continues —

Secondly, Green Head is 259 kms to Perth. For example, Margaret River is 271kms to Perth. Geographically we are that much closer to the city, yet for our small town of 250 people ...

She says that nobody bothers about them or knows that they exist. Finally, the writer states that only a few businesses in town, are offering the only crucial employment opportunities. She continues —

Due to the COVID pandemic these businesses have already suffered greatly as rely on caravanners and Perth holiday houses, it is now just totally soul destroying to know any pick ups to business are going to be missed because we are 15kms on the wrong side of the blocks.

She says that her family store has been offering vital services to the community since it opened in the early 1970s, and her family has owned it for the last five or six years. There is a very great chance that it now may be lost. The letter continues —

If there is anything at all that can be done, we would appreciate your assistance.

I am doing all I can, and that is advocating in Parliament on her behalf and pointing out that this is causing great distress in the town of Green Head. The community has already lost a number of jobs locally, including in not only the retail sector, the boutique hotel and the caravan park in the town, but also the couple of people who are involved in the octopus market there. They are professional octopus fishers. With the shutdown of that trade in Perth restaurants, which is now starting to slowly pick up, of course they have had no market for their occy, so they have had to shut down. Those fishing families are another statistic in that town. During this lockdown period, the shop itself has lost the 30 per cent or so that is the trigger point for some of these measures. We know that the G2G PASS that has been issued apparently allows some of the holiday home owners to come up to town, but they feel guilty about being in the town, so instead of coming up and spending a week in Green Head, they are coming up, checking the house has not blown away and going straight back down to Perth, because they feel that they should not be hanging around in the community. That is definitely affecting businesses.

At this time of year, people in Green Head would expect to see 50 to 100 caravans coming through each day. Those people might stop off and look at the scenery. Some might stay at the local caravan park, which, of course,

is suffering. Others would stop and buy a drink or a snack as they go and look at the beautiful Dynamite Bay and other places around Green Head. That is just not happening. Zero caravans are going through Green Head at the moment. That has been a real issue for the residents of Green Head.

As I said, my electorate also takes in the town of Kalbarri at the moment. I have here some figures that have been given to me by a person from a local business in Kalbarri, and she is happy for these figures to be quoted in Parliament. She writes that she is a business owner, not a tour operator. She asks —

... what help is there for me?

She has not been given a handout and is sick of the Western Australian government claiming there is help available when she cannot access it. She contacted the Small Business Development Corporation, but it could not suggest anything. She has had to access her super to cover wages, but, thankfully, the JobKeeper payments have now come through. Her business income in April 2019 was \$125 000. In April 2020, it was \$17 000. Her fixed costs include, for instance, insurance, which is \$2 000 a month. She cannot drop any of that. There is no change to her fixed costs. Her last power bill was \$10 000. She is not eligible for the \$2 500 Synergy offset. She might be able to defer the account, but eventually she will have to pay it. Her water bill is about \$1 200 at the moment. Those types of figures are crippling for a small, family-owned business in the town of Kalbarri. But even when borders are now open, we know there have been gaps in some of the payments of this tourist boost that the member for North West Central spoke about a little time ago, which is available only to so-called tourism businesses that are members of the regional tourism organisations.

I received a letter from a business in west Toodyay, which states —

I am writing this to attempt to understand and get answers to why some tourism businesses are deemed worthwhile to receive assistance in these unprecedented times, while others are not.

It is fully appreciated that the funds being distributed by all of the schemes, whether they be State or Federally based schemes are ultimately ... funded by rate payers money and have to pass scrutiny ...

What I have trouble understanding is: why the criteria is, a business needs to belong to a Regional Tourism body or have an accreditation to be eligible for consideration under this scheme.

Many businesses can and have been running for many years, very successfully without ... associations with these two criteria. Surely a business operating prior to the upheaval of covid19, that had the same massive impact that a business that fits the current criteria due to the measures that were put in place by government ... should be eligible for funding that it has contributed towards as a tax paying business.

I am disappointed that the benefit from our successful operation has not been seen as a value, financially and otherwise to our local, Western Australian and indeed the national economy as a whole. It appears also that our business and livelihoods also are of less value because we are able to operate outside your criteria.

It goes on to say that this is a legitimate tourist-related business that has an ABN. It states that it —

... has accepted the many costs and conditions that are placed on them to be compliant to enable it to operate. These costs and conditions, many of which are Western Australian Government benefit by, apply to all businesses whether they meet current eligibility criteria or not.

The writer states that businesses have to register their business name, meet all their tax obligations, pay staff and contractors, pay a premium on their water bills, deliver free power to the state government when their solar power generates excess electricity, and have all the additional insurances associated with running a business—building and contents, public liability, workers comp et cetera—and a lot of extra costs associated with building codes specific to the business. It continues —

Factor in lost trade due to covid19 cancellations of events [mandated by Gov.] This includes lost potential trade plus refunding payments for bookings accepted and then cancelled.

The writer feels that many other businesses are equally entitled to assistance as those presently entitled, and all he is asking is for the government to deliver a level playing field.

Those operators in the tourism industry are definitely hurting and need the assistance of both the Western Australian and federal governments. As I said, some of them have been falling through the cracks.

I must put on record that the midwest communities and some of the wheatbelt communities that I represent have been devastated by the COVID-19 impact in a way that a lot of other electorates might not appreciate. First of all, our tourism was badly hit, because in recent years we had become a centre that received a lot of visitation from Chinese tourists. Chinese tourists love to come to Western Australia to hire a little car and drive up Indian Ocean Drive, through the towns that are on that drive, through Lancelin and Jurien Bay, up through the member for Geraldton's electorate, ultimately to view the pink lake that is in my electorate, and then back down to Perth. There are a lot of attractions. That has become very much an accepted route for Chinese tourists, or at least it was until the devastating impact of COVID-19 early in the new year. We have been suffering these impacts since way back then.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr R.S. LOVE: We have been suffering these impacts going back many months now, pretty much since the start of the year. In addition, the shutdown of the Chinese market to the western rock lobster industry has been as devastating to my electorate as it has been to the member for Geraldton's electorate. Perhaps more so because that is a major industry in some of my communities, and its impact has been felt up and down the coast from Guilderton to Kalbarri.

In February, the member for Geraldton put forward a great initiative to bring together tourism operators who had been affected badly by the disaster in the Chinese tourism market and some of the fishermen in the midwest region to meet with the Deputy Prime Minister when he visited in February. The member's February media release states that the Deputy Prime Minister came and learnt just how devastating COVID-19 had been on the local fishing and tourism operators in Geraldton. The Deputy Prime Minister left with a great deal of sympathy for and understanding of the problems in Geraldton and the midwest, as outlined by the member for Geraldton. The federal government announced that it would put forward a \$170 million package to support fisheries, seafood and agricultural markets in Western Australia through a freight trade initiative that it would put in place. Those measures were in no small part due to the Deputy Prime Minister's personal interest and his role in guiding some of the federal government's investment to rescue, if you like, some of the key industries and regions in our country. I believe that the member for Geraldton's initiative led to that investment. I congratulate the member for Geraldton and thank him for the effect his initiative has had on not only his community, but also all communities in the midwest. It is a great initiative. Well done, member for Geraldton.

The inland parts of the Moore electorate have not escaped the devastating aftermath of what we might call the coronavirus outbreak. After recent federal government calls for an inquiry into the coronavirus, trade tensions have built up, and seemingly come to a head with a devastating tariff being placed on the barley market. Today's front page of *The West Australian* features Mr Tony White, a member of the industry from the Miling community, who is one of my constituents, outlining the devastating impact this tariff will have on farmers.

It is now not only the coastal areas of my electorate that are suffering economic hardship that is not really of their own making, but also the inland areas. It just goes to show how exposed our free-trading Australian farmers are when a disaster like this happens. I was in Canada last year when China slapped a tariff on Canadian canola. That disrupted trade in canola from the prairie states, such as Saskatchewan, into China, which was Canada's main market. Unlike the situation in Western Australia, in which the imposition of a tariff led to an immediate response by farmers to, in some cases, switch their varieties back to wheat, rather than continuing to plant barley because of concerns about what the market might look like at Christmas, Canadian farmers are protected by what we would call multi-peril crop insurance that insures against not only adverse weather conditions and outcomes, but also adverse market conditions. In order for Canadian farmers to get that insurance scheme, the local provincial government subsidises it to the tune of several hundred million dollars a year, which is more than matched by the Canadian federal government. It means that those farmers get a direct subsidy into their insurance scheme of towards \$A500 million every year. That is an enormous amount of assistance those farmers get in what we might consider to be a fairly free-trading country such as Canada.

If we compare that with what happens in Western Australia, it is quite clear that our farmers operate with minimal subsidies, and we can see that this tariff on the basis that our farmers are either dumping grain or are beneficiaries of lucrative subsidies is unfair and devastating. I think they are both nonsense claims. Over the course of 18 months or so, members of the Nationals WA have had consultations with groups, such as Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, farmers and farming groups. It has become quite clear to us that this tariff has been a worry and a real possibility for quite some time, and now that it has come to fruition, it will affect farmers throughout the state. It is completely unfair. Farmers will do what they have always done—that is, make decisions and get on with life. New markets will have to be found and those who have not finished planting might consider new varieties. Nonetheless, that is another industry that is suffering—perhaps not directly from the COVID-19 situation. Certainly, as the local member, I think it is important that I put to the house just how devastating this will be for Western Australian farmers.

The people of Moore, the midwest and indeed regional WA are crying out for help, and that is why the member for North West Central brought this very sensible motion to the house. This motion is not condemning anybody. It is not a negative motion; it is a positive motion asking the Labor government to get behind Western Australian businesses and to immediately address the shortfall in support for small businesses and industry suffering because they are unable to access relief and recovery measures. Bear in mind that in many cases they are unable to access that relief and recovery support because of the restrictions and rules the government has put in place around the relief measures.

I will finish up with a bit of a discussion about the plight of commercial landlords and tenants in their arrangements. A relief package for land tax has been put forward, but, as local members, many of us have been contacted by landlords who will not be able to access that package because of the criteria wrapped around it. The amount that they would have to forgo or the amount of recompense on offer is a bit unsustainable as well. I know it is difficult and that many landlords are working with their tenants to come to reasonable outcomes. I think they are trying to address the devastating effect on tenants. There are no winners and nobody is trying to be greedy in many of these

negotiations, but there has to be an understanding that both tenants and landlords often face fixed costs that they cannot avoid. I think it is important for the government to look again at that land tax situation and readdress the criteria to ensure that money does not stay unspent in Treasury but gets distributed to landlords. If we can help landlords, we can help the tenants. The government can help landlords to assist their tenants to get through this very devastating period when we are all suffering.

I call upon the government to look at this motion in the spirit in which it has been written. It is a motion that aims to be constructive and asks the government to carefully examine what it can do to assist businesses that are obviously still falling through the cracks after the range of measures the state and federal governments have put in place.

MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton) [5.09 pm]: I would also like to acknowledge the work of the State Emergency Service in Western Australia. I went to a recent SES function in Geraldton. The youngest person there in an SES uniform was 16 years old, and the oldest one was over 80 years old, which I would say tends to indicate broad community support. The member for Moore touched on this briefly, but I will talk for a while about our rock lobster industry initiative.

The rock lobster industry basically ceased fishing on 25 January. Not long after that, direct services to China and most Asian ports stopped. That, of course, left us with a huge problem because 98 per cent of our lobsters go to China, and there was a problem getting them between Western Australia and China. As the member for Moore said, the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack, came to Geraldton and we explained the problem to him. A commitment from the Morrison government flowed from that to underwrite pure commercial freight flights to China. Over the next eight weeks, 18 freight flights occurred, which went toward saving 2 400 Western Australia jobs and the \$500-million-a-year local crayfish industry. The economics of it are interesting. If crayfish travel under the floor of a commercial aircraft, it costs about \$4 a kilogram, but if they go on a pure freight operation, it costs about \$10 a kilogram. It is reasonably marginal at the current prices, but the important thing is that it gets crayfish back into the pipeline, and it will be worth about \$30 million to the local industry. Obviously, that was quite an important job creator in my electorate. Interestingly, I raised the issue with someone at the Chinese Consulate last week, asking when they thought direct flights to China would resume, and they said that they were not sure if they ever would. I was a bit taken aback by them saying that in such a blunt way. It would be very disappointing if that were the case.

Geraldton has an interesting hybrid university centre. Once again, we welcome the higher education relief package, which came from the federal government. That was quite positive, and included funding for new short courses and \$100 million in regulatory relief for education providers. Geraldton Universities Centre is looking at offering short courses to retrain and upskill people in the Geraldton community who are affected by the future of their jobs being in doubt due to the COVID-19 crisis.

I will touch briefly on the tourism industry. A number of operators in my city have been affected. However, we get quite a lot of commercial travel as well. It is not just people there for holiday purposes. Some of the figures from an operator in Kalbarri were particularly instructive and interesting. That operator qualifies for JobKeeper, but 95 per cent of its business has gone. Some members will know it; it is the Kalbarri Palm Resort. Funds for small businesses will be allocated through the tourism recovery package of \$10.4 million. I am disappointed that operators have to be members of the state's eligible tourism organisation. The owner made the point that most people in Kalbarri are members of the local visitor centre, which they fund and operate. They consider that membership of that organisation should qualify them for access to the tourism package. Thinking like a farmer, as far as I am concerned, it sounds like making drought aid available only to members of the Western Australian Farmers Federation or the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. The government should not discriminate against people just because they do not belong to a particular organisation.

An issue that I have been dealing with for one operator in Geraldton is the so-called toilet tax. In this case, it is a resort that was very busy during the resources boom. I think 2013 was his record year. He has, I think, 60 toilets. It is a combined accommodation and caravan park. All the caravan park ensuites are on septic systems and are not connected to the sewerage, but he has to pay for each facility. I think the department is charging him for 60 toilets and every billing cycle he gets charged \$110 per facility. That is a huge impost on him for a property that has, most of the time, only five or six units that are occupied and no caravans. I call on the government, as we have a number of times, to abolish that tax, even if it is just for the period in which our tourism sector is so badly hit. I think it is quite wrong and quite unfair. Another operator who has been in touch with me is the owner of the backpackers' hostel in Kalbarri, who has to pay the tax for about 12 or 13 toilets. It is a substantial cost out of a bottom line that has been really heavily hit by the virus.

I want to acknowledge a substantial investment by Josh and Tanya Johnson, who have brought a \$3 million 31-metre fast ferry to Geraldton called *Abrolhos Adventures*, which will carry up to 270 people out to the Abrolhos Islands. They have just got it to Geraldton and are ready to get it working. They are going to have a pontoon out at the Abrolhos Islands. Of course, no-one from Perth can travel up there to go on it. Until the border restrictions came in, they were taking plenty of bookings, but since then all they have had is people ringing up and cancelling. There seems to be no urgency from the government to develop tourism and aquaculture at the Abrolhos Islands. Here is

a private-sector operator who has invested \$3 million, which is a substantial investment. Its main business is earthmoving. They bought the ferry in Queensland and had to bring it over to Western Australia. That is a substantial investment and I think it would be a good thing if they could get operating as soon as possible. Unfortunately, winter is not very far away now so the seas will probably be too rough between Geraldton and the Abrolhos Islands to use the ferry for a few months.

I note with interest and some excitement the \$4.42 million pilot study to look at the feasibility of setting up a renewable hydrogen and ammonia production facility in Geraldton, which is funded by BP Australia and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. It is quite an exciting project. That is real money, so we are all waiting with interest for the results of that study, which will take less than a year. We are a very favourable place for renewable energy. All that is needed to make it really happen is to do the final stage of the 330-kilovolt powerline from Three Springs to Moonyoonooka or Oakajee. The Barnett government built the first stage for \$419 million, which was Western Power's biggest investment for 20 years. I see that the Minister for Energy is sitting in front of me. I appreciate that a case for such things has to be made to the Economic Regulation Authority, and I suspect that would be a pretty hard job to do.

I refer to apprentices and a couple of local building companies. The first one is run by a bloke called Peter Fleay. He has been doing work in the Pilbara for Rio Tinto, and he has moved most of his apprentices to the Pilbara during the period of that work. A lot of Geraldton companies do that when they have substantial work in the Pilbara. He employs 16 apprentices full time. I would like to acknowledge the package of help that the state government brought to keep apprentices. In addition, he employs a significant number of Aboriginal apprentices. He is one of the biggest local regional apprenticeship trainers. He directly indentures; he does not use a labour hire company to employ them. The current president of the Master Builders Association of Western Australia is a bloke called David Crothers, who has a substantial building company in Geraldton. He also has a company here in Perth. He was talking, once again, about the difficulty of retaining apprentices due to the downturn in construction. He said that the industry peaked in Perth about six years ago, and the number of houses built each year has fallen since then from 32 000 a year to about 14 000. Locally, in Geraldton, the market has obviously peaked. We came off a high of around 360 houses a year, and I think we are down to about 40 this year. That gives an indication of the extent of the slump in the building industry in Geraldton.

I have an interesting note here about a fisherman building a new fishing boat, which I think is a pretty substantial investment. This one is worth \$3 million. It is being built between a couple of companies, one in Dongara and one in Geraldton. If someone has a long-term commitment to their industry, they have to keep investing, so I would like to acknowledge Dave Perham for signing on the dotted line for a new \$3 million fishing boat. It is being built between Xtreme Marine in Geraldton and Southerly Designs in Dongara.

I do not have designs on the town of Dongara, but I would like to acknowledge another company there called the Illegal Tender Rum Co. It has been praised for winning an award for the world's best under-five-year-old rum, which I think is quite an achievement. I would like to acknowledge Codie Palmer and his partner for their company. They are doing an exceptional job. During the COVID-19 crisis, they switched from making rum to making hand sanitiser with the highest possible alcohol content, using 96 per cent alcohol. The first batch is 4 500 litres. I want to say that in the small business community in Geraldton it is not all bad news, but it is certainly not easy. Small business people will say that it is never easy, but it certainly has not been easy for the last six to 12 months.

The City of Greater Geraldton has financial problems, as do probably all our local governments. It revealed recently a forecast deficit of \$3 million for the rest of the financial year, basically due to the COVID-19 crisis. The budget had been forecast to have a \$100 000 surplus; however, there has been a fall in revenue this year of \$6 million. The council has clearly indicated that it will not be raising rates, fees and charges on residents. The majority of the loss came from the airport, which had its revenue absolutely slashed by the decline in flights. We have gone from 14 Qantas flights a week to two. Because of that, the council said it would have to cut its expenditure. It suspended more than 200 staff and operations and maintenance of city infrastructure. Its worst-case scenario for next year is a \$10 million decrease in revenue, which will mean it will have to look very carefully at every operation it has.

I sympathise with councils, because they are not able to access the JobKeeper payments, and they have not really received any support from the state government either. I think it was a little unfair of the Minister for Local Government to say that they needed to lift their game and look at cost-saving measures, which Geraldton council has done, but it also came under severe criticism from the minister for standing down 200 people. The council is considering offering ratepayers a 10 per cent discount if they pay their rates up-front in full when they are due, and that is a pretty hefty discount to be offering. As I said, our airport now has only two flights a week. I was dealing a bit with the issue for security people at the airport, who were actually employed by a company, and all the other work they do is on mine sites. Once again, the company could not access JobKeeper because its revenue had not dropped by 30 per cent. That meant that the hours worked by people doing security checks for people getting onto flights in Geraldton had gone from the normal number of hours a week to probably about eight hours a week. They were not able to access any support. I checked it out, and, unfortunately, there was no flexibility in those rules.

A big issue locally for the last month or two, since the crash in the price of oil, has been the price of petrol in Geraldton. It really has been a marked difference this time. The price of fuel has obviously dropped considerably in Perth, and I would like to know to what degree that has been affected by the emergence of Costco as a competitor, because I am told it is the cheapest operator. We had a price difference of 50¢ a litre for a while between Costco near Perth Airport and most of the service stations in Geraldton. This is an issue that the Nationals WA will bring to the next Parliament. We will request a parliamentary inquiry into the difference between the price of fuel in the regions, particularly the regional cities—because they have the turnover at the service stations—and Perth. I do not really think there is much faith anymore in FuelWatch. Anyone we have spoken to seems to be trying to find excuses for what is happening rather than giving us reasons and telling us there is something they can do. On the same day that the price of petrol at a Perth station was 107.7¢, in Geraldton it was 137.5¢. The point has often been made to me that bringing fuel from Perth to Geraldton by road, at whatever the cost, is perfectly legal—if someone is qualified, they can do that—but no-one is doing it. If everything we do around this place these days is ruled by the invisible hand of the market, that is a case in which the invisible hand of the market is somehow being stopped from working.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: We are a port city, of course, and port cities have a tradition of providing hospitality to seafarers. I had a couple of cases of people being concerned about seafarers being allowed off their ships. They are usually allowed off for a couple of hours to go to a local supermarket and do some shopping, but that has been ceased. It was obvious that the community was concerned about it, and the masters of the ships were worried about the security of their crews, so for the period of the coronavirus it was decided they would not be leaving their ships. As it was, they were not allowed to leave their ships until they had been quarantined on them for 14 days and proven to be free of COVID-19. Of course, that has meant that our mission to seafarers has been closed as well.

A group of backpackers found themselves stranded at Drummond Cove, which is a free camping area in the northern part of Geraldton. It looked like they were going to be told to move on, as no-one was interested in helping them, so the local community gathered around and gave them a hand and found them accommodation, which was good. It showed good heart in the community.

Of course, accommodation continues to be an issue. Along with the MBA, I have been in contact with the Department of Housing. There are about 40 boarded-up government houses in Geraldton, and the MBA is interested in whether those houses are available to renovate. The Salvation Army has a reasonable amount of land available in the middle of town with, I think, five small units that people with a need for emergency housing can use. They could always do with more, because our Cameliers Guesthouse shelter closed down, so we have lost out. Sun City Christian Centre also has a facility in Geraldton to look after people who are homeless for a short time. It would be good if some of the money that the government has just put aside was available to be spent on renovating those houses in Geraldton.

I want to talk also about the boundary issue that other members have mentioned. Like everyone else, I fully supported the government's decision to put in place the boundaries; however, in the case of Geraldton, as people have said, we are now linked with the Gascoyne and the Pilbara and, let us face it, most people want to go to Perth; they do not want to go to the Gascoyne or the Pilbara.

A government member interjected.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: That is the way it is. That is where all our connections are. Most of our people have connections with Perth rather than that area. I agree that it could perhaps have been said a bit more carefully, but this is really causing a bit of grief.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Have you asked for a briefing from the health officer about that?

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: We asked a question about it.

Mr W.J. Johnston: But have you asked for a briefing?

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: I have seen what was said in the upper house. I think we got the answer we wanted in an answer in the Legislative Council today.

Mr W.J. Johnston: You should seek a briefing from the professional.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Should I ask the Premier?

The time has come, certainly within Western Australia. I understand what the Premier is on about with the interstate border. The briefing note from the upper house today, which I have had only a brief look at, said that the government would not think about taking down the state's border until there had been two full 14-day cycles. I get the logic of that; there are no arguments there. However, I think the time has come to move on within the borders in Western Australia. Surprisingly, a lot of people in the regions want them to stay. The point was made by a number of people that these measures are easier to bring in than to take away because people like the security they offer. A person from Broome left a comment today on the ABC website that they would like the government to leave the borders in place until Christmas. There was no rational reason for that; they just thought that Christmas would be a good day to bring them down.

As I see it, there is an absence of community spread of COVID-19 in Western Australia. I note a Hollywood Private Hospital specialist, Clay Golledge, today called for the intrastate borders to be scrapped immediately and labelled the idea of clean states —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: May I seek your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Protection granted, member for Geraldton. Minister, that is enough.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: I am being bullied by the Minister for Energy!

I echo what the specialist said. It was endorsed by a phone call I received today from a fairly senior doctor in Geraldton, who said that one of the top infectious diseases doctors in Western Australia was struggling to understand why the midwest and the north were isolated from the rest of the state. The doctor said there was no infectious diseases person on the working group that was deciding these things. It is time to take a good hard look at this. I note with interest the group in the Kimberley that is asking for the borders to be removed. I echo what it says.

I have only one other thing to talk about, which does not have a hell of a lot to do with coronavirus, but I want to acknowledge it here today. Anzac Day events were held differently this year across the midwest with the social gathering restrictions. I am sure most members stood at their front gate at 5.50 am, like I did, listening to ABC Radio in Canberra before they laid their wreath. The *Midwest Times* states—

At the Bundiyarra Aboriginal Corporation's Yamatji War Memorial, unveiled last year, four men gathered on Saturday for a simple ceremony to honour the 280 Yamatji men who fought for Australia ...

The two veterans behind the idea and construction of the memorial, Graham Taylor and Ron Cross, spent several years campaigning to create it.

According to a spokeswoman for the Bundiyarra Aboriginal Corporation, the two men were a bit disappointed they could not have proper ceremony, but they understood the restrictions were necessary to keep people safe.

This is only a black-and-white picture, but it is a picture of the war memorial that I am happy to say I made a reasonably substantial donation to.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Give it to me and I'll frame it for you.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: The minister will lose me!

I wanted to acknowledge that. I do not know of any other Aboriginal group in Australia that has built its own war memorial and I think it is quite an amazing achievement.

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury) [5.35 pm]: I, too, would like to begin by acknowledging the State Emergency Service workers and volunteers throughout the state. We have a remarkable amount of orange in Parliament today, and that is great to see. That group of people has been doing a fantastic job for many years and it is good that we acknowledge them collectively today.

I acknowledge also the 260 000-odd small businesses in Western Australia and the traumatic time they have been through. I think every member in this house would share that view. On the day that we had to start closing down the economy in this state, it was traumatic to see the uncertainty people faced with their businesses—some businesses quite small, some businesses reasonably large. It was like nothing we had ever seen before. It was not like a recession or a natural disaster impact; this was about closing down businesses and the uncertainty about when they might reopen. At the same time, there was an aura of what COVID-19 might mean and that people might die from it. If people did not die from it, they would be seriously ill and nobody quite knew what the boundaries of that would be. That is something we forget in this debate. This is a fundamental issue impacting not only Western Australia and Australia, but also the whole world. We can see that the virus has had an impact in different locations across the world. Some had to move to quite severe lockdowns, much stricter than here in Western Australia, after the virus had got loose through community transmission. We were facing some pretty devastating scenarios at that time with the closure of businesses, the uncertainty surrounding that, and the uncertainty of what that meant for us as family and community members. That uncertainty may be easy to forget when we get to a point at which we have zero reported new cases and only three active cases in the state and nobody in hospital, but there is still uncertainty about where this virus is at, from a transmission point of view, and into the future.

One of the remarkable things is that businesses, particularly small businesses, adapt quickly; they can be incredibly nimble. Some businesses in my electorate picked up pretty quickly and reported to me that they had significant changes in spend within their businesses, particularly in the retail sector. Bike shops have done pretty well in my electorate.

Mr P.J. Rundle: Like Woolworths and Coles?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Woolworths and Coles have also done well, yes. Interestingly, sales of fitness equipment, such as weights, has increased. Gardening centres are also doing well. Retravision told me it had done an enormous

trade with people who are doing home renovations and replacing kitchens, for example. Some businesses found that they could continue and improve their retail prospects. That could well be a bubble of retail spend and it might dissipate over the next few months as people adapt back into their working lives, but it was certainly an interesting thing that we did not foresee at the time.

Other businesses have done some really interesting things. I want to comment on a few of those. The Side Door Restaurant in Bunbury switched to doing deliveries straightaway. It switched its whole profile and moved to a delivery framework. It started doing fresh produce boxes for delivery, even baking its own cakes to go in the boxes. When gatherings were increased to 10 people, it started to provide home dinner parties with eight guests, one chef and one waitress. A very modest price was charged for a three-course meal. Cost-effective pricing for families really targeted the notion of supporting families and trying to do something special for them. It made money as well and the business survived. What I am talking about, member for North West Central, is the fact that businesses adapted, and we should celebrate the fact that some businesses could adapt. I am not taking away from the fact that some businesses could not, but I want to acknowledge those businesses that could.

Mr V.A. Catania: It's different when you've got a large population like Bunbury.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: It may well be, but I am talking about my electorate. I might add that, in anticipation of the border restrictions being eased at some future point, I have booked a holiday in Exmouth for a few days. When I went on Booking.com, I found that I could get one of the last rooms available. So there is a sense of optimism about forward bookings for holidays in that area.

Mr V.A. Catania: Do you know something that we don't know?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: No, I do not. I do know that I have a fully refundable option, so if it stays closed, I will not go, but I will go later. What I will do, member for North West Central, is support local businesses in Western Australia. I will support them in my electorate and I will support them in the member's electorate, and I will do whatever I can in Western Australia to help us recover.

I want to come back to Mojo's Bunbury, a little family business. The family has worked hard for many, many years to build that business into a quality restaurant. It switched a lot of the beer that is sold in the bottle shop to WA-manufactured beers, rather than imported beers, and it made up Mother's Day packs after collaborating with other local businesses. This business networked and maximised the potential to support other businesses and build a resilient business network in the south west. That is what we admire about small businesses. They have gumption. It is a good old-fashioned word that means rolling up the sleeves and getting in and making the best of a very difficult set of circumstances. They sell growlers that can be refilled with local WA beers. I am not a beer drinker of any note, but I am assured that that is a very popular item in Bunbury. The business looked at local deliveries and had cost-effective pricing for families, with family packs.

The Rose Hotel and Motel is a great historic pub in the centre of Bunbury. It has very entrepreneurial operators who moved straight to a full menu for pick-up and delivery, with a very modest delivery cost. They made up favourite cocktails in batches to sell to the public. Again, that business adapted very quickly. The Green Depot, which is in the main street of Bunbury, provides gardening accessories. It very quickly switched to an online store and provided gifts and flowers for delivery locally. The Sabotage clothing store in Bunbury had been a traditional retailer and immediately developed an app and went online for purchasing and local delivery. Corner's on King switched to home deliveries and takeaways. Nicola's Ristorante collaborated with other local businesses for Mother's Day gifts. Florist Gump, which is one of the major florists, beat the competition over east on the internet after a referral to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. It moved online and has had a really good run through online sales. This what I am talking about with the adaptability and nimbleness of business, and we should acknowledge that. Some businesses in my electorate are equally doing it tough.

I want to read into *Hansard* something from Mojo's, because it goes to the essence of what the people who are running these small businesses have been doing to try to make sure that they build their resilience and that they do that in collaboration with other people. This is from Juliana, one of the owners of Mojo's Bunbury —

Would like to send out some good cheer to our BUNBURY & Surrounds family!!!

At the start of the week we were wondering how we were going to keep trading without customers!!!

Starting yesterday it's been like a veritable Tsunami of good wishes & people coming in to see if we're okay!!

Today is the day Noel & I stay home to babysit our Grandson & even in these hard times we needed to do this to lighten our mood!!

Our normal day usually works with Jake our son, running Mojo's & then we phone each other every so often throughout the day to check in ...

But today Jake keeps calling me & telling me of all the phone calls & bookings he's had where people are clearly going out of their way to help us.

The last call was to let us know that one of our local work crews around BUNBURY were wanting to support each of the hospitality venues every Friday for lunch from now on & they were booking us for catering next week.

Tears haven't stopped today because at least they've been because we are so overwhelmed by how much everyone is trying to help each other.

Working together will save us & many other venues in town & we in turn will do our very best to make sure you are safe from catching this dreaded virus when you come to visit us!!

THANK YOU, THANK YOU BUNBURY & Surrounds we really can't do it without you ...

That is what regional WA is about. It is about local people helping other local people, doing their best and not necessarily relying on government. These are people with gumption who have been doing it themselves.

I want to come back and talk about the government itself. In the debate so far, one of the biggest things that has not been spoken about but is one of the biggest things that Mark McGowan, our Premier, has done, along with our Minister for Health, Roger Cook, the cabinet, health professionals, frontline workers and the Chief Medical Officer, all with the support of the people of WA, is to flatten the curve. The curve has flattened, and that means that we have the potential to restart the economy, which I do not think ever stopped. It certainly slowed and it certainly had an impact on individual businesses, but we have been lucky because the economy has been operating, and the businesses in my electorate that I have just spoken about are testament to that. This government, with the support of Western Australians and health professionals, has taken a determined, disciplined approach, but it has had to defend that approach. It has worked in lock step with the national cabinet, the national Chief Medical Officer and the Prime Minister to make sure that our state is safe and that those small businesses that had to stay closed have the potential to reopen. That is the critical point. That is fundamental. A fear existed when we first closed the borders and started to talk about social distancing and hygiene and the implications of that in running a small business. We are now in a position in which we can start to say that we think we may have some control over this virus. There is still some uncertainty about that, and that is why there is a cautious approach to unlocking each risk. This is something that no government has faced, as far as I am aware—certainly not for a long time, but maybe during the time of the Spanish flu. The ease of transmission in the modern day is so rapid that I think it is even different from that during the time of the Spanish flu. This is a situation in which we have to make decisions, be adaptable, receive medical advice and then advance another step so that vulnerable people are not suddenly placed clearly and seriously at risk. All the feedback that I am getting from my electorate is that people fundamentally appreciate that. As the member for Geraldton said, a lot of people out there do not want the borders opened in a rush. They want assurance that they are going to be safe. I am very confident that that is what this government is about—it is about trying to make us as safe as possible as things are unlocked and restrictions are eased.

That does not mean that government ignores the plight of small business. Both the federal and state governments have worked to try to put in place the fiscal and regulatory levers to help support small businesses through this period of quite severely restricted trading and help businesses start up again and re-establish when they can reopen, because it will not be a simple reopening. There will be a whole new start-up phase in terms of cash flow, and I think members in this place understand that. Although members opposite may have raised issues about eligibility and quantum, the fact is that this government came to office with the state in a pretty damaged fiscal position and pretty significant debt. It worked hard to bring that debt and operating expenses under control. In my view, the government certainly put this state, Western Australia, in a much better position to deal with the COVID-19 crisis than it would have had we continued with the fiscal management patterns that were established by the previous government. That is a very important thing to note. Having said that, it is not a bottomless pit. We have to manage state debt and we have to manage expenditure. The government is very committed to looking at a targeted approach to try to ensure that support goes to where it is most needed and where there is the best chance of recovery in supporting our small businesses. I have nine pages of notes relating to the sort of support that is available. If small businesses have any concern at all, I urge them to ensure they talk to the Small Business Development Corporation, get advice, talk to their accountant and look at the pathway forward.

I want to talk about the member for Geraldton's comment about fuel prices because that is pretty dear to my heart as well. I acknowledge that the member for Warren-Blackwood is in the chamber. He joined me and other colleagues from the south west in writing a public letter to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to express our dissatisfaction with the way fuel price monitoring is occurring at a commonwealth level. There is a clear reason for that. I understand that the difference in fuel prices between the metropolitan area and Geraldton is pretty significant, as noted by the member for Geraldton. We reached record levels. I think there was a 42¢ difference in the price of petrol in my electorate and the metropolitan area. That is a record price. I accept that there can be some differences between the metropolitan and regional locations but as all of us members in the south west saw, there is no rational explanation for a price difference of that magnitude. There is no rational explanation for why someone can go down to Busselton and get fuel 10¢ cheaper or go to Manjimup and get it 12¢ or 13¢ cheaper.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I received a letter from the ACCC that basically mirrored the explanations I get from the fuel companies, which is a real concern. One of the letters that we received from one of the fuel companies acknowledged that there may be a 7¢ to 12¢ difference in the cost of supply and delivery between the metropolitan area and Bunbury. The ACCC provided no explanation why there was a 24¢ difference between its price and the metropolitan price at that time. There is 12¢ or 13¢ going begging. It makes no sense to all of us, collectively, in the south west that when the world oil price goes up, fuel prices in the south west almost go up instantaneously. When fuel prices on a world scale go down, there is a very long lag before seeing that at the petrol pump. The people of the south west are seeing that, and they are pretty cranky about it. In my view, the onus is firmly on the ACCC to take a fresh look at this issue. It needs to take a fresh look at the speed with which price movements occur and how consistent those price movements are across various outlets. It needs to take a good look at that and not hide behind the fact that it may be more expensive to sell in the regions, and it may be that the volumes are not moving over as quickly as they should or there is not enough competition. There is plenty of competition in the Bunbury market. One of the fuel companies clearly acknowledged to me in phone calls that there was a lack of competitive pressure in the bush. Although that is there, they can move in a very aggressive way on metropolitan pricing. To me, that says that people in the regions are subsidising the metropolitan fuel price. I will certainly keep the pressure on. In this argument, when small businesses and households are really feeling the pain from dealing with this crisis, the last thing we need is fuel companies at a national level making an excessive profit out of that. We should not deny them a reasonable profit, but the profits appear to be excessive.

The other thing I wanted to comment on—I know there was a discussion on this earlier in this place—is the issue of reform and regulatory reform. I look forward to the debate on planning reform over the next few days. I thought it was interesting to read today’s media release from the CEO of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, Chris Rodwell, which is headed “Small businesses freed of regulatory deadweight”. It states —

WA small businesses will be better able to adapt in the wake of COVID-19 following a significant overhaul of planning regulations announced by the State Government today.

That is a pretty good third party endorsement. It continues —

Large projects with the potential to bolster jobs and support our economic recovery will also have a faster, simpler and more coordinated planning approach to help them get started sooner.

Everybody is looking towards capital projects as part of the stimulus to aid recovery. It is amazing how we all run back to Keynesian economics when the going gets tough and as soon as things look a little better, everybody views the whole of the market as a free market and a free run for all. It is really interesting that the CCIWA has come out so strongly in support of this government’s agenda, not just looking at grants, which is important in helping to cushion the impact on cash flows, but positioning the state for private sector investment because, at the end of the day, the government fiscal budget is a small part in comparative terms to the whole of the Western Australian economy. There is a whole pool of private sector investment out there waiting to be tapped, and those private sector investors have a role to play. In my view, they have a responsibility to play. Now is the time to step up. Now is the time to come forward and support this state, support regional Western Australia, support the metropolitan area and help Western Australia recover. In my view, all those frontline workers, Mark McGowan as our Premier, Roger Cook as our health minister, the Chief Medical Officer and the cabinet members have all played their role in flattening the curve to the point at which we can now start to risk-manage the unlocking of those restrictions and open up opportunities for business to restart. That is what the government can do but it is up to the private sector as well. I look to those large institutional investors to take advantage, to look at the opportunities, and to look at what we are doing in procurement reform. The Procurement Bill 2020 was debated in this house yesterday. In fact, I do not think we have had a single day in the past few weeks in this Parliament when a reform bill has not been debated. That is what we call adaptability, being nimble and responding and taking action. Action is what we need. We need movement to help give people confidence, help drive the state forward, and help take us to a point at which people feel confident about the future. From the feedback that I am getting, I certainly think that people are feeling very confident about how this government has managed the response so far. From my point of view as a local member, I am proud to be part of my government. I am proud to talk to my community about what we are doing, proud to hear the feedback and proud to be able to relay that feedback to the ministers because I think we are doing a good job. I think there is a long way to go. We are doing a good job, but it is a job that is based on teamwork with the people of Western Australia. It is the people of Western Australia who will make this state thrive again.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood) [5.58 pm]: I would also like to respond and make a contribution to the motion that was moved by the member for North West Central, which states —

That this house calls upon the Labor government to immediately address the shortfall in support for Western Australian small businesses and industries suffering because they are unable to access relief and recovery measures.

I want to take that motion in the full breadth and context that I think it deserves around what is happening in Western Australia now. I agree with one point made by the member for Bunbury. I think the government has done

a good job during this pandemic. Its response so far is certainly acknowledged by the people of Western Australia, including the people in my electorate. Therefore, the government has strong community support. There are certainly a few people in my electorate who would like to see a bit more than a hard border in Western Australia; they would like to dig a ditch and see a bit of the Southern Ocean flow up through the middle of Western Australia and take a more permanent approach to those borders. Unfortunately, that will not be the case. At some point, those borders will have to be lifted.

The Nationals WA also want to see the government successful at this. We do not want to see Western Australia be a massive loser out of this international pandemic, something that is out of our control. We want to see success as a result of the steps that the government takes to ensure the health and safety of people who live in Western Australia as well as an appropriate stepped response to recovery. Members will have seen that in how the National Party has been operating. We have not played tough politics during this time. We have been supportive of bills that have come in on very short notice, with today being a slight exception. It was fair and reasonable to push back on that, but the record we have had in supporting bills in this place, as was highlighted by the Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA not that long ago, has been pretty good on the National Party's part. Through the Leader of the National Party's office we had taken the step that when issues came up, we discussed them ourselves on Zoom. In the collective, we took those through the central point of the leader's office. Those issues were then raised directly with the Premier, and in many cases we got a response. I might say, very unusually for members of Parliament, it was not attached to a media release. We took issues that came out of our electorates into the collective and through to government and got some good outcomes. An example is getting the three-bottle rule on alcohol limits out of bottle shops. Eastern state companies are able to sell online full cartons of wine, yet our own retailers were not able to sell more than three bottles. That was changed very quickly by the relevant minister. Likewise, the firearms and ammunition issue emerged, which was the right decision to start with, but there was some collateral damage. Again, the government was quite quick to respond and made sure that it put in place the right measures. The National Party is on good ground when it says that it has been responsive and supportive of government initiatives to deal with the issues that it faces.

The bigger challenge comes now, in letting out the reins and making decisions to ease off restrictions. How fast does the government do that, and where? Will there be enough time to see the response to that easing and to see whether there are any outbreaks or community spread and take appropriate action? That is the more difficult challenge. We are now starting to see in our communities a fair bit of comparing and contrasting happening between us and the other states, us and other countries, and my region to another region in what steps may well be taken by government. I make the point that I know making decisions in the lockdown are tough. Governments made those tough decisions and I think the state government rightly made the call that it had to go hard and early, based on experiences we saw overseas. The government took on that strategy and it was the right thing to do. I do not say this lightly, but it is a relatively straightforward decision. We see the challenge coming, see the issues elsewhere, make the call and lock things down. Letting it out is harder. We have health advice, maybe with some differences between state and federal health advice, a federal government and other jurisdictions to deal with, and we have different parts of Western Australia that are very diverse in nature. That is going to be harder. One thing that the community will ensure from now on is that the government will now own its decisions. It has been reflected well so far, but the government will now own its decisions.

What are some of the pressures in my community that have come from this crisis? First and foremost, it is the protection of the elderly, those people who are in that older demographic. Some of them have other underlying health challenges, which puts them at high risk. That is a big concern, particularly across my electorate, which has an older demographic. Some communities, such as Augusta, have a relatively small population and a big transient population that comes in during the holiday period, which now brings with it some risk to that community. I know that that is a big concern for the Department of Health in the south west. Communities like that will express pretty strong views. Some of my parliamentary colleagues from other parties have put out Facebook posts about lifting the boundaries and I have seen the responses. An underlying response, in a lot of cases, says that we need to keep a level of protection over this. Some of that still exists, but fundamental to our thinking needs to be protecting the elderly and making sure that we have processes in place for that. I have elderly parents in Denmark. When I was working from home I bought the daily paper for them and took it to them. I did not want them going near the shops. We have taken some very localised steps in our family to try to enhance their level of protection. There is now a risk emerging that some in our community may be getting a little casual. We have not seen the pandemic wash through our towns and we have not seen close friends die from COVID-19; we only read about it in the papers and see what is going on in the news. We are getting a bit casual about social distancing and all those protections that have been put in place for a reason. That is a risk, and it is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that as we move forward, particularly as we lift some of the restrictions, and we make sure that our community keeps a level of rigour in and around this.

The premise of this motion today is business stress. A big proportion of my electorate relies on the foot traffic of tourists coming through the south west to Margaret River, Bridgetown, Manjimup and Pemberton, right through to Walpole, Denmark and Mt Barker. They are quite heavily dependent on the tourism sector—the one sector that

has been absolutely smashed through COVID-19—and the imposition on them because of the boundary restrictions on travel. I must say that they have absolutely welcomed the JobKeeper strategy. That has been really welcomed across the community. Obviously, we will watch that as it moves forward and comes to an end, but that has been the saviour of many small businesses in my community. Of course, the positive effect of that extends to accommodation, businesses, cafes, restaurants, shops and a whole range of broadly tourism-related businesses that have been impacted by the travel lockdowns. With the lifting of restrictions, they are starting to open their doors and work out strategies to manage the health risk and maintain high levels of hygiene and social distancing in the context of maintaining a successful business.

The next impact on my electorate has been emerging mental health challenges. We know that the numbers are going up for those groups that receive phone calls from people with mental health challenges, Beyond Blue and Lifeline in particular. Again, we need to be very cognisant of the mental health challenges through this. I have written letters to the Minister for Health about a couple of specific issues in my electorate, where some consideration needs to be given to extra resources, given there have been a couple of suicides in very recent times, which is terribly, terribly tragic.

An interesting impact has been in the international workers space. I have only one example of this, but there are probably a few in my electorate who fit into it. This young fellow is a saturation diver who goes on the rigs overseas. He stays down in a bubble and does the work he needs to do in the very, very deep sea. Divers have to come up slowly and go through decompression. Because his work is overseas, every time he makes the decision to go to his job, he has to sit in isolation for two weeks before he can get back to his family in Denmark. This issue extends to a lot of people in their workplace, and some with some very unusual circumstances. The member for Geraldton might have already mentioned backpackers. There are two groups: backpackers who are largely responsible for harvesting pretty much all the horticulture in my electorate in the Manjimup–Pemberton area, and also work visa holders who have been asked to come because of the particular skills they bring to our nation. They are here for a couple of years, and when their jobs drop out, as they have, they have no way of supporting themselves and they cannot go anywhere. We invited them to be here. There are a couple of those people in Nornalup, in Western Australia. It was quite a publicised issue. That is one of our challenges. Back to the backpacker issue more specifically, the Manjimup community has absolutely embraced them. It has said, “Righto, we recognise that you are fundamental to our workforce as we go into the harvesting season in spring. We need to make sure that we look after you.” I take my hat off to Ed Fallens. Ed owns Tall Timbers. If members ever go through Manjimup, they should stop in at Tall Timbers. If they want a glass of wine, he has a fantastic array of local wines, but it is also a great restaurant. Ed has just bought the Manjimup pub across the road and he has converted it into a backpacker hostel. He has some 60 backpackers in there now who he is effectively feeding. He sought donations from the Manjimup community and got a significant amount of money, more than it costs to feed them, to look after those backpackers. That is a fantastic initiative that is supported by the shire. He is getting a little bit of work out of them, they are getting a bed and a meal and being looked after, and they will be ready to go in the spring when the harvesting starts. Interestingly, he was geared up to convert that pub into a distillery and a brewery. It has all the kit inside; he showed me recently. When he gets the chance, he is raring to go and pull the trigger to start a pretty significant tourism investment into Manjimup. I am sure that will be something that is not only a fantastic tourism initiative, but also supports the local economy.

Our community sport and recreation and culture and arts groups have also been impacted. We do not talk about them very much, but they have been pretty significantly impacted. Margaret River and Denmark in particular have strong creative industries that support those communities. Their businesses have been smashed. Also, sport and rec. We might not think of football clubs, but I talked to a member of one of the football clubs in Manjimup recently who made the point that even if the club were allowed to go back and start playing footy, it is not allowed to have crowds, because there are restrictions on that. The club gets its revenue from charging people coming through the gate and from selling beer and so on across the bar. That runs their football game. The club member made the point that unless the club can do that, it is pointless opening because it would have no money to run the club. The impact goes right into those sporting and cultural groups that sit within our communities and form a significant part of the community fabric. They should not be lost in the discussion about how we respond to this. In many ways, they are businesses in and of themselves.

There are challenges. The government is looking at easing restrictions now. At the same time, it wants to stimulate business. That is the challenge matrix. What things can we do in my electorate that respond to a motion like this to stimulate business and help businesses to come out of the challenge? The first one has already been raised, and that is the eligibility criteria of tourism grants. I have had numerous emails and phone calls on this issue—a significant number. I have had more emails and phone calls on this issue than pretty much any other in the last six months. The government announced \$14.5 million worth of grants. A lot of businesses in my electorate do not meet the eligibility criteria because they are not a member of a regional tourism organisation as at 31 January. In my electorate, they would need to be a member of Australia’s South West or the Tourism Council Western Australia or another accredited group. I think that is sad. That extends to accommodation businesses, for example, that have been hit by the online platforms. This issue was raised in this house and we had a discussion about it; we even had a parliamentary inquiry. The recommendations for that now sit with the Minister for Planning. They include setting up a central

register for those short-stay accommodation providers to make sure that they are on a level playing field with those businesses that have invested in the sector. Accommodation businesses were impacted by that. When businesses are impacted by something, they go through their profit and loss statements and try to wash out whatever expenses they can. Membership of organisations such as the Tourism Council WA or Australia's South West is probably one of the first things to go. Many businesses were members of those organisations before and have chosen not to renew their membership because of reasons of business pressure. Of course, the consequence now is that they are not even eligible to apply. This is not an issue of getting a grant but of being in the pool to have a go at it. I would have thought it reasonable that a business in Margaret River, for example, that has been massively impacted by this, is a member of the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association. That is a local tourism organisation—the next tier down from an RTO—and is a very, very competent group with over 600 members, who do a lot of very good progressive work in the Margaret River and Busselton region. However, membership of that organisation is not sufficient to be eligible to apply for this grant. I think that is disappointing. I think the government has missed the mark there.

I have even had wineries give me a call. Wineries are in the tourism space. Again, they are members of their own organisations, or, in many cases, members of their local organisations, for reasons of local promotion. In Denmark, for example, there is the Amazing South Coast. The Shires of Denmark and Plantagenet and the City of Albany have got together and coordinated a campaign to promote their region. Why would wineries not be a part of that? They join that, drop their membership of other organisations, and now they are not eligible to apply for a government grant. I am not suggesting they might be successful in getting a grant, but they would like to be eligible to apply.

I note the hardship grants that were part of that \$4 million. I think the Premier made the point that there is every likelihood that that money will go north. Some of my colleagues might benefit from that, simply because of the hardship and the longer duration of the travel restrictions.

I refer to wine tasting. I have been contacted by cellar door outlets that can open and sell wine, but cannot allow people to taste their wine. That does not make sense to me. Restaurants are allowed to sell wine and food to up to 20 seated patrons, but a winery cannot have a tasting. They would have to follow the rules, absolutely, including rules on social distancing and all the hygiene issues, having patrons seated outside—whatever it might be.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I would have thought that more than reasonable. Again, we have the long weekend coming up. I would love the minister to consider that before the long weekend, because that would give those businesses that are going to be opening for the first time a chance to be able to put something to the tourism traffic that is going to be coming down.

I want to get on to a couple of other issues. I know the Minister for Energy is here. I am running out of time. I am not going to get on to the timber industry just yet. I wish the Minister for Forestry were here, but that might be left for another day.

I refer to the \$2 500 grant that the Minister for Energy has put out for small business. There is a threshold of 50 megawatt hours in the south west interconnected system. If businesses go above that, they get into the contestable market. The minister has answered every question that has been thrown at him in the last couple of weeks by saying, "That is the contestable market; I don't want to upset that." In the Horizon network, I think it is all contestable. There may be some areas. I will pick one. Esperance certainly does not have a contestable market.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Horizon had authority to go beyond the 50 megawatts for—I don't know whether Esperance would be covered—those businesses that the nature of their location mean they use more than 50 megawatts. But I will talk about this in a second, if the member wants.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Yes. My understanding is that that was a late decision.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Yes, it was.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The call was made that there is a 50-megawatt-hour threshold. We asked questions about it. My office actually wrote an email to the minister on 22 April. I was seeking information on whether the government will provide equal support to regional small businesses who operate in uncontested electricity markets and use more than 50 megawatt hours per annum. I made reference to the Horizon network. Of course, the response was "No". The response was that these are the rules. Then I read in the paper that Horizon's tariff offset had been welcomed by the member for Pilbara. Some two or three weeks after I raised it with the minister's office and I got a no, he must have come more nicely to you. Those businesses have got it because it is hotter up there and they are required to run air conditioners. I do not understand why that is a special requirement that means they are in and no-one else is. What about Esperance? Esperance has businesses, one of which, the Esperance Taylor Street tea rooms, is actually on a footprint of the Esperance Southern Ports. This business is over the 50-megawatt-hour threshold and is in the Horizon network, but it cannot access this grant. Interestingly, it has to run a couple of lights to light up the Taylor Street area, which are actually port lights. They have to have those and they pay for them.

A member interjected.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: They do from the port, but they cannot access the grant, either.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Because they are not Horizon customers.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: They have to be a Horizon customer; what about other businesses down in Esperance that might be over the threshold?

Mr W.J. Johnston: I will explain in a second.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Okay. I found it interesting that the minister set the rules up, and then suddenly there has been a change. I am sure there is a whole heap of other reasons businesses could find there has been a change. The toilet tax has been mentioned very, very strongly in my electorate. I would have thought that the minister could simply take that off the Water Corp's balance sheet. That would not be hard.

I have another couple of issues. I refer to Hesketh Quarry. The minister was talking about green and red tape today. That is an issue; they need some issues sorted in order to be able to put blue metal onto the market. Right now, it has to be transported a significant distance away. It would literally supply the south west. Main Roads is chasing it. They have all these barriers to their expansion.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Is it on private land?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: No, it is on Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions land. I have had letters back and forth. I am trying to get the development commission to take up the issue. Of course, the fantastic Walpole pumped-storage hydro project—one of the minister's projects—is applying for a clearing permit for the bottom dam site. I hope that gets a tick. I have written to the Minister for Environment to say that this is a good outcome for a community that is just longing for a solution to the challenges it has. I have raised a number of issues that the government can respond to. We are putting this motion on the table in good faith because we know there are challenges; nevertheless, businesses out there have been substantially impacted by something out of their control.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [6.19 pm]: I rise to speak on behalf of the government on this motion—somewhat surprisingly. In advance, I want to pass my regards to the Minister for Tourism and hope that his day does not go too badly.

I say to the Nationals WA members that what they are asking us to do is what we are doing. We are looking at the shortfalls in the federal government support to small business and trying to fill the gaps that have been left to us. The federal government has not assisted everybody in industry in Western Australia. That is not a surprise because no government has unlimited money. We have to fit in around the enormous support that the federal government is giving. Let us not get away from the enormous support provided by the federal government. It is to its credit that it has abandoned ideology to follow some incredibly commonsense policy. We all have to acknowledge the elegance of the design of the JobKeeper program. There are, no doubt, issues around it. Temporary migrants are not covered by it in the way that the member for Warren–Blackwood described. I think he said that people were invited to Australia to work but are being left out of the JobKeeper program. Casuals have been left off. If a person has been a casual employee for less than 12 months, they do not get the JobKeeper payment. On the other hand, there are people who might have been working, say, seven or eight hours a week who are covered. Previously, they were getting \$300 or \$400 a week as a uni student working one shift in a bar, but now they are suddenly on \$1 500 a fortnight. There are definitely some anomalies in the JobKeeper program, but I absolutely give the commonwealth government credit for that program. I do not want to be seen to be criticising it. The commonwealth government had to design a program in a very short period of time for the hibernation of the economy—I think that is the term we are always using. When we thought that we would have to have a very, very long period of hibernation, it was a genius idea. The commonwealth government also supported displaced workers through the JobSeeker program at a proper level, rather than the disappointingly low level that used to apply to people who were out of work. I give credit to the commonwealth government for its ingenuity in designing these programs.

Of course, the commonwealth government also has working capital grants available to business. I think the maximum is \$100 000. It is a grant, not a loan. A whole range of government-backed loans are available for small business to get them through this difficult period. An incredible number of well-designed programs are available from the commonwealth government to assist industry in Western Australia and around the country. We looked at what the commonwealth government had done and tried to work out how we could fit in around that. So far, we have spent \$1.8 billion on behalf of the people of this state on stimulus and relief in response to COVID-19.

I will go through that in a minute, but I want to come back to a couple of things that were discussed by members as well. No matter what happens in the future, some things will probably stay with us for a long time. I put that down as social distancing, changed personal hygiene habits and people staying home when they are sick. I think people have to understand that these things are needed from now on, even if we have no people with COVID-19. We do still have people with COVID-19 in Western Australia. If no people in Western Australia had COVID-19, that would not mean that the disease does not exist. The disease will still exist elsewhere in the world, and all that is needed is for one person with the disease to come into the country for us to be back where we were in February. People need to understand that. If we are able to get zero cases in Western Australia, that will not be the end of the fight; that is just the end of this stage of the fight. We will still have to deal with the fact that COVID-19 exists in

the world, and we have to change society to accept that. The future will be different from the past. It does not matter what happens, because the future will always be different, so I think those three things will be with us for a long, long time. I am talking five, six or seven years. Social distancing; personal hygiene—people cleaning their hands and using hand sanitiser three times a day—coughing into elbows, not hands; and people staying at home when they are sick will be with us for a long time. People used to think that the best employee was the guy who came to work no matter what; we do not want that anymore. If people are sick, they need to stay at home, because the insidious nature of this disease is that some people do not even know that they have it until after they have had it. It is absolutely essential that society now changes to come to terms with this until, as we know, there is either a vaccine or a treatment. I am sure we all read the same international media sources and have seen the discussions in them about whether either of those two outcomes will ever occur. Society has to change; we will not, for the foreseeable future, go back to where we were prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in our world.

It is interesting that they now say that the first person to catch COVID-19 in France caught it before the new year. Nobody was talking about COVID-19 on 31 December. It was not until the middle of January that it started to break out as a story in world media. It had actually already been spreading outside China before anyone in the media was talking about it. That shows the difficulty we all have in dealing with this disease. Nobody knows whether there will be another outbreak tomorrow. Look at the difficulty they are having in Victoria with McDonald's. A truck driver infected a McDonald's employee and, as is often the case with McDonald's, the owner had more than one store, and the same worker worked at more than one store. They ended up with an outbreak across McDonald's stores and 12 stores are now shut. That is a challenge for all of us. Nobody should think that just because we get zero cases in Western Australia, if that ever happens, that that will be the end of the fight against COVID-19, because every day there is the possibility that a person with COVID-19 will come into the state, and that is why we have to have our hard borders with the east coast and overseas.

It is also interesting that just because a person is tested and comes up negative, it does not mean that they do not have the disease. There are also false negatives. Again, there is a lot of debate in the media about that. I think it was the member for Geraldton who was talking about people becoming relaxed about this. We cannot. We have to continue to maintain our strict behaviours because, otherwise, we will risk an outbreak of the disease exactly as we had in February and early March, when it became an issue in Western Australia. Remember, if we have an outbreak again, we will have to go back to that March response. It is not that we will now only ever go in one direction. If we have an outbreak, we will have to go back to where we were, because otherwise we will end up like New York or South Dakota. If members want to see an example of a regional community battling against the virus, they should have a look at what has happened in South Dakota over the last month. Obviously, this disease spreads more rapidly in a tightly populated area; therefore, cities around the globe seem to have been more impacted. However, even regional communities can be impacted. Of course, as we saw with the outbreak of the disease at Broome Health Campus, regional communities can be impacted. That is why we had to rush into the lockdown, but it will take us a long time to get out of it. If members have seen the advice of the government on the intrastate borders, they would know why we are being correctly cautious. Just because we get the count down to zero does not mean that there will be no risk. The more travel occurs, the higher the risk. That is why we need to do social distancing, make sure that we sneeze into our elbows, use a tissue and dispose of it, regularly clean our hands, and stay home if we are sick.

I want to address a couple of little things. We recognise that culture, the arts, sport and recreation is an area that relies a lot on volunteers—the bar funds the football, the ticket price funds the regional touring program and all these things. That is why the Premier tasked Lotterywest with supporting the not-for-profit sector. Organisations that would normally not be able to get a grant from Lotterywest or ordinarily not be able to get a grant for their underlying costs can now apply to Lotterywest to get that type of support. Lotterywest has money that is available for grants, but that does not mean that every community organisation in the state will be able to be supported to the extent they would like to be, but that system is deliberately designed to make sure that we can help community organisations get through this difficult time. Again, that is exactly what the Nationals WA is asking for. We have had a look at the shortfalls in support from the commonwealth government and are trying to address them. That is an example of something that we knew would not be helped by the commonwealth government, so we moved to address it.

I refer to the \$2 500 electricity offset. The government had already decided to give the \$17 500 payroll tax grants to businesses with a payroll between \$1 million and \$4 million. The reality is that, as a government, we do not have that much to do with business. Businesses operate out in the community. They might have to go and see their local government or they might need to buy a licence, but there is not much interaction between the government and business. But one thing we do is send an electricity bill every two months to just over 70 000 small businesses in Western Australia—those that buy regulated electricity from Synergy, and Horizon in the regions. Most of those small businesses do not pay payroll tax; therefore, they would not get the benefit from the payroll tax credit or the reduction in payroll tax that we are also introducing. Many of those businesses do not have employees. Statistics have been quoted that there are 225 000 small businesses, but 150 000 of those small businesses do not employ anybody. We know 70-odd thousand of them because they buy electricity from us. Generally speaking, if a business uses less than 50 megawatt hours of electricity, the assessment of government was that those businesses are not paying payroll tax, because if they were, they would be larger businesses and would be in the deregulated electricity system. In fact,

many of them would be small businesses that do not employ people. That was a way of targeting support and getting it into their pockets quickly. I think it was the Leader of the Opposition in the upper house, rather than the National Party representative but, one way or the other, we had a question in the upper house about what the application process is. There is not an application process. On 1 May there is a \$2 500 offset to electricity costs. Interestingly, the average electricity purchase for the business tariff for Synergy is \$2 600 so basically for 70-odd thousand small businesses we are paying their electricity for nearly a year, which is a pretty amazing achievement.

Mr V.A. Catania: They are under the 50 megawatt hours?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes. It is those people using less than 50 megawatt hours.

Mr V.A. Catania: Can the minister explain how the government made the change about Horizon?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am coming to that. That was the decision of government, and we made the announcement. Subsequent to us making that announcement, the chief executive of Horizon Power was approached by businesses in the north west and asked for flexibility around the implementation of the grant. That was reconsidered by the government and approval was given for Horizon Power to provide assistance to businesses—effectively, those in the north west, but it is not limited to the north west—that would use less than 50 megawatt hours if they were located in the south west. Therefore, they are using above the 50-megawatt-hours limit, but are not able to access alternative offerings other than Horizon. Horizon has to come back to me to approve the exact details, but it has flexibility, for those businesses that are a bit above the 50-megawatt-hour limit, to provide the offset to those customers. I am sure that the member wrote to me about this issue. I have no doubt about that. We would have told the member what the position was at the time that he wrote to us. It was a decision that was made quite late in the process, and it was because the chief executive, Stephanie Unwin, came and spoke to us about the challenge for customers in the north west particularly. I am not engaging in the question of Esperance, because I do not know the answer to that and I have certainly not discussed it. The concession is to Horizon and its customers. There are Esperance customers that are buying their energy from Horizon, but I think, because of the nature of the environment down in Esperance, that a business that would be using 50 megawatt hours in Perth is probably using 50 megawatt hours in Esperance. Interestingly, the port authority currently does not buy its electricity from Horizon. If a business is on the port land, it is probably getting its electricity either from the port authority or from somebody else—not from Horizon.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The south west interconnected system is a contestable market. The moment we start playing with it, we disturb it. I said this twice, in answer to a question from the member's leader and a question from the member for Bateman. I had retailers come to me and ask me not to give a grant to those people because I would be favouring Synergy over other businesses. In the over-50-megawatt-hour area, because they can get contestable outcomes, they can get different products. Sometimes the unit cost of electricity is lower than the regulated tariff. It has become very difficult to play in that space. That brings me back to the cost. This is a \$220 million program, which is an enormous amount of money. We cannot help everyone. It is sad, because we know that there will be businesses that are badly impacted. The member will have heard the Premier make the point many times that the COVID response has led to good people ending up in bad situations. That is the way it is happening because of the disease. We are trying to help as many people as we can, but we cannot help everybody. We are trying to do exactly what the member has asked. We are trying to see where the shortfalls in support from the commonwealth government are to see where we can fit in.

Mr V.A. Catania: Can I just say one more thing?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sure.

Mr V.A. Catania: For roadhouses, for example, in the north that are independent of the power supply and are not making a dollar, it is costing them a lot by not having traffic. They spend up to \$20 000 a month on diesel just to run. Is there any chance of them being able to get some acknowledgement that they are an essential service that is being kept open—not that \$2 500 is going to make a lot of difference? It is a vital service and their power costs are through the roof.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am not going to give the member an answer standing here, but we are very sympathetic to problems that are arising in the community. It is a very difficult time. We are not quite finished considering all the relief efforts, but we are ready now to pivot to the next stage because we are lucky that we have been able to control the disease and we now want to reopen. Leaving aside the Northern Territory, we are the place in Australia with the fewest restrictions. We never had a stay-at-home order in Western Australia. Obviously, nobody was encouraged to travel, but it was not like Victoria or New South Wales where people were told not to leave their homes. That has not been the case in Western Australia. Now, there can be gatherings of 20 people. On the east coast it is 10. It will be more in the future. I am not going to make any undertaking about a particular circumstance for an individual business that we have not been able to help, but I am happy to have a look at it.

Mr V.A. Catania: I have written to the Premier about that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sure. I do not know what response was given to the member.

Mr V.A. Catania: I have nothing yet.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes. We get a lot of questions about where the line is. It is the same with the internal borders. Everybody accepts that the internal borders were needed. The question is how we get out of them. I go back to the comment I made at the start of my speech. The disease still exists, so we still have to make sure that we are not doing things that will allow it to spread. Everybody looks at the figure and says that there are three people with the disease in Western Australia, so it is not a problem. Actually, that just means that we are back to where we were in February. The risk is exactly the same, although we are managing the borders better now, so we have to make sure that we do it slowly. I am not on the emergency management committee of cabinet, but, again, information is still given to the full cabinet. The point I make is that if we had taken all the borders away in Western Australia and if something had gone wrong, we would not know which bit was the problem, so we will do it slowly and in a measured way.

Mr V.A. Catania: I suppose the argument from the north is that we are allowing two major populations, being Perth and the south west, to congregate in a colder climate. Why allow that to happen down south and leave the north alone? That is the argument.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sure, but the Premier has explained that. It is because the medical facilities are further apart, there is more reliance on medical transfers and there is a larger Aboriginal population in the north. Do not forget that even if we had done away with all borders, the commonwealth government's biosecurity rules would still be in place. The Kimberley and a significant part of the Pilbara and elsewhere, including the goldfields and, I think, even a bit of the Gascoyne, are covered by the commonwealth government's biosecurity arrangements, and we cannot withdraw those. Only the commonwealth government can withdraw those.

Mr V.A. Catania: Can I just make one point. Everyone keeps talking about the Aboriginal populations and communities; yes, there are communities and a large Aboriginal population, but the largest Aboriginal population lives in Perth and the south west.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I know, but whatever the risk in Perth is, it was always the same. When we relax our risks here in Perth, that risk changes, but there is a risk if we remove the internal boundaries. We have removed some internal boundaries. The Premier has made it clear that he will review that in three or four weeks. If the risk has not become a problem, he has made it clear that he will make further decisions about those other internal boundaries. Broome is one of the classic examples. It is a city that relies on tourism, but it is the service centre for the remote communities in the Kimberley. The member can immediately understand the challenge. Yes, we want tourism businesses back up and operating, yet it is one of the points in the state where the risks are so high. These are not easy decisions. As I say, I am not on the emergency management committee and it is not a decision I have to make, although it comes to cabinet for final endorsement, but these are the problems. It is the same as the pubs. There has been a suggestion that there should be 20 people per venue, but one of the problems is that some large venues have a number of subparts. One of the challenges is the use of toilets and ingress and egress, because if there is only one entrance to a building and only one set of toilets, it is only one venue, because the patrons would mix. That is about tracing if there is a need to trace people.

Mr V.A. Catania: They cannot afford to have more than one toilet either!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The difficulty with that, as the Minister for Water highlighted in question time today, is that it is a fixed charge because there is a fixed cost. The Water Corporation bears the cost whether facilities are being used or not.

Mr D.T. Redman: But it is a spot where the government could provide a subsidy or short-term relief, because they simply do not have the revenue to offset what is a fixed cost.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, it might be something we could look at.

Mr V.A. Catania: Prior to 2003, it was a consumption charge rather than a —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The problem is it is a fixed cost because it is about capacity. It is like so many other things; it is about having the capacity available when it is needed.

Mr D.T. Redman: Network costs.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, network costs; there we go. But we never know what the government might do in that area. It is something that we understand is a challenge and it might be possible to come up with a plan to help.

Getting back to the question of the interaction of customers in a business, I turn to the question of the cellar door. The reason a person cannot just have a beer at a pub is about preventing mixing of clients. If we go okay with the current relaxations, there will be further relaxations, and that will probably address the cellar door question.

Mr D.T. Redman: A big proportion of cellar doors are only little ones—three or four people at one time.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, I understand that.

Mr D.T. Redman: Provided they have good practice—I think good practice is a given—I would have thought it made a bit of sense.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is the advice we have at this stage, and I am sure it will change over time.

The other thing is the \$150 million pull forward of the expenditure on the housing package. This is a really good idea. Yes, some new houses are going to be built, which is good, but the other thing is this large-scale refurbishment program. The great thing here is that the Department of Communities has houses everywhere, so the refurbishment of houses in Broome will be done by contractors in Broome, the refurbishment of houses in Carnarvon will be done by contractors in Carnarvon, the refurbishment of houses in —

Mr D.T. Redman: I thought you had open tender processes that allow those to go to market, which means a Perth business may well get that business.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, because the good thing is that it is a panel contract, as the member knows, as a former Minister for Housing. The contractors are already in place. This is the great thing.

Mr D.T. Redman: So you would use those panel contractors?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am not the Minister for Housing, but my understanding is that the reason we are encouraging the minister to do this is that he knows what work needs to be done. He does not have to plan it, because like all government organisations, there is a list of maintenance tasks. It is right across the state; therefore, we can spread the work around. He already has a panel of providers for the proposed works, so he can get the work out the door on a quick basis, just like we did with the school maintenance blitz last year. That was a great program. I am sure members all have stories of what happened in their schools. The member for Central Wheatbelt got the largest contribution of any electorate in the state.

Ms M.J. Davies: I have got a lot of schools.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, I know. I looked it up. The electorate of Cannington had the largest spend in the metropolitan area, so I wanted to see what the largest spend in the state was, and it was in Central Wheatbelt. The member for Central Wheatbelt and I did very well out of that.

Ms M.J. Davies: I have got a lot of schools.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, although I have a lot of old schools. I have two schools that are over 100 years old, so members can imagine the maintenance required.

Ms M.J. Davies: I think I might give you a run for your money on that one. I reckon I have more than that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am sure the member does, but to have two 100-year-old schools in one metropolitan electorate with only 42 000 citizens is pretty amazing.

Ms M.J. Davies: I reckon a lot of mine would be around that age.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, but the member's electorate has a big footprint.

Ms M.J. Davies: Yes, I have a 100-year-old town.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: There are not a lot of 100-year-old schools in the metro area, so to have two of them in one electorate is pretty amazing.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy): I have one.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: You have one?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Gosnells Primary School.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Anyway, keep going.

Mr D.R. Michael: Tuart Hill Primary School.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: There you go—another one.

We appreciate the problem with the cellar door. That is the advice we have at this stage. As the advice changes, we will deal with it.

The \$2 500 credit on electricity bills for small businesses is a very important part of our relief program, and I have explained why we targeted those businesses—it is because they were the ones that we think were not being touched by the other federal or state government programs. The grant of \$17 500 to businesses with a payroll of between \$1 million and \$4 million, increasing the payroll tax threshold to \$1 million and waiving payroll tax for four months for businesses with annual wages bills of less than \$7.5 million that are affected by COVID-19 are very important contributions. There is \$24.5 million in funding to assist the building and construction industry to maintain apprentices and trainees and the \$150 million housing investment package for the Department of Communities to provide work for tradies across the state. The construction of up to 500 social and affordable houses will be

achieved out of that package as it unfolds over time. That is very important, and the minister explained, I think yesterday, the pipeline of work and the fact that many of those construction companies rely on that long pipeline. Because that pipeline has been severed, even if only on a temporary basis, that will have a big impact.

We have also waived over \$100 million of licence fees that impact on small and medium-sized businesses. An electrician might need to renew their licence, so there are those sorts of things. They have all been waived for 12 months. Believe it or not, that is \$100 million of cost to government by effectively giving a 12-month extension to people in those situations. Of course, we have invested in the Small Business Development Corporation so that there is a one-stop shop for people needing to find out what assistance is available from government. The great thing about the SBDC is that it does not just explain how to access state government assistance; it also explains what other assistance is available and helps to deal with other more commercial issues.

I want to emphasise what we have done. There was a bit of criticism from one member about the rebate on land tax. People asked how the government expected landlords to be generous to tenants if it was not being generous to landlords, so we have given a rebate. If a landlord forgives their tenant the rent, we will forgive them their land tax for the exact same period. Land tax cannot be a reason for a landlord not to help their tenant. They might have other reasons not to help their tenant, but it will not be about land tax. We will waive their land tax obligation to the extent that they waive the rental for their tenant. Of course, we have given increased protections to leaseholders. There is also the eviction moratorium and a process to deal with disputes, in that there is a compulsory mediation process, but the dispute will go to the State Administrative Tribunal for resolution if it cannot be resolved through mediation. That is a much stronger position for tenants than they had previously. That is why there is a \$100 million land tax assistance package for landlords. If a landlord has given rent relief to a small business, they can seek a land tax rebate for the same duration as the relief given to the tenant. I know that there has been some criticism about eligibility, but, again, grants of \$6 500 have been provided to support eligible tourism operators, including micro-businesses, with annual taxable wages of less than \$1 million. The \$4 million tourism business survival grants package will provide grants of between \$25 000 and \$100 000 to try to assist businesses to survive during this difficult period so that tourism offerings can continue in parts of the state that have had to be locked away from tourists in the short term.

Ms M.J. Davies: I have a couple of travel agents who are obviously still working 12-hour days because they are working through cancellations. A lot of them might get JobKeeper, but only one of them, because a lot of them are mum-and-dad operators. They are not included in that tourism package. I have had a couple, including one that operates in my electorate and also in the Premier's electorate, and they are just devastated because they are a small business and their entire capacity is based on international and interstate travel. They feel like they are very much a part of the tourism industry, but they do not qualify under that package.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The \$14.4 million recovery package is aimed at the tourism offerings—the attractions. I would not want to be a travel agent, and there are lots of them that have specialised in marketing cruises, because I do not think anybody will be going on a cruise.

Mr V.A. Catania: They're cheap!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, I know. Apparently, they are really, really cheap, but I am still not going on one.

Ms M.J. Davies: But they are doing all the cancellations, so they are still working but they have no income.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, I understand that. It is unfortunate. I am not quite sure what the assistance would be to get them to a successful business model. Does the member understand what I mean? These grants are designed to help businesses that have a clear opportunity for the future of tourism in Western Australia, which is going to be more domestic oriented, to make sure that when tourists return, the tourism offerings are there to attract tourists from Perth, and perhaps later on the east coast, to those regional parts of Western Australia. As I say, it is unfortunate but true that the government cannot help every single business, in the same way as the commonwealth government cannot help every business. The member is quite right; we need to address the shortfalls and that is what we are trying to do. But that does not mean that we have addressed every single business, because that is not possible for us. As we keep emphasising, the state government is about nine per cent of the economy and the commonwealth is roughly 24 per cent, so that means that the private sector is 67 per cent. We do not have the resources to replace that 67 per cent.

The new Procurement Bill is another way that we are trying to provide simpler and more consistent access to government work. I know that is something that people in the National Party discuss regularly. We have arranged the hygiene training course for hospitality workers so that businesses are ready for the return of customers. There is a \$1.78 million package to make sure that the workers and businesses in the industry are ready to deal with this new world of COVID-19 that we are coming into. That is one of the things that we have to understand—the world has changed and we have to deal with that. There were some grants to individual TABs to make sure that they can cover cash withdrawals during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Ms M.J. Davies: The next available RPT flight out of Karratha is not until Monday, 8 June. They have been told to ramp up and get going, but they need people.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes. We have worked very closely with the resources sector on the health and safety of workers on mine sites, because clearly keeping the mining industry going was absolutely essential not just to Western Australia, but to the nation. One of the responses to that was for the mining companies to move to a dedicated charter service, and that was a necessary part of their COVID response. Of course, given that they made up about 60 or 70 per cent of travel to the regions, it completely undermined the existing regular public transport business model. As I understand it, the state government is supporting the operations of Rex airlines and the commonwealth government is supporting the RPT operations of Qantas and Virgin Australia, but it is very difficult.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, but that is the problem. It is all about the risk. Maintaining the high level of risk management for the mining industry saved Australia. If the mining industry was not running as successfully as it is, Australia would look like a different country.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

MINISTER FOR WATER — GOVERNMENT TRADING ENTERPRISES — STAFF

5957. Mr D.C. Nalder to the Minister for Water:

I refer to each of the Government Trading Enterprises in your portfolio, and I ask:

- (a) For each of the years 2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19,:
- (i) What was the total number of full-time equivalent staff;
 - (ii) What was the total headcount;
 - (iii) What was the total number of contractors; and
 - (iv) How much was spent on consultants?

Mr D.J. Kelly replied:

Aqwest

	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19
(i)	37.79	36.03	34.26
(ii)	39	38	39
(iii)	2	3	3
(iv)	Please refer to the Six Monthly Consultants Returns tabled in Parliament		

Busselton Water

	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19
(i)	29.5	30.5	30.1
(ii)	31	32	31
(iii)	–	1	2
(iv)	Please refer to the Six Monthly Consultants Returns tabled in Parliament		

Forest Products Commission

	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19
(i)	204	184	192
(ii)	230	213	226
(iii)	9	3	12
(iv)	Please refer to the Six Monthly Consultants Returns tabled in Parliament		

Water Corporation

	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19
(i)	2618.79	2612.58	2677.02
(ii)	2753	2751	2821
(iii)	259	243	292
(iv)	Please refer to the Six Monthly Consultants Returns tabled in Parliament		

