



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2021

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 12 May 2021

Legislative Assembly

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

VISITORS — DEANMORE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [12.02 pm]: On behalf of the member for Scarborough, I would like to acknowledge in the public gallery today the year 6 students from Deanmore Primary School. Welcome to you all.

PAPERS TABLED

Papers were tabled and ordered to lie upon the table of the house.

INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

Statement by Minister for Health

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health) [12.03 pm]: Today is International Nurses Day and on 5 May it was International Day of the Midwife. I would like to thank all nurses for their extraordinary contribution to the health and wellbeing of our Western Australian community, and I acknowledge the important work of our midwives, who were celebrated on the International Day of the Midwife just last week.

Once again, nurses have stepped up to lead and deliver care during extraordinary times, showing the value of their profession. As dedicated professionals who care with compassion across diverse specialities in all sectors, our nurses are crucial in meeting not only the physical needs of our patients and their families, but also their psychological, emotional and spiritual needs. The theme for International Nurses Day 2021, “Nurses: A Voice to Lead—A vision for future healthcare”, recognises the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the health system and the nursing profession.

The WA Nursing and Midwifery Excellence Awards gala ball, to be held this Saturday, 15 May, will recognise our nurses who have gone above and beyond in delivering care to their patients, with our 2020 winners announced at this event. I am so proud to see a diverse range of finalists from right across this great state, including our regions—the Kimberley, the Pilbara, the wheatbelt and the goldfields. A very special thankyou to the finalists from the Premier, and I also thank my local hospital, Rockingham General Hospital, for their contributions to our communities. The gala ball will also include a special tribute to all our nurses in recognition of their commitment to the health system and wellbeing of the community during the pandemic. Our WA nurses who were deployed to Victoria to assist during the COVID crisis will also be acknowledged for their exceptional care of, and commitment to, vulnerable aged-care residents during this challenging and uncertain time.

WA is fortunate to have world-class nurses who are committed to providing care to the highest standard. I am incredibly proud of the work our nurses undertake every day to meet the needs of the WA community. To our nurses, enjoy your day of celebration; it is well deserved.

PERTH CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL — AISHWARYA ASWATH

Statement by Minister for Health

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health) [12.06 pm]: I rise to update the house on the tragic death of seven-year-old Aishwarya Aswath Chavittupara at Perth Children’s Hospital on 3 April this year. I can confirm that the initial investigation into this tragic death has been completed and was provided to Aishwarya’s family this morning. It is vital that we now give the family appropriate time to read and process the report. We must respect their right to privacy and acknowledge that this report documents in detail the final hours of their daughter’s life. It is confronting and extremely distressing to read. However, I also acknowledge that the findings and recommendations of this report address issues that are a matter of public interest. Therefore, today, with the consent of Aishwarya’s family, I will provide the house with a summary overview of the root cause analysis report into Aishwarya’s death and table the recommendations in their entirety.

The report makes it clear that Aishwarya and her parents should have received better care. They did not get the help they asked for. I wish to apologise unreservedly for this failure and for the heartbreak and devastation Aishwarya’s death has caused her family and her community. On behalf of the McGowan government, the Child and Adolescent Health Service and all the health community, I say to Aishwarya’s family: I am sorry. This morning I spoke to Aishwarya’s father and once again I conveyed my deepest sympathies. While nothing can ease the pain felt by the family, I will do everything in my power to ensure that it will not happen again.

I would like to thank the 10 members of the review panel for their work in completing this investigation. The report finds that it appears Aishwarya succumbed to an infection related to group A streptococcus, which is associated

with very poor health outcomes and high mortality. The report outlines 11 recommendations to be implemented at Perth Children's Hospital within the next six months. These include: improvement to the triage process policy; contemporaneous education to improve staff skills and knowledge; improvement of clinical supervision in the emergency department; development of a clear pathway for parents to escalate their concerns to staff; development of an established sepsis recognition diagnostic tool in PCH's ED; a review of cultural awareness by staff for culturally and linguistically diverse populations; and an independent external review of the emergency department. I am advised that implementation of all 11 recommendations has the full support of the Child and Adolescent Health Service board and executive, with a considerable amount of work having already been undertaken to address some of the concerns highlighted by the report. I know that this tragic event has been deeply felt by staff across Perth Children's Hospital and we must continue to support them and the work that they do.

Perth Children's Hospital continues to be a leading hospital that performs objectively well against safety and quality measures. It is vital that we learn from what happened at Perth Children's Hospital and continue to improve the care provided to the children and young people of Western Australia. To this end, I can inform the house that I have today requested the director general of the Department of Health to use his powers under the Health Services Act to arrange for an independent inquiry into the Perth Children's Hospital's emergency department. This independent inquiry will include any matters of specific concern identified by Aishwarya's family.

[See paper [218](#).]

WATERWISE RECOGNITION AWARDS

Statement by Minister for Water

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean — Minister for Water) [12.10 pm]: This morning I had the pleasure of attending the annual waterwise recognition event co-hosted by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Water Corporation. The event celebrates the achievements of participants in the state's five non-residential waterwise programs.

Water is central to the lives and lifestyles of all Western Australians, but as the state responds to the growing impacts of climate change, it has never been more important to work together to create more waterwise communities and protect our state's precious water supply. The impacts of climate change have seen a 20 per cent reduction in rainfall in the state's south west since the 1970s, meaning we can no longer rely on rain alone to meet our water needs and dramatically affecting where precious water supplies are sourced from.

The waterwise programs support and foster relationships between local government, business and industry to ensure that we are all working collectively to meet the challenges posed by climate change. As we continue to feel the impacts of climate change, local governments, businesses and the community all have a role to play to protect and adapt the way they use water.

I would like to congratulate all those recognised as part of the 2021 waterwise recognition awards, particularly our platinum award winners, who continue to show real leadership and innovation in driving water efficiency. They include the joint Waterwise Councils of the Year, the City of Bayswater and the City of Cockburn; the Waterwise Building of the Year, 197 St Georges Terrace, Perth, owned by GDI Property Group; the Waterwise Business of the Year, Inghams Enterprises, Wanneroo; and the Waterwise Development of the Year, WGV by DevelopmentWA.

The Waterwise council program was introduced by the Water Corporation and DWER over 12 years ago. A total of 46 councils are now endorsed through the program, with eight councils this year recognised for 10 years' participation. Together, they are achieving billions of litres of water savings for our state and helping to ensure a sustainable water future.

YOUTH WEEK WA 2021

Statement by Minister for Youth

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean — Minister for Youth) [12.12 pm]: I rise to inform the house of the 2021 WA Young Person of the Year and update the house on WA Youth Week. As members would be aware, the WA Young Person of the Year is announced during Youth Week WA. Youth Week WA is the largest celebration of young people in the state, with various events held across WA to elevate and celebrate young people's voices. Last year's Youth Week WA events were significantly impacted by COVID-19, so it was great to see the program back and better than ever this year. One of the highlights of Youth Week WA is the WA Youth Awards, which I had the pleasure of attending last month at the Western Australian Museum Boola Bardip. As with previous years, the calibre of nominees was outstanding.

I am pleased to advise the house that Whadjuk Noongar man Derek Nannup was awarded the 2021 WA Young Person of the Year for his dedication to strengthening cultural connections for young Aboriginal people. Derek has worked at Wesley College as the Indigenous cultural program coordinator and with Wungening Aboriginal Corporation as a support worker for children in care, and currently works in sexual health education at the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia. Outside of work, Derek sits on the Mirrabooka Police District Youth Advisory Group and the Youth Educating Peers Reference Group. Derek also established Boorloo Indigenous Youth Yarning Circles,

a space where young people can meet monthly to practise traditional healing, discuss culture and community issues and talk about how they can address and prevent them. I once again congratulate Derek for his outstanding achievement and for his continuing dedication to his community.

I also had the pleasure of presenting the Minister for Youth's Most Outstanding Youth Worker Award, which was won posthumously this year by the late Laura Florisson, an inaugural coordinator of Anglicare's Home Stretch program.

I extend my congratulations to all nominees and pay a special thank you to the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia, which coordinated the awards.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — INQUIRY REPORTS

Statement by Minister for Local Government

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Local Government) [12.15 pm]: I rise to table the authorised inquiry reports into the City of Subiaco, the City of Cockburn and the Shire of Wiluna. The inquiry into the Shire of Wiluna commenced in 2019 and the inquiries into the Cities of Cockburn and Subiaco commenced in 2020. They were commenced following concerns raised with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries about the operation of all three councils. The authorised inquiry reports I table were developed by the department. The report into the City of Subiaco makes three recommendations. The report into the City of Cockburn also makes three recommendations. These three reports highlight issues with the employment and management of staff, inappropriate workplace behaviour and inadequate systems for dealing with that behaviour, the reporting of misconduct to the appropriate authorities, and workplace culture.

The report into the City of Subiaco also highlights the adequacy of, and adherence to, council's policies and procedures by elected members and administration staff, and declarations of interests by elected members and administration staff. The report into the City of Cockburn also highlights issues with the city's complaint handling procedures, for both internal and external complaints.

The report into the Shire of Wiluna makes three recommendations. It highlights issues with request for tenders process 2017–06; an overdraft of \$2.5 million from the Commonwealth Bank of Australia; the financial viability of the shire; and the culture of the shire, including among the elected members and administration.

All three local governments and affected parties have seen the reports and had the opportunity to comment before release. Recommendations to improve the local governments' operations include a governance review at the Cities of Subiaco and Cockburn, elected member training at the Shire of Wiluna, and elected member and executive team training at the City of Cockburn. All three councils must report back on improvements made to the department within a specified time frame. The department will continue to support those local governments. Driving a strong system of local government that operates efficiently and effectively, with clear transparency and accountability to ratepayers, and that puts the community first, is a priority of the McGowan government.

[See papers [219](#) to [221](#).]

FREMANTLE PRISON

Statement by Minister for Heritage

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Heritage) [12.18 pm]: I rise to inform the house of a significant development in this government's plan to explore and exhibit the significance of Fremantle Prison in Western Australian history. This government is working to fund conservation works to ensure that Fremantle Prison—one of the most significant heritage sites in Australia, and indeed the world—remains protected, harnesses its storytelling potential and opens more areas of the prison to be discovered. I am pleased to report that last month two grants worth \$400 000 from the commonwealth government's Australian heritage grants 2020–21 program were announced. The first grant is for \$320 000, which will fund the Aboriginal heritage management plan. This plan will identify cultural and historic heritage values relating to the history of displacement and incarceration of Aboriginal people at Fremantle Prison and guide the culturally appropriate interpretation of this history to the wider community. By exploring an Aboriginal perspective of the impact of Fremantle Prison, we are working towards establishing a truly inclusive view of our state's history. This is fundamentally important to the truth telling of our past—a history that is part of Western Australia's path to reconciliation. The process of truth telling must also be accessible. All Western Australians should have an opportunity to visit Fremantle Prison and immerse themselves in the histories exhibited and commemorated on those grounds.

A second grant of \$91 000 will be used to prepare an accessibility and inclusion plan to ensure that we are improving our service delivery for Western Australians with a lived experience of disability. This will be developed in partnership with a range of people with lived experience of disability. The plan aims to make the site and the services it offers more accessible and inclusive to ensure that Fremantle Prison is as welcoming as possible. The plan will be open for community consultation in early 2022. The grants follow more than \$5 million in state government-funded projects to repair the main cell block, restore the commissariat, and upgrade and repair the main parade ground and prison hospital. I commend the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage for its successful grant application and its work to find funding opportunities to improve the accessibility and cultural impact of our state's heritage fabric.

FINANCIAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021*Introduction and First Reading*

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr M. McGowan (Treasurer)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the Treasurer.

Second Reading

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Treasurer) [12.21 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Financial Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 was introduced into the Legislative Council on 19 March 2020. Unfortunately, due to urgent legislation arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the government's significant legislative agenda, the bill lapsed upon the dissolution of the fortieth Parliament. The 2021 bill is in the same form as the previous bill that lapsed. It arises from the recommendations of two statutory reviews of the Financial Management Act 2006 undertaken in 2012 and 2017, in accordance with section 85 of the Financial Management Act.

The amendments proposed in the bill will support key reforms that will deliver a more effective and robust financial management framework. This will continue this government's strong focus on sound financial management and accountability. In broad terms, the amendments in the bill fall into two themes: improving governance and accountability, and improving efficiency and effectiveness. Importantly, the proposed amendments also address the findings and recommendations of recent reviews, including the service priority review and the special inquiry into government programs and projects. Although the majority of the amendments proposed in the bill are to the Financial Management Act, a small number of amendments are also proposed for the Loan Act 2017 and the Government Financial Responsibility Act 2000.

The bill will strengthen budget management practices by explicitly requiring an agency's accountable authority to operate within its approved expense limit as specified in the agency's resource agreement. Embedding this requirement in the FMA will enhance fiscal responsibility and accountability, and is crucial in ensuring that key performance measures are meaningful and observed.

The bill will also require agencies to formally notify their minister in the event they may be experiencing financial difficulty. The responsible minister is then required to confer with the Treasurer on a course of action to enable the agency to meet its financial obligations when they are due. Currently, this requirement is only included in a limited number of statutory authorities' enabling legislation, primarily those with a commercial focus. Although the FMA provides a strong framework of control over the authorisation and payment of money, it currently lacks an explicit constraint on agencies entering into an arrangement that effectively commits the state to a financial obligation and thereby potentially pre-empting the government's discretion in the matter.

To strengthen governance, the bill will require accountable authorities to ensure that agencies comply with state government policies on financial management. Importantly, agencies will be required to have policies and procedures on how officers of an agency may exercise the authority to enter into a financial obligation on behalf of the agency or the state. Furthermore, sound budgetary control will be reinforced through the introduction of a legislative requirement for agencies to establish a comprehensive framework of delegations and authorisations, including maintaining proper records and documentation. This is essential for enforcing stronger financial accountability controls across the public sector. It builds on the measures already implemented by this government to reinforce the independence of agencies' internal audit functions and the segregation of duties in the authorisation of payments. The bill also introduces amendments that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector financial management.

New and supplementary expenditures that have been incurred during the course of the year are currently required to be provided for in an appropriation act in the next or later financial year, in accordance with section 27 of the FMA. However, in recent years many of these supplementary appropriation bills have not passed the Parliament and lapsed, largely due to more urgent and competing priorities. Therefore, this bill proposes to deal with these expenditures as a standing appropriation and provide accountability to the Parliament by reporting these expenditures in the *Annual report on state finances*. Under the Government Financial Responsibility Act 2000, the *Annual report on state finances* must be tabled in Parliament within 90 days of the end of the financial year.

The bill also proposes amendments to provide for the automatic supply of moneys in an election year, such as this one, where the budget is typically handed down at a later date. If supply has not been granted by Parliament at the beginning of a financial year, the bill's amendments will permit the Treasurer to charge to the consolidated account up to 35 per cent of the total amount appropriated in the previous year, in order to meet payments for up to four months—up from two months currently—of the budget year. These amendments will allow adequate time for Parliament to examine the state's finances in an election year and to fund the core activities of government without resorting to a supply act for supply beyond the first two months of the current year.

The bill also provides a solution for the unintended build-up of agency holding account balances that comprise non-cash components of an agency's appropriation, such as depreciation and increases in leave liabilities. It was intended that over time, the holding account would fund relevant agency commitments. For example, holding account

balances built up through depreciation would fund like-for-like asset replacements. However, these balances, which impact the balance sheet, have been growing unabated, for reasons including the non-replacement of assets, due to, for example, changing technology, other funding options for capital and the overestimation of depreciation expenses. The proposed amendments will resolve this issue by permitting the Treasurer to direct all or part of agencies' non-cash balances standing to the credit of the holding account to the consolidated account, where these balances have built up and are not likely to be utilised.

The bill also addresses an existing anomaly in the Loan Act 2017 which does not allow for the temporary repayment and redraw of borrowings without impacting the total authorised borrowing limit. This means that short-term cash surpluses in the public bank account have generally been applied to investments rather than debt repayment, which is not optimal, given that interest earned on investments is typically less than the interest paid on borrowings. Proposed amendments to the Loan Act 2017 will resolve this legislative deficiency so that the temporary repayment and redraw of borrowings will not impact the authorised limit and allow better cash flow and liquidity management practices.

As part of this government's commitment to reducing red tape, the Governor's role in the approval of write-offs of public property and revenue and other debts due to a statutory authority or the state, as well as act-of-grace payments, has been replaced with the Treasurer. Although this will reduce the administrative burden on the Governor, it will not diminish accountability as agencies are required to not only maintain registers for write-offs and act-of-grace payments, but also disclose this information in their annual reports under the *Treasurer's instructions*. The overarching objective of the proposed recommendations is to "enable the public sector to do its job better", consistent with the service priority review. I note that these amendments are consistent with the recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Audit. The bill includes amendments to reduce the financial reporting compliance burden for agencies, by allowing the Treasurer to exempt agencies from reporting key performance indicators in their annual reports when there is adequate justification. Key performance indicators are a significant component of the Western Australian outcome-based management framework, but compliance does not always mean responsible financial management, particularly when KPIs are not meaningful in helping to assess an agency's performance. Various reviews have recommended modifying the existing performance reporting regime to avoid key performance indicators for policy, planning and research functions, recognising that the value of these functions cannot be effectively assessed in this manner.

Other minor amendments to the Financial Management Act in the bill include: providing clarity to agencies on the requirements of resource agreements, and the operation and approval process of the annual estimates; broadening the definition of "relevant commitment" to provide the government with greater flexibility to respond to changing circumstances; and extending the statutory periodic review of the Financial Management Act from five to 10 years, reflecting the ongoing need for the act and the significant workload in undertaking the review. I note that this amendment will not preclude any other legislative amendment to be made in the interim.

Western Australia already has a good financial management framework, but we can and should seek to continually improve it. The Financial Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 will do this and will build on the McGowan government's commitment to strong financial management and accountability.

I commend the bill to the house.

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

METROPOLITAN REGION SCHEME (BEELIAR WETLANDS) BILL 2021

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) [12.32 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce legislation that will permanently protect Beeliar Regional Park—the Beeliar wetlands—and forever exclude the area from development. This bill was presented to the Parliament in the last term. It passed the Legislative Assembly in 2019, but, unfortunately, could not be considered in the upper house due to the actions of delay by the Liberal Party.

We have made significant progress to save the Beeliar wetlands for future generations. Last year, we created an A-class conservation reserve of 610 hectares. Today, we are finishing the job to ensure that these highly valued wetlands remain protected for future generations.

The Beeliar wetlands are internationally and nationally significant. The vegetation communities found within Beeliar Regional Park are significant, as they represent communities that have been widely cleared from the Swan coastal plain. A number of areas in Beeliar Regional Park contain priority flora species. The wetlands and surrounding

areas provide important nesting and feeding habitats, as well as act as summer refuges for a diverse bird population. Beeliar Regional Park also has high cultural significance for Aboriginal people, particularly North Lake and Bibra Lake, which have spiritual importance.

The bill will rezone 34 hectares in the metropolitan region scheme from a primary regional roads reserve and urban zone to a parks and recreation reservation. A small area is also being zoned urban to reflect existing local roads. The 34 hectares are a key part of the Roe 8 reserve, which is now classified as an A-class reserve.

Land for future road corridors was reserved in the metropolitan region scheme in 1963 when the MRS was created. Since that time, development across the metropolitan area has expanded considerably and we have seen hundreds if not thousands of changes to the MRS. Although there has been and continues to be significant political debate about Roe 8 and the Perth Freight Link, it is our considered view that these reservations are no longer warranted given the environmental values of the wetlands and the government's freight strategy for the future.

In the short term, we are delivering on our commitment to increase the volume of freight on rail. The percentage of freight on rail has increased under the McGowan government to approximately 20 per cent and we will continue to work to increase this percentage even further. We are also working with industry to provide additional train paths for container freight and to facilitate the development of intermodal terminals. The intermodal network plan will provide for new and existing precincts to transfer freight efficiently from road to rail, further improving the competitiveness of rail. The movement of freight efficiently and safely around the state to our ports is a priority of this government. We are a trading state and we need to make sure that we can facilitate strong trade growth into the future.

The Westport Taskforce has recommended a new port in Kwinana and work is actively underway to deliver on this recommendation. So, too, is the work to plan the road and rail connections to this new port. This will not require the Roe 8 and 9 road reservations; instead, work is underway to plan the Thomas Road and Anketell Road east-west corridor.

In recent decades, we have seen the development of the eastern corridor with the Tonkin Highway projects, and new and significant development in transport planning. Tonkin Highway stretches from Muchea to just north of Byford, and works will soon commence to extend it to Mundijong. This significant corridor, together with the development of logistics parks and intermodals in Forrestfield, a new intermodal planned for Kenwick, and future possibilities of intermodals at Mundijong and Bullsbrook, show that this eastern corridor is growing in its importance to meet the freight challenge.

On this I want to refer to the Stephenson plan and some of the comments that have been made in this place about what it does or does not say. First of all, let me say that the Stephenson plan is more than 60 years old, and although it has been the fundamental guiding document for the development of Perth and Fremantle, things have changed dramatically. For example, road corridors like the extension of Tonkin Highway past Armadale and the extension of the freeways were never imagined. However, even the Stephenson plan—more than 60 years old—noted that the inner harbour had a limit and that the outer harbour would need to form a fundamental part of the Fremantle port over time.

Throughout the document, reference is made to the expansion of the Fremantle port to Cockburn Sound. On page 17 it notes —

The port will continue to grow, with increasing emphasis on the Outer Harbour in Cockburn Sound.

On page 136, the plan states —

There exists in the south-eastern part of Cockburn Sound area a vast hinterland capable of accommodating all the uses associated with a major port and industrial area without any of the restrictions on space, becoming more and more apparent, in the vicinity of the Inner Harbour.

It is clear the new port has always been on the agenda and part of the longer term plan. We are ensuring that we have dedicated freight corridors from the east to serve the new port.

Clause 4(1) of the bill will amend the metropolitan region scheme by deleting the primary regional roads reserve that traverses the Beeliar wetlands and a small portion of the urban zone, reserving that land for parks and recreation.

Clause 4(2) of the bill will amend the metropolitan region scheme by deleting a small portion of the primary regional roads reserve—shown in the area shaded reddish brown on the plan—and will zone that portion of land urban. This area will be zoned urban, rather than reserved for parks and recreation, in order to ensure consistency with the zoning of adjacent land. This will ensure that any use and development of land reserved for parks and recreation must preserve the natural environment and provide public recreational opportunities. Rezoning of the land through this bill will ensure that the Beeliar wetlands are preserved for the enjoyment of future generations.

The next stage of the process, after the bill has passed, will take place through a standard metropolitan region scheme amendment to engage on rezoning the remaining 84 hectares of land located to the west of North Lake Road that is currently designated as a primary regional road. We will be consulting widely with the community and other stakeholders on the most appropriate future use for this land through a separate planning investigation process.

The retention and protection of the Beeliar wetlands is an issue that we have taken to two elections. We have a clear mandate to deliver on this commitment. This bill will preserve these wetlands for future generations. I believe we need to put an end to the debate about development in this area once and for all. Let us ensure the Beeliar wetlands are protected and reserved for our use and benefit.

I commend the bill to the house.

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

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Ms A. Sanderson (Minister for Environment)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MS A. SANDERSON (Morley — Minister for Environment) [12.40 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Conservation and Land Management Amendment Bill 2021 is to amend the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984—the CALM act—to implement government policy commitments including the joint vesting of marine parks with traditional owners. Traditional owners have long held aspirations to be joint managers of their sea and land country with a formal vesting interest.

In 2015, Parliament made changes to the CALM act enabling terrestrial reserves to be jointly vested with the Conservation and Parks Commission and an Aboriginal body corporate. The amendments in this bill extend the joint vesting provisions to marine parks, marine management areas and marine nature reserves.

Leading into the March 2017 election, the Labor Party said —

At its heart, A McGowan Labor Government will protect the rights of Traditional Owners to their land and sea Country. We will recognise rights through improved consultation, recognition of indigenous leadership in land management, supporting participation in economic activities on Country, and the joint vesting of marine parks.

As Minister for Environment, I am excited to deliver on this commitment as we implement the Plan for Our Parks initiative to jointly manage and jointly vest lands and waters with Aboriginal people. In delivering new and expanded reserves, we will deliver the intended environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits with traditional owners and learn from what they have to offer.

This bill will also recognise that the conservation purpose of marine parks includes the protection and conservation of the value of marine parks to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal people. This means that in special purpose areas, referred to as special purpose zones in management plans, the protection and conservation of Aboriginal culture and heritage values will be a conservation purpose in addition to the other purposes referred to in section 13(1) of the act that are considered when determining incompatible uses. This will ensure that when we design and manage marine reserves, traditional owner cultural heritage values will form part of the legislative framework governing the ongoing management of sea and land country. Special purpose zones in marine parks will continue to be identified through the well-established consultative marine park planning processes that require the approval of the Minister for Environment and the concurrence of the Minister for Mines and Petroleum and the Minister for Fisheries.

The bill also includes amendments that clarify the regulatory framework for the management of section 8C lands. Section 8C provides for unallocated crown land and unmanaged reserves to be managed by the CEO responsible for the CALM act, with the CEO's management functions for the land specified in the order. Crown land remains subject to the provisions of the Land Administration Act 1997 and its regulations. The amendments will clarify that the CALM act and its regulations will apply only to the extent specified in the section 8C order. Specifically, part IX of the CALM act, which provides for compliance and enforcement, and the Conservation and Land Management Regulations 2002 will apply only to land subject to a section 8C order if the section 8C order specifies that they apply. Similarly, a function of the CEO in section 33 of the CALM act will apply only if it is specified in the section 8C order.

Other amendments that the bill will make are administrative in nature and will update and modernise the CALM act in accordance with the government's goal of pursuing legislative reform to reduce red tape and ensure that legislation operates efficiently. These include amendments that will remove the requirement for permit and licence forms to be prescribed and other amendments to address miscellaneous minor anomalies and omissions.

I commend the bill to the house.

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

SUNDAY ENTERTAINMENTS REPEAL BILL 2021*Introduction and First Reading*

Bill introduced, on motion by **Ms A. Sanderson (Minister for Commerce)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MS A. SANDERSON (Morley — Minister for Commerce) [12.44 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce the Sunday Entertainments Repeal Bill 2021. The bill will repeal the Sunday Entertainments Act 1979, which restricts the keeping, opening or use of premises for paid public entertainment or amusement on Sundays, Christmas Day or Good Friday unless the minister has issued a permit or granted an exemption to allow a place to open on those days.

Since 1979, ministers of successive governments have granted permanent exemptions for paid entertainment on Sundays and short-term permits on Christmas Day and Good Friday. Permanent exemption notices published in the *Government Gazette* and permits issued in writing allow cinemas, sporting events, live music performances, carnivals, festivals and the like to operate. Requests for exemptions or permits are not contested and are granted as a matter of routine. In recent years, most applications for short-term permits are to allow cinemas, ice rinks, snooker centres, cultural festivals and sporting events which charge for entry to operate on Good Friday. In 2019, a permit was granted for an AFL match featuring the West Coast Eagles to be held on Good Friday with over 40 000 spectators in attendance.

Through Streamline WA, the McGowan government has made a commitment to improve the quality of regulation and remove regulation that is no longer relevant. The process of having to apply for an exemption places an unnecessary administrative burden on businesses. Government agencies also incur financial costs because there are requirements to publish exemption notices in the *Government Gazette* and issue permits in writing.

The Sunday Entertainments Act is out of step with contemporary community practices and attitudes towards holding paid entertainment, sports events and amusements on the mentioned days. In summary, the act is no longer relevant and should be repealed. Some members may recall that legislation to repeal the act was previously brought before Parliament. On both occasions the repeal bills lapsed due to the proroguing of Parliament before the state elections in 2017 and 2021.

I commend the bill to the house.

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

AQUATIC RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2021*Introduction and First Reading*

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr D.T. Punch (Minister for Fisheries)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Fisheries) [12.47 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Aquatic Resources Management Amendment Bill 2021 will amend the Aquatic Resources Management Act 2016, known as ARMA. It is worth noting that the fortieth Parliament dealt with an almost identical bill and it was agreed to by both sides of the chamber. This speech and indeed the bill itself are largely the same as the previous version, with the difference that we have included an amendment that was advanced during debate in the previous Parliament that requires a review of the operation of ARMA in five years' time. I look forward to progressing this legislation so that the Aquatic Resources Management Act becomes operational.

The focus of ARMA is to ensure the ecologically sustainable development of Western Australia's living aquatic biological resources and ecosystems by protecting these resources from over-exploitation and the threats posed by diseases and harmful imported organisms, while encouraging the development of the industries and activities associated with their use. A key feature of ARMA is the inclusion of a structured approach to the provision of secure fishing access rights for all sectors within the context of sustainability. ARMA extends the transparency and focus of historic fisheries management by establishing an integrated cross-sectoral planning and management framework for aquatic biological resources, which sets up how a resource will be managed, the level of exploitation to be allowed, the level of the resource that must be maintained for sustainability purposes, the setting of total allowable catches and the access rights to the resource. Importantly, ARMA provides for the continuity of existing management arrangements and resource access rights for the state's commercial fishing industries until each is separately

migrated to the new legislative framework. The need to provide for an orderly transition to the new legislative framework has resulted in this bill. As part of preparing for ARMA implementation, it was discovered that ARMA did not provide enough flexibility to allow different types of resource shares to be provided for in the strategy and planning documents for a managed aquatic resource. As a result, it would be impossible for multi-zone, multi-species or multi-gear fisheries to be transitioned to managed aquatic resources under ARMA.

When ARMA comes into operation, it will replace the Fish Resources Management Act 1994 and the Pearling Act 1990 as the primary legislation for the management of Western Australia's fisheries and aquatic biological resources. The pearl oyster fishery is currently managed by the use of zones, and the government and key stakeholders all wish for this approach to management to continue under ARMA. The amendments in this bill are required to facilitate and continue this type of resource management. The bill makes three additional key amendments.

Firstly, the bill seeks to amend the meaning of an aquatic resource to allow the resource to be further defined by the type of gear or method used to take the resource. This will provide for the continuation of separate management arrangements in situations in which multiple fishing activities occur on a single species or species group, but in which the nature of these activities is too different for them to be dealt with effectively under a single aquatic resource management strategy called ARMS.

Secondly, the bill will remove the requirement for the CEO to publish notice of a decision to grant, vary or transfer an aquaculture licence. Under ARMA, aquaculture licences will now include licences for pearl oyster, *Pinctada maxima*, aquaculture. There is no requirement under the Pearling Act 1990 to advertise such decisions. The imposition of a new obligation to advertise these decisions was an unintended consequence of ARMA. Importantly, this streamlining of administrative processes will not diminish transparency around decisions relating to aquaculture or preclude opportunities for third parties to have input into decision-making.

Thirdly, the amendment bill introduces a requirement for the minister to review the operation and effectiveness of ARMA after five years from the repeal of the Pearling Act 1990. A report of the review will be laid before each house of Parliament. The review process is likely to be linked to the revocation of the Pearling Act 1990 because, as some parts of ARMA have already commenced, providing for a specific event rather than the commencement of the act is required. The five-year review will consider whether the operation of the act is achieving its intended outcomes, including how the pearling aquatic resource and other resources subsequently transitioned to the new management framework are operating under ARMA.

Finally, the bill makes a number of minor administrative amendments to ARMA.

I commend the bill to the house.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 11 May on the following motion moved by Ms L. Dalton —

That the following Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's speech be agreed to —

To His Excellency the Honourable Kim Beazley, AC, Governor of the State of Western Australia.

May it please Your Excellency —

We, the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [12.53 pm]: I look forward to contributing to the Address-in-Reply debate today. Firstly, I welcome all new members into the house. Obviously, most of them are from the other side, but I certainly welcome all those members and look forward to their contributions in the years ahead. I also congratulate Madam Speaker on her election and all our Acting Speakers in the chamber.

The first thing I would like to express is my regret at losing, I think, one of Parliament's hardest working and most genuine politicians in Terry Redman, the former member for Warren–Blackwood. I wish Terry and Marie all the best in their future ventures. I know Terry had a lot of respect in here, and many people, including staff and members, have asked me whether they can mention Terry's great contribution. We obviously look forward to the new member for Warren–Blackwood's contribution, but Terry was a great member. He was a hard worker. I know he is working hard on fencing his block down there in Denmark at the moment, so that is a bit of a change! I also acknowledge Deb and Jeanette in his office who did a great job.

I am also obviously sad to see Ian Blayney lose his seat as the member for Geraldton. He was a consummate local representative, and he had that ability to think deeply and strategically. Many of his ideas on the likes of the ag department and the agricultural system in WA were very good. Not all of them saw the light of day, but I think he was also a great local representative. The new member for Geraldton will have big shoes to fill there as well.

In the other place, I will be sorry to see Colin Holt and Jacqui Boydell retire. They have made a large contribution over their time. I welcome James Hayward as our new representative for the South West Region in the other place.

I would like to thank all of the people in the electorate of Roe who voted for me. I believe in local representation, and I believe that means representing everyone in the electorate, whether they voted for me or not. I would like to especially thank all members of our branches for their support, especially over the pre-polling period of nearly three weeks, and I think all members of the chamber will understand how draining that was. We need that support. Personally, I believe the pre-polling is too long. Too many things can change over that time. I would like to see much better advertising of the pre-polling scenario, because a lot of people, especially in regional areas, did not realise it was happening until word of mouth got out. That is an improvement that could be made. In an electorate like mine, which is two and a half times the size of Switzerland, you need that support. Members in our branches in Narrogin, Kojonup, Katanning, Esperance and the lakes were very much appreciated. I would like to thank my family members, Andrea, James and Sam, for their support. I thank my parents, June and Bronte, who came up faithfully from Albany every week to help us out on pre-polling. I also thank my office staff, Sally, Nat, Jill and Dorothy. The general National Party support network is much appreciated. I am very comfortable with the alliance agreement, and I look forward to working with the Liberal Party team in the years ahead. We will certainly give it our best shot.

Due to the redistribution of electoral boundaries, I have picked up the Shire of Jerramungup, which includes Boxwood Hill, Bremer Bay and Gairdner. Just as an aside, I have been paying for the member for Albany's book prize at the school awards for the last four years, but we only just picked that up last year! I might have to put a stop to that now. I will pick it up now, but I will be mentioning that to the past member for Albany when I see him! In gaining Jerramungup, I lost Wickiepin, Kulin and Cuballing. I was very disappointed to lose those three shires. It is great to deal with those local governments. We have done a lot of work together. I know our leader, Mia Davies, will represent them well; however, I am disappointed to lose those towns after working with them for the last four years. Of course, I also look forward to the Kulin Bush Races, which is a great event in our wheatbelt and something I recommend everyone here in the chamber go to at some time during their lives. It is a fantastic event. During my doorknocking of these new areas in the pre-election period, I certainly noticed there were some issues, especially in Jerramungup. It has a real issue with a lack of medical providers. We need to keep working hard on that. Jerramungup is a fair way from Albany. Temporary arrangements have been made so that doctors visit from Albany when possible, so there is no real continuity. Bremer Bay is a very interesting town in the Shire of Jerramungup. Its population of around 500 people goes up to 10 000 people during the Easter period, long weekends and the Christmas period. The power supply is put under a massive amount of pressure and there are outages right in those peak periods. Another issue, which I will be speaking to the Minister for Health about, is the medical centre in Bremer Bay. We nearly had it over the line about seven years ago when I was the chairman of the Great Southern Development Commission. Unfortunately, it is still in a bad state. We look forward to a new medical centre being built under the Labor government, hopefully, in the not-too-distant future.

I would like to move on to the election. It was certainly a big win, obviously by the Labor Party. I congratulate the Premier and his team on the overwhelming vote of confidence bestowed on him by the electorate, but my concern is that this election was decided on the handling of the COVID situation. It was decided on one issue. Issues like the Schools of the Air, Moora Residential College, community resource centre funding, Perth Modern School and the gold tax all disappeared into the background. I would have hoped the electorate would have had these issues in the back of their mind, but obviously they were overwhelmed by the Labor Party's marketing campaign, I suppose we might call it. Every candidate was put next to a photo of the Premier, saying, "We'll keep you strong. We'll keep you safe". I guess it worked, but those were the issues over the last four years that we need to keep in mind. I remind our constituents of those issues.

An example was during the pre-polling in Esperance. The Labor Party members in their red shirts were handing out how-to-vote cards and saying, "Vote for Mark McGowan. He'll keep you safe." We needed to remind people that Mark McGowan was not their local member. It was a good marketing campaign, but constituents need to remember that when they have an issue, they will go to their local member. If someone has an issue in Carnarvon, they will go to the member for North West Central's office, not to Rockingham, where the Premier is.

Mr V.A. Catania: I'll send it on to Rockingham!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The member will not get much response.

I found it quite disturbing when my opponent from the Labor Party, Brad Willis, was standing at the polling place in Esperance and saying, "Vote for Mark McGowan." I said to Brad, "Brad, you're the candidate. Why don't you say, 'Vote for me; I'm Brad'?"

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: No, local representation.

That was concerning but, as I said, it obviously worked. The problem is that when it is all about one person, it is a kind of adulation, in a way, which is fraught with problems. I am concerned that we will have a scenario in which there will be autocratic rule. There will be an element of megalomania. I am disappointed that the Premier could

not find one person out of his 75 other members who could be the Treasurer. I would have thought that out of the 75 other members, he would have been able to find someone who was fit to be Treasurer. I think there is a risk of the Premier believing in his power and not listening to other perspectives.

Another thing that really concerns me is what has been playing out with the COVID press conferences. As the member for North West Central said last week, when things are going well, it is “Good News Mark” out the front. When things are not going quite so well, the Deputy Premier is included. When things are going very poorly, the Chief Health Officer is wheeled out.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: We have hardly heard from him; that is right. When things are not going too well, out he comes. It is not the way to go. We have heard from the Chief Health Officers in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, but we barely hear from the Chief Health Officer here.

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, about the noise coming from the peanut gallery over there. Can you please tell them to be quiet?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): There is no point of order. Thank you, member. The member for Roe is on his feet. I do not think he is far from finishing. If we could hear the rest of his speech in silence, that would be great. Carry on, member for Roe.

Debate Resumed

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I will also pass on my regret about losing Minister Tinley as the Minister for Housing. I thought he was an excellent minister. I look forward to the new ministers learning from him about responding to correspondence. He was by far the most efficient minister in responding to requests, correspondence and constituent issues. I certainly regret losing him due to union alignments, I assume. It is very disappointing.

I would like to move on to my shadow portfolios of education and training; sport and recreation; and racing and gaming. I certainly very much look forward to working in the education shadow portfolio. I have already met with the Principals’ Federation of Western Australia and the Department of Education and I look forward to engaging with the State School Teachers’ Union of Western Australia, Catholic Education WA and the like. I have always said that good leadership in a school is essential. Every child in the state, wherever they live, deserves a good education, and an essential part of that is good leadership and staff, as well as a commitment from that leadership and staff to their community. That cannot be underestimated.

Another element to that, especially in our regional areas, is the Government Regional Officers’ Housing. This issue has already been raised during this term. I note from an answer to a question on notice asked by Mr Tony Krsticevic in 2019–20 that 68 GROH houses were sold at a value of \$10 million. I do not know what is going on or the mindset behind that but I do know that when a principal and a new teacher came to Nyabing, they could not find appropriate housing. We are asking professionals to up-end their lives and move to smaller communities, but they are given housing that is unfit for their positions. That is something I will focus on.

Another issue is the increase in the budget for orange school buses in the regions. What I believe has happened is the Minister for Transport has issued a directive to the school bus service to cut every school bus where possible and funnel the funding into Metronet. We have a scenario here whereby people in the regions and their children are being disadvantaged. We need to have the right people working in school bus services.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister for Police!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: We need people with empathy to work in school bus services, who understand what it is like to be isolated and to have their four or five-year-old child on a bus for an hour when they live only 15 minutes from town. I am really concerned with the government’s level of austerity and that, despite a \$4 billion surplus coming up, it is cutting things like school bus services. That is a real issue.

Education and training is another element. I am concerned about an issue that the Leader of the Liberal Party brought up the other day. The number of trade apprenticeships that have been completed has reduced by nearly 3 000 over the last four years of this government—the number has halved! The Premier talks about TAFE fees and the rest of it, but he has dropped the ball on trade apprenticeships. Somewhere along the line something has gone adrift, and this government needs to address it.

I am certainly looking forward to my shadow portfolios of sport and recreation, and racing and gaming. Several issues are cropping up at the moment. We look forward to keeping the government to account on them. We know about the Perth Casino Royal Commission at the moment. In some ways, I look forward to seeing what comes out of that. I have some real concerns about governance.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I also look forward to questioning what is going on with the super-departments. The Premier said yesterday that the number of departments has gone down from 41 to 25, and it looks like governance has gone down with it. The super-department scenario is starting to show cracks, and we are seeing an example of this at the moment. I certainly look forward to questioning those elements.

Briefly, on health, I will mention once again ambulance ramping and the pressure on our doctors and nurses, who are doing a great job. I do not think anyone understands the pressure they are under. We need to give them support. This government needs to look at advertising and filling positions. As of today, over 300 health positions have been advertised, with over 120 in the regions. We had the cancellation of all category 2 and 3 surgeries and hospitals were basically empty most of last year. I think the Department of Health forgot to fill those positions and the system is now under stress as it tries to fill them. I am also concerned about category 1 surgeries, which, supposedly, were not being cancelled. I have a 32-year-old constituent whose category 1 surgery was cancelled in March 2020, and it took over a year for him to get back on the list. He had two heart attacks in the meantime! That is the sort of thing that worries me about our health system. When we have people ringing talkback radio about it, we know we have a system in crisis.

Of course, mental health is also a real issue. Everyone in this chamber understands that we have some real issues cropping up from the COVID scenario, with children and adults experiencing anxiety. Issues have also cropped up with newborn babies and their parents. After mothers have had their babies, their husbands have not been able to come down to the ward to see them. That has caused a massive amount of stress and anxiety for some of our families. I cannot understand what is going on there. The government released thousands of people out into the regions on the Anzac Day weekend, but at the same time, partners were not allowed down to the ward to see their partner and baby. I think we have got some things out of proportion there.

I will briefly mention electoral reform, because this is one of the real disappointments I have with this new government. Labor repeatedly said during the election campaign that it was not on the agenda. I remember when the Premier was in Albany, with the former member for Albany at one shoulder and the new candidate for Albany at the other, being asked by Dan Mercer, "Is electoral reform on the agenda?" The Premier's answer was, "No, it is not on the agenda." He asked that question five times, and five times he was told, "It is not on the agenda."

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What has happened? Member for Burns Beach, members were sworn in on the opening day of Parliament and the next day the Minister for Electoral Affairs announced that a review was being established!

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I find it bizarre!

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: They only waited one day!

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Standing order 95 states, "Members will not converse noisily or otherwise disturb the proceedings." We are having nothing but disturbance from the member for Burns Beach; and can I say this has become a feature of this chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, you cannot, member for Cottesloe. It is not a point of order.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is under standing order 95!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No; he is not having a conversation; he is just yelling out.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe! Carry on, member for Roe.

Debate Resumed

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I express my concern that three of the four review panellists, who are supposedly independent, have already put out over the last couple of years their preference for electoral reform and reducing regional representation. How do members think that makes the people of regional Western Australia feel? Three out of four independent panellists have already expressed their feelings in black and white. Members can imagine how disappointed our regional constituents are.

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach!

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Clearly, the member for Burns Beach's facial hair has got to him!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can you sit down, please. Thank you. Do not abuse the point of order process in the future. Member for Burns Beach, I call you for the first time.

Debate Resumed

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: You are the first person to be called to order in the new chamber, member for Burns Beach.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, he is not, actually!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Three of the four review panellists are not independent. I want to put that on the record. The Minister for Electoral Affairs is using smoke and mirrors and is blaming it on Wilson Tucker, who was elected to the other place with 98 votes. That is the entree, but the main course is about reducing regional representation. We will be making that clear to our regional constituents. Will every regional Labor member in this Parliament vote to reduce regional representation? I will be very curious to find out. Will the member for Kalgoorlie, who sits over here on my left-hand side, vote to reduce regional representation? I ask the same question of the member for Mandurah over there.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: He will not be voting for reducing regional representation.

Mr V.A. Catania: Mandurah has a fuel card.

Mr D.A. Templeman: We don't get the fuel card. What do you want me to say?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I want the member for Mandurah to vote against electoral reform to reduce the number of regional members.

Mr D.A. Templeman: We already have electoral reform in Mandurah. We have one vote, one value.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am certainly not looking forward to the type of electoral reform that the Minister for Electoral Affairs is proposing.

Mr R.S. Love: I don't think Mandurah is a very good target for electoral reform; it's city based.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I think so. As I said, where does 70 per cent of our state revenue come from? It comes from the regions. Regional people pay higher airfares and higher fuel costs but have no public transport. The list goes on, so I am looking forward to regional members, especially those in the other place, voting themselves out of a job, member for North West Central. I will say that they will be caught between voting for the party and voting themselves out of a job.

Mr V.A. Catania: Like a farm full of sheep.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Absolutely. They are my concerns.

On a positive note, I would like to mention the opening of the Esperance tanker jetty back in March. It was certainly an excellent day. I look forward also to the opening of the new South Regional TAFE Esperance campus in the foreseeable future—somewhere around July, I believe.

In closing, I would like to mention my concern at the way this government has handled the COVID-19 crisis and I guess the effect it has had on my constituents and the small businesses in my area. We saw the release of people on the Friday night of the Anzac weekend. People poured out into the regions but on the Saturday night they got the news that they had to be locked down in the region. Trade at many of the small businesses in the likes of Esperance was down for sure. The Narrogin trots and the speedway were cancelled and there were numerous withdrawals of people from accommodation. Many of our service stations in places such as Williams that rely on trade during long weekends were left with no passing traffic.

I think there was a major effect on many of our businesses in the regions. It is really quite concerning that this government did not take this into account. There are some real issues. We cannot keep having snap lockdowns and breaks in the traffic. These things affect our regional businesses.

Amendment to Motion

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I move —

That the following words be added to the motion —

but regret to inform His Excellency that the McGowan government's COVID-19 management including snap lockdowns as a result of its failed hotel quarantine system is having a dramatic impact on small businesses and events across Western Australia, creating uncertainty for the sector

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [1.23 pm]: I rise to support the amendment moved by the member for Roe. We have had many debates in this house on how small businesses and events have been affected by the

lockdowns and this government's management when it comes to supporting small businesses, events generally and regional events. Clearly, this Labor government is no friend of small business. It is clearly no friend of tourism businesses right across this state. If it were, it would have paid businesses \$500 following the first five-day lockdown that occurred last year, but they still have not received it. Now we see an increase to that \$500 that some businesses have not received to \$2 000 recompense for the three-day lockdown, which the Premier originally said no to—"We cannot afford it"—yet this state's finances are swimming in a \$4 billion surplus due to the resources boom that is occurring. We can look back at 2008 when we saw this sort of price climb, but not at the same level as that today, when the iron ore price is close to \$200 a tonne and the state is receiving its GST share. It is swimming in money. We do not talk about the debt anymore; we talk about how wonderfully the economy is going. May I say, members, the economy is going wonderfully well because of the resources sector, the industries that support the resources sector and the businesses that support the industries that support the resource sector. However, when it comes to small business—pubs, cafes restaurants and the local printer—many small businesses are dramatically affected by a lockdown.

I think everyone understands the need for a lockdown, but a lockdown occurred because of the inadequate quarantine system, which the state government has been in charge of and has been slow in moving towards fixing. Only this week we saw that a security guard was working a second job. We still see that only 70 per cent of security guards have received their coronavirus vaccine. It is something the government has moved on very slowly and it has cost local businesses in the state of Western Australia hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars.

This is about the state of Western Australia because the lockdowns in Perth and Peel do not mean people can have their freedom in regional Western Australia. A lockdown in Perth and Peel prevents people from travelling north, south or east and it has an impact on businesses in regional WA, which have to spend most of their time dealing with cancellations and refunds, much like businesses in Perth have to deal with cancellations and refunds. The uncertainty these lockdowns cause small businesses is having a huge effect by preventing people from booking tickets to events until the last minute, not knowing whether events will be cancelled, and people not being able to properly plan their travel to tourist hotspots in Western Australia. It also affects, of course, interstate travel, and causes uncertainty on a national scale. Our tourism businesses rely on interstate travel. Tourism is dissipating due to the uncertainty, coupled with insurance costs going through the roof and the worker shortage in this state that the government is not dealing with. It did not deal with it during the election campaign. It has no plan to deal with the worker shortage, whether for small business, tourism or agriculture—a worker shortage that will strangle our economy. The government is not dealing with it.

If workers can be found for regional WA, they have nowhere to live due to a housing crisis that is crippling our small business and tourism industries right across Western Australia, yet we see no plan whatsoever for constructing houses or building workers' accommodation in the real tourist hotspots such as Exmouth, Coral Bay, Kalbarri and places in the south west. They all need extra accommodation if the government is able to get these workers. We can add to that JobKeeper and JobSeeker coming to an end. The pressures that small businesses are under are huge, yet the Premier says, "Our economy's going well. Our economy's the best in the country." That may be the case, but we have to be able to analyse where that is coming from. It is coming from the resources sector. Small businesses cannot afford lockdowns; they cannot afford to gear up and then throw everything in the bin. There are workers who rely on those jobs and are not getting paid.

Perhaps the government can take this question and provide an answer to it. After the five-day lockdown, the state government announced a \$43 million package to support those small businesses in the Perth, Peel and south west regions that were impacted by the lockdown. How much of that money has actually gone out the door? It would be interesting to see how much of that \$43 million has actually gone to the businesses that have applied for funds. There are still businesses that have not received the \$500 power bill credit. It would also be interesting to see how many people are able to take up the \$2 000 offer.

The state government has notionally acknowledged that small businesses have been impacted, but it took weeks for it to react. The Australian Hotels Association had to demand compensation for businesses. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia had to say that businesses were being impacted and needed financial support. Many other associations, businesses and communities have been crying out for assistance, and because of the pressure being applied by the opposition, industry and the media, the government did an about-face on compensation. It will be interesting to see how many people can apply for that \$2 000. What criteria will they need to meet to be able to access it?

However, there has been no compensation for events. Last year the Mandurah Crabfest was cancelled, and little towns like Yalgoo have had to cancel their race meetings. Events have been cancelled in pretty much every electorate. Where is the financial support for those businesses? It takes months, if not years, to plan for some events, and tens of thousands of dollars are spent on gearing up for them. They cannot get that money back. People are not buying tickets or they are waiting until the last minute, so events cannot fully plan for how many people are actually going to be there because of the uncertainty. Where is the government's financial support for the events across this state that have had to be cancelled?

The government is swimming in money—a \$4 billion surplus. Iron ore is \$US200 a tonne at the moment, members. Back in 2007–08 it was about \$US180, and five years ago it dropped down to about \$US50. Is the government awash with money because it is a good financial manager or is it because our commodities are in such demand? I think members and the public know exactly what is driving our economy.

Like I said, small businesses are suffering right across the state because of the uncertainty that exists. I do not think anyone begrudges the shutdowns; we have to do what we have to do to contain this virus, but the point the opposition is trying to make is that there is no certainty around support for small businesses so that they can survive continued lockdowns into the future. That is why we need a purpose-built quarantine facility, because clearly the hotel quarantine system is a failure in this state and all other states. The state of Western Australia has a great opportunity to lead the way and build a purpose-built quarantine facility.

I think the federal government said in its budget that there will potentially not be any international travel until 2023 or beyond, so this is a long-term problem and the state government needs to work on some long-term solutions. That is why, during debate on the COVID-19 Response Legislation Amendment (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Bill 2021 yesterday, we moved an amendment to provide some certainty for businesses. After the five-day lockdown, businesses were eligible for a \$500 electricity credit, yet some businesses still do not have it. Three months later we had another lockdown, and it took weeks for the government to announce \$2 000 in compensation for businesses. This came after the Premier had said, “No, no, no. We simply can’t afford to do it.” Suddenly, there was a change because of public pressure.

The opposition is calling for certainty. If there is a lockdown in the future, businesses need to know that there are compensation packages in place. We ask the government to be open and transparent, and to provide information now on what the compensation package for any future lockdown will look like, whether the lockdown is for three days, five days or whatever the case may be, so that we can have some certainty. The government needs to get the criteria correct and not work on it on the run. It seems as though this government is a one-trick pony. The only response it has is to shut the gate, close the borders and call lockdowns. The government has mismanaged hotel quarantine because of its inability to follow its own inquiries into ways to ensure that the hotel quarantine system is robust. Small businesses, tourism businesses, events businesses and the people of Western Australia are paying for the government’s inaction. For this government, it is always a reaction to what goes on.

The opposition will no doubt support the government if it develops long-term plans for avoiding lockdowns in the first place; or, if there have to be lockdowns, for providing compensation packages to small businesses that are impacted by COVID-19. This is the government’s opportunity to show it is not a one-trick pony that can only shut the gate. The government’s decisions are impacting on small businesses, the tourism industry and regional towns. Even the City of Perth is probably losing its identity because there is no focus on providing support to businesses in the city.

We push regional Western Australia and we want people to visit the regions. People have, because there is no opportunity to leave the state. That is great for regional WA, but the regions are under pressure. They do not have reliable power supplies—something that everyone in the city takes for granted. In places like Kalbarri, it is basically impossible to have a reliable power supply in peak season. Workers in regional WA are non-existent, and even if businesses can find workers, there is no accommodation for them. There are pressures on water supplies, power supplies and telecommunications. Trying to download something or to use an app when there are 25 000 people wandering around Exmouth is impossible. The government is not taking any action to assist regional businesses and communities; it is not keeping pace with what is going on.

People will be travelling this great state of ours for many years to come, so let us put the building blocks in place now. Let us keep pace with the needs of our communities. That is something that the government is failing to do because it is a one-trick pony. That is not to mention all the other deficiencies when it comes to government departments and not making sure that there is a full complement of full-time equivalents in a lot of towns. The government has a workers’ crisis. What is the government’s plan to fix it? What is the government’s plan to bring workers over to ensure that we can support our businesses in this state? It is desperate, and, in desperate times, we need desperate measures.

The government has to start listening to small business, because it is not all beer and skittles out there. When the Premier stands up and says that our economy is number one in the country, everyone knows it is because the iron ore price is hitting \$US200 a tonne. We know that the GST is flowing back. But the government is not spending the money to assist our economy to be drought-proof, and to assist regional communities to deal with the trials and tribulations of people not travelling to those communities because of lockdowns. We need that investment. The government is failing miserably to ensure that it governs for everyone. If the government wants to keep people safe, and if it wants to grow Western Australia, then start talking to small businesses and to regional communities, which desperately need that investment to be able to keep pace with what is going on. The decisions that the Labor government and the Premier make when it comes to lockdowns need to be based on a plan that is open and transparent. That is something that the other side of this chamber seems to want to avoid. This is why having independent inquiries is critical to being able to keep the government of the day on its toes and to come up with the right decisions, the right policy frameworks and the right support for, in this case, small businesses and events.

I urge the government, if it thinks it is doing the right thing, to be open and transparent. Set up a committee of both houses to continuously look at ways in which we can improve how we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The government should set up an independent oversight body to make sure that when these decisions are made, it can limit the impact on small businesses and events right across Western Australia. What does the government have to hide, as I say? Being open and transparent means good government. At the moment, the government is not a good government. The arrogance, the lack of transparency and the dismissing of protocol in this place is concerning and should be concerning to all Western Australians. I think they have been sold a dummy. Over the next four years, that will come out well and truly—the arrogance, the lack of transparency and the lack of concern about small businesses and our communities right across Western Australia.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) [1.43 pm]: I rise to support the amendment as moved by the opposition. It is a worthy amendment that recognises the value of our small businesses in the state. It recognises that they represent and support 40 per cent of the employment and jobs here in Western Australia, and that they represent, as well, some 224 000 local businesses in our state. It also recognises that overwhelmingly they have underwritten much of the financial cost of COVID-19. The response to COVID has been well and truly applauded by the public. The public in its response to restrictions and in obediently following the directions of government based on health advice has been instrumental in seeing Western Australia perform so well in the face of the international pandemic that is COVID-19.

Our small businesses have had to respond to a large range of restrictions. A number of issues have been raised about the plight of our small businesses, whether it is in the hospitality sector with the range of different requirements for QR codes and sanitising—which has been across the board as well—or in relation to the four square metre rule, and at times our small businesses have actually had to shut their doors in response to lockdowns in the best interests of the state.

That includes our gyms as well. I have heard, as many members have as well, from people who have been concerned about the consistency, or lack of consistency, in the rules around the lockdowns or restrictions in relation to COVID-19. It is certainly clear from a financial perspective that they have worn a heavy financial cost. I quote from a councillor from the City of Joondalup, who wrote to me and the member for Cottesloe, the Leader of the Liberal Party —

The McGowan Government offers zero assistance to small businesses affected by lockdowns they impose, despite a strong state budget position. Small businesses assistance has, to my knowledge, been entirely from the Federal Government. Gyms operate on very slim margins and being singled out every lockdown will cost jobs and livelihoods. Many gyms cancel customer's direct debits, and make no income from classes, so their income stream does suffer, while expensive leases, such as to Westfield —

Westfield Shopping Centre —

must still be paid.

That is quite a detailed email from a councillor from the City of Joondalup, who does point to some of the significant costs associated with running small businesses such as gymnasiums, which have overwhelmingly been affected by the COVID restrictions and the lockdowns as well.

We acknowledge that although the government did announce a package of assistance—the \$31.8 million package for small businesses affected by the lockdown in Perth and Peel—it is concerning that the McGowan government's first response was not to provide any support, and that it took significant lobbying from small businesses, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia and others, which raised the issue of the real cost of the lockdown. Although it is pleasing that the grants were significantly more than the paltry \$500 payment that was offered in response to the lockdown in early February, some concerns have again been raised by industry about the scope of these grants. I quote from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry —

“While the \$2000 figure is a welcome improvement on the amount offered for the February lockdown, we wanted to see businesses deeply affected by this lockdown receive up to \$5000 and anything short of that is disappointing.” ...

“We're also disappointed that tourism businesses in other WA regions, who lost business due to reduced travel out of Perth and the Peel region, are left out of the scheme.

As the member for an electorate in the south west region, I certainly understand those concerns, not only from the perspective of the cost of this lockdown for small businesses, but also with respect to what businesses outside of the Perth and Peel regions had to face. As we have already raised in this place, and publicly as well, the impact on the regions was certainly an afterthought when it came to the decision to lock down Perth and Peel. The impact of that from a small business perspective was quite significant. Not only did small businesses have to try to navigate what the health advice would mean for their hospitality venues and retail stores, for example, but also they had an influx of patrons from the Perth region who were not abiding by the backdated health provisions and the stay-at-home provisions, and there was some concern about how they would manage that from a public health point of view.

As the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia pointed out, what we saw in response was that many small businesses shut their doors while others experienced a loss of revenue because of cancellations. Peter Kalbfell, the director of Jet Adventures in Dunsborough, wrote to me and the Leader of the Opposition about the impact of the Perth and Peel region lockdown. He stated —

My business is very small with an annual turnover of only around 200k and the majority of that is required just to keep afloat with costs such as liability insurances going through the roof recently making things tough. Prior to the announcement of the lockdown I was estimating a turnover of 6k = 8k over the long weekend, instead my turnover was less than 1k. With some restrictions on Perth people expected to continue I now have basically no bookings for the next 2 weeks and I estimate this will cost Jet Adventures somewhere between 10k–15k.

That is much closer to the figure that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia predicted about the cost of the lockdown. We must recognise that many tourism operators and small businesses in regional areas are seasonal and over the Anzac Day long weekend, they were overwhelmingly trying to make up for the quieter periods.

Eagle Bay Brewing Co also wrote to me about the impact that hotel quarantine failures have had on its business. The letter states —

Revenue on Sunday 25th from our tourism based restaurant was down >80% from on a comparable long weekend

We chose to shut the restaurant on Monday 26th because it was not viable to open.

We manufacture beer on site and most of our wholesale beer customers are based in Perth, and orders were down >80% the following week as our customers did not reorder due to the impacts of the lockdown. Income lost as the result of the most recent shutdown can be estimated at about \$150k–\$200k

Our cashflow was significantly impacted, as the fixed costs remained the same while our income was decimated.

The effects were longer lasting than the 3 days, public confidence to dine out was impacted, mask wearing is a deterrent to going out and it takes a while for people to resume ‘normal’ behaviour.

Mr R.R. Whitby: Are they able to give you some idea of their trade volume for this season over the most part of the year, because I’d be very interested to know how a tourism business in the south west has been going over the past six months or so? I know that one particular weekend was bad—obviously, it did have an impact—but it would be nice to know in the proper context how their trade has been going throughout the months of this year.

Ms L. METTAM: That is a fair question. We will be happy to follow that up further. Quite obviously —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ministers!

Ms L. METTAM: The point that I am making is quite a clear one—that is, while there has been an acknowledge of the impact —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! If you want to have a conversation, take it outside. The member for Vasse is on her feet. Carry on, member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: The simple point I am making is that although the government has acknowledged the impact of the lockdown on Perth and Peel businesses by providing an assistance package, other businesses outside those regions were also impacted. That impact was twofold in that there was not only a lack of business, but also the backdating of restriction guidelines, illustrating that after 14 months of managing COVID-19 with very little community transmission, the McGowan Labor government has not given further thought about other impacts on regional WA. As has been stated publicly, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia estimated that the loss to small business due to the lockdown was about \$170 million, which is significantly more than the \$70 million that the Premier stated. As I have stated, there were concerns about small businesses in my electorate because the public health advice was unclear. That advice was finally backdated on the Saturday evening after an inconsistent answer was provided by the Minister for Health during a press conference on the Saturday.

As has already been mentioned in this place, a number of concerns have been raised about the events industry. I refer to an online ABC article, the heading of which states, “WA events industry in ‘total devastation’ as coronavirus pandemic interruptions rage on”. The article quotes Amanda Parker, a small business owner, who states how horrifying COVID has been for her area of the small business sector. It also quotes Mitchell Ross, who runs an events equipment hire business. He said —

... lack of visibility and understanding made it difficult when appealing for help.

The article states —

“That’s what hurt us most through the pandemic ... who do we talk to [in government]?” he said.

We're not sports. We're not arts and culture. We're not tourism. We complement all of those. But we're not them. We're events.

“The mental toll is devastating on us all.

We know that the events industry is a unique model in the way that it is structured because it needs to plan significantly. We want organisations to continue to invest and have confidence in these events; therefore, greater consideration must be given to how the events sector will be further supported going forward. Certainly, the opposition is seeking additional support for that industry. I understand that Winterworld Fremantle is potentially no longer going ahead. We also know that the costs for these businesses and the up-front investment is quite significant, and that is certainly something that the government needs to consider going forward.

This is certainly a worthy amendment. I support the opposition's position on supporting small business. Given that the government has flagged potential further lockdowns, it is important that it has clear guidelines on how it will support small businesses going forward. It must also provide clear guidelines so that the regions know how they will be impacted.

I refer to an article from WAtoday of 24 April headed “Anyone who left Perth and Peel to other parts of WA from April 17 to act like they're under city restrictions”. In that article, the Minister for Health states —

“We just want to clarify for everyone even if you left the Perth and Peel region last night before the declarations were put in place, you are subject to the directions. You need to wear the mask when in public and you should only be in public for essential purposes ...

“They should wear masks if they're moving around the community.”

What Minister Cook did not say was that the stay-at-home mask directions actually applied to anyone who was in or had been in the Perth and Peel regions since 17 April. I will leave my comments there.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, you still have a minute to go, member.

Ms L. METTAM: I will just wrap up my comments. This is certainly a worthy motion. There has certainly been a significant financial cost. I would like to acknowledge that our small businesses overwhelmingly have paid a financial cost for the failures in hotel quarantine and because of the lockdown.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 497.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

MINISTERIAL EXPERT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

73. **Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Electoral Affairs:**

I refer to the consultation process for the ministerial expert committee charged with making recommendations on the government's plans to reform the Legislative Council.

- (1) Why is it such a short four-week time frame for submissions for such major reform when a routine electoral boundary review by the Western Australian Electoral Commission typically takes six months or more?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that the committee is publishing a discussion paper this Friday, leaving only two weeks for the public to consider this and make a submission before 30 May?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:

- (1)–(2) This reform process is not a rejigging of the seats like in the Legislative Assembly where we have to try to fit new boundaries within provinces, which is a very difficult task. This approach is a more basic task: how can we achieve equality amongst voters? For example, the member for Roe's voters in Esperance only get half the vote weighting as the voters in Kalgoorlie. I do not know how the member for Roe reconciles that with the people in Esperance when their vote is only worth half of the vote of the people in Kalgoorlie. We think that this is unfair on the people in Roe. Similarly, we think it is unfair that the people in Albany only get a quarter of the vote that the people in Kalgoorlie get, or that the people in Wooroloo only get a quarter of the vote that the people eight kilometres up the road in Wundowie get. We are asking the committee: how can we achieve equality? We want equality for all these people, from Esperance in the member for Roe's electorate, to Kalgoorlie. We want suggestions on how we might achieve equality.

Mr McCusker has advised that the committee intends to publish a discussion paper on how equality might be approached and achieved. There might be a number of ways, I do not know, but he is going to publish a discussion paper and ask people to comment on the discussion paper. At the end of the month, the committee will consider all of that material and advise the government on how it might proceed next. This is a pressing matter. We do not think that the people of Esperance, who are more remote from Perth than the people of Kalgoorlie—Kalgoorlie has an airport that jets can land at, a train that goes there every day, a major hospital—should be prejudiced by having half the vote that the people of Kalgoorlie have.

MINISTERIAL EXPERT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

74. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Electoral Affairs:

I have a supplementary question. Will the minister extend the submission deadline of 30 May given that he has only just made it public that there will be a discussion paper to inform people of the options for such a significant reform?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:

The Leader of the Opposition will have to ask Mr McCusker about it. I do not set the deadlines. I do not set the process of the committee. We handed this job over to a very esteemed jurist, the thirty-first Governor of Western Australia, and three professors. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about the time for submissions and all that, then write to the committee.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kimberley with her first question.

REGIONAL ROAD SAFETY PROGRAM

75. Ms D.G. D'ANNA to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's record investment in upgrading regional roads and improving road safety right across Western Australia, including the roads to the Great Northern Highway through the Kimberley. Can the minister please update the house on how the McGowan Labor government's regional roads program is supporting regional communities, improving road safety and helping to create jobs?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for Kimberley for that question. I congratulate her on her election. I know that she will be an excellent and very strong representative for the Kimberley.

The McGowan government is delivering a record amount of infrastructure throughout regional Western Australia, particularly when it comes to regional roads. Over the past four years there has been significant expenditure, and that will continue because of the years of neglect of regional road safety under the other side. Remember that the National Party said, when it was in government, that we should not be spending money on regional roads; that it was not important enough for royalties for regions funding. That was the attitude of the National Party and the Liberal Party when they were in government. Of course, we are spending a record amount. The Great Northern Highway, as members know, plays such a vital role through the Kimberley. We will be upgrading the Ord River section of Great Northern Highway between Halls Creek and the Victoria Highway turn-off. That will support access to mining and pastoral leases, remote communities and the port of Wyndham.

Member for Kimberley, one of the big initiatives that we have undertaken is to ensure that we have Aboriginal employment and Aboriginal businesses participating in our program. In 2019–20, 6.7 per cent and nearly half a million work hours were undertaken by Aboriginal people, 10.3 per cent of the total hours worked on our projects were worked by Aboriginal people and 14.8 per cent of the contracts were awarded to Aboriginal businesses. That was a significant achievement and we want to do more.

Another program that affects everyone, including those in the Kimberley, is our regional road safety program. Over two years, \$455 million has been allocated. I thank the new Minister for Road Safety and acknowledge the previous Minister for Road Safety for their support of this program. The \$455 million program was started under this government. We went to the federal government and we sought further funding. Members, I am pleased to announce now that in last night's federal budget, another \$142 million has been secured for regional road safety. That means saving lives throughout regional WA. Again, with the \$50 million that we allocated as part of the election campaign, that is nearly \$200 million on top of the \$455 million—just think about that! A few years ago, about \$10 million per annum was being spent on that program. Now, over \$200 million will be spent per annum. We have been serious about road safety from day one. This program saves lives and I am so proud to have achieved so much funding from the feds and also from our contribution.

Of course, the Liberal Party made a commitment during the election campaign. I remember it went out very early and committed \$900 million to the program. When its costings were released at a big press conference on that fateful day, I think it was the Thursday before the state election—some sort of “safer today for a better tomorrow”; I cannot remember what its claim was—do members know how many dollars were actually allocated just two days before the election, after they had made an announcement of \$900 million? Do members know how many dollars were allocated? Zero! That is how Liberal members treated road safety. They went out on the side of the road down in Albany and made an announcement about a big initiative. All these third parties were welcoming their announcement, but, to tell the truth, I was a bit shocked and thought, “Wow! That was a big announcement!” We were sensible. We said that we would allocate \$50 million to it and go to the commonwealth for more. What did they do? They announced a \$900 million initiative but allocated zero dollars in their costings document. We have taken it seriously. We have worked with the commonwealth and are out there improving infrastructure throughout regional WA.

CORONAVIRUS — HOTEL QUARANTINE

76. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I refer to reports that multiple hotel quarantine staff have been under investigation for holding second jobs in contravention of the government's second jobs ban. Is the Department of Health investigating multiple workers for breaching the second jobs rule; and, if so, where were those additional jobs and at which hotels did the staff work?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

Thanks very much for the question, member. Once again, it gives me an opportunity to get up and talk about how important our hotel quarantine system is in keeping Western Australians safe. Almost 45 000 people have now gone through our hotel quarantine system, with just a small handful of incidents to report during that time. It has been incredibly effective in keeping Western Australians safe. As the member alluded, making sure that we keep our staff members safe, and that they keep their families safe, is an important element of that process.

As the Premier has outlined on numerous occasions, we now require each of our hotel quarantine staff to undertake daily COVID-19 testing, plus weekly polymerase chain reaction testing. We require them to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment and to undertake extensive training in infection protection and control. We expect them to be able to properly manage the circumstances in which they work so that they can keep themselves out of harm's way. In particular, we recently introduced a mandatory vaccination policy for all workers, or all people, coming into what is called a "red zone" in our hotel quarantine system. That will make sure that we can protect staff and that they can protect their families and friends.

In addition, some time back we also instituted a rule that would require security guards, in particular, who are working in a hotel quarantine environment to commit to a single point of employment. We compensated them for that by utilising a 40 per cent loading on their wages. This was negotiated with their contractors—the various security firms that contract to our hotel quarantine system. As a result, the Department of Health continues to work with contractors to make sure that they have oversight of their staff. Their staff are required to fill out a statutory declaration to say that they will not take on additional work. Obviously, it is hard to police. We cannot visit people in their homes to ask whether they are working tonight and what they are doing on their days off, but, obviously, we can continue to liaise with them in the team-like environment in which we are operating.

The fact that a worker can be identified as having taken on secondary employment means that we can then move swiftly to take them out of the hotel quarantine arrangement so that they can continue to enjoy their life in that secondary employment, but not inside our hotel quarantine system.

CORONAVIRUS — HOTEL QUARANTINE

77. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I have a supplementary question. Further to my question, what were the additional jobs that these workers were undertaking?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I do not have that information to hand, nor do I have the answer to the other part of the member's question, which was which hotel they were working at. The member, obviously, will be familiar with the people who work in this industry and can imagine the sorts of extra roles that they take on from time to time. As I have said, and as the Premier has said, "It's not on." That is why we are compensating them for having a single employment role and that is why we are working closely with the contract employers to make sure that we have proper oversight.

HOSPITALS — PILBARA

78. Mr K.J.J. MICHEL to the Minister for Health:

Madam Speaker, congratulations on being appointed as the first woman Speaker of the house.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's record investment in hospitals right across the state and its commitment to enhancing health services in regional Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister please provide an update to the house on the upgrades to the Tom Price and Newman Hospitals?
- (2) Can the minister outline what this investment will mean for communities across the Pilbara?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question and, in doing so, congratulate him on his resounding victory in the seat of Pilbara. Clearly, the people of Pilbara recognise that they have a great advocate in the member for Pilbara and we were delighted to see him returned with such resounding results. Congratulations to him.

- (1)–(2) The people of Pilbara, of course, can see the member's work in action, advocating for good health services for the people of Pilbara and, in particular, the McGowan government's commitment towards the \$61.4 million Newman health service redevelopment, which includes a \$15 million contribution by BHP. Everyone will be pleased, particularly the member for Pilbara, to know that this redevelopment is progressing well. It

will include an expanded six-bay emergency department, 12 inpatient beds, an outpatient centre, medical imaging, pathology, GP consultation spaces and two dental chairs. The first stage of the redevelopment is due to be completed in 2022, with the hospital expected to be fully opened in 2023. Of course, an important element of any upgrade to regional health services is digital enablement, which will make sure that people who go into hospital benefit from telehealth services and emergency telehealth services.

In addition, I am very proud to see a commitment to Tom Price Hospital, which will see it built on a completely new greenfields site. Planning for the \$32.8 million facility, which includes a \$20 million contribution from Rio Tinto, is already underway. The Tom Price design is anticipated to include a modern emergency department, with private interview rooms and consulting rooms for visitor services. Right across the Pilbara, we are seeing great upgrades taking place. This means, of course, particularly for Tom Price, that people who visit Karijini will know that there is a world-class hospital service available to them in the event that they need it. These hospitals will complement the fantastic facilities we have at the Karratha Health Campus and the Hedland Health Campus.

As the member would be aware, we are also undertaking major redevelopments of several other regional hospitals, including Geraldton Health Campus, which is undergoing a massive redevelopment; a \$200 million redevelopment at Bunbury Hospital at South West Health Campus; as well as building a radiotherapy suite at Albany Health Campus; and, of course, member for Kalgoorlie, the MRI service continues to be developed at Kalgoorlie Health Campus at pace.

This government is fully committed to improving healthcare services to patients wherever they live. When they do have to travel, we are also committed to improving the patient assisted travel scheme system. I am proud of our recent election commitment to increase the PATS accommodation subsidy to \$100 and to expand the eligibility criteria for support persons for vulnerable patients.

I look forward to updating the house on these Pilbara and other regional projects over the coming months.

Mr R.S. Love: How is the Mullewa rebuild going?

Mr R.H. COOK: The what?

The SPEAKER: Order! Please do not interject. You will have your chance to ask a question.

Mr R.H. COOK: I think it is going quite well, member. In addition, the member will be very pleased to hear that we are also undertaking a massive rebuild at Laverton Hospital, thanks to our friends in the commonwealth who are supporting our healthcare agenda. I very much look forward to the work at Meekatharra Hospital.

These are all examples of the continued commitment of the McGowan government to country health services and to putting Western Australians and all patients first.

QUARANTINE ADVISORY PANEL

79. **Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:**

I note that some notice has been given of this question.

I refer to yesterday's news that the Quarantine Advisory Panel has finally been established more than 60 days after Professor Weeramanthri recommended it.

- (1) Who is the chair of the advisory panel?
- (2) Who will be on the advisory panel?
- (3) What are its terms of reference?
- (4) How often will the panel meet and report to the minister?
- (5) Will the panel's progress on ensuring the implementation of improvements to the hotel quarantine system be published?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(5) I thank the member for some notice of this question. I am in a position to advise that the composition of the panel is being finalised in these coming days. The panel will comprise a senior personnel from key government agencies and independent experts. The Department of Health is in the process of finalising the terms of reference. The matters referred to in parts (4) and (5) of how often the panel will report to the minister and whether the panel's progress in ensuring the implementations of improvements to the hotel quarantine system will be published will be outlined in the final terms of reference.

QUARANTINE ADVISORY PANEL

80. **Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:**

I have a supplementary question. When this was a key recommendation and accepted by the government in its response, why has it taken so long to finalise such an important part of the government's response to COVID management in relation to quarantine hotels?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I want to address the premise of the question and the tone of it—that is, to suggest that the government is somehow ignorant of expert advice about hotel quarantine and that we are not acting on that advice. Obviously, Professor Weeramanthri provided an expert report to us, supported by other panellists in his inquiry, and they have continued to inform us about how we can continue to improve hotel quarantine. We have a continuous improvement program learnt from expert advice and testimony and with experience, and we continue to make sure those improvements are implemented. In addition to that, the member will be aware that over the past few months we have been focused on a particular element of the Weeramanthri report, which is the ventilation components and how they impact the quality and safety of the services we provide to the guests staying at the hotel and the staff working in those hotel arrangements. The member will be aware that we have made a range of decisions about that, including the retirement of three of what are normally termed our “SHICC hotels”, because that gave us cause to make sure they were taken out.

Mr R.S. Love: What sort of hotels?

Mr R.H. COOK: SHICC.

Ms M.J. Davies: Maybe explain that! It did not sound good, minister! On the ground I am not sure that translates in *Hansard*!

Mr R.H. COOK: The member for Vasse will be familiar with this nomenclature, which means the State Health Incident Coordination Centre, which is SHICC. It is language that we have used for some 15 months now and obviously has become part of the vernacular when it comes to our hotel quarantining and our response to the pandemic. The member will be aware that there have been significant upgrades and improvements to the way we deliver that element of our response to the pandemic, and this is another element that will take its place as we continue to improve the hotel quarantining system.

SHARKS — HAZARD MITIGATION

81. Mrs L.A. MUNDAY to the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the state government’s commitment to helping keep people safe in the ocean and mitigating the risk of fatal shark attacks.

- (1) Can the minister please update the house on the conclusion of the nonlethal shark drum line trial?
- (2) Can the minister also outline to the house what measures the McGowan government is taking to ensure the continued safety and confidence of those using WA’s beaches?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Dawesville for the question. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate her on her emphatic win and note the excitement coming out of the electorate of Dawesville since she has been elected.

The McGowan Labor government is committed to keeping people in Western Australia as safe as possible. That includes our ocean users and coastal communities. The SMART drum line trial commenced in 2019 and has now come to a close, having provided valuable findings to the government that allow us to base our decisions on strong scientific evidence and expert advice. An independent review by the Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Klinken, has concluded that the trial was extremely well designed and implemented in a highly skilful manner. I want to extend my thanks to the contractors who have been out there over the past two years conducting the trial. Professor Klinken has also concluded that the science does not support a continuation of this technology for our unique coast. On the recommendation of the Chief Scientist the trial will conclude on its scheduled end date of 20 May 2021, and additional investment will be made to the highly effective approach of tagging white sharks.

We are going to increase our support for shark hazard mitigation measures that we know are helping to keep our ocean users and communities as safe as possible. The McGowan government will spend an additional \$5 million over the next four years to deliver our highly successful shark mitigation program, including increasing white shark tagging operations, upgrades to the shark monitoring network, support for beach enclosures of our popular beaches and continuing the personal shark deterrent devices rebate scheme for surface and divers, which we know has been very popular. The success of our targeted shark tagging program has been remarkable, with 22 white sharks tagged last year off the WA coast and another nine this year, which is a total of 31 since 2020. Fifty-one white sharks have been captured throughout the program since 2019, compared with just two through the SMART drum line trial for the same period.

We are providing additional funding of \$2.8 million to increase the valuable tagging work and upgrade the state’s shark monitoring network receivers. It will enable our highly experienced shark tagging team to spend more time on the water with the best chance of tagging white sharks. The McGowan government will upgrade the shark monitoring network by increasing the range of our 34 receivers to provide near-real

time alerts of the presence of target sharks. This valuable data and monitoring will contribute to our capacity, importantly, to predict shark behaviour and respond accordingly using our suite of shark mitigation measures. The upgrades to next-generation digital live VR4 receivers over the next four years will mean that detection of target sharks will have a longer range of up to 800 metres, a wider detection zone than the 500 metres currently in use. There are already two new-generation receivers in place as Bunker Bay, and we will upgrade the remaining 32 receivers along the coast from Perth south to Geographe Bay, Yallingup, Gracetown, Albany and Esperance.

The McGowan government is investing in shark hazard mitigation measures backed by strong scientific evidence and expert advice to help keep WA ocean users and our communities as safe as possible.

CORONAVIRUS — POWER REBATE

82. **Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Finance:**

Just before I ask my question, I want to add to the comments by the Minister for Health in recognising International Nurses Day today and International Day of the Midwife last Wednesday. I recognise the enormous contribution they make to the quality of our lives.

I think perhaps that this is the Minister for Finance's inaugural question. I refer to the minister's response in the Legislative Council on 4 May regarding the ministration of the \$500 power rebate from the five-day lockdown in February.

- (1) How many small businesses and charities are eligible for the \$500 rebate?
- (2) How many of the businesses are not customers of Synergy or Horizon Power and have therefore not received the \$500 assistance?
- (3) Why is it taking until mid-June before those impacted small businesses can even apply for the assistance that they were promised?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

- (1)–(3) In regard to the numbers that are entitled to the rebate and its application, as the member even said in his question about why it is taking some time to June, of course we will not know how many people have applied if the process is being implemented at the moment. I am unaware, and I will find out the numbers that are entitled to it. I can assure the member that it is a significant amount. I am sure the member will applaud that we are providing this to businesses that may require it. It is not something that we can just turn the tap on for and give the money out tomorrow. This is a prudent, fiscally responsible government. This is taxpayers' money. It is the money of mums and dads. We have to do this correctly. As the member knows, the Department of Finance is engaged in a number of programs providing grants in a number of areas. It takes some time to get systems up. That is what we are doing. In due course, the process will be implemented and those that should be awarded the credits will be awarded them.

CORONAVIRUS — POWER REBATE

83. **Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Finance:**

I have a supplementary question. Why is it taking 42 Department of Finance bureaucrats to administer this \$500 power rebate, especially given that it will largely be managed by Synergy and Horizon Power; could the money not be better spent elsewhere?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

Sorry, the member's question was whether this money would be —

Dr D.J. HONEY: If I may, Madam Speaker?

The SPEAKER: Clarify it—yes.

Dr D.J. HONEY: That 42 staff, out of the minister's own government's papers, are being taken on to administer the \$500 rebate in the Department of Finance.

Dr A.D. BUTI: This is interesting. One minute the member was asking why we are delaying it and now he is complaining that we are putting in extra resources to manage it. What does the member for Cottesloe want? Should we just stay with the existing staff and the grants program will start next year or does the member want us to take on extra staff so we can try to process it as quickly as possible?

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: What do you want, member? Give me an answer! What would you prefer?

Several members interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: You want the grants to be delivered now, but you do not want us to put on extra staff to try to speed up the process. What do you want, member?

Dr D.J. Honey: You're not delivering it until June and Synergy and Horizon are going to be administering it.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: No, sorry; member for Cottesloe, you have made your point. Can we have a response from just the minister?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Member, come back to me tomorrow with maybe a more defined question about what you actually want so I might be able to answer your question.

OUT-OF-HOME CARE — ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

84. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to keeping children safe and its efforts to address the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. Can the minister update the house on the Aboriginal family-led decision-making pilot in Geraldton and outline what it will mean when it comes to delivering positive outcomes for vulnerable children?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I thank the member very much for the question. It was fantastic to be with her up in Geraldton last week to announce a particular initiative that I am very proud of. I think we will start to see some significant changes in the way that child protection decision-making is made in Western Australia. Sadly, Aboriginal children are over-represented in our child protection system. Nearly 57 per cent of our children in out-of-home care are Aboriginal. Members might be aware that it is a new measure in the Closing the Gap targets that we reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care. Of course, it is a difficult objective because we need to keep children safe so we cannot just say that we will take fewer children into care. Our objective is to keep children safe. That means that we need to work on early intervention with families whose children are at risk of coming into care. We have invested new money into that and allocated some of that money to dedicated Aboriginal organisations. So far, the results look very promising.

We are also looking at doing things differently. We will be reintroducing amendments to the Children and Community Services Act—that is the child protection legislation in this state—to increase in the legislation the role of Aboriginal organisations. Once a decision has been made for a child to come into care, it will increase the role that Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal families have in deciding where that child will be placed. One of the good models that many advocates have been pressing us to implement is called Aboriginal family-led decision-making. This is implemented particularly in Victoria and Queensland. I am very proud that our government has funded a pilot program for Aboriginal family-led decision-making. The model that we have decided to trial will be an independent Aboriginal facilitator convening a meeting of the Aboriginal family to see whether we can get some better safety outcomes and engagement by that family in relation to child protection. That was the announcement that I made in Geraldton with the member for Geraldton last week. It looks very promising.

I would like to thank Will Hayward from Curtin University and also Corina Martin from the Aboriginal Family Legal Services who convened a group of Aboriginal leaders to design this work. We will also have a pilot in the metropolitan area. This is all leading in the direction that, when we can, we will involve Aboriginal families and their representatives to try to prevent children from coming into care and, if children are brought into care, that families and their representative organisations have a say on where the children will be placed and to keep some cultural connection with those children. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse identified that cultural connection and identity are important protective factors for Aboriginal children. I am really proud that, as the Minister for Child Protection over the last four years in the first McGowan government, as a result of some of that important work, we have now seen the first annual reduction in the number of non-Aboriginal children in care since 1998. After 20 years, we have seen the first reduction in numbers of non-Aboriginal children in care. In fact, the rates of growth for numbers of Aboriginal children in care is also going in the right direction. It is not a simple exercise, as I said, of just saying we will have fewer children in care. We need to make sure that children are safe, but we need to build the capacity of Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal families to be involved in the decision-making to make sure the children are safe and are kept connected to their culture so we can get better outcomes for those young people and their families.

GAMING AND WAGERING COMMISSION — CHAIR — DUNCAN ORD

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

I refer to question 57 yesterday that the Premier failed to answer relating specifically to the qualifications and experience of the chair of the Gaming and Wagering Commission.

- (1) Can the Premier confirm that Barry Sargeant, a person with 25 years of gaming regulation experience, is to leave the position of chair due to the machinery-of-government changes?
- (2) Can the Premier confirm that he replaced Mr Sargeant with Duncan Ord as chair of the commission, a person with no gaming regulation expertise, experience or training?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

(1)–(2) So the member understands, and I said this yesterday—I do not know what he is talking about “question 57”; I do not know what that means.

Mr P.J. Rundle: It is the number of the question I asked yesterday.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Question 57—what does that mean?

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have no idea what the member is talking about—“question 57”. I have been here only 24 years, but I do not know what question 57 is!

So the member understands, I explained this to him yesterday. Mr Sargeant recommended Mr Ord for the role. I was keen to ensure Mr Sargeant continued. I will be frank with the member; I am quite good friends with Mr Sargeant. He was the director general when I was minister back in 2005–06. I have enormous respect for his abilities. Mr Sargeant said to me that he was going to retire. He recommended Mr Ord for the role. That is what occurred. Duncan Ord is a longstanding public servant, a very decent man, highly respected, dealing with a range of portfolio responsibilities, as indeed do all the directors general in a range of areas. It is the case that in some portfolios in government, we have people who are generalists. They might be a specialist, if you like, in one area of the portfolio, but the portfolio is broad and they have deputy directors general and staff and the like to assist them in those areas. It is often asked why the Minister for Defence Industry is not an ex-member of the Defence Force. That is the nature of government. We get people into ministerial roles who have a broad array of experiences and abilities—predominantly around leadership and administrative abilities—who have responsibility for answering to a government and to the minister. We do not necessarily have someone who is an expert. The Commissioner of Police is a serving police officer; that is always the case. The director general of Health is almost always a doctor, but in other agencies across government, we have people with a range of experiences in roles in which they are placed across agencies. Under the old system, the director general of sport did not have to be an ex-sportsperson and the head of local government did not have to be a mayor. It is just the nature of things in government. Otherwise, we would have to have literally scores—probably hundreds—of government departments with only people who had ever worked in an area as the director general of that agency. When I studied politics at university, I was always advised that sometimes it is better not to have a person from the area because they come with the view that they know better than their advisers—certainly in a ministerial sense. That is why Mr Ord was appointed; it was because he was recommended to me by Mr Sargeant.

GAMING AND WAGERING COMMISSION — CHAIR — DUNCAN ORD

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

I have a supplementary question. Given the annual report tabled by the previous Minister for Racing and Gaming states unequivocally that “As a result of the 1 July 2017 Machinery of Government changes, Mr Barry Sargeant will stand down as the Chairman of the Commission”, was it the Premier or his minister who tabled this report in Parliament who was wrong?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

Mr Sargeant was heading towards retirement in 2017. I will explain it to the member again. I was very fond of Mr Sargeant, and still am. He sat on the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, and I think a couple of other bodies for government, because he is very technically knowledgeable in a range of areas, but he was heading towards retirement. I said to him, “I would like you to take on this role.” He said, “I want to retire, but I recommend Mr Ord.” That is what he said to me. I am sure he would verify that.

We have subsequently set up the Perth Casino Royal Commission into events that occurred in respect of Crown casino over many years, including when members opposite were in government! We did that. We set up the royal commission. The royal commission is now taking evidence and hearing matters, and the like. The idea that somehow a public servant is responsible for what people inside an organisation have done is a misunderstanding of the role of the public sector. If anyone has behaved inappropriately or wrongly inside a gambling organisation or a casino or what have you, well, that person is responsible for what they do. In terms of the royal commission, of course, it will come down with recommendations. We will let it do its work and undertake its duties and hear its evidence and so forth. It is all in public, because we are open, accountable and transparent, and we have done something that you never did in your eight and a half years in office.

BLUE CARBON ECOSYSTEMS

87. Ms C.M. TONKIN to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the commonwealth government’s recent announcement that it will invest \$100 million in managing our oceans, sequestering carbon and helping address climate change. Can the minister outline to the house how the McGowan Labor government is seeking to work with the commonwealth to ensure that Western Australia benefits from this investment in blue carbon ecosystems?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I thank the member for the question. I congratulate you on your election. My mum is very pleased to have a Labor member and to know also that she is not the only Labor voter in City Beach anymore!

As we know, blue carbon is carbon that is sequestered in marine environments, so that is seagrass, mangroves and tidal flats. Evidence shows that it can be up to four times more effective than terrestrial environments in capturing carbon. Given Western Australia has so much coastline, we are in a very good place to develop this industry. When UNESCO surveyed the 50 marine World Heritage areas, it found that more than half the blue carbon ecosystems across these sites were in Australia and two of them were in Western Australia, with Ningaloo and Shark Bay.

Shark Bay has the world's largest and most diverse seagrass ecosystem. During the heatwave of 2010, the Shark Bay World Heritage area lost large areas of its seagrass. That released what is estimated to be around nine megatons of carbon dioxide, which is the equivalent from two coal-fired power stations. We know that marine heatwaves are becoming more common and are lasting longer due to the impacts of climate change, so restoring seagrass is really critical to restoring the functioning of that ecosystem and helping to sequester carbon from the atmosphere.

The Shark Bay Malgana Indigenous community is currently funded through the Aboriginal ranger program and it has worked with scientists to develop seeding, shooting and planting methods to scale up our seagrass restoration activity. But despite our vast coastline, there are barriers to this, and one of those is the federal government. When it comes to developing and accrediting new methods of carbon abatement, the federal government has left out seagrass from its priorities, focusing mainly on mangrove environments, which are obviously more common on the east coast. That becomes really challenging for WA. The accreditation process is really important because it attracts private investment, and without that we cannot generate carbon credits, which are up to about \$18 per tonne of carbon dioxide.

Last week, I informed the house that I had written to the commonwealth Minister for the Environment, Hon Sussan Ley, and requested that WA gets its share of that \$100 million and that WA is at least one of those four major on-ground projects that was announced by the commonwealth. If we are going to act on climate change as a country, we need Western Australia to be included in this national approach on blue carbon and we cannot afford to be left out.

As Minister for Climate Action, I will continue to work with the Premier to push for greater recognition of our potential in blue carbon, and the government will continue to support scientists and Aboriginal communities in working on our blue carbon ecosystems through the expanded Aboriginal ranger program, the carbon innovation grants and the carbon farming and land restoring program.

The SPEAKER: That concludes question time.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY*Amendment to Motion*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [2.45 pm]: I rise to make a short contribution to this amendment. Yesterday, I listened with interest to the Minister for Small Business when we covered this topic and to the Minister for Local Government, who made a contribution on a related debate. There seemed to be a lot of focus on the government side around the capacity of the government to support a compensation package for small business in this state, so I thought it would be interesting to reflect on the confidence the government has in the capacity to pay.

We have seen the Minister for Transport oversee the largest blowout in a capital project in this state's history, with the Metronet project. In the last four years, the government has blithely put another \$5 billion into the Metronet project to take the budget from just short of \$2 billion to over \$7 billion, so, clearly, it has billions of dollars to spend on that particular project. Furthermore, we have seen today the Minister for Planning again introduce the Metropolitan Region Scheme (Beeliar Wetlands) Bill to excise the road reserve for Roe 8 and 9, with, apparently, the view to protect 0.19 hectares of the Beeliar wetlands and decimate 60 to 120 hectares of seagrass in Cockburn Sound. We have another \$5 billion commitment from this government for a project to replace a port that is only at one-third capacity. That is another \$5 billion spent there, I guess on a slightly smaller scale, but it is noteworthy for members in this house. It is encouraging to see so many new members, although it is disappointing they are not in this bloc here.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: We are looking for volunteers, member—reasonable people!

It may surprise new members in this place that their Labor government, in its last budget, contributed \$65 million to moving a substation and also remediation on the East Perth power station site—a site that was given to the two richest people in Western Australia for one dollar! That was \$65 million, minister.

Mr W.J. Johnston: I know exactly how much it was.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I will explain it to the minister after this debate if he likes.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have spoken about this before.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes, yes!

The SPEAKER: Minister for Mines and Petroleum, I would like you to not interject any further.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your support in this.

Clearly, this government has money.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The taxpayers do not, because the Minister for Water has been the expert at ripping money out of households in Western Australia!

No minister has done more in taking money out of the pockets of the households of Western Australia than the Minister for Water—\$400 a household.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Fifty families a week had their water cut off because of your policy.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is \$400 a household. I hope the minister is proud.

The SPEAKER: Members! Leader of the Liberal Party, I will give you this advice; that is, if you are going to direct provocative comments at ministers, you should expect a response. If you do not want a response from ministers, you should perhaps not direct provocative things directly at them.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you for your advice, Madam Speaker, but can I say that I am happy for the Minister for Water to expose how little he cares about the damage he has caused households in Western Australia with his \$400 bill. Can I move on?

Mr D.J. Kelly: You were cutting the water off for 50 families a week when you were in government and you did nothing about it.

Dr D.J. HONEY: As I say, the minister does not care.

Point of Order

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: Under “Rules for questions”, standing order 77(1)(b) refers to being argumentative. The member is attacking the minister. You warned him and he continued with his attack.

The SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach, I understand your point but I do not accept it as a point of order. I merely warned the Leader of the Liberal Party that if he continued in this robust manner, he could expect interjections and he could not necessarily expect my protection. At this moment in time, he is getting no protection.

Debate Resumed

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker; it is enjoyable to see you as Speaker.

If we can move on. We know that this government has more than \$4 billion in its coffers above the budget forecast and it is growing every day. Again, for the information of new members in this place, every dollar that the iron ore price is above budget forecast is worth around \$80 million additional money on an annualised basis in the government’s budget. Every cent reduction in the exchange rate is worth about the same, just as a mathematical quirk. Given the price of iron ore is over \$200 a tonne at the moment, substantial funds are coming into the budget, Minister for Energy.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Substantial funds are coming into this government’s coffers. The Minister for Finance should be very happy that I was his inaugural questioner—I gave him something to do.

If we can move on. There are substantial funds in the government’s coffers to allow it to offer this support. There is an important point in the need for offering this support. Normally when we have crises and the government needs to consider some sort of compensation for them, they are acute events; that is, when we have a storm, a flood or a fire, immediate action needs to be taken and compensation needs to be given. This COVID event is not an acute event, although obviously there can be acute moments within the crisis; it is chronic and ongoing. This has been ongoing now for 14 months, and there is a very high probability that it will go on for at least another two years. The Premier has made it clear that the public health advice is that we are likely to experience shutdowns. In fact, the appropriate way to mitigate the possible spread of the COVID virus in the community is to have short, sharp lockdowns. As we on this side have said for some time, we are very happy to support the government when it takes action based on competent medical advice.

The minister was correct when he said that this does not affect all businesses. He was also correct when he said that some businesses impacted by shutdowns have benefited overall from increased patronage due to tourists staying home and going out. Although there might be a short-term impact, over the year there might be a larger impact.

That is a fair observation by the minister. However, many businesses are suffering chronically from these shutdowns. That includes event businesses. The problem with event cancellations is that 80 or 90 per cent of the money is spent to hire sound systems, venues and the like before the event. When there is a shutdown, they lose all that money and do not get it back. Event organisers are not large companies; they are typically smaller businesses that may comprise a few partners or a couple who own the business. For many of them, certain events may be their major fundraiser for the year. The last two *Sculpture by the Sea* events, fortunately, managed to escape the worst impact of COVID. The *Sculpture by the Sea* organisation runs two events, one in Sydney and one in Western Australia. If it loses those events, it loses its entire income for the year. Event organisers have paid a particularly high price.

Hire venues for weddings and the like also have paid an enormous price. I was talking to the manager of Fraser's Restaurant and he explained to me the magnitude of the impact of the last shutdown on his business. It is not about just the business they lose. A lot of weddings and the like are held on weekends at those venues, when most people can attend. These places lose all that business. Shutdowns make people nervous about organising events in the future, particularly at large venues. These venues have seen a halo effect: not only is there an immediate effect on them from a shutdown, but also cancellations follow because people become nervous about whether an event can go ahead, particularly weddings, obviously, which these days people seem to take a year or more to organise. Places see hesitancy on the part of people who want to organise those events. Small restaurants and small cafes typically make most of their money on the weekend. They need to do food preparation beforehand, so they hire extra staff to do the food preparation for the weekend. They therefore lose not only the food but also the money they spent hiring that additional labour.

Another area of business that is probably the most affected is gymnasiums and, as I mentioned before, spin-cycle classes, yoga classes, exercise classes and the like. They have paid a particularly heavy price. If we look at the impact of shutdowns, members may note that typically those venues are the last to open and come back to normal operation. It means that they will have experienced a longer shutdown than almost any business from the shutdowns we have had. In the case of a local yoga business that has been set up by a lady and was starting to build customer numbers, it was explained to me that customers walk away if they are not confident that they will always be able to utilise their membership or they do not go for a period. Those businesses pay a particularly big price.

The state economy overall is doing well. Unemployment in the state is low, which indicates that business, overall, is okay. We need to recognise that small businesses are the big employer in this state. We talk about keeping mining and other businesses going, but small business employs around 40 per cent of people in the state. It is a huge employer—the largest employer in our state. Particular small businesses have paid a very high price for this shutdown. As I said, we on this side accept that the government is prudently trying to manage the crisis and is taking medical advice to do that. However, the people who are paying the greatest price are the small businesses that I mentioned, and others like them. We on this side think it is fair that the government should have a compensation package for them. As I have mentioned a few times, these businesses are typically not some big organisation or some globally networked corporation. They typically comprise two people, who have put everything on the line. They do not have big margins or big savings; invariably, they are just a sniff ahead of the bank in terms of repaying debt, paying their bills and so on. These businesses are really suffering. For some of them shutdowns can be quite catastrophic and, in fact, send them to the wall. The opposition appreciates that it may not be trivial, but we think it would be fair for the government to offer compensation to these businesses. I heard the minister say that it was all variable and that it is so subtle that the government cannot really put in a formula. We understand that in any system there has to be some latitude for discretion, but we can codify the types of shutdown we have. That is something that needs to evolve into something like type 1, type 2 and type 3 shutdowns. We know there will always be nuances involved, but on that basis we also think it would be fair for the Minister for Small Business to look at some formalisation of the types of compensation that can be applied to those businesses.

There has been some compensation applied to date, but the significant compensation—at one stage there was a \$14 500 payment—went to only about 4 000 businesses. I think there is something in the order of 200 000 small businesses in this state, so most small businesses have not benefited from any significant recompense from the government. There was a bit for power and so on, but that does not go close to matching the sorts of losses these businesses have sustained.

As I said yesterday, I heard the minister's argument and discussion. We have a state government that has adequate resources. We do not want the government to be profligate with taxpayers' money and we do not want it to waste money on businesses that have not suffered, but we do want it to look at targeted, appropriate compensation for those businesses that have been affected by the COVID-19 shutdown so that they do not have to pay the price and write the cheques that underwrite the management of COVID-19 in this state.

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Emergency Services) [3.01 pm]: I want to thank members opposite. I am going to oppose this amendment, but I will make the comment that I appreciate the more conciliatory tone of the member for Cottesloe, which stood in stark contrast to some of the earlier commentary from other members opposite. It is very disappointing that we have an opposition in this place that is always talking down the state and undermining business confidence.

The other point I make is that some of the comments made by members opposite simply were not true. Comments were made several times that the government had done nothing to support business. I could give members opposite

a list of initiatives. I will not be able to mention them all because I do not have them here in front of me and my mind is not big enough to contain all that detail, but I could go through a substantial list for them. The member for Vasse came in here and directly quoted someone who had claimed that there had been no financial assistance to any businesses as a result of COVID-19. She knows that that is not true. Why would she come in here and deliberately mislead the house without clarifying that comment or putting it into context? She said —

Withdrawal of Remark

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, you are going to have to withdraw that because you cannot actually say that someone has deliberately misled the chamber.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: Okay; I will change my phrasing and withdraw that, Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.R. WHITBY: It was clear to everyone that the member —

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr R.S. LOVE: I understand that if someone is to withdraw a remark, it is an unqualified act. It appears that the minister is trying to qualify his remarks. He is not actually removing the sentiment of what he said.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but the minister should withdraw and carry on with what he was saying.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.R. WHITBY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. We heard the comment made. What I am saying is: I believe the evidence is overwhelming that that comment was simply not accurate and the member should have known.

I will continue and go through some of the small forms of assistance that have been made available to thousands of small businesses for well over a year. I remind members that we are dealing with a global pandemic the like of which has never been seen by this living generation. It has had a massive impact on all facets of our community and business lives. We in Western Australia are renowned throughout the world for the way in which we have managed it and for the fact that our economy has been the strongest in dealing with COVID-19 of perhaps anywhere in the world. The Premier mentioned the surveys of states and provinces around the globe; I think we have come up trumps, and slightly behind us is a province or state of Germany that perhaps did almost as well, but not quite. The record shows that it is amazing how this government has worked hard and responded to COVID-19 to keep business doors open so that we can continue our financial vibrancy.

There is absolutely no doubt that businesses suffer when there are COVID-19 lockdowns, limitations and directions. Those all impact on businesses. I have admitted that, and the government is constantly dealing with it. But let us go through some of the ways in which the government has assisted businesses in this state. It is not true that there has been no support for business. That statement was made a number of times today, and it is simply not true.

There has been payroll tax relief. The payroll tax threshold has been increased to benefit about 12 000 small businesses; some businesses were relieved of payroll tax completely. There were grants of \$17 500 for slightly larger businesses that were still paying payroll tax but were relieved by that amount—businesses in the category of having a payroll of between \$1 million and \$4 million. It is estimated that in Western Australia today, a business can employ more than 10 staff and not pay payroll tax, such have been the changes to payroll tax for businesses in Western Australia. There have been licence fee reductions, commercial tenancy relief and electricity credits of \$500. The electricity credits went virtually straightaway, member for Cottesloe; they went immediately to the credit of business accounts. In that instance there is an issue if a business is located in a large shopping centre where there is an embedded electricity account. It is very difficult and not automatic to work out where that credit will go. We do not want it to end up in the hands of a large shopping centre landlord; we want it to go to the businesses, so of course there will be some difficulties and delays there. But the vast majority of small businesses have that money as a credit into their business electricity accounts.

There was \$2 000 for the recent Anzac weekend lockdown. With regard to cyclone Seroja, I know it is a different issue, but businesses are dealing with huge setbacks up there and there have been \$4 000 payments provided for that. We are also working with the federal government to unlock category C assistance, and that will directly benefit primary producers and businesses in that region. There will be a total of more than \$1.2 billion in support of Western Australian businesses that are dealing with COVID-19. In addition, \$5.5 billion in infrastructure programs will have a huge impact on Western Australian businesses and employment.

Mr V.A. Catania: It's coming from the federal government!

Mr R.R. WHITBY: That is the \$5.5 billion infrastructure program that was announced in the state government's budget last year.

Mr V.A. Catania: What was that? Sorry, minister; can you outline where that support came from?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for North West Central!

Mr R.R. WHITBY: I will continue. There is a \$5.5 billion infrastructure program. If the member likes, I can come in here tomorrow with a long list of initiatives and projects that also benefit business. As the member knows, the very best thing we can do as a government is to keep the doors of business open. That is what business wants. It wants to operate and to employ people. We know that it is not just one story across Western Australia; it is different stories. We know there are businesses that have taken initiatives, changed and been able to adapt, and are actually doing better business now than they did pre-COVID-19. They have actually employed more people. We heard none of that from members opposite, at least not until the member for Cottesloe stood up, so let us be honest in the way we describe this issue.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for North West Central!

Mr R.R. WHITBY: There have been huge benefits to businesses right across Western Australia from local tourism. There have been huge benefits to businesses across Western Australia through the renovation of cafes and restaurants.

Mr V.A. Catania: The minister is already in an ivory tower!

Mr R.R. WHITBY: I know, member, that there are often negative impacts from COVID-19. We see it all the time, we deal with it all the time, and we direct assistance all the time. To say there is nothing but a bleak godforsaken landscape, which is all the member said when he got on his feet, is not correct and not part of the true context of the situation. Members of the opposition want a black and white world. They want a one-size-fits-all solution to every challenge. It is not possible, members. In the same way, members of the opposition want a silver-bullet quarantine facility. They have mentioned the proposal to build one in Mandurah. That has come unsolicited to the government. I do not think the government knew anything about that proposal.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: The issue there, as we know, and as I said yesterday, is that we have a quarantine solution at the moment that is working incredibly well. We have had a handful of transmission cases. Today, we know that more than 45 000 people have gone through the system. More than 45 000 people have come from overseas and been quarantined in Western Australian hotels, and we can count on one hand the issues we have had. I think we should applaud that system.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Hear, hear! Well said.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: We should all applaud that system.

Ms M.J. Davies: Good job. Tell your Premier that Mark is the best! You wouldn't need new facilities, then, if we don't need them.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: We do not need new facilities, because I have no way of guaranteeing, and nor does the Leader of the Opposition, that spending \$200 million of taxpayers' money on a purpose-built facility will give us a result that is any different from the one we have now. We know it is world-class.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! Opposition party, enough! The minister is on his feet. Carry on, minister.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I think it is very clear that this government has responded, and continues to respond, to the needs of businesses, and particularly small businesses, across Western Australia. COVID-19 is a difficult issue to deal with. No jurisdiction in the world knows all the answers. I think we stand out as a world leader in the way we have led the fight against COVID-19. In terms of supporting small business, we have underwritten millions and millions of dollars in support, in the ways I have just described. But the very best thing we can do —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: The very best thing we can do, member, is to keep the doors open. We do that again and again. I know, from speaking to small businesses in my electorate and elsewhere in the state, that we are praised for that. People in small businesses are savvy people. They understand the risk and the threat, and they know that the short-term inconvenience of having a lockdown for three days, in the last case, will have a huge benefit to them long term. We have seen again and again that businesses like breweries in the south west and elsewhere do suffer short-term inconvenience and cost but are able to open their doors for much longer than they would be able if they were in other parts of Australia or the world and are doing very well as a result. Thank you.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.13 pm]: I just want to make a couple of comments. The minister has made some assertions that I want to play out a little bit. First of all, this group of individuals here are not talking down the state. To borrow a line from the Premier from the last Parliament, the minister's comments are a bit tired. I expected more from someone who was a professional media operator in his

past life and that he would have picked up his own line and used that. We are certainly not here to talk down the state. We put forward a very good amendment yesterday, I believe—a reasoned amendment—calling for compensation for businesses when there was a lockdown. The government indicated that it had some understanding of the merits of what we were talking about, although according to the government it was a flawed concept. We are seeking to improve the situation for people in Western Australia. We are not seeking to talk down the state at all.

This amendment that has been put forward is simply a recognition, if you like, that the lockdowns and the management of the quarantine system have had a traumatic impact on small businesses and events that are hosted across the state of Western Australia. That is a fact. It cannot really be denied. When there is a snap lockdown, it does have an effect on business. What we are talking about here are two aspects. First of all, we have had some indication of potential avenues for compensation. The minister has rejected any assertion that there is inadequate compensation, but I know from businesses on the ground that there is still a need for further measures. There is also still a need to look very hard at the situation for events, because the lockdowns are really changing the face of the entertainment industry and also just life in Western Australia generally. For instance, community groups cannot plan shows properly because there is not sufficient support when an event might be cancelled.

We are not here to talk down the state. We are not here to criticise the government unnecessarily, although there are aspects that could be improved. What we are trying to do is to put forward the case for some improvements and some targeted measures that would lead to a better outcome for the state, for businesses, and for the communities that business operate in. As regional members, the Nationals know that business is fundamental to the health of our small communities.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, keep it down, please.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I took a bit of umbrage at comments the Minister for Small Business made about the member for Vasse. He did withdraw his inappropriate assertion that the member had been misleading. The member for Vasse is entitled to make comments that she feels are appropriate. Had the minister had some sort of problem with that, he could have stood up on a point of order and made some comment at that point, instead of waiting for his own reply to have a go at the member for Vasse.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I will say something about the member for Vasse. She asked a question of the Minister for Health in this house last Wednesday. The health minister gave a completely erroneous answer. This was on the Quarantine Advisory Panel. The health minister gave a completely erroneous answer to the question. He said that he had been consulting the Quarantine Advisory Panel. That does not yet exist. That was very misleading. We have not had an apology for that. No-one has come out and said, “Sorry; that was wrong information.”

Later on that same day, a question was asked of the Premier, and the Premier replied that the panel had been formed and that Professor Weeramanthri was the chair. The next day, the Premier had to backtrack on that and admitted that the Quarantine Advisory Panel had not yet been formed. Today, further information was sought about the terms of reference and what that group will be doing, but nothing was forthcoming. We have gone from a situation in which, last Wednesday, the Quarantine Advisory Panel was informing the health minister and the government on the best methods to handle quarantine in this state, then we found that it does not even exist, and then we were told, “Yes, it’s going to be formed, but actually we haven’t written the terms of reference for it yet.” We are going to be waiting for quite some time before the Quarantine Advisory Panel will actually be doing anything for this state. I think that a fundamentally flawed piece of information was given to this house. That lies at the heart of this amendment, which is about the failed hotel quarantine system.

Some members have put forward different views about what could happen—it could be a camp or a different type of quarantine environment. What we really need is a qualified group, such as this Quarantine Advisory Panel. Had it been formed when the government undertook to form it, and had it then had a qualified group of individuals looking intelligently at the hotel quarantine system and coming forward with recommendations that the government could follow, we might be able to move forward. It may well be that another facility is needed, but we need a process to ascertain the best way to do quarantine. Nothing has been done to the hotel quarantine system since it started, except for tinkering around the edges and trying to make sure that the things that have been put in place in other states, such as vaccinations for hotel quarantine staff, appropriate ventilation and not allowing Uber drivers to work as security guards in quarantine hotels, have been put in place here. Those fundamental things happened in other states but this government failed to learn from their experience and, as a result, small business has been unjustifiably penalised.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, I call you for the first time. Member for Armadale, I call you for the first time. This is not a place in which to shout at each other. Carry on, Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The government needs to be held to account for its failure to introduce a quarantine advisory panel, a group that is dedicated to coming up with a decent process so that we can properly analyse the quarantine

situation. Perhaps we can have a public discussion. What would be wrong with talking to people in the community about what they think? Perhaps we can have a discussion around what impact being locked in a hotel room has on people's mental health, which is an issue I raised when the system was first introduced. There are a lot of issues with the hotel quarantine system. I am not saying that it is wrong, but we need a process to properly examine the way forward and the Quarantine Advisory Panel, for which no terms of reference have been set, might be the vehicle to do that. It is a pity that the panel was not doing its work a month or two ago because we might have been getting somewhere; we might have been having some intelligent discussion.

The amendment is not an attack and it is not meant to talk down the state. It simply points out that when the system fails, it has an effect on innocent small businesses and communities across the state. We are seeking a better process in the future so that these types of events do not happen as regularly as they have.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [3.21 pm]: The government was of the understanding that after the Minister for Small Business made his contribution, that would be the point at which the debate would end, but, apparently, members of the Nationals WA thought they needed to have the last word. They cannot help themselves; they want to have the last word. It is amazing that they come in here talking about failed COVID management in Western Australia. Let me tell the member for Moore something: 38 881 is the number of votes that the Labor Party got in the Agricultural Region in the Legislative Council vote. Do members know how many votes the National Party got? It got 22 495 votes.

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I cannot see how what the member for Cannington is talking about has anything to do with the amendment.

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

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Pilbara, thank you. The minister has only just started to put his argument, so we will give him a bit of time to make sure that he sticks to debating the amendment.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We are debating this ridiculous amendment moved by the opposition, which states —
but regret to inform His Excellency that the McGowan government's COVID-19 management including snap lockdowns as a result of its failed hotel quarantine system is having a dramatic impact on small businesses and events across Western Australia, creating uncertainty for the sector

The opposition is saying that the McGowan government's management of COVID-19 has been a failure. We know who has been a failure; it has been National Party members in trying to get the support of their core constituency. Think about this: even if we add the Liberal Party's 10 481 votes, the National Party did not get 85 per cent of the vote of people in the Agricultural Region. The National Party is a national embarrassment. Compared with the four per cent of Western Australians who voted for the National Party, seven per cent voted for the Greens. They are a rounding error of the people's views of this state.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: Mr Deputy Speaker, you said he would have some time to develop his argument; I think he has had a bit of time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member. There is no point of order, but, yes, the minister will keep his remarks very close to the amendment to the motion.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The point that I am making is that when we review the views of the community on whether the Labor government and this Premier have been successful in managing COVID, we should talk to the community instead of the National Party. We should talk to the constituents in all the electorates that endorsed the Premier. Let us not kid ourselves; the number one reason people voted Labor at the election was because they wanted to show their support for Mark McGowan, Premier of Western Australia, and his handling of COVID-19. The lazy opposition spent four years doing no work, presenting no plans and providing no alternatives.

Speaking about small businesses, Mr Deputy Speaker, do you remember the Liberal Party lie at the time of the election? It said it would provide \$10 000 for every small business. Where was that in its costings? Remember the three stooges and the stooge there saying, "That's what we want the government to do." It was not what the Liberals wanted to do; it was what they wanted the government to do.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Liberal Party and the National Party were hypocrites then and I bet anything that the community continues to consider them to be hypocrites now. I am happy for people to judge the performance of this

government. What is it? Forty-five thousand people have been in hotel quarantine but there have been only five errors. Do members know what the failure rate is? The Prime Minister said that it has 99.9 per cent success, but that might be around the country because here we have had 0.01 per cent failure. We cannot eliminate every risk in managing COVID. I am proud to stand beside the Premier because I know that he is doing everything possible to manage the risk. That does not mean that there is no risk; it means that he is managing it in a responsible and effective way. Guess what? Even the people in the wheatbelt agree with me because they voted Labor more than they voted for any other party in this chamber. In the seats that make up the wheatbelt and make up the Agricultural Region, a majority—the largest number of people—supported the Labor Party. That is what happened. Do not rewrite the story of the election. The opposition has failed. It is not our quarantine system that is failing; it is the opposition.

Division

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

Ayes (6)

Mr V.A. Catania
Ms M.J. Davies

Dr D.J. Honey
Mr R.S. Love

Ms L. Mettam
Mr P.J. Rundle (*Teller*)

Noes (45)

Mr S.N. Aubrey
Mr G. Baker
Ms H.M. Beazley
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr J.N. Carey
Ms C.M. Collins
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms L. Dalton
Ms D.G. D'Anna
Mr M.J. Folkard
Ms K.E. Giddens
Ms M.J. Hammat

Ms J.L. Hanns
Mr T.J. Healy
Mr M. Hughes
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr H.T. Jones
Mr D.J. Kelly
Ms E.J. Kelsbie
Ms A.E. Kent
Dr J. Krishnan
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr D.R. Michael

Mr K.J.J. Michel
Mr S.A. Millman
Mr Y. Mubarakai
Ms L.A. Munday
Mrs L.M. O'Malley
Mr P. Papalia
Mr S.J. Price
Mr D.T. Punch
Mr J.R. Quigley
Ms R. Saffioti
Ms A. Sanderson
Mr D.A.E. Scaife

Ms J.J. Shaw
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Dr K. Stratton
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms C.M. Tonkin
Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms E.L. Hamilton (*Teller*)

Amendment thus negatived.

Motion Resumed

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House)**.

TREASURER'S ADVANCE AUTHORISATION BILL 2021

Second Reading

Resumed from 5 May.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [3.33 pm]: I rise to speak on behalf of the opposition on the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2021. The Parliament deals with bills like this on a regular basis when it comes back after an election. We have no objection to the mechanics of a Treasurer's advance bill. We are responsible and we will offer our support to the Premier and the government on this bill, regardless of that fact that it will make no difference whatsoever to whether it passes, but we have some questions about the quantum, the priorities and the assumptions that sit beneath the request to provide additional money.

I thank the Premier for the briefing that was provided on Friday at short notice by his office and also the Treasury officials to me and the shadow Treasurer, Hon Dr Steve Thomas. At that meeting, there was some discussion about how, at our request, the Premier may consider tabling in the house today some of the detail that has been glossed over. We are looking for a breakdown of the spend of the \$750 million increase in this advance bill and ask the Premier to consider that.

Broadly, we understand that the additional spend will cover the COVID-19 response from government, including, specifically, the vaccination rollout. A joint commitment was made between the state and federal governments between the federal budget being set and our return from the election. Funds will also be provided for the government to respond to the natural disasters that we have experienced in Western Australia, with the Wooroloo fires and ex-tropical cyclone Seroja. We have no issue with the government working quickly to provide support to those particular communities, but we have some questions about where that funding is going and how it will be managed. The other area of spending mentioned in the second reading speech is the small business assistance grants brought on in response to the lockdowns that we have experienced in Western Australia since January. Interestingly, a number of election commitments have been included in this advance amount along with a buffer, which I am told is normal. Treasury includes a buffer to ensure that we do not have to come back again, so from that perspective, I would like to understand the assumptions underpinning that amount and how much is allocated according to those particular categories.

Obviously, we have an interest in the election commitments that the government wants to include in the rollout prior to the end of this financial year. I appreciated the Treasury official alerting us to the fact that we can go through

the *Pre-election financial projections statement*, which categorises where there have been spending changes in the various departments. But, again, the level of detail does not allow us to understand exactly why that has come about and some further detail on that would be appreciated.

I want to start with some of the commentary that has surrounded the Premier's decision to take on the role of Treasurer. A few eyebrows were raised when the new cabinet for the McGowan government was announced. There are many new members of Parliament, as we are reminded of daily when we come into this place; we are surrounded by them in this corner of the house. A crop of new hopefuls is coming through the ranks and there are some ministers with significant experience in this place. A number of ministers were touted as being up to the task of taking on the role of Treasurer and filling the very big shoes left by the former member for Victoria Park. The cabinet reshuffle that ensued with the Premier taking on the role of Treasurer meant that some very competent and reasonable ministers, such as the member for Willagee, were stood aside. The dealings that I had with that previous minister in his portfolios—fisheries, in particular—was a welcome respite from those I had with the member who held that position before him. It is a great disappointment that the member for Willagee, Hon Peter Tinley, who was a very reasonable minister, is not continuing on in that role.

Given the size and the depth of the members in the Labor Party, it seems a little miserly that the Premier has taken on this role in addition to the role of Premier, particularly when we are in the middle of a pandemic. The Premier has many demands on his time and this state is facing a number of key issues. It is a big task that no doubt comes with an enormous responsibility in terms of his time and making sure that those budget allocations are managed across all these new portfolios. The Minister for Transport was touted as having all the right qualifications to become the Treasurer. In fact, she has a professional background in economics and experience of working in Treasury in Canberra and the state government, yet she was overlooked for the role. We have to ask whether the Premier has a lack of trust in his colleagues, because, once again, it is hard to understand why the Premier would take on this mantle when there are so many people in his government with the right qualifications. There is a significant task ahead to manage the COVID-19 response—which the opposition has been asking questions about over the last two weeks—as we move on from the crisis mode that we were in early on in the first half of last year to what is now business as usual or the new normal. Of course, the Premier will now be required to significantly focus on these things in addition to the many Treasury responsibilities. Although there may have been discussions previously—I have no doubt the Premier was heavily involved and was leading the Expenditure Review Committee and the remainder of that—those discussions would have been led by the previous Treasurer, and that is now also on the Premier's plate. Those questions were asked—not only by us in the opposition; it was widely canvassed in the community—and, as I said, there were a few raised eyebrows when the Premier made that decision.

It was interesting to hear the Premier being interviewed on the ABC on 19 March, not very long after announcing his cabinet, and saying that one of the main reasons he wanted to take on the Treasury portfolio was that he wanted to protect WA's share of the GST. I have not heard that particular debate come back on the agenda, but they were fighting words, which does not surprise me. It is always good to pick a fight with the feds and our eastern states colleagues when we need to push things along and make sure that we maintain those heady heights of popularity. The Premier commented, "The other states are mobilising, jointly mobilising against it, and that is a threat to Western Australia." I have not heard the Premier raise that ever since, so I am very interested to know exactly how he thought that mobilisation was occurring. I cannot imagine that any discussion about changes to the GST in the run-up to the federal election, at the very least, will be on the agenda. I will be interested to see whether any Premiers in other states have a view on this, but I am sure that there will be no discussion on that front. Whether this is a real threat or a threat that has been dreamt up, the old playbook of blame the feds when looking for a distraction is probably wearing a little bit thin.

I am not sure whether it is just a convenient excuse or political ploy or artificial argument to create tension when there is none, but the Premier needs to make clear whether that is in fact something he will be pursuing. Of course, he will have the opposition's support because we fought very, very long and hard to see some equity from a GST perspective. I point to the fact that Tony Crook, a former federal Nationals member, the former member for O'Connor, was in fact one of the first MPs to raise the matter in a federal context. In fact, when he moved a motion calling for a better distribution of GST moneys and argued that Western Australia was being completely duded, he found himself sitting on one side of the house while every other federal MP was sitting on the other. We have a long history on the GST argument, so the government will not be able to drive a wedge between us and the people of Western Australia on that. We will support any move the government considers to ensure that WA continues to get its fair share, given that so much of the wealth is created here in Western Australia. However, I find it interesting that that debate has not been put forward since. I suspect it will come to the fore as we get closer to the federal election.

Turning to the bill, we would very much like to unpack the increase of \$750 million on the currently approved limit of \$689 million. The COVID-19-related expenses are understandable, but some detail would be appreciated, given that we have had very limited opportunity to scrutinise the government spend on this, given the circumstances of the past year. We have questions like: What has been spent on the hotel quarantine system? Has any of the funding been attributed to forming the Quarantine Advisory Panel? If so, when did the government start allocating those funds? What resources will be provided to acquit that very important job? What funding has been allocated to

implement the recommendations that the government agreed to as a result of the Weeramanthri report? We have found it very difficult to get any detail on the implementation time line and the funding that has been attached to those recommendations, which the government has agreed to. We do not see the rigour in how they will be delivered. The opposition cannot do its job of finding out whether the government is holding itself to a high standard to deliver that in a timely and cost-effective manner.

We do not pursue these questions with a view to saying that we cannot acknowledge the management of the COVID pandemic over the last 14 months. I think the people of Western Australia have clearly shown that they support what the Premier and his government have been doing to make sure that we have been kept safe. But we do absolutely have a responsibility to ask questions about the money that will be spent. As I said, we are shifting from a crisis mode, which we have been in for the last six to 10 months, into what is a business-as-usual mode. We need to understand exactly what has been spent, how it has been spent and what the future plans are to ensure that our state can continue to grow even while the threat of COVID still exists.

As I said before, I think the opposition understands and supports expenditure to assist those communities that have been impacted by natural disasters—the sooner, the better. Ex-tropical cyclone Seroja and the Wooroloo fires have been absolutely tragic for those communities that have been impacted on both fronts. It would be remiss of me not to mention that we understand that these are complex situations that require many departments, both state and federal, to have input to make sure that we are able to support the recovery of those communities, but there are some very urgent and immediate issues that we would like dealt with. Some of them have already been raised by members of the opposition. In particular, the communities in Kalbarri and Northampton—places that have been most impacted—are inhibited from getting roofs back on houses and houses rebuilt after there has been complete destruction because those communities cannot get a construction workforce or have no accommodation available for the workforce—likewise with clean-up crews. That is hampering support to those communities and their recovery. I always premise these remarks with huge congratulations and thanks and appreciation to the emergency services workers who have been involved so far. But the immediate challenge is housing the workers who will rebuild these communities.

It would be good for us to understand what the government has put on the table. We have yet to see category C and D—is that correct, Deputy Leader of the Opposition?

Mr R.S. Love: Yes. We are waiting for category C to be assessed.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We are waiting for category C to be triggered. That will then allow federal government funds to flow significantly as well.

We would like some detail around what has been spent in relation to the Wooroloo fire and ex-tropical cyclone Seroja. So much has happened since the Wooroloo fires, but the community is continuing to pick up the pieces. It resulted in utter and complete devastation for some people. As we always hear after these events, there are people who will be coming through this without insurance. There will be the tragic stories of people who are underinsured, particularly in regional communities. As we go along this path, I suspect we will hear more stories about people who have been unable to insure appropriately or who are unable to rebuild because insurance companies will simply not recognise the value of these homes in regional areas. There is the risk that those people will move on and not remain in those communities and that, I think, will be a very poor outcome. A similar debate arose after the Yarloop fires and about whether Yarloop could be rebuilt. That community was strong, as are the communities of Wooroloo, Kalbarri, Northampton and other places that have been impacted. The people of Yarloop strongly believed in the need to rebuild their town and funds were made available to assist them. It is only now that they are getting back on their feet and prospering once again.

I turn to small business grants. There has been a fair amount of discussion in the house today around the quantum and assumptions that underlie this spend and whether it is enough. It has been difficult to get details on who has been eligible for them. We asked the Minister for Finance today about the energy grants. We have been trying to understand who is eligible, who is not and what additional funds will be made available. We then made a very reasonable request and suggestion, I thought, with the amendment that was moved yesterday to the second reading of the COVID-19 Response Legislation Amendment (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Bill 2021 and the debate we have held today around trying to provide that certainty for businesses in Western Australia if we are going to continue down the path of short, sharp lockdowns so that those businesses have some level of certainty. It is a serious matter. I am not convinced that the government has turned its mind to this in a fulsome manner.

I understand that the Treasury estimates of the three-day lockdown over Anzac Day were around \$70 million. I do not know whether that has changed now that more information and feedback has been provided. I would certainly be interested to know whether that figure has changed. Feedback from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, the Australian Hotels Association and small businesses across Western Australia puts the broader impact at far more than that. Numbers between \$100 million and \$200 million have been put forward as the real impact of that short, sharp lockdown. As I said, the government refused to consider an amendment to the COVID emergency response bill that I think would have been a good way to explore how it might provide some of that certainty to the business sector in the event of future lockdowns, given that it seems this is the way we will manage any future outbreaks. We were given a short time frame to consider the legislation. We genuinely did not want to hold up the legislation. We moved an amendment that would have allowed the government to consider how it

might accommodate the request, as opposed to making a very specific request, but it was discounted. I echo the comments of the member for Roe, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for North West Central that people in the business community are very flexible and resourceful, but they are stretched and they are not magicians. As we carry on, they cannot keep operating with that level of threat of lockdown without some certainty that there will be at least an opportunity for them to receive some sort of compensation. It seems that every time we go through this process, the government waits to see how big the outcry is, how big the pushback is, as to how big the amount will be that it needs to respond with. I do not think that is fair to the business community. I think it has enough to deal with if it is coming off the back of a lockdown. I do not think it is worthy of the way we have tried to manage all the uncertainty in our community. I think that the government has tried to be mindful of that, but a mechanism is required that says without doubt when we go into lockdown, we will see how we can provide support so that businesses know it is coming and they do not need to get up and agitate and start to push back. That would take a lot of heat out of that debate.

Undoubtedly, the pressure has a long-term impact on not just people's bottom line, but also their mental health. We have all been dealing with businesses that have been impacted, whether one is in the Perth or Peel region or in the regions. I have had experience of it in my electorate. I also have family that runs and manages small businesses that were directly impacted. It does have an impact. They understand that there needs to be a process that allows us to stop people moving about, but they want some certainty while that is occurring, so they know they will come out the other end with support from their government. I hope we will see movement on that from the government as we go forward.

I draw the Premier's attention to the election commitments. Clause 3 of the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill allows for an advance of funds that are required and that qualify as extraordinary and unforeseen. That is the qualification provided in the legislation for this advance of funds from Treasury. In the briefing, the shadow Treasurer, Hon Dr Steve Thomas, was very up-front with the Treasurer's adviser and the officials. We requested details of the election commitments and other expenditure, so we did not waste the time of the Premier in this place or the spokesperson in the Legislative Council. We felt that it would push the process along a little if we could see what was being included. I ask for this detail to be tabled as part of the debate, because we did not receive it before I started my contribution today. I do not think it is unreasonable from an opposition perspective to expect detail on how and why these election commitments have been included, especially as we have very significant issues facing the state at the moment.

We have talked about issues facing our health system—a health system that is under significant pressure. There has been no lack of discussion around the shortage of staff in our tertiary hospitals that has put enormous pressure on their emergency departments. That has been borne out in ambulance ramping and the number of challenges that have been reported widely. If I were spending funds on matters that I thought the people of Western Australia would agree were extraordinary or unforeseen, I would have no hesitation getting the tick of approval from everyone if it related to improving our health system.

I mention the hotel quarantine argument about capacity. We have hotels that are coming offline, many Western Australians still stranded overseas, and a worker shortage in key sectors and industries that will continue to only increase, but we do not seem to have an answer from the Premier on that other than to point the finger at the commonwealth and say that it needs to do more. Given that the state's economy relies on agriculture, mining and tourism—businesses that require access to those workers—is there something in the advance that allows us to expand our hotel quarantine system and make it safer? If we are retiring three hotels that are unsafe, but we have investigated and done our due diligence and we are prepared to spend further funds to expand that, because hotel quarantine is what we are going to persist with, and we do not believe it is value for money to go down the path of investing in new facilities, I will accept that if someone has done the work. However, although we have asked the question over the past two weeks, we have not had an answer to that question. It does not appear that any work is being done on alternatives to expand the hotel quarantine system. I do not know whether that is belligerence, because it is easier to have a fight with the feds, or whether it is simply that we think we are doing our bit and we will not have a view to bringing in the people who can assist us with our key industries going forward or to bring back those who require assistance, who are Western Australians, who are Australians, who want to return home and who are in countries that are being ravaged by COVID. If we can do that safely, it is incumbent on all of us, state and federal, to make sure that we are doing it. If that was something that was included as extraordinary and unforeseen, the government would have the tick of approval from most Western Australians. If it is commitments that were made by—I had better not canvass the Deputy Speaker—a new member of Parliament at a local level, I would question the urgency of that. We seek to understand what is being included in that \$750 million from an election commitment point of view and for that to be tabled so we can understand better how those commitments are being prioritised and why they are being brought forward. Do they in fact have business cases attached to them that would assist in that prioritisation process and give us some confidence that these are things that should be included in the Treasurer's advance?

They are the questions from our perspective, particularly around the election commitments. If information were tabled by the Treasurer on this, we would welcome it so that we could make an assessment and not necessarily have to draw out consideration in detail as we asked further questions on that front. The opposition has no issue with the

mechanics of a Treasurer's advance bill. We understand that there are always unforeseen spending movements across departments and we appreciate that a briefing was provided in a relatively short time frame. However, I echo what the shadow Treasurer said in our briefing: if we can have access to the information so we can see what is making up the \$750 million in additional spend, this process will go a lot faster and we can all get on with the important business that the Treasurer has to do and move on to the next piece of legislation.

I will conclude. We have a few more contributors from this side. I look forward to seeing the information the Treasurer can provide to assist the opposition to do our job to scrutinise this legislation.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [3.59 pm]: I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition. As she mentioned, we will generally support this Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2021, although we have a few questions, and I certainly do, especially about the election commitments.

Firstly, I support the opposition leader and her concern about the Premier also being the Treasurer. I have had a lot of concern from my constituents. As I mentioned in my contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate today, it is amazing that the Premier cannot seem to locate anyone else out of his 75 members who is able to do the Treasurer's role. I am sure you, Deputy Speaker, would potentially be a very good Treasurer. But certainly it could be the likes of the Minister for Transport. I would have thought the member for Armadale, the Minister for Finance, would be very highly qualified in that department.

Mr W.J. Johnston: He is a constitutional lawyer.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Nonetheless, he is also the Minister for Finance, so I would have thought he would be somewhere in the mix. Anyway, that is not to be. The Premier is also now the Treasurer. The Premier is undertaking a massive workload. I worry, with the amount of work he has on his plate, whether he will be able to cover every angle, including the COVID situation. Nonetheless, that is the situation. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, through the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2021 we support additional health spending, cleaning for schools and public transport, and the \$500 small business and charity electricity tariff offset. We certainly support those things, but when I get to the line in the second reading speech that says "the forecast impact of election commitments", I am a bit concerned about the urgency of this bill and would like some clarity on some of the election commitments. I would like to refer to some of the things that happened in my electorate of Roe and the nonchalant approach to election promises there. Hon Darren West gave his contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate over the last day or two and made many random promises to clubs and facilities in Roe. Most of those promises were uncostered. As per the opposition leader, I would like to ask whether they have business cases, whether they have an application process and whether they have been budgeted for. These are the sorts of questions that the people of my electorate are interested in. It appears that if someone was lucky enough to have a chat with Darren over the election campaign and they mentioned a wish list, they could potentially be promised funding. This is the sort of thing I am concerned about.

I will refer to Local Projects, Local Jobs, which the member for Armadale is very much aware of when we talk about the Armadale or Aubin Grove dog parks—those fantastic projects from the previous government that came through. I will refer to the report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, *The Local Projects Local Jobs program and the establishment of a parliamentary budget office*, which is about that Local Projects, Local Jobs scenario. I will just go on a little bit about those election commitments in Roe. As I said, I am concerned that if someone happened to run across Darren on the election trail, it looks like they might have been in luck. The Esperance Table Tennis Club has been promised \$2 500.

Mr W.J. Johnston: What have you got against table tennis?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I had a game of table tennis on a Thursday morning at the Esperance Table Tennis Club. I did not get the spirit level out, minister, but the tables look pretty good to me!

Mr W.J. Johnston: You're pretty mean!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am not being mean; I am just trying to work out the random approach.

Mr M. McGowan: You've lost the table tennis vote!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I had a game myself, Premier!

Anyway, as I said, I am concerned about the application process. I am concerned about how this will play out and the equity for clubs, charities and the like in my electorate.

If I may, I will refer to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations report, *The Local Projects Local Jobs program and the establishment of a parliamentary budget office*, which it delivered in June 2020. We had Hon Tjorn Sibma as chair, Hon Diane Evers, Hon Jacqui Boydell, Hon Alanna Clohesy and Hon Colin Tincknell. Nathan Hondros in his media article of 25 June 2020 stated —

The controversial scheme, which was a centrepiece of the party's 2017 election campaign, resulted in 859 payments to community groups for small projects.

But the election commitments drew fire when it emerged 92 per cent of the cash was spent in Labor's target seats.

There we go. There was an 18-month inquiry by the WA Parliament committee. It did not receive evidence to demonstrate that any new form of sustainable or ongoing employment was created, but the program was called Local Projects, Local Jobs. The article continues —

... Local Projects, Local Jobs program raised expectations that new, sustainable and on-going employment would be created, the government did not track or measure job creation.

Education and Training Minister Sue Ellery was asked by the committee how many jobs the program had created.

“One, this was a branding exercise,” she said in evidence.

“Secondly, it definitely was, though, about stimulus to the local economy. Depending on the size of the commitment, to a very small extent or, in some cases, a slightly larger extent, we knew that we wanted to assist local economies where we could.”

Hon Tjorn Sibma was quoted in the article as saying —

“There’s more emphasis on spin and crafting a narrative rather than there is dealing with matters of substance and I think this now casts a pall across the board on government programs.”

That is where my emphasis is. As I said, we will support the Treasurer’s advance, but once again I question the urgency when we read this paragraph about the forecast impact of election commitments.

Finally, I want to go on to the recommendations of that committee report on the government’s Local Projects, Local Jobs program from the previous election. It recommended that a parliamentary budget office be established to improve the Parliament of Western Australia’s capacity to conduct financial scrutiny. The purpose of that parliamentary budget office is to support members and parliamentary committees by providing independent and nonpartisan advice on financial matters and policy costing services. This would be an opportunity for a parliamentary budget office of WA to look over some of those election commitments, how they work, whether there are business cases for them and whether someone happened to run into Hon Darren West on the election trail somewhere and was lucky to time it well enough to get included on his list.

Mr J.N. Carey: That’s so patronising to your own community organisations.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am not patronising anyone.

Mr J.N. Carey: Yes, you are!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am pointing out about the election commitments and my concern —

Mr J.N. Carey: You’re saying your own sporting clubs do not deserve those election commitments.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am not saying that at all. I am saying that I am concerned about the equity over the electorate. That is my concern. I am not patronising anyone. All I would like is some transparency and some process.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is what I would like. As we saw in the report on Local Projects, Local Jobs, *The Local Projects Local Jobs program and the establishment of a parliamentary budget office*, there are question marks over that and it continues. It has continued in the commitments of the 2020–21 election. With that, I will finish my contribution. I look forward to the Leader of the Liberal Party’s contribution.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.11 pm]: I rise to —

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: They must be putting something in the tea.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Can we hear from the Leader of the Liberal Party?

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

I will make just a brief contribution. I think other members have covered most of this ground. Not to bring the member for Perth or the Minister for Energy into the debate more than they already have been, I wish to touch a little on the issue of funding for election promises and perhaps more the equity around that process.

Mr W.J. Johnston: I’m going to get out that video!

Dr D.J. HONEY: Just wait, minister.

I understand the purpose of the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill and, clearly, we do not seek to oppose it. Obviously we will support the bill, but in relation to the funding of the election promises, my concern is that we have a government that was elected for all Western Australia, not only for Labor electorates. However, in the apportionment of some of the money sequestered in this bill for election promises, we see a very uneven distribution of that funding. It concerns me —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The Leader of the Liberal Party is speaking.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It concerns me that we see a very uneven distribution of funding based on the probability of whether the government thought it was going to win a seat, but, more particularly, we saw some extraordinarily generous promises in some seats the government was hoping to win. For example, the Swanbourne–Nedlands Surf Life Saving Club has over 350 female members. That is about 50 per cent of the membership in that club. It is expanding rapidly and comprises a large number of young families. Very, very late in the campaign, Labor candidate Gemma West made an offer of \$500 000 of funding for the Swanbourne–Nedlands Surf Life Saving Club. I did not see her a lot on the campaign, but when we met, she was a very nice person. The club has one female toilet for 350 female members and the club is expanding. As I said, they are people with young families. I do not know whether that money is going to be forthcoming now at all.

If we look at the Sorrento Surf Life Saving Club, the government sniffed blood early in the campaign on the seats that straddled that electorate, which were two Liberal-held seats. The government realised it had a good chance of taking away those seats. We saw an \$8 million promise in that seat to replace the surf lifesaving club. Although it was old, it certainly had far more adequate facilities than those at the Swanbourne–Nedlands Surf Life Saving Club. This goes to the heart of saying, “It’s an election promise; we’ll just fund it.” As I said, members opposite are a government for all Western Australia, not just Labor seats. The problem is that, as members on this side have highlighted, we see no clarity on this process and no prioritisation. We saw the contention —

Mr W.J. Johnston: It’s an election commitment! Go talk to the ALP state secretary!

Dr D.J. HONEY: Minister, I have heard your argument several times this afternoon. I do not think I need to hear it again. I understand the point you are making.

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am simply explaining that I think it is a process that ends up with very unfair outcomes for deserving clubs and that there is no clarity.

We all remember the contention there was when the federal government had its sports funding program across Australia. There was an allegation of terrible misuse of that funding because there was an incorrect allocation of funding across potential recipients and clubs that missed out. Regardless of what members think the mechanism is for doing this, it ends up with very unfair outcomes going to different groups and different areas.

I will refer to Mosman Park Primary School. I know the Premier is extremely busy and I appreciate the difficulty of the job he has, but I genuinely encourage him to go down to look at Mosman Park Primary School. I suspect there is no primary school in Western Australia that is worse than that school in terms of the amenities for the students. That school also includes the Mosman Park School for Deaf Children. Perhaps the Premier is aware—his Minister for Education and Training is certainly aware—that the school has quite a large Aboriginal population. Disproportionately, Aboriginal students are very badly affected by hearing issues and hearing loss. I have travelled extensively throughout the regions of Western Australia, and as late as the weekend, I was travelling up in the Kimberley looking at schools. All the schools I saw in those areas had substantially better facilities than those at Mosman Park Primary School. I encourage the Premier to go down there because no funding at all has been allocated to that school and I suspect it is the most in-need school in Western Australia, especially given the difficulties of many of the students who attend that school. It pulls very heavily from the social housing area in the south of my electorate. As I said, a lot of students there, including those in comparison with a metropolitan average, are disadvantaged Aboriginal students and who need extra support.

If that school had \$8 million, it could be transformed. I went to the school in the middle of winter. There was a young Indigenous boy, about five years old, who came to school with profound hearing problems. He needed one-on-one support from an Australian Sign Language teacher to teach him Auslan so he could then go on to other learning. That little boy and the teacher were sitting out on the veranda in the freezing cold, exposed to the weather, because that was the only quiet space they could get to work together. That is what I am concerned about. I understand the point made by members opposite about election promises, but the trouble is that we end up with very disproportionate funding based on whether it happened to be a seat that the Labor Party was targeting. I think we need to have at least some transparency. At the end of the day, this is taxpayers’ money. Election promise or not, there has to be some way to prioritise this. It may be that, in the heat of the moment, a promise was made that was a bit rash and could be revisited. I understand there may be a political cost to that, but again, it is taxpayers’ money, not the Labor Party’s money, that is being spent. I think that is one aspect of this issue that deserves further scrutiny.

As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, we asked for more detail on this, including how this money was being split up and expended. The Premier, for one reason or another, did not provide that additional detail. We would still like to see that detail. We do not intend to drag out this bill or go through 1 000 questions in the consideration in detail stage, but I think it is reasonable for the Premier to provide that detail to the opposition so we have an opportunity to understand and scrutinise in detail where the money is being expended.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.20 pm]: I want to make a few comments on the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill 2021 because, as an appropriation bill, it is an opportunity to talk fairly

widely about a few matters. I will start by talking about some of the things I have listed here, that being the election commitment component. I ask the Premier whether at some stage there is going to be a list of election commitments that will be funded as a result of promises that were made during the election campaign and whether that list will be published and broken down seat by seat so that all Western Australia can see whether there has been some level of equity in the distribution of some of these expenditures across the state. That is because we know that everybody deserves to be considered.

In my electorate of Moore, I am aware that whenever the Labor lower house candidate, along with Hon Darren West, made an announcement, she said that this funding would be delivered if the McGowan government was re-elected, as opposed to whether or not the particular Labor candidate was elected in the seat of Moore. I am asking for clarity as to whether these projects will be funded as part of the government's election commitments. I can provide a list to the Premier if he wishes; otherwise, I can read them into *Hansard* now.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: If the minister has something to say, he will get an opportunity in a minute.

I will go through those election commitments. They include \$50 000 for the Gingin–Granville Park and weir project; \$10 000 for the Chapman Valley Historical Society; \$100 000 for the Moora Speedway; \$40 000 for the Bindoon Entertainment Arts and Theatre group, and I think the candidate was involved in that; \$90 000 for the Denison Bowling Club; \$100 000 for the Toodyay Home of Culture and Arts; and \$150 000 for the Chittering Junior Cricket Club.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Why are you opposed to them? These are your constituents; why are you opposed to it?

Mr R.S. LOVE: I do not oppose it. I actually asked for more in the original community sporting and recreation facilities fund application. I am a bit disappointed we did not get the full amount!

To continue, there was also \$200 000 for the Jurien Bay Golf Club, and I must put on record that I am a member of this club so that everybody knows that; \$425 000 for Nambung National Park upgrades; and \$30 000 for the Jurien Sport and Recreation Centre. Right across Moore, there is a fairly select group of large communities with lots of little communities, which are not mentioned there, so I wondered why that would be. There are also towns where, surprisingly enough, there are a few Labor voters! Anyway, it is an opportunity for the Premier to commit to those communities that he will be funding them, because although those promises were made during the election campaign, they are still wondering whether this will actually happen. I will be happy to know that, Premier.

As I say, it is important that we have a full understanding of where the funding is across the state. The Nationals WA try to treat every part of the state with a degree of equity. When we were involved in government, the pattern of royalties for regions investments shows that huge amounts were being spent in Labor seats. Unlike this government, we are not averse to spending money in other people's seats. In the Kimberley and the Pilbara in the period we held it—2008 to 2013—hundreds of millions of dollars were spent in some very good investments that are still making a difference today in enabling those towns to handle the mining boom up there. Those investments were long overdue and have proven to be very wise over time.

I have another matter I want to raise because, as I say, this is an appropriation bill and is an opportunity to raise a few matters generally. I have raised this before in this house several times with the Minister for Health, and I now have the ear of the Premier and Treasurer. I speak on behalf of the Mullewa community. In 2016, as part of an ongoing program for, if you like, a modernisation of health delivery systems throughout the state, there was a program called the primary healthcare demonstrator site trial. It picked up a couple of sites in the central wheatbelt, in Pingelly and Cunderdin, and two sites were in my electorate, in Mullewa and Dongara. Dongara was not really surprising, as the model existed and was already very much achieving what the demonstrator site trial was meant to achieve. Mullewa had a traditional country hospital. Once upon a time there were, I think, 38 beds operational in Mullewa Hospital and it was not uncommon for them to be completely utilised. Over the years it has become more of a place to service the aged community and a number of residents in that community were looked after in the hospital. When that announcement was made, I am sorry to say that part of that program was about the closure of the hospital and the development of a new health centre. I was never fond of the idea of the closure of the hospital, but that was the policy and that is what happened. That has meant that no aged care is being delivered in the same way in Mullewa. Promises were made to find alternative ways to deliver that aged care. Funding was given to a group to construct age-friendly accommodation in the area. Those units have been constructed through royalties for regions funding, but with the change of government, some of the levers of government, if you like, have dropped from my hands and those units sit empty, because there is a rental ask and there are some conditions about how they would be rented out, so nobody has taken them up. The age-appropriate housing is not being used, older residents have been taken out of hospital and there is effectively no aged care in the town to speak of. That is a huge problem because it is an aged community and it has a very high level of Aboriginality, and there is a considerable level of need for aged care in both European and Aboriginal communities. It is quite an egregious situation.

The development of the health centre was announced in 2016. It was expected to get underway in 2017, with the expectation that sometime in 2018, the new health centre would be developed. I have raised this previously

with the Minister for Health, probably three times or more, in grievances, discussions et cetera in this Parliament and nothing has happened—not a brick has been laid and no development has happened with that centre. In the meantime, certain parts of the hospital have been shut down and it is now becoming a really dangerous situation in Mullewa because health services are not being delivered to the community as they should be. As recently as November 2020 in the last Parliament, I raised this with the minister. I got some undertakings from the minister that measures would be brought forward, but nothing has happened. I ask whether the Premier and Treasurer could look into this. This was a funded program; the money for this program was set aside back in 2016–17. To my understanding, it has been carried forward in the budget ever since. It needs to happen. Part of the program is different from what happened in the wheatbelt—there are many WA Country Health Service districts, so there is different management and understandings. In the wheatbelt, there was a concerted effort to look at the appropriate services that would be available and put into the new health centre. To my understanding, very little of that work has happened in Mullewa and there has been no real work on service planning. The whole idea of these demonstrator sites was not to spend money maintaining older hospital sites that are run-down and heavily dependent on staff for maintenance to keep the place open but to direct that to the types of services that are required in the town. Yet, in the town, the expectation for Mullewa and for many communities in that midwest area surrounding Geraldton is that they travel to Geraldton for everything. Geraldton professional services are not coming out in outreach into those areas; and, if they do, they come out in a fleet of white cars, they stay for a couple of hours and they go again.

The idea of professional health people being in those smaller midwest towns does not seem to be part of the current WA Country Health Service model, and that is a real issue for those areas. It is so bad that a constituent of mine—this is an issue that I have raised with the Minister for Education and Training—has had to send her primary school-aged child, who is autistic, to live with her family in the Lake Grace area because of the lack of available help in terms of occupational and speech therapy et cetera going out to the school and the Mullewa area. She has two or three businesses in the area and her in-laws are from that area. Surprisingly enough, those sorts of facilities are available in Lake Grace. It is a different WACHS district, which is servicing the areas of need. I am afraid to say that the midwest is far too concentrated on just Geraldton. Not enough help goes out to the likes of Mingenew, Mullewa, Morawa, Northampton and beyond to ensure the communities get the service they need.

With that, I will conclude my contribution to the debate but I urge the Premier to commit to looking at those election promises and ensuring they are carried out, because some people voted for the Labor Party even if it was not successful in winning the seat of Moore. They voted that way in the expectation that those investments would be made and it is quite clear that the investments were promised in the event the McGowan government were re-elected, not in the event the current member for Moore was not elected. Thank you.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Treasurer) [4.31 pm] — in reply: I thank members for their contribution on the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill. I will talk about the bill for a moment, then I will address the queries of the members of the opposition who spoke on this debate. The bill itself seeks authorisation under section 29 of the Financial Management Act of \$750 million to fund public spending that may arise by 30 June 2021. This is not uncommon in the Parliament and has happened for many years, particularly when a range of unexpected things have happened, or elections for that matter, that require this additional authorisation of spend.

The additional items that need to be covered by the Treasurer's advance include additional COVID-related spending, including the rollout of the national vaccine, in which the commonwealth has been perhaps not so generous to the states in how to manage the costs of the vaccine, which the states will have to pick up; the funding of the small business lockdown assistance, following the events in January and more recently; the allowance for natural disaster costs, including the Wooroloo bushfire and what occurred as a result of cyclone Seroja; the value of election commitments, which we would like to deliver prior to 30 June; and any other unavoidable spending that may occur considering the environment we are in. It is a very unusual environment in which many unexpected things are occurring. That is what this bill is designed to do.

The Treasurer's advance grants access to the consolidated account funding when an agency's existing appropriation is not sufficient to meet its cash needs and when existing appropriation limits under the automatic Treasurer's advance have been exhausted. The automatic Treasurer's advance is three per cent of the prior year's consolidated account funding. It does not provide the government with a blank cheque, and, obviously, any drawdowns are reported to the house in the *Annual report on state finances*, which is released in September of each year. If the funding is not required by 30 June, the authorisation lapses and is no longer available; so if it is not required, it is not spent. That is basically what that means. Parliament approved a similar bill last year. Obviously, at this point in time last year, the situation was even more serious or at least as serious with respect to COVID, so the government had to do the same thing. That bill authorised \$1 billion for the Treasurer's advance to deal with things that may occur as the pandemic began to unfold. By 30 June last year, only \$166 million of the additional funding was required and the remainder lapsed. Although we had a large Treasurer's advance, we did not use it; we used less than a fifth of it. That is the bill before us now. It may not be required but it gives us the capacity to meet needs that have crystallised or may crystallise prior to 30 June this year. That is the situation and the reason behind the Treasurer's advance. It is not unusual; it is designed to deal with all those things.

I will address the points made by the opposition. The Leader of the Opposition asked why as Premier I am also Treasurer. To put a bit of context around that, until 2001, when I was elected to this Parliament, every Premier had been Treasurer. When I was elected in 1996, Richard Court was the Premier and Treasurer—he was both. That had been the case going back for I think the entire history of Western Australia, so there were 100 or so years of the Premier also being the Treasurer. When Geoff Gallop made Eric Ripper the Treasurer, my recollection is that the opposition complained and said it was an outrage, how strange and how unusual it was for that to occur. From that point forward until recently, the Premier and Treasurer were different people. I brought it back together for a range of reasons that I will go through in a moment.

Just so members know, in the ACT, the Northern Territory and Tasmania, the Premier and the Treasurer, or the Chief Minister and the Treasurer, are the same person. In half the jurisdictions of Australia, the Premier and the Treasurer are the same person. I think both those facts might be lost—that is, for 100 years, the Premier and the Treasurer were the same person: David Brand, Charles Court and Richard Court—all of them going back through history—were the same person and it is the same for half the jurisdictions across Australia. Having experienced it now for six or eight weeks, and having some overlap during a national cabinet discussion, we understand what the committee of Treasurers are considering. It is not a bad thing; it allows us to have knowledge about things. I have discussed this with other Premiers who have the same role and they are of the same view; that is, it allows us to have that breadth of understanding so we can deal with both issues knowing what is going on at both a national cabinet level—formerly known as COAG—and at a Treasurer’s level. I would not be surprised if other Premiers do it, to be honest. I think they have seen the trend and I think they quite like the idea of it. I would not be surprised if it happens also in other states.

The Leader of the Opposition questioned the issue of the GST. I can absolutely guarantee her, having been at meetings with the Treasurers of the other states and territories, that there is a major campaign against the GST arrangements that Western Australia secured a couple of years ago. I can advise members that they have written correspondence and are mobilising on all sides. They do not like it. They do not like what the iron ore price has done. They feel as though they are missing out somehow even though they are not, and they do not like the fact that as of 2026, the entire situation will change whereby states’ funding will be equalised to that of the level of New South Wales or Victoria, whichever is the higher. They do not like it, so they are calling for the Productivity Commission review that examines these things to be brought forward. All sides are saying that, so it is quite problematic. I know the Leader of the Opposition said in the lead-up to the federal election that the federal government will not change its position. That may well be true in the lead-up to the federal election, which could be on us in six months. What will happen after that? All I would say is that it is very important that we elevate this issue as much as we can to defend Western Australia’s position. I think it is very important that we continue to do that. That is what I will do to defend Western Australia’s position. Obviously, if you want to go —

Dr D.J. Honey: Where is federal Labor on the GST?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know. The member can ask it. I suspect it is on a unity ticket with the commonwealth government at this time. All I will say is that there is a federal election coming and I want to make sure this issue stays on the agenda up until the federal election and beyond it.

We fought hard to get a change in the situation. The reality is that the GST would not have changed but for our election in 2017. At the time the state Labor Party was elected in WA in 2017, the Liberal Party nationally thought Western Australia was rusted on to it. Suddenly, the situation changed, and we secured a better deal. It was the impetus and basis of the change that we secured from then Prime Minister Turnbull in 2018. We moved very quickly after that point.

To cover the other points, the member for Roe raised the same issue about the Premier and Treasurer; I have addressed that. He then said that there should be an application process around election commitments. That is not the nature of democracy. If we want to go to a system in which political parties running for office have to apply to someone else to make commitments, that is not democracy; that is some sort of, I do not know, authoritarian system. It is a very odd suggestion—that the National, Liberal and Labor Parties should have to apply to Treasury or another body to make an election commitment. I do not know who the member is suggesting the application should be made to, but it is an odd suggestion, and I think it shows a misunderstanding of the nature of democracy. We make commitments to get elected, and if we are elected, we deliver our commitments. That is what happens. That is the way the democratic system works. I think it is a very odd suggestion that we should go through some sort of application process. I do not know why the member has the idea that there should be some sort of higher authority that parties should answer to in order to make election commitments, but it shows that the member basically does not understand the nature of the democratic process. If a party is elected after making commitments, it delivers on those commitments.

The member for Roe then claimed that our policies were uncoded. Quite the contrary: we submitted all our policies to Treasury and they were all coded. The member might recall that in the lead-up to election day, the former Treasurer went out and announced all our policies and had Treasury endorsement for all of them. Not only did he do that in the week leading up to the election; he did it every week during the election campaign. For the first time

ever in the history of Western Australia, a party actually had its policies costed on a weekly basis by Treasury and publicly released those costings. We went out and faced the press: “Here are our policies, and here are the Treasury costings of them.” That had never been done before, yet the member says our policies were not costed. We had the most costed set of election commitments in the history of the state—\$2.4 billion worth. They were costed on a weekly basis. That went on for six weeks or eight weeks or so—whatever it was—during the election campaign, and every week we went out and faced the press. It is fair to say that the press was not that interested; it was so boring, because we were so straight and accountable. It was pretty boring for the press that there were Treasury costings for all the policies we had announced. Every single one was bound up with all sorts of figures alongside it.

That is what we did. What did the opposition do? I do not think the Nationals WA actually did any costings. It made commitments worth many billions of dollars, but it did not actually do any costings. The Liberal Party, however, did—on the Thursday before the election. Until that Thursday, I thought that Sean L’Estrange was going to hold his seat, but as of that day, things might have gone a bit bad for him! I think even the current member for Churchlands might have thought he was going okay up until that point.

What did the Liberal Party do? Its costings were hopeless—the worst ever seen. I think the built-up stress and tension in the press gallery—the press really had not much addressed the Liberal Party’s commitments—exploded on that day. Basically, the Liberal Party’s costings were a complete shambles. I inform members opposite that we have had the Liberal Party’s energy policy costed since the election campaign. Do members know what it came in at? It came in at \$15.3 billion, and that did not include some of the transmission lines that needed to be in there. That is what it came in at. The Liberal Party and the National Party —

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Leader of the Liberal Party, that is what happened. He can sit there with his single colleague and protest, but that is the reality. He can sit there with his deputy and protest against history, but that is what happened. The Liberal Party was exposed; that is what occurred. It did not put its policy to Treasury and it did not have it costed; that is the reality of what occurred. The member for Cottesloe was the shadow Minister for Energy at that time. That is the history of the first three months of this year in Western Australia.

When I was elected to this place, the Liberal Party of Western Australia, with Richard Court as Premier, had members stretching around to the other side of the house. These days, the Liberal Party of Western Australia has two members sitting in that corner. That is because everyone in Western Australia saw what the Liberal Party did, how its members conducted themselves and how its policy creation process worked. It all crystallised a couple of days before the state election. That is what happened. We have had its policy costed. Do not worry; more information will come out about that in due course. I do not expect there will be a great deal of interest in it because of the Liberal Party’s current predicament, but that is what has occurred.

Dr D.J. Honey: Bring it on!

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: You bring it on! You bring it on, member for Cottesloe!

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As you can see, a lot of people here are terrified of you! You know exactly what happened, and we all saw it in the lead-up to the election: four years of no work, four years of no policy preparation and four years of no organising a succession plan for leadership. None of that was done for four years. Then, in the lead-up to the election, the Liberal Party promised the world. There were the \$10 000 grants that were going to go to every business, but not a single dollar of that was costed. I was in here when the former member for Darling Range demanded \$10 000 for every business in the state. Then it was raised during the election campaign: “Where’s the \$10 000 for every business in the state?” We then looked at the costings, and there was not a single dollar for it. Do members opposite think people did not notice that? I had lifelong Liberal Party supporters, even members, coming up to me and saying how hopeless the Liberal Party is. On election day, people who were handing out Liberal how-to-vote cards were telling me that they were not going to vote Liberal! They were handing out the cards as a favour to a friend. That is what was occurring. That happened because of the way in which the Liberal Party conducted itself and continues to conduct itself.

Next we heard the Leader of the Liberal Party’s arguments. He referred to Mosman Park Primary School. I am unfamiliar with the exact details of Mosman Park Primary School, but that school is within the electorate once held by former Premier Colin Barnett. The member for Cottesloe stands there and says how bad it is. I simply pose the question: if it is that bad, why did Colin Barnett not do something about it?

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Why did he not do something about it?

Dr D.J. Honey: You’ve been in government for four years. There is nothing in the forward estimates.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I ask a question of the member for Cottesloe: did you make a commitment to it in the election campaign?

Dr D.J. Honey: Yes, I did.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What was that?

Dr D.J. Honey: It was a \$2 million upgrade to the school for the deaf.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Right; okay. So, eight and a half years of Colin Barnett as the member—sorry, 25 years of Colin Barnett as the member —

Mr S.A. Millman: And Minister for Education before that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: And Minister for Education back in the 1990s and early 2000s, and nothing was done. Now the member for Cottesloe rolls in here in this debate and demands to know why I have not fixed Mosman Park Primary School, which, to the best of my recollection, the member has never raised with me before.

Dr D.J. Honey: I've raised it directly with the minister.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member has never raised it with me before. As part of his contribution, he actually said, "Why don't you break some election commitments?" He said, "Oh, it might be politically difficult, but you need to break some election commitments to fund our election commitments."

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Again, I did not see that coming! Then you said that the distribution of commitments is uneven. Do you want to know where the biggest commitment we made was? Do you want to know which electorate that is in? Nedlands. Nedlands is actually where the biggest commitments that this government has made in its time in office have been made—a \$1.8 billion women's and babies' hospital, and the build of Bob Hawke College stage 1 and 2, which is over \$100 million. The two biggest election commitments that we made, totalling around \$2 billion, were in the electorate of Nedlands. Then you ask, "Why didn't Liberal Party electorates get anything?" I mean, that is a pretty unusual argument that you are putting when those two things occur.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is \$2 billion towards the electorate of Nedlands. At the time, it was Sir Charles Court's seat, Richard Court's seat, Sue Walker's seat, ex-Liberal Party deputy leader Bill Marmion's seat and the seat of a whole range of Liberal luminaries going back 70 or 80 years. It was their electorate. We made the commitment to fix the school and we delivered, something that the former government struggled with for eight or 10 years. We did it. We fixed it. We provided the people of Nedlands and Subiaco and surrounds with a state-of-the-art school. That needed to be done. We fixed a longstanding problem for the area. Our biggest commitment, \$1.8 billion, was within that electorate. I am sure the people in that electorate will appreciate it enormously. But then the Liberal and National Party members ask why we are not committing anything to Liberal or National electorates. We did, and we have, all over the state, within financial parameters that were achievable and affordable—\$2.4 billion worth. Between the two of you—the Liberals and Nationals—when we add up all your commitments, it was somewhere in the vicinity of \$25 billion! You actually committed 10 times what we did, including your \$15.3 billion electricity policy. Then you did not have it costed by Treasury and then you had the train wreck costings day, two days out from the election. You now sit there, sort of angry. You should be angry at yourselves. You are the masters of your own domain. You are the people who created the situation that you are in, because that is what you did. Then you sit there smarting and angry and sniping and so forth. Have a look in the mirror. The Liberal Party needs to have a look in the mirror as to where it is at.

As I said, when I got here, there was Richard Court, Colin Barnett, Hendy Cowan —

Mr S.A. Millman: Norman Moore.

Mr M. McGOWAN: And Norman Moore—all these sort of Liberal-National Party luminaries dominated this house. Labor had 18 or 19 seats. It was a difficult period. Do members know what we did, and what I did in my first term—indeed, in every term? We worked. We did what was required to win office. What members opposite did when they went into opposition in 2017 was they did not work. They did not do any of the hard work, costing, policy development, preparation of people for high office—all the things that needed to be done in order to win office. They did none of that. Therefore, they are in their current position. Members opposite then ask: why is it that—this is so unusual; so highly irregular—a government would seek through a Treasurer's advance to deliver election commitments?

Dr D.J. Honey: No-one said it's highly irregular.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member's colleagues did. When had that been done before? Treasurer Buswell introduced the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2009 for the newly elected Barnett Liberal-National government, which sought \$762 million to fund the new government's commitments in that financial year, including \$337 million for royalties for regions. That is what happened back then. That is because when we go to an election, we will often say that we intend to have this commitment delivered by this date; we intend to fund this by this date. That is the

nature of commitments in an election campaign. The Liberal and National Parties would have done that back in 2008. We did that in 2021. It is not unusual, and, proportionately, compared with the size of the budget, what they did in terms of election commitments was many multiples to be delivered by the Treasurer's advance of what we did in the most recent state election campaign. So, it is not unusual. That is what we are doing—exactly the same as was done back then—and I suspect it has been done in many election campaigns over time.

I think sometimes there is a bit of a misunderstanding—perhaps deliberate by some people—that somehow election commitments are bad. I read this in the press sometimes: “They’ve made an election commitment here. Why not there?” I think someone—it might have been the Leader of the Liberal Party—said that every electorate should get the same amount of election commitments. Some area might have a greater need; it might need a highway or a road built. It is an odd thing to say that if that electorate gets that road built, every electorate should get the same amount spent on it. It is actually quite an immature argument that somehow that is the way it should happen.

Dr D.J. Honey: It's one you made up yourself. Who said that?

Mr M. McGOWAN: They were the sorts of things you were just saying.

Dr D.J. Honey: Who said that? I didn't say that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: You were just saying these things. It is “you” as in plural. You were saying a lot of silly things, to be frank.

Dr D.J. Honey: I didn't say them. Who said it? You made up your argument yourself.

Mr M. McGOWAN: You said to me that we should break election commitments in order to fund some of your priorities. That is what you said. You should stand by that, because the *Hansard* will prove that is what you said. That is what the Liberal Party and National Party are actually alleging—this government got elected on a set of commitments and it should break them to fund their commitments. I think the public actually voted and said whose commitments it was in favour of. I think that was pretty clear.

Dr D.J. Honey: They voted on COVID.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What was that?

Dr D.J. Honey: They voted on COVID.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Okay; that is your argument. I think people vote on a whole range of things. I think what they did was they voted for one side, and they said they wanted us to deliver our commitments, so that is what we are going to do. This is part of doing that. But we are going to do that in a financially responsible way, because that is our nature, and that is the way this government has conducted itself over its time in office, far more so, I expect, than any other government in Australia currently, and certainly more so than any government in recent history in Western Australia. We will do that. As I said, the totality of our commitments was \$2.4 billion over four years, costed by Treasury. That was it.

We saw the difference in the campaign between how the Liberal Party and the National Party conducted their commitments and how we conducted ours. I think the public noticed that. As I said, a great many people came up to me and indicated that they will be supporting this government and will not be voting for the Liberal Party or the National Party. They were people who had never voted Labor before, frankly. I think a range of factors was involved in that. If the member for Cottesloe wants to ascribe it to COVID, go ahead. We know that we had a very different approach to COVID from that taken by members of the Liberal and National Parties. All I copped for 14 months—the most stressful 14 months of my life—was criticism and undermining by them. That is all we copped every day. I can roll out numerous examples, such as those press conferences out the front, where they went out there and attacked and undermined everything we tried to do to keep the state safe, all the time. It did not stop, and it still does not stop. I urge them to be a little more supportive, a little more constructive and a little more understanding of the situation that the state is in and perhaps how we have gone compared with anywhere else in the world. I guarantee that the public knows this, because they see on television every night how Western Australia has gone compared with anywhere else in the world.

Finally, the member for Moore raised issues around Mullewa Health Service. I do not have any details about the issues raised by the member. I do not know whether my advisers will have any details about that, but if the member would like to write to me about what is going on with the health service in Mullewa, I will try to find those details. I am sure that it is an issue that is of interest to me and everyone. The Minister for Health today talked about the hospital rebuilds and improved services all over the state that we committed to during the election campaign and over the last four years and that we will deliver. I would like to get some details about Mullewa. I like Mullewa as a town and I would like to make sure that the people there get treated well. I urge the member to drop me a note and I will follow up on that issue.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

[Leave denied to proceed forthwith to third reading.]

*Consideration in Detail***Clause 1: Short title —**

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I thank the Premier for his explanation in responding to the questions that we asked. Can the Premier explain the calculations within and the rationale behind the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2021, and whether this request is consistent with previous budgets in an election year, including the buffer that is included in the amount?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Thank you for the question. As I outlined in my second reading speech, this was done in 2009, close to the September 2008 election, to meet the \$760 million-odd of election commitments made by the newly elected Barnett–Grylls government. The government did it then largely because of the election commitments. We did it last year to the tune of \$1 billion simply because of the extraordinary circumstances that hit us with the COVID-19 pandemic and all the potential expenditures. As it turned out, we sought \$1 billion as part of the Treasurer's advance, but only \$166 million of that was used as of 30 June last year. The reason for this advance, as outlined in my second reading speech, and, again, in my second reading reply, is a range of contingencies and unexpected expenditures—COVID-related matters, small business assistance grants, the cyclone and bushfire responses—that were never budgeted for, in addition to a number of election commitments made this year. It reflects the circumstances that we face this year whereby COVID and other issues such as bushfires and cyclones continue to cause the state to make additional expenditure.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I understand that the Premier was going to provide more detailed information to the opposition about the expenditure in the Treasurer's advance, but that information has not been forthcoming to the shadow Treasurer. Is there any reason the Premier is unable or unwilling to provide that information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have some documents that I am happy to table. They include everything in the *Pre-election financial projections statement* that was identified as being needed for the Treasurer's advance—that is, a \$786 million allocation of spend. It includes money for the Perth City Deal; COVID-related issues; the HomeBuilder grant scheme, the take-up of which was stronger than we expected; the expansion of the alcohol and other drug unit at Casuarina Prison; a subsidy for Transperth services; the mining royalty assistance towards Koolyanobbing iron ore mine; the \$500 small business offset for the lockdown in January; and a number of other things. I will table that document that covers \$786 million.

The issues that have arisen since the *Pre-election financial projections statement* include the vaccination program, \$148 million; the small business lockdown assistance grant for the more recent lockdown, \$31.8 million; the natural disaster response, \$50 million; election commitments, \$220 million; and a buffer for unforeseen issues that might be needed if COVID issues erupt again. I seek to table that document, too.

Finally, I have a list of the election commitments that the government seeks to deliver. They are spread all over Western Australia in a range of communities and places. I think it is predominantly capital spend.

[See papers [222](#) to [224](#).]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I appreciate that detail. I do not think I have heard the Treasurer say it, but has any of the Treasurer's advance been allocated to planning on the Metronet project, or is that not included?

Mr M. McGOWAN: To the best of my knowledge, and on advice, no.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can the Treasurer explain how the decision to prioritise the election commitments so that they would be delivered in the first half of the year was made? Who makes that decision? Is it the Treasurer, the Expenditure Review Committee or cabinet?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have very effective ERC processes. It goes through ERC and to cabinet, where those decisions are made. I do not know what happened in 2008–09, but according to the figures I have, the election commitments make up \$220 million. Back in 2008–09, the election commitments were in the vicinity of \$767 million, including \$367 million for royalties for regions.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I do not have the list of commitments that were just tabled yet, so it is hard to tell whether they are time sensitive in relation to needing to be delivered as part of the Treasurer's advance or whether they could, in fact, be scheduled over the next four years.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are very keen to achieve things. The Leader of the Opposition will get the list in a moment, but, for instance, we have made commitments for flood support for Carnarvon. That is time sensitive. A range of capital projects for around the state will be delivered relatively easily. As the Leader of the Opposition would know, we are trying to get as much activity as quickly as possible. But, in many ways, we cannot win, because, obviously, as the Leader of the Opposition said, if it is delivered over four years, the opposition will say that we have not delivered; whereas, if we do deliver, it will say that we are delivering too quickly.

Ms M.J. Davies: I am just trying to understand the priorities.

Mr M. McGOWAN: How are we supposed to win?

Dr D.J. HONEY: For the Koolyanobbing payment to repay royalties, how much of the royalties have been foregone to date and what can we anticipate for this financial year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not have that detail to hand. This is a longstanding issue, from memory, surrounding the magnetite producers because of the cost that they incurred and the fact that there were some issues around their continuing viability at various points in time. The arrangement may have spanned two governments and, as I recall, they were to ensure that the magnetite producers remained viable and operational. According to the advice that I have tabled, the cost, if you like, is offset by the rise in royalty income, and that is probably about the price, so the price has assisted in achieving that. Obviously, governments have had to make decisions. I think the last government may have put in an assistance program for some magnetite producers to ensure that they survived a low price. As we know, magnetite is not as profitable as hematite. The magnetite industry has much higher costs of production and often employs more people because a lot of the processing is undertaken here. The decision to keep those major investments operational and productive and, therefore, employing Western Australians, and reducing the royalty rate as a consequence, was made by Colin Barnett as state development minister. I continued that when I was state development minister.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I understand the argument in relation to magnetite, and I also understand the good sense in making sure that this operation is viable. Was any consideration given, though, to a cap based on the iron ore price in terms of royalty relief? Clearly, with an iron ore price of \$US200 a tonne, that is substantially above any level that is required for an operation to be profitable.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is asking me about things that are not really part of this bill. If he wants to put a question on notice about that, I will try to get him some answers. I do not have the state development minister's advisers here to answer those things. As I recall, the arrangement was a continuation of the arrangement that was put in place by Colin Barnett when he was state development minister. It may have been for three magnetite mines. These decisions are sometimes made to keep a major investment operational. For instance, for the Koolyanobbing iron ore project, which I think is in the midwest, the decision was to keep it operational. We did something similar—not exactly the same—down at Cliffs to keep it operational and to keep hundreds of people in jobs, including in the port, in the mines, in transport and in Esperance. We got a lot of criticism over that, but what was the alternative? Why should 1 000 people lose their jobs when we can keep them employed?

Dr D.J. Honey: That wasn't the point.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not have the detail about what the member is asking with me. When the budget comes out, the member can ask questions in the estimates hearing. The member could put a question on notice. He could give me some notice of a question or give the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade some notice and ask a question in question time tomorrow after we have had an opportunity to get more advice on those specific aspects.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you, Treasurer, for tabling the information. I am looking at "Attachment A", which is a list of election commitments. I note some headings of individual election commitments are "Community Infrastructure—Minor", "Minor School Works", "School Package (Infrastructure and science resource grants)", "Sport and Community Infrastructure" and "Transport and Road Safety—Minor". Is there any way that we could get the detail sitting behind that list? Would the Treasurer be willing to table that information so that we could look at it?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not have that information at hand. I think the member for Roe identified a \$2 500 grant to a table tennis club in Esperance. I do not have that information at hand. This is the best information I have at hand on government commitments. These are our election commitments. We are delivering on our election commitments. Opposition members complained a lot about our election commitments in their speeches a moment ago, but they are election commitments. We travelled around and met people and made commitments—that is the nature of democracy—and we are delivering on them.

The reality is that we will deliver what we can as quickly as possible. I do not want the Leader of the Opposition to ask me questions in here in two or three years' time about what happened to the Kalgoorlie–Boulder basketball court. I want to deliver it, particularly if it is easily deliverable. These sorts of things are relatively easy to deliver, whether it is a grant to an arts organisation or a grant to a sporting club, or whether it is a grant to a multicultural group. They are relatively deliverable. That is the nature of these grants; they are election commitments.

I could go through the opposition's election commitments and find scores of grants that it was going to make to organisations. That is the nature of democracy. I know that there seems to be some contention that somehow there should be some higher approval and we should get someone to approve our commitments. If that is the case, let us not have a democracy; someone else could be running the show. Our Treasury people could be running the show. I am sure that they would be happy about that! If we did that, we could dispense with this chamber and everything that goes on in here. We could have boffins running the show, although they probably do not like me calling them boffins. I meant that in the nicest possible way. We could have technocrats running the show, as happens in some places around the world, but that is not Westminster democracy. We make commitments and we deliver on our commitments.

The SPEAKER: Just before I give the Leader of the Opposition the call, I draw members' attention to the fact that we are dealing with the short title of the bill. Clause 3 authorises the expenditure, and I have been happy to allow a little bit of latitude to follow up on things, but I am hopeful that we will perhaps move off the short title sometime soon and that people's comments or questions will be relevant to it. If there are further questions about expenditure, they might be better dealt with under clause 3.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will take your guidance on that and I will hold the question I had about the Treasurer's statement just then, but I will make the comment that I am in furious agreement with him that, as members of Parliament, we are fully entitled to make commitments and we are judged on them and our ability to deliver them come election time. I had this exact debate with John Langouant as he was doing the review of royalties for regions when we came to opposition at the end of our term in government. I was very happy to stand beside the commitments we had made and also to have them publicly listed. My question to the Treasurer previously was simply that, although I have no issue with the government delivering commitments, I just want to know what they are. There are a number of lines, which I will come back to under the relevant clause, for which I am trying to understand exactly what the commitments are. I have no problem with the government delivering them, but I am just trying to find out what the government is going to deliver.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2 put and passed.

Clause 3: Authorisation of expenditure to make payments in respect of extraordinary or unforeseen matters or to make advances for certain purposes —

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I will have another go. I refer to "Attachment A" and I am asking whether the Treasurer could provide today or whether there is a willingness to provide by way of supplementary information or tabling—if that is permitted; I am not sure—a list of the items that would fall under "Community Infrastructure—Minor", "Minor School Works", "School Package (Infrastructure and science resource grants)", "Sport and Community Infrastructure", "Support for our local arts" and "Transport and Road Safety—Minor". The others I can see; I have no doubt there are media statements attached to those commitments. There is just a lack of detail about those particular matters. They are not insignificant. They are amounts of around \$13 million, \$14 million, and \$57 million in one case for sport and community infrastructure. We would like to see what the individual commitments are so that we can understand what the government hopes to deliver in the next six months or whatever time frame the government needs to spend the money, and what that time frame is.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know how it worked under the former government, but it is not as though the \$2 500 to the Esperance Table Tennis Club is debated at the Expenditure Review Committee. We do not go to that level. But, as the member can see, there is a range of global amounts for various things. I think this happens in every agency all the time; they have an amount of money. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions has a global amount for investment in national parks. It does benches, roads, barbecues, lean-tos, rehabilitation and the like, and it has a global amount. That happens in every agency. I have given the best list that I have in relation to these things. What happens, of course, is that when a grant is given to the Esperance Table Tennis Club, there is a grant agreement and there is an audit process that it may be required to be a part of. That is for grants across government. We have not had any significant experience of impropriety or anything of that nature around these things. These things happen all the time from the state government. Indeed, these grants are very small in comparison with royalties for regions funding. That happens all the time. I cannot provide the member with supplementary information. That is not the nature of this debate. Again, I ask the member to put a question on notice and I can have a look what can be provided and what level of granular detail we have about these things.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just so I am very clear, the Treasurer just told us that he is excited to deliver these election commitments. The government made them prior to the election and it has local members out there wanting to deliver them. I am giving the Treasurer the opportunity to tell me what those projects are in the lines for sport and community infrastructure, the school package, the minor school works and community infrastructure, and whether it can be provided. If we need to do that by asking another question in the Legislative Council or by putting a question on notice, I am happy to do that. We are not questioning the fact that the government has made the commitments; we simply want to know what they are. They are election commitments.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think what I had to say about our election commitments was very plain. They fit within the \$220 million envelope. From a cursory glance at them, they appear to be very, very worthy. They are spread all over Western Australia, from the south to the north. I can see that the list starts with "Albany Surf Life Saving Club" at A. There is "Kimberley Sport and Community Infrastructure" in the list as well, so they go from the north to the south and from the east to the west. Regarding the granular detail that the member is asking me for, this is the level of detail I currently have. As I said, I cannot provide supplementary information through this process. That is provided only in a budget process. If the member would like to put a question on notice to us, I can see what further information can be provided.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can I assume there will be business cases attached to these? There are promises here for things such as the communities renewable project, and I do not understand what that is, but there are "Community Sporting Clubs", "Fremantle City Football Club", "Full Circle Therapy Centre" and "Geraldton Basketball Stadium". Can I assume that there are business cases attached to the expenditure of this funding; and, if so, did they go through a cabinet process before they were funded?

Mr M. McGOWAN: These are grants. For instance, when I was in Geraldton in the lead-up to the election, I made a \$2 million commitment to the Geraldton basketball stadium. There was a project there that we looked at and

endorsed. We then put all our costings into Treasury, which properly costed these things and found that, in fact, sometimes we had over-costed some of our commitments. Our costings process was the most exacting in the history of the state. We did it every week. The policies that we announced during a week were put in and they were costed and released that week. That had never been done before. It was a great process and it was very disciplined, and our \$2.4 billion of commitments ended up at \$2.4 billion as costed by Treasury. Therein is the process. As I said, these are election commitments. I went to Kalgoorlie with the now member and we went to the Kalgoorlie–Boulder basketball court. There is a huge demand for basketball courts out there, I might tell the member! We made a commitment of \$5 million toward some improvements and expansion of the Kalgoorlie–Boulder basketball centre. That is what happens in an election campaign. The nature of it is that the commitments were all costed by Treasury, they all received the tick off, they were all announced prior to our election and now we are delivering them.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I thank the Treasurer for that explanation. I will certainly put in a question on notice about the detail. I appreciate that the Treasurer cannot give me the answer now, but as the local member for Cottesloe, I am especially keen to make sure that the Swanbourne–Nedlands Surf Life Saving Club is going to receive its \$500 000 towards much-needed facilities. I do not expect the Treasurer to respond to that! I quickly scanned through the figures but perhaps the departmental officers could tell me how much of the Treasurer’s advance is due to the \$500 power rebate? I see it is mentioned in attachment 1 as a line item being mostly attributable, but is the Premier able to provide the number? There is a general description that one line is in relation to that and other things.

Mr M. McGOWAN: When we had the lockdown in late January, we decided to provide small businesses across the state a \$500 grant as an offset on electricity, a bit like we did with the Bell Group payment. Obviously, Synergy and Horizon Power customers were the beneficiaries of that grant. In any event, we then announced that we would be expanding the eligibility because a range of small businesses and charities do not have their own electricity account, so it is very hard to deliver \$500 to them. We have been dealing with that issue over the course of the last couple of months since we have been re-elected, because, obviously, we could not resolve that in the caretaker period. The reason we wanted to expand the eligibility was for a range of businesses, particularly those inside shopping centres, that do not have their own electricity accounts and therefore could not get the \$500. I thought it was unjust that they were not beneficiaries while businesses outside shopping centres were beneficiaries. That is why we did that. That is what this commitment is about. It has a lot of administration associated with it and making it work is not easy, but that was our commitment and that is what we will deliver. Our preferred option is to avoid these sorts of things, which is why we have made the changes to hotel quarantine. We are basically moving out of three hotels as we speak.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is not a major issue but the line reads “predominantly attributable”. When we say “predominantly”, I am not trying to be cute, but I am trying to ascertain what other things fall inside that or is it effectively nearly all of it?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice I have is that it has been driven by small business and charity offsets. Perhaps the word “predominantly” is there in order to provide some scope if there were something else that my advisers cannot currently provide me with an example of.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I read in *The West Australian* that the government has renegotiated the coal contract to Synergy. Does any of that renegotiation or does any of the budget allocation for that renegotiation appear in this advance or will it appear elsewhere in the budget?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am advised no.

Mr R.S. LOVE: In the information that was provided a minute ago, there is \$50 million for natural disaster response. Has that money already been spent? Has that money been allocated for future expenditures? Is there a program in place for that money? Can the Treasurer tell me a little bit about where the money might be going?

Mr M. McGOWAN: This is a funding source if we need to go up to that amount of money. We have already announced a range of things that will fit within it, including the cyclone Seroja grants programs, repair work and some of the bushfire grants programs, as well as any unforeseen expenditure we do not yet know about in response to those things. Bear in mind that 30 June is still six weeks away. It includes clean-up costs and additional expenditure for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. These things are very expensive, as the member might understand. We have both seen it; they are very expensive. This gives the government the capacity to meet some of those costs as they might come along. It may well be that it is significantly under \$50 million. We do not know, but the Treasurer’s advance gives us the capacity should we need it.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Treasurer, the Minister for Emergency Services mentioned that there is an application or process underway to put forward a category C application under the natural disaster relief arrangements. Would this money also be available for that? There is a commitment of state money required to be matched—I think the ratio is 75 to 25 or thereabouts. Is that envisaged to be delivered anytime soon? Does the Treasurer expect that to happen before the end of the year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have written to the Prime Minister about that. I think it is called category C and category D. Obviously, there are categories A, B, C and D. That is all very complex and there are different things that come within each. I asked the Prime Minister to go to Kalbarri and I said we would work together. We did; we had

a meeting and I think it went pretty well considering. I have written to the Prime Minister on all those issues. Those matters are handled by people who are experts because they deal with cyclones and bushfires every year over east and we deal with cyclones every year. This may well help, but the commonwealth money is paid in arrears—so expenditure is undertaken and then reimbursed by the commonwealth. This \$50 million is there as an outlying amount should we need to do something. Sometimes we cannot foresee what that might be. We might have another grants program. We might have a big tourism promotional program for Kalbarri. They are the sorts of things that could happen. We will see how it goes. Strangely enough, considering the reduction in the amount of accommodation currently available, Kalbarri might be so overrun with tourists that it cannot accommodate them, so it may not need a promotional tourism campaign. They are all the sorts of things we will look at. This money would no doubt assist us in responding to all these things.

Dr D.J. HONEY: There is \$750 million in the *Pre-election financial projections statement*. I will not go through it agonisingly line by line, but the single biggest item is item 54, \$166 million for delivery of service for WA Health. Is it possible to obtain at least some granularity of what that total allocation corresponds to?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is for broad COVID costs, so it might be personal protective equipment or vaccine costs. A lot of them come along. It is a funding provision for those sorts of things and the costs are acquitted later.

Clause put and passed.

Title put and passed.

[Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading.]

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by **Mr M. McGowan (Treasurer)**, and transmitted to the Council.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

On motion without notice by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House)**, resolved with an absolute majority —

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the motions for the establishment of standing committees, a sessional committee, the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, to be moved forthwith while the Address-in-Reply has priority.

Appointment of Members — Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [5.42 pm]: I move —

That for the present Parliament —

- (1) the Procedure and Privileges Committee consist of the Speaker and the members for Cottesloe, Forrestfield, Landsdale and Roe;
- (2) the Public Accounts Committee consist of the members for Bicton, Cottesloe, Darling Range, Mirrabooka and Victoria Park;
- (3) the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee consist of the members for Bateman, Burns Beach, Collie–Preston, Kimberley and Vasse;
- (4) the Economics and Industry Standing Committee consist of the members for Cockburn, Joondalup, North West Central, Riverton and Willagee; and
- (5) the Education and Health Standing Committee consist of the members for Dawesville, Hillarys, Maylands, Pilbara and Thornlie.

I will speak very briefly to the motion. This motion, of course, sets up the standing committees of the Legislative Assembly. I congratulate all those members who are soon to be appointed to those committees. For new members, committees do very important work for the operations of the Assembly. Each of the committees inquire into a range of matters across the portfolios for which each of those standing committees are responsible. Upon establishment, committees will traditionally meet on Wednesday mornings and at other times as determined by the committee. At the first meeting of a committee, the members will appoint a chair and also a deputy chair. As per conventional arrangements between the government and the opposition, the chair of one of those committees, being the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, has been offered to the opposition, and I understand that the chair will be the member for Vasse. Of course, government members will chair the other standing committees referred to in the motion. It is tradition that if an opposition member is on those committees, they will be offered the deputy chair position. One of these committees will not have representation from the opposition due to numbers; however, the work of all these committees will be very important. Once this motion is passed, effectively, we will have established those committees. I know that one of our clerks will be in contact with each of the members and they will receive a package that explains the operations of the committee and the date of the first meeting will be set.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.46 pm]: The opposition will be supporting the establishment of the committees. We welcome their establishment, as committees give members, including opposition members—perhaps especially opposition members—an opportunity to be involved in some important, proactive work, as well as providing a tool of oversight for some of the operations of government. As the Leader of the House said, there is a constraint on our numbers. Because of those limited numbers, we put forward a proposal that we thought would offer the best opportunity for the opposition to provide that important oversight role to the Parliament, and that was by our taking a position on the Public Accounts Committee. Due to that committee’s wideranging reach, it follows the money trail into pretty well every government portfolio. We had wanted a majority of the positions on that committee, and in fact the chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee. We put that proposal to the government as we felt that that would give us the best opportunity to provide oversight, given our limited numbers. We do not have enough people to put a person on every one of the committees, because they all meet roughly at the same time. We thought this was a very good proposal; unfortunately, it was not agreed to by the government. I want to put on the record that this was not without precedent, with many examples of public accounts committees in different jurisdictions being chaired by an opposition party. In fact, from 2008 to 2013, the opposition, which was then headed by the Premier, was offered the opportunity to have control of the Public Accounts Committee, and the late John Kobelke was the chair of that committee.

The SPEAKER: It was actually headed by Eric Ripper, but there we go.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We put that proposal forward. We also put forward a proposal for non-government members to have a majority on the Legislative Council’s Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations—that is obviously not a matter for this house—but that initially was not agreed to. That was disappointing. However, due to the different arrangements in that house and the difference in numbers at the moment, agreement was eventually reached with the government and non-government members will now head up the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations and have the majority on that committee. At least we have achieved an outcome there, which will enable some level of oversight. It is to the credit of opposition and non-government MLCs that they were able to arrive at that position.

To new members of this place, I say that committees offer you an opportunity to learn a lot about the state and the operations of government; they provide you with a degree of oversight of different operations of the government. Generally speaking, discussions among committee members are quite cordial and members of different parties end up getting along and working quite well together. New members might want to look at some examples of committees that have done great work. In the last Parliament, I was involved with the Education and Health Standing Committee. I will not say that I was involved in writing its great reports, but I think a couple of reports that that committee has done in the time I have been in Parliament have been tremendously important. One of those in 2015 was titled *The impact of FIFO work practices on mental health: Final report*, which provided some important learnings. There was also the 2016 report *Learnings from the message stick: The report of the inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide in remote areas*. They are the types of things new members can become involved in. It is good and important work. For many backbenchers especially, it is an opportunity to feel that they are making an important contribution to the state.

I point out also that members will get the opportunity to work with some really top quality research officers. There used to be lovely sausage rolls in the committee rooms, but they have been replaced by stale biscuits. I make the point that the long hours we spend in committees should be rewarded with something better than stale biscuits and instant coffee in my view.

The SPEAKER: I thought you were on a health campaign.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Members who have known me for some time may know there is a difference between the member for Moore in this iteration and the previous member for Moore. We did an inquiry into diabetes and the long-term effects of putting on a bit of extra pud, so that led to some changes. That was another valuable committee inquiry undertaken by that same Education and Health Standing Committee under the chair of the then member for Mirrabooka.

Mr M. McGowan: You’re not as thin as the last member for Moore.

Mr R.S. LOVE: He was very thin. He is very thin now; he has got thinner I think. They do not call him “Woody” for nothing.

Mr M. McGowan: The member for Moore before him was not so thin.

Mr R.S. LOVE: That is right.

Getting back to committees, I will say that it gives members an opportunity to engage in some very frank discussions within the committee processes. I draw members’ attention to standing order 270 of this place. Under the heading “Deliberations in private” it says —

Committee deliberations will be conducted in closed session.

Members do not want to end up disclosing the proceedings of a committee outside the committee unless that is by authority of the committee through a report or some other method that the committee has agreed to and is allowed

under the standing orders. New members should please not get themselves in a mess by putting up Facebook posts and other things that could end up in a referral by angry members of the Parliament if they do just that. As I look around, I am thinking that last year there was a heated discussion in this place when the member for Kalamunda became the subject of such a referral motion due to Facebook posts, which members of the opposition thought were disclosing the deliberations of the committee. There is quite an interesting conversation in *Hansard* if members want to look at it. That referral was defeated along party lines. If members read the *Hansard* on that matter, they can make up their own mind about what they think should and should not happen. The point is that it is best not to cross the line, but members should remember that if they do, they will not only be overturning centuries of a process that has been built up to protect the institutions of democracy and parliamentary debate, but also contravening the standing orders of this house and could be subject to a sanction.

Unfortunately, that particular member did not seem to learn. There were further discussions on 14 May. I will quote a couple of excerpts from *Hansard*. When called to account by members through interjection, the member for Kalamunda shouted out —

You might think that. I told you. I can tell you what did not happen in that committee. Refer me to the Procedure and Privileges Committee again.

Of course, the retort was, “We can’t; we don’t have the numbers.” We do not want to turn the committee into a place of controversy. I am just going to read something from the member for Central Wheatbelt, the Leader of the Nationals WA, now Leader of the Opposition, when she said —

That was a quite extraordinary contribution from the member for Kalamunda on the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Amendment Bill 2020. I appreciate the pressure that the member for Kalamunda must have been under, but he does his cause no good. The views of those sitting on his side of the chamber were plain to see on their faces when they watched him make his contribution. As somebody who has been here for 12 years, I can say that when he talks about tabling the minutes of committees, he is talking about significantly changing the processes of this Parliament. I cannot imagine that members of this place who have served for longer than one term and who understand the processes would agree to that, because it would significantly stifle debate within committees, which is supposed to be bipartisan. I cannot accept the arguments the member has put forward. It is clear that he is frustrated and that he has been heavily involved in this process to this point, but what the government has put forward as a solution is not right.

The Nationals WA have watched this whole process with great interest, because the Corruption and Crime Commission serves an incredibly important function in our state.

I urge members to heed those wise words from the Leader of the Nationals. Do not follow the path that the member for Kalamunda did. Follow a path that shows you have more respect for Parliament and its committees. I conclude by wishing all the members who, by this motion, will take their place on committees all the very best and hope they enjoy making a great contribution.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [5.56 pm] — in reply: I am happy to respond to close the debate on this motion. I am a little disappointed that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition chose to raise that matter when the member for Kalamunda is not here. He is paired at the moment and I am sure he would have liked to have responded. I do not think that was necessary, quite frankly.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition also highlighted that he had sought to have the opposition as a majority on the Public Accounts Committee. The government’s position on committees is consistent with the previous government, of which he was a member. The member referred to the 2008 to 2013 period, and the member will be aware, of course, that the numbers in the house then were very, very close and the government of the day had a slim majority. The committee arrangements changed at the 2013 election. I refer the member to the comments of then Leader of the House, the former member for Kalamunda, on Thursday, 9 May 2013, when these same committees were being established. In that contribution, he highlighted —

In the last Parliament there were two committees on which the opposition had a majority and therefore chaired. I suspect that the argument may well be put today that that arrangement should continue. It is the government’s view that because of a substantial change in the composition of the house, whereby the number of government-supporting members has increased substantially and therefore, by definition, the number of opposition members has decreased substantially, with 38 government-supporting members and 21 opposition members, it is appropriate for some variation to the arrangement that was put in place after the last election.

I tend to firmly agree with the former member for Kalamunda, and indeed the numbers in this place have changed substantially. Even if there had been agreeance and we had three opposition members in one committee, it would have rendered the other committees likely to have no opposition members. I agree with the former member for Kalamunda, Hon John Day, and his comments on the variation from the 2013 election to the 2018 election, and we are being consistent in that regard.

Question put and passed.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES COMMITTEE*Appointment of Members — Motion*

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [5.59 pm]: I move —

- (1) That for the present session, the Parliamentary Services Committee consists of the Speaker and the members for Churchlands, Kalgoorlie, Roe, Victoria Park and Warren–Blackwood.
- (2) That the Legislative Council be acquainted accordingly.

There was mention made of sausage rolls in a previous contribution. This committee is fondly but, I think, sometimes rudely referred to as the “Sausage Roll Committee”! This is an important committee. It does not meet frequently, but it has input into various parliamentary services that are provided by the Parliament. Those members, though not heavily if at all remunerated, will make a tremendous contribution to the Parliamentary Services Committee and will be well led by Madam Speaker as chair. I congratulate those lucky people who, I must admit, I had to coerce somewhat to be members! I thank them for their contribution to the Parliamentary Services Committee.

Question put and passed.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION*Appointment — Motion*

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [6.00 pm]: I move —

- (1) That for the present Parliament, in accordance with Legislative Assembly standing orders 288 to 292, a Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission be appointed by the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council.
- (2) That the Legislative Assembly requests the Legislative Council to agree to a similar resolution.

For the information of members, this is a formal motion that essentially seeks to establish the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission. Because it is a joint standing committee, it requires members from both houses. Once we have received a response from the Legislative Council, I will then present to the house in due course a motion to formally appoint the representatives from this place, which will be two members.

Question put and passed.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE*Appointment of Members — Motion*

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [6.02 pm]: I move —

- (1) That for the present Parliament —
 - (a) pursuant to section 51 of the Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006, a Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People be appointed by the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council;
 - (b) the joint standing committee shall comprise two members appointed by the Legislative Assembly and two members appointed by the Legislative Council;
 - (c) it is the function of the joint standing committee to —
 - (i) monitor, review and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Commissioner for Children and Young People;
 - (ii) examine annual and other reports of the commissioner; and
 - (iii) consult regularly with the commissioner;
 - (d) a report of the joint standing committee will be presented to the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council by members of the joint standing committee nominated by it for that purpose; and
 - (e) the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly relating to standing and select committees will be followed as far as they can be applied.
- (2) That the Legislative Assembly requests the Legislative Council to agree to a similar resolution.

Again, very quickly, this establishes the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People. As it is a joint standing committee, two members from this place and two members from the other place will be appointed. This motion simply acquaints the Legislative Council with the establishment of that committee. In due course, we will nominate two people to be the representatives from this place on that joint standing committee.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.03 pm

