

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Consideration

Resumed from 14 February on the following question —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [12.20 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to this discussion. Last year when the member for Central Wheatbelt stood up to make her address, she began by acknowledging the hardworking volunteers who had been supporting our communities throughout a trying bushfire season. In 2021, we thanked volunteers who had been helping communities across the midwest, including Kalbarri and much of my electorate, in the wake of tropical cyclone Seroja. I am sorry to say that I will be commencing this discussion in a similar vein because of the severe flooding that has occurred in the Kimberley and the need to thank volunteers and agencies that have worked tirelessly to assist the people affected by those floods. Regional communities endure more than most and this state is indebted to the volunteers who are wards of our communities in situations of disaster. Opposition members will do all we can to ensure that the Kimberley's recovery is effective.

I thank the member for Central Wheatbelt, Hon Mia Davies, for her commitment in the time in her role as the Leader of the Opposition. The member served as the captain of the ship for two years in very uncharted waters and served us very well. I thank her very much for her service and dedication. She has held many roles in her tenure, commencing in the Legislative Council as one of the members for the Agricultural Region before successfully transitioning to the Legislative Assembly in 2013 and a role as a parliamentary secretary. She was then part of the ministry for much of the remaining term of that government. For the last six years, she has been the Leader of the Nationals WA, including as the Leader of the Opposition for the last two years. I thank her for all her achievements. There will be many more times down the track to thank Mia for all her work, but I just want to say thank you, Mia, and I hope that we are able to continue with the great work she has put in place.

If I were to characterise the government's performance in 2022 in one word, it would be "failure". Yesterday, the Premier chose to remind Western Australian families that he promised to keep them safe and strong. On that promise, I think he has failed. If members look beyond the front steps of Parliament, the consequences of the government's failure are abundantly clear. Crime rates, especially in some regional areas, are through the roof. Our housing waitlist is sitting at 18 000 families. Children are going to school hungry and households are skipping meals to keep the lights on. Hospitality venues are operating under limited hours or closing altogether because of worker shortages. Regional economies are being suffocated to meet lofty promises—promises made without regard to the consequences to those families, businesses and crucial industries that exist and prop up the state to the benefit of every Western Australian. Every Western Australian benefits from regional businesses. Trees that were milled in Manjimup have been used as structural supports in Metronet projects. Coal mined in Collie keeps the air conditioning on in places such as this. Demersal fish, caught off the Western Australian coast, feed families with a fresh local product and provide an economic benefit. Muddled decision-making reflects a minister out of touch with the community. This is while the Premier has ripped away regional voices from Parliament through his so-called electoral reform. One thing is for sure: if you live outside Perth or work outside Perth and if you grow it, mine it, catch it or make it, this government is not going to be your ally. If you live outside Perth, this government has failed you.

However, the breadth of our state's challenges are not limited simply to regional areas. There is a failure to run a health system deserving of our wealthy state and a failure to address the housing crisis that continues to worsen every day. There is a failure to be transparent on all fronts. In 2022, the government failed to live up to its rolled-gold standard of transparency by incurring the highest number of qualified audit statements of any government from the Auditor General. From the border backflip with retrospective health advice to the Perth Mint fiasco being handballed to the embattled Minister for Mines and Petroleum, there has been a failure to be honest. That has emerged as a cornerstone. The government has failed to protect Indigenous children from domestic situations so troubling that they are wandering the streets at 2.00 am, too frightened to be at home. It failed to facilitate a recovery for the communities devastated by tropical cyclone Seroja, which I hope will at least be a lesson for things to come in the Kimberley as those communities seek to recover. The government failed to provide adequate support for teachers with crippling workloads resulting in widespread burnout and loss of some of the most experienced educators we have in the state. It failed to build Metronet projects that have been touted as a legacy. These project costs continue to blowout into the billions and government members should ask themselves whether the priority for Western Australian families in 2023 is train lines or keeping on the lights at home and feeding the kids. While the Premier sits atop a \$6 billion surplus, he raised household fees and charges with water and power going up 2.5 per cent. Driver's licence fees were driven up by 6.4 per cent. This was an opportunity for the Premier to cushion the blow of the rising costs of living, but he failed to take it.

This year, in 2023, opposition members see that the government has an opportunity to address and rectify these failures. We put forward a solution to assist not-for-profit organisations to deliver the services needed to the community in this cost-of-living emergency. A sum of \$300 million over two years would bolster the delivery of

these crucial services. We spent last year urging the government to listen to the experts and peak bodies that were warning of the risk of rising fees and charges, the risk in failing to address the housing shortage and the risk in stashing surpluses for a rainy day while some householders are left to weather the storm. We will continue to remind the government of its responsibilities to look after every Western Australian.

This year, the north of the state was hit by one of the worst flooding events on record when ex-tropical cyclone Ellie crossed the coast. I thank the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner, Darren Klemm, for facilitating a visit to the affected area for the former Leader of the Opposition; Hon Martin Aldridge, our emergency services spokesperson; Hon Neil Thomson; and Dr David Honey. The recovery efforts are unprecedented in scale and complexity. It will be years before the Kimberley is well and truly back on its feet. What will be important for this government is how it responds to this disaster, learning lessons from the flawed recovery process after cyclone Seroja. The financial assistance delivered for the people in the midwest, although promised, was inadequate with less than 10 per cent of the record recovery funding package hitting the ground. Some constituents are facing a third winter without a sealed roof. This government has clearly failed the people impacted by Seroja. We can only hope that the government has learnt from those mistakes.

As the north of our state battles against inundation, the south has battled against out-of-control fires. Tragically, two lives have been lost this bushfire season. In late 2022, in Goomalling, a member of the community was lost in a blaze sparked by a lightning strike. This year in January, a man's life was lost after his vehicle was found in a burnt out fireground at Mt Gibson. Our regional communities have had to deal with the threat of fires approaching their doorsteps, including places such as Donnybrook–Balingup, Manjimup, Kingston, Collie, Kalbar, Manypeaks, Nanarup, Fitzgerald National Park, Kununoppin, Toodyay, Woodridge and Moore River. Fires have also come dangerously close to homes in Rockingham, Lake Coogee and Eden Hill. The most recent fires in the Shire of Gingin saw property lost within minutes of the fire starting. These emergencies highlight the McGowan Labor government's poor preparedness of our firefighting fleet. To have multiple trucks sitting idle due to this government's decision not to recall firefighters placed the community and other firefighters at risk during what was predicted to be and has proven to be a very dangerous fire season.

This time of the year always brings natural disasters to the spotlight as we remain in the midst of the southern bushfire season and northern cyclone season. However, other emergencies require attention at all times of the year. In the middle of January this year, one of our rescue helicopters undertook a six-hour operation to evacuate an unwell passenger from a cruise ship off the midwest coast. The reason the mission took so long was that the helicopter had to be deployed from Perth before it was able to stop in Geraldton to be refuelled, and then fly out to the ship. For six years—the same length of time that the Premier has been in power—we have been calling for a rescue helicopter to be based in the midwest.

We started highlighting the need for that helicopter in 2017. Coincidentally, that is the same year that the Labor government tried to cut funding to the life-saving service. In 2022 our calls were supported by 3 000 Western Australians who signed a petition by Geraldton resident and marine rescue volunteer Ian Dempsey to have a chopper stationed in the midwest. When we consider the fact the Premier has had three years of surpluses adding up to \$13 billion, with another budget surplus on the way, it is astounding that a midwest rescue helicopter has not been funded. A helicopter based in the midwest could mean the difference between life and death.

There is a glaring need for this state to improve our supply chain security. Before the floods in the Kimberley, the prime example was the Trans-Australian Railway. Before floods closed the railway, there were fires along Eyre Highway. The vulnerability of our supply chains and major transport links is well known, yet even with the funds to change this, the Labor government has failed to act. How many more natural disasters or global pandemics will it take for this to be addressed?

Our ports are also vulnerable. We know that some ports have single port service providers, which produces vulnerability due to industrial action. At a time when the supply chains have so obviously not been up to task, the government is still hell-bent on delivering a \$2 billion vanity project in the Armadale line. Is that truly the priority for transport in this state? Both the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Productivity Commission have highlighted that industrial action by unions at Australia's ports have exacerbated difficult trading positions created by COVID. When such challenges are already affecting the timely delivery of equipment or spare parts, that type of union activity has made a bad situation even worse.

What this government promises and what it delivers are very different prospects. The Premier yesterday said this would be a year of delivery—we hope WA is ready for yet another broken promise. The McGowan government has recently announced a task force to examine the Western Australian shipping industry, which is due to report to cabinet in March this year. That report should be made public and any recommendations to shore up a supply chain from that report should be expedited. I have read the discussion paper of the task force and note that it refers to direct shipping into regional ports, including the Pilbara. I am a strong supporter of efforts to increase direct shipping

into those ports. It makes little sense to ship things to Fremantle and put them back on the road to send them up to Karratha or Port Hedland when they could be just as easily sent into those centres directly.

The recovery effort in the Kimberley centres on transport infrastructure and crossing the Fitzroy River is a key part of this. In the press, the Minister for Transport says that a temporary barge system would be able to handle cattle trucks, but when asked in Parliament yesterday, she refused to give me any indication as to whether this will occur or when it will occur. Meanwhile, Kimberley pastoralists have labelled the idea a disaster. We hold out hope that the government will take infrastructure delivery seriously, but history does not bode well. Why is it so hard to get funding for these vital projects? Infrastructure Partnerships Australia's recent budget report listed Western Australia as the worst in the entire nation for infrastructure spend—unsurprisingly, from a government which took six months to respond to the strategy, outcomes for which are likely to take another six months to be presented.

Meanwhile, we wait for commitments to vital projects such as the Dongara–Geraldton–Northampton bypass. I would suggest to the Minister for Transport, if she is listening, that the Northampton section of that route is a standalone project that should be addressed urgently, given the increased traffic that we are seeing through that town due to sandmining and garnet mining starting just north of town.

The decimation of sustainable regional industries has become a hallmark of the McGowan Labor government—none more so than the destruction of the timber industry. There was a lack of consultation and a plan to help timber businesses, workers, their families and their communities following Labor's ambush of native logging, which was delivered with no thought about the consequences. Western Australia had some of the most sustainable logging practices in the world, whereas countries like Brazil or Indonesia—from which we will eventually have to import native wood due to Labor's ban—have more questionable attitudes towards sustainability. Our forests have been managed well for generations. To simply walk away and leave them unmanaged could be a disaster in the making.

Like it or not, they have been logged and may well need careful management to bring them back to their natural equilibrium so that we can manage fire risk. We have to ask: Do these forests require thinning? Do they require management to bring them back to their natural state? Could a reduced milling operation have supported this while providing high-quality wood for furniture and other high-value uses? We will never know because this government chose the headline over a considered decision. Despite promising jobs until the end of 2023, we have, unsurprisingly, seen the Nannup and Manjimup mills close early, after Parkside Timber, which invested heavily in these mills on the advice of the state government, decided it could not go on. The forestry industry is already shutting down and the transition package for workers and communities is lacking in detail and delivery. The government's decision instead was to help workers transition their lifetime of skills, careers developed over decades, to entirely different industries. The government's plan to help Western Australians whose jobs were ripped out from underneath them was to uproot their workplace.

Let us take Nannup for example. More than 100 people lost their jobs when the mill, which had operated for more than 100 years, was shut down. It was one of the biggest employers in town, competing against only agriculture and wine. Unlike the transition packages offered to Collie, there is no support available to encourage other industries to grow in Nannup. When faced with this, the Premier said the nearby lithium mine was looking for workers. He has the audacity to tell someone who has made a career working in timber for more than 40 years to jump into an entirely new industry. It is probably not an easy undertaking for them. Despite what the Premier thinks, the skills are not translatable. Some skills could have continued to be used in management of the forests. Labor failed to consult industry before making the rash, unscientific decision to ban logging and now has no serious transition plan in place to support local jobs in the south west. Those communities will be looking to the new Minister for Forestry, but, unfortunately, I expect they will receive the same treatment—neglectful ignorance of an industry cut off at the knees.

The McGowan government continues to back away from throwing its support behind our state's \$136 million live export sheep industry. Despite repeated calls from the opposition to support this critical industry, the Premier's noncommittal responses to the live export industry only cause further uncertainty to businesses directly involved in this sector. It is not just shipping lines, but farmers, producers, truck drivers, vets and shearers and all the supporting industries, largely regionally based, are treading water in these uncertain times. The Premier needs to come clean on why his government's \$2 million study into the future port for live export seems to have sunk without a trace. Is this because in his heart he does not expect it will need a new port as he quietly waits for the Albanese government to kill off the industry? If Australia creates a gap in the live export market, it will be filled by other exporters who do not operate with the same, world-leading animal welfare practices. By continuing the live sheep trade here in WA, we can ensure better welfare outcomes worldwide. Our shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Colin de Grussa, MLC, will continue to champion this industry.

The government's failure to consult industry does not stop with live exports. The Premier and his government showed that when the Minister for Fisheries announced a nine-month ban on the fishing of demersal species like snapper and dhufish, a decision that was made without adequate consultation with the professional industry or the recreational sector. The opposition threw its support behind the sector and presented a petition in the Legislative Council that

garnered over 18 000 signatures, rejecting the government's plans to keep fishers off the water for nine months of the year. The pressure mounted by the sector and the opposition saw the minister backflip and reel the ban back in to six months after a lack of genuine consultation and good faith negotiation. In the end, the outcome was still seen as a poor result by the sector.

As the threat of foot-and-mouth disease wrought havoc on the industry in neighbouring Indonesia, the opposition called for the government to take seriously the concerns of farmers who felt threatened by a potential foot-and-mouth outbreak in Western Australia. Instead of treating those concerns with the level of caution they required, the former agriculture minister downplayed those fears and made misguided jokes or comments in the media about foot-and-mouth disease making milk and meat cheaper. As the person in charge of Western Australia's \$11 billion industry, I hope the Premier's new minister will work on winning back the trust of the sector and refocus the department's efforts away from the pet projects of the former minister.

It is clear that the federal Labor government has its sights set on Western Australia. As we inch towards the next federal election, we will begin to see the relationship between the Premier and the Prime Minister being tested. The Premier will need to step up and stand up against Premiers from the eastern states who have more relevance to the Prime Minister and more influence over him as he will seek to discuss our share of the GST into the future. That is a fight that the Nationals WA know well. We took that fight to the federal Parliament way back in 2010, when the then member for O'Connor, Tony Crook, stood against virtually the entirety of the House of Representatives and called for a fair share of Western Australia's GST. We know that major projects in Western Australia will come under significant threat if the Albanese government allows the plans of Tanya Plibersek, the Minister for the Environment and Water, to go ahead for a federal Environmental Protection Authority. Will that provide genuine climate protection and genuine climate action? I do not know, but I guarantee members that it will affect and impact the development of our state.

The government's shaky support of live export will be challenged, and the minister responsible for holding off that threat is now a first-term member. She will have the opportunity to prove herself in this space and I hope that she does, because the industry needs that support.

Our energy network continues to be a low priority for this government. Some parts of the state, many of them in my electorate of Moore, have such regular interruption in their connection that it has been normalised by those opposite, with one member of the Legislative Council telling business owners to buy a generator if they want to de-risk their power supply. The member may have forgotten that it is the government's role to supply the network. This lapsed understanding is not surprising from a team led by a Premier who attempted to cut the community resource network because people have mobile phones these days. As evidenced on Western Power's website, the number of interruptions to the electricity network in the Shire of Northampton on average per customer had risen from nine in 2020–21 to 21 in 2021–22, with an average time without power of 65 hours and 36 minutes per customer. For the Shire of Irwin, it had risen from seven to 16 outages, with an average time without power of 63 hours and 38 minutes in 2021–22. I can tell members that the experience this summer has been even more woeful. My office is in the town of Dongara, and the community in that town has experienced a summer of woe. Residents are fed up to the back teeth with the excuses and promises of improvement, and a minister who believes that if someone lives in the midwest, they choose to have unreliable power. Those residents want action. Our energy network is deficient, and this minister has failed to address very real concerns for safety and the barriers that are stopping further development.

Crime continues to be a problem and a challenge for this government and swift action needs to be taken right across the state. The government can no longer be in denial about the part it needs to play in ensuring that towns in Western Australia are safe for residents and visitors. I fully support calls for action from the member for North West Central. I expect she will have much more to say about this in her contribution later today.

I move on to what must be considered the biggest failure of the McGowan Labor government—a failure that will truly be the legacy of this Premier and the two health ministers he has had since 2017, who have both failed to look after such a vital sector. Our health system in WA is all but broken. Our nurses and doctors are broken after six years of feeling undervalued and being under-resourced and underpaid, yet this Premier sits there with \$13 billion in surplus over three years and does nothing to even put a bandaid over the broken health system. It is not surprising to hear that there is an overwhelming number of nursing roles available in Western Australia. There are 73 vacancies advertised for nurses and midwives in regional Western Australia, and 31 in the Kimberley. Although the staff shortages are immense in the entirety of our state, they are more acute in regional areas, where access to suitable health care is limited by distance and service availability.

To sound like a broken record, the ambulance ramping record keeps getting broken under this government. I am sure that my colleague the Leader of the Liberal Party will have much more to say on the state of the health system during her contribution, but it is significant to note that in 2022, ambulances were stuck on ramps in Western Australia

for more than 60 000 hours—the highest annual figure ever recorded—all because this government has failed to provide enough beds to ensure that the system works.

Perhaps if the health minister looked to improving regional hospitals in Geraldton, Mullewa, Margaret River, Laverton and Meekatharra, just to name a few that need desperate upgrades, there would be fewer regional Western Australians trying to access complex care such as surgery or oncology services in Perth, increasing pressure on our health systems. Our shadow minister for regional health, Hon Martin Aldridge, has consistently raised the delay to upgrading the Geraldton Health Campus, only for the minister to reveal last week that that project is still only at the expression of interest stage. It is simply not good enough. The project was meant to be finished in 2024–25, but midwest locals now say that it will not be completed until at least mid-2026 due to those delays.

Now, to add salt to the wound, we have the situation at Mullewa Hospital, which has deteriorated since it was set to be replaced six years ago and is well and truly past the point of not meeting today's standards. Despite being a budget item for the entirety of the McGowan government term, there has been no progress on replacing it. I note that last week the minister announced that there will be no commencement of the replacement of Mullewa Hospital until after the Geraldton hospital is complete. It is a disgrace that Mullewa has to wait for that length of time to get a health service that has been funded in the budget now for six years. Meekatharra's 65-year-old hospital has been the subject of an election commitment by the McGowan government, yet still Meekatharra waits for a fit-for-purpose facility.

The impact of poor investment in health services goes beyond infrastructure. Allied health and mental health services have been grossly neglected under this government, especially in regional areas. The matter of mental health support in regional communities must be given priority. Suicide is the leading cause of death for people aged 15 to 44 years. I note that the government has moved towards mental health checks for firearm owners. When I heard that, I commented that that is fine, but I am not sure where in regional WA they are going to find someone qualified to give an assessment of someone's mental health state, because they do not exist at the moment. There are no people out there providing mental health services in much of regional WA, and I believe that is something that needs to be addressed. Perhaps the minister's move may finally expose —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: If the minister will listen to me, I am actually not criticising him. I am saying that I think his move may well expose the dearth of services that actually exist for mental health in regional Western Australia, and I hope that leads to a good outcome. Thirty per cent of Indigenous Western Australians report having a mental health condition. Their suicide rate is three times the national average. New parents, seniors and Indigenous Western Australians have all been identified by the WA Country Health Service as vulnerable groups in our regions. It is time for this recognition to translate into work and action. Our state's health system is in dire straits. It is broken, depleted and exhausted. That is why the opposition has been calling for a royal commission into the health system. We need real solutions because what has been provided so far is clearly not working.

I refer to schools. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Roe, yesterday made some outstanding points in his contribution about the failures of this government over six years to invest in the health and wellbeing of our state's education system. It is a telltale sign of a failing education minister that the State School Teachers' Union of WA has commissioned an independent review into WA's education system, led by former Labor Premier Hon Carmen Lawrence. I am sure that not many in the sector will be surprised that this review will find severe teacher shortages, excessive workloads, violence in schools and a lack of substantive principals and education assistants, just to name a few issues. All those issues are tenfold in regional communities. If towns cannot even house education staff, what hope do they have of attracting staff? If towns are relying on the flying squad to provide teaching services or on students coming out of their courses to fill in positions, what hope is there of a decent education for children in those towns? When the new minister was asked about the drop in the number of schools that are offering ATAR courses, he simply threw the responsibility back onto principals. It seems he is happy to follow the former minister's approach of making principals responsible for these failings rather than the department. The issue has been rearing its head for years and it needs to be addressed. There should be equality of opportunity for children across the state. A child in Marble Bar should be entitled to a decent education, just as is a child living in Maylands, Morley or anywhere else in the metropolitan area. Unfortunately, Labor's track record on regional education is not good. We need only look at some of the first moves it tried to make as soon as it took government in 2017, including shutting the Schools of the Air, closing Moora Residential College and other matters, to see the true nature of its agenda for regional education.

Our state is in the grips of a severe housing shortage, preventing many regional communities from accessing workers as there is nowhere for them to live. There is no social housing available in many communities. In many communities, there are no rentals at all. The waitlist has blown out across the state to more than 18 000 and these families are being forced to remain on the waitlist for years, with no private alternative as the rental market is the tightest we have seen for at least a decade. The McGowan Labor government has continually over-promised and

underdelivered on fixing the homeless problem in Western Australia. First it failed to deliver the Common Ground project. Then it took well over a year to fill Boorloo Bidee Mia with 61 occupants, despite a promised capacity of 100. What is the government's solution? Its solution is 90 houses and a spot purchase program. Spot purchasing does little, because of course it does not increase housing stock at all. The government needs to think outside the box to fix the housing problem. Perhaps it should consider incentives for developers to transform some older unlettable and vacant C and D-grade buildings into residential developments that can be leased out to provide more affordable accommodation for people wanting to live near the city. The failure to deliver on adding housing stock to the market prior to this term has only increased pressure on contractors to build as the crisis worsens. These building contracts are folding because of worker shortages, material supply issues and costs. Ninety-four builders have folded, yet there has been no action from the government. The government should be embarrassed.

The housing crisis is impacting every sector of our state, but one of those most impacted is our tourism industry. Tourism has been plagued by a lack of workforce accommodation. Tourism is reliant on workers to support that industry. The sector has been battling to recover from COVID, and for this sector to flourish, it has to have staff and the staff have to live somewhere. It seems pretty basic. When we look at places like Exmouth, we see that it is indeed something that has not been addressed. We know there will be a spectacle to behold in Exmouth very soon, as it will be set upon the world stage with the upcoming solar eclipse, which I believe will attract tens of thousands of people to the member for North West Central's electorate. She has kindly invited me to Exmouth to look at it. I do not know whether any accommodation has been sought yet, apart from a tent, but we are still working on that particular matter. We know that the pressures on that community will be great and I hope that adequate measures have been put in place to ensure that it can cope with the population swelling to something like eight times its usual population. We know that the impact will be felt by communities from Kununurra all the way to Geraldton as travellers try to make their way across the state. The tourism industry in the Kimberley is front of mind, as operators continue to recover from the one-in-100-year floods that have hit the Kimberley in the last year. What I have learnt from our spokesperson on tourism, the member for North West Central, is that that will have a significant impact on many communities to the south of the Kimberley because the traditional pattern of movement is for people to come into the state via the north, travel down the coast and continue their travels further to the south. That flow will be interrupted somewhat by the situation in the Kimberley, so it may be operators not just in the Kimberley but elsewhere who will be affected by those floods. The need to get the roads up and running as quickly as possible is certainly there.

In my local area, the community of Lancelin is very concerned at the moment about the future of its tourism industry. The Lancelin sand dunes are an iconic attraction, with thousands of adventure enthusiasts travelling to the region pretty well every weekend to four-wheel drive and sand board over those sandy dunes. At some point in the future, those dunes are set to be carted away as lime sand, which is a valuable resource for farmers to balance the pH levels of soil that has been treated with fertiliser. Given the sensitivity of this issue, I believe the Minister for Mines and Petroleum and the Minister for Tourism should visit Lancelin to discuss the future of Lancelin directly with the community. There is a great deal of concern within the community. I attended a meeting there at the end of January. I would say that at least 200 people were in attendance and they directly expressed their concern about the future of tourism and the environment in the Lancelin area. I caution to say that the Minister for Mines and Petroleum needs to be involved because we need to have access to lime sand into the future.

Mr W.J. Johnston: I have no power to change anything there, so what would I say if I went?

Mr R.S. LOVE: The minister could go along and have a listen.

Mr P.J. Rundle: Show an interest.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Show an interest at least. It would be nice if the minister could show an interest.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Okay; I can show an interest, but what action are you asking me to take?

Mr R.S. LOVE: I would like the minister to have a look at the situation so that he can go back and brief his department.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr W.J. Johnston: I just want to understand this from you: I go there, I look at it and then what do I do? What will change for the people of Lancelin after I have looked at the problem? Tell me what will change.

Mr R.S. LOVE: If the minister had looked at the wheatbelt lime sand strategy that we developed before his government came to office, he would probably find those answers. I suggest he grab that and have a look at it.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Sorry; I still don't understand. What action are you asking me to take?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr R.S. LOVE: I am asking you to visit the community and have a talk to those in the local lime sand industry.

Point of Order

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I would like to hear the contribution continue. The minister is making a substantial number of interruptions.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): There is no point of order. Yes, the minister is making a substantial number of interjections, but they are being invited and engaged with by the Leader of the Opposition. I ask both parties to allow the debate to continue, with the Leader of the Opposition having the call.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.S. LOVE: There needs to be a resolution that benefits all the stakeholders in Lancelin so that there is a future for the community and a lime sand source for farmers into the future.

I turn to the year ahead for the opposition. This year, people can expect to see a team focused on holding this government to account for the basics. While the government continues to ignore the cost-of-living crisis, spending its time on international apology tours to make up for lost opportunities while the border was shut, we will be discussing problems closer to home. We know that the Reserve Bank has now lifted interest rates nine times in a row, which is putting incredible stress on householders across the state. There have been the sharpest increases in mortgage repayments on record, with repayments on a \$500 000 mortgage now increasing by \$923 a month, or almost \$11 000 a year. Mortgage repayments are now 41 per cent higher than they were in April last year.

A Roy Morgan nationwide report showed an estimated 1.1 million mortgage holders were at risk of mortgage stress in the three months to December 2022. For the first time in this cycle of interest rate increases, the proportion of mortgage holders now considered at risk is above the long-term average stretching as far back as 2007. Many householders have recently stepped, or are about to step, into a world of financial pain as they leave those lower fixed interest rate arrangements and are hit with much higher rates. Surely, amid such financial stress and uncertainty, now is the time to take action to ensure that Western Australian households are prepared to meet the oncoming crisis. Any further increase to fees and charges imposed on households by this government would be an indictment of our state.

We must not forget that while this government gives with one hand, it takes with the other. Providing a one-off electricity credit while raising the overall costs to households was not helpful for those households at all. Families are taking up buy now, pay later options to afford school necessities. The *Foodbank hunger report 2022* found that more than 200 000 Western Australian households are forced to skip meals or go without food because they do not have enough money. Each week, more than 20 000 Western Australian children go to school hungry because they do not have breakfast. More than 116 000 children in Western Australia are living in severely food insecure households in a state that has recorded \$13 billion in budget surpluses over three years.

Nobody should go hungry in Australia, let alone in its wealthiest state. In a state that feeds more than 50 other countries through grain exports alone, no family should be skipping meals to keep the lights on. It does not add up. The number of Western Australians living in poverty is 12.8 per cent, which is up from just 8.7 per cent in 2014, while 59 per cent of people who utilise Foodbank have a job. This is a cost-of-living emergency. Households that have never engaged with support services have become reliant on them. How, in a state so rich as Western Australia, has this come to be?

Beyond our continued pressure on the government to address the cost-of-living emergency, the opposition will focus on the forgotten communities. The Kimberley deserves the best possible chance at recovery from devastating floods. Communities right across the north of Western Australia deserve localised and targeted measures to address rampant crime. The children in those communities deserve a chance at life unhindered by disadvantage, which has worsened under this government.

The city of Albany deserves the oncology unit that it was promised if it returned a Labor member. Manjimup deserves an explanation for the government's decision to rip its central economic driver from the core of its community. The decision to shut down the native forestry industry was backed by a survey completed by people with no connection to the industry, region or the consequences. That local community deserves better.

Regional Western Australia—indeed, all Western Australia—deserves a proper explanation for the Premier's determination to strip away Parliament's regional representation. This government claims to champion diversity, but not diversity of opinion. It should not matter where a person is born, where they start a business or whether they choose to be a teacher or a nurse. Whether a person lives in Mullewa or Mandurah, their opportunities and outcomes should be equal.

Although the government continues to run its agenda to diminish the strength and vibrancy of our regional communities, at every opportunity those communities band together in the face of adversity. As an example, the community resource centre in Mullewa in my electorate has been running the local visitor centre for nearly 12 years without any government funding. Dedicated staff run the cafe and sell local souvenirs to promote our

wonderful region. Some 150 people go through its doors each day to learn about the wildflowers and our natural attractions thanks to the determination of the CRC team.

When our regional communities were told that hundreds of Afghan refugees, who were fleeing domestic atrocities, were due to land in Australia, they put up their hand to help. The Shire of Plantagenet, which was already home to a number of refugees who have now been part of the community for some 20 years, was the first to say that it would welcome the displaced families with open arms—even with scarce accommodation, the shire said that it would find a solution to house these families to ensure that they had a home and could become part of the community.

While rates of family and domestic violence continue to increase across the state, some communities are taking a stand and trying to find solutions. Finlayson House women's refuge in Kalgoorlie was presented with a cheque for more than \$20 000 following a fundraiser by local dance group Heart of Gold Dance Company. These funds have been earmarked for a project to build six apartments for women and children seeking help. The remaining funds have been stumped up by local mining companies.

In the recovery efforts across the Kimberley, local Indigenous-led organisations have come together to ensure the timely distribution of food and other essentials, while also raising \$600 000 in donations. They saw an immediate need for on-the-ground coordination and support and stepped in. They are also working to find secure housing for those displaced by the waters—no small task amid a housing shortage.

These are the stories that drive our team. Even in the face of adversity, regional people and regional communities find ways to support those around them. While this government continues down the path of diminishing those communities, we will find ways to bolster them. We will ensure that the challenges they grapple with every day cannot be ignored by this government.

The work of the opposition is to push for change, challenge decisions and hold the government to account. That is its job. It is also its job to be pragmatic and put forward solutions. We might be a small team, but we are big enough to hold the government to account. No matter where people live—from Derby to Denmark, Coolgardie to Cannington—this opposition will make their voices heard. I remind those opposite of the old adage that oppositions do not win elections; rather, governments lose them. As this government continues to break the trust of Western Australian families, regional communities, business owners, nurses and teachers, its arrogance will come back to bite.

Amendment to Question

Mr R.S. LOVE: With that, I therefore move to amend the question before the house. I move —

That the following words be added after “noted” —

and that this house notes the McGowan Labor government has abandoned its responsibility to all Western Australians and is too arrogant to see how failing to address the cost-of-living emergency is hurting Western Australian families

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [1.04 pm]: Sometimes I find the Leader of the Opposition's contributions interesting; unfortunately, this was not one of those occasions. The Leader of the Opposition likes to quote Infrastructure Partnerships Australia. He says, “Look at how bad you are because Infrastructure Partnerships Australia says you're bad.” He has done that on a number of occasions. People should know what Infrastructure Partnerships Australia is before they take notice of what he says. I will go through a selection of Infrastructure Partnerships Australia board members.

Louise Adams is from Aurecon, a construction business, and Marika Calfas—I apologise if I have mispronounced her name—is from NSW Ports. NSW Ports privatised Port Botany and introduced a system that meant that when the Port of Newcastle was later privatised, container trade could not occur at Newcastle port without money being paid to the owners of Port Botany. It eliminated competition to maximise the price it received for the asset. It was not interested in the consumers of New South Wales. It pushed up the costs to New South Wales consumers by privatising the port. That is the plan that we defeated at the 2017 election. If there were a Liberal–National government in Western Australia now, port privatisation would be back on the road. Other board members include Rob Ward, who is from a Japanese bank, and Scott Charlton, who is from Transurban. The Liberal and National Parties introduced legislation to this Parliament—it passed through this chamber but was not pursued in the other chamber—to introduce road tolls in Western Australia. No wonder Transurban supports the Leader of the Opposition and not the Labor Party; toll roads in Western Australia will come about only if people vote for the opposition. Bede Noonan is from Acciona, which is a big construction company, and Joanne Spillane is from Macquarie Capital, one of the world's largest privatisation experts.

No wonder Infrastructure Partnerships Australia board members criticise us. They are owners of various infrastructure vehicles and have toll roads all around the world. Rodney Wallis is from the National Australia Bank and Shannon Cotter is from EY, a consulting firm that makes money through privatisations. This is a good one and, again,

I hope I pronounce the name right. Kate Perumal is from White and Case—the member for Cockburn is a lawyer—but she is not just from White and Case, which is an international global law firm of a high profile and great repute. Rather, she is from a specific part of White and Case—its global disputes practice. One of the things that happens with privatisations is that it is all about the contract, and the privatisation experts on the private side always know more and they come back and dispute the terms of the contract.

The New South Wales government pays consumers in New South Wales to reimburse them for road tolls. The road tolls go up every year above inflation and now the New South Wales government, having crowed about how much money it received after selling its road system, has to take money out of the budget and pass it back to consumers because of the privatisation fetish of the Liberal and National Parties. No wonder the Leader of the Opposition always quotes the privatisation agenda of Infrastructure Partnerships Australia. It criticises the Western Australian government because it will not privatise.

That is true; we will not privatise, and we wear the criticism of Infrastructure Partnerships Australia as a badge of honour because it shows that we are putting the interests of all Western Australians first, unlike the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA, which are asking us to put the interests of shareholders first.

I note that the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party and the shadow Treasurer do not understand how the budget works. Just as an example, the shadow Treasurer said the other day that the government has had, quote, “\$20 billion in surpluses” over the last few years. The shadow Treasurer is implying that surpluses are unused money. I will make it clear. If you want to pay down debt, you have to run a surplus. If you do not run a surplus, that means you will borrow money. I remind everybody that when the Liberal–National government came to power in 2008, the government of Western Australia was saving 13¢ for every dollar it collected. It was using that 13¢ either to be ready for the future or to build infrastructure. When we came to government, we were spending \$1.13 for every dollar collected. That was before that money was used to pay for infrastructure. That is why when we came to government, the infrastructure build in Western Australia was on a trajectory to collapse. That is why road funding was being cut year after year after year.

If the Liberal–National government had kept going along that pathway, interest payments would have become one of the largest items in the budget in the out years. I make it clear: a surplus is an accounting issue about whether you are keeping your recurrent expenditure to below your recurrent income. You then need to pay for infrastructure after the surplus has been declared. Members opposite are saying that the surplus is too big. That means that they believe we should borrow money to build infrastructure. We use the surplus to pay for infrastructure and to retire the debt that was left to us by the former Liberal–National government.

Members opposite also criticise our government for being responsible for the cost-of-living pressures in Western Australia. As the Premier has constantly pointed out to members opposite, we all understand the cost-of-living pressures that people in Western Australia are facing for the various reasons discussed in the media. We are keeping our government charges to the lowest level that we possibly can. We have seen the crocodile tears from the Leader of the Opposition. In the eight years of the Liberal–National government, the price of electricity increased by 93 per cent. We have kept the cost of electricity down. When we take into account the two one-off electricity credits for households, the cost of electricity for households in Western Australia is lower than it was before we came into government. Western Australia is the only state that has kept control of electricity prices. We need only to look at the chaos in the electricity system on the east coast, with 30 to 50 per cent increases in costs. I am told by people in industry that Western Australia has the lowest cost natural gas in the whole of the OECD.

I say that again. Western Australia has the lowest cost natural gas in the whole of the OECD. The cost is certainly much lower than it is on the east coast. We appreciate the tough times people are facing at the moment. That is why we are keeping electricity prices to a very modest level, unlike the former Liberal–National government that increased electricity prices by more than 90 per cent. When we take into account the one-off electricity credits, we see that the cost of electricity has fallen.

We understand the need to focus on keeping costs under control and we will continue to do our best to do that. It is not as though we have increased land tax by \$1.5 billion, as was done by the Liberal and National Parties when in government. It is not as though we have cut off 2 500 customers from their water supply, as the member for Central Wheatbelt did when she was Minister for Water. We have capped public transport fees. That somehow has been completely ignored by members opposite. We know that because of the way the housing system works, people pushed to the edge of the suburbs have the highest public transport fees. We have eliminated that problem by capping public transport fees, with a \$3 000 saving for a person who lives in Mandurah, for example. I suppose it is just the Liberal–National Party hatred for anything that will assist in fighting climate change, such as public transport. We know that opposition members do not know believe in taking action on climate change. We see that again with their embracing of coal for future energy supply. I will make it clear. Coal-fired power stations are not being closed because of the climate agenda. They are being closed because they are no longer functioning in Western Australia’s electricity system.

We cannot make money out of a coal-fired power station by running it between December and March and effectively closing it for the remainder of the year, which is what is happening at the moment. Members should look at the published figures on this. That is not the way to use a coal-fired power station. Between September and November 2021, for six weeks the Collie coal-fired power station was not switched on once. That had nothing to do with coal supply. It was because the operation of the power station could not fit into the electricity system.

That is why we have a carefully managed and sensible process to transition from coal. That includes support for the township and residents of Collie, and the coal industry workforce. However, that transition process has now been completely rejected. That is ironic. The former Liberal–National government promised to shut everything down in three years. It said that the whole thing would be gone by 2025. Opposition members are now saying that the coal-fired power stations should remain in operation. Members opposite are the goldfish of politics: they forget what happened yesterday.

The reason that Western Australians supported the government at the last election so strongly is that they know that they have in Premier Mark McGowan a leader who understands the needs of the community. They know they have a leader who listens and responds to the demands that the community makes on him. They know they have a leader who makes decisions only after carefully considering them and making sure that they will benefit the community. That is why the people of Western Australia endorsed the Premier at the last election.

It is interesting to hear members opposite attack this government over arrogance. They are sitting in this chamber with only six members and telling everybody that they will be in government at the next election. What arrogance! They have the arrogance to believe that they do not need to do any work and come up with any policies or budget plans. They think they can say whatever they like, no matter what the truth is, and get away with it. I have never seen an opposition as arrogant as this opposition. Opposition members have no funded and costed policies. They have no policies that explain how things could be done better. They have only a couple of glib lines. We only need to look at what the member for Moore has done for the people of Lancelin. He came into this chamber and said he bleeds for them, but when I asked him what action he wants us to take—does he want sand mining to be stopped or to continue—he could not tell me. Given that the Minister for Energy has no power to overturn approvals that have already been given, what is the member for Moore asking me to do on behalf of his constituents? The problem with the member for Moore is that he is too arrogant to do the real work. He thinks that he deserves to be the Premier of this state.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is the member saying that he does not want to be the Premier?

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is the member saying that he does want to be the Premier? The problem is that this person thinks that he should be the Premier of the state of Western Australia when he does have a single policy that he would implement if he was in government—not a single policy, no funding, no plan, and no ideas. He is so arrogant —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Leader of the Opposition, please stop interjecting.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: He thinks he can be the Premier, without doing the work. He thinks he deserves to be the Premier of this state, but he wants to represent only the people who live outside Perth. He wants to be the Premier of this state, yet he has no agenda for the benefit of our community.

Under the leadership of Premier McGowan, we are carefully working through all the challenges in this state, and we know there are many. Many of those challenges come from the success of this state, because we have such a strong mining industry. Do members remember, back in 2017, the opposition spending three hours in this chamber saying that the mining industry would collapse in WA because of the Labor government? It has never been stronger. We have the largest workforce in the history of the state, the largest investment in the history of the state, more success with commodities than ever in the history of the state and more downstream processing than at any time in the history of the state. That is all leading to worker challenges; we all know that. My agencies have been impacted by those worker challenges, as have many others. But we have a government that is carefully working through those issues—listening to the advice of the private sector, listening to the advice of the public service and listening to the community. It is not being arrogant, unlike the member for Moore, who thinks he should be Premier but will not tell us why.

He thinks he could do a better job than the current Premier, but cannot tell us what that would look like. He has no budget process in place. He thinks that the budget surplus is spare money that is not used and is kept in a cupboard. He does not understand that the surplus pays for infrastructure and is used to pay down the debt run up by the Liberal Party and the National Party. He still supports privatisation; he comes in here and quotes Infrastructure Partnerships Australia. How arrogant can he be? How many times do the people of Western Australia need to

reject privatisation before the Liberal Party and the National Party listen? Remember, if the member for Moore were in government now, Western Power would be in private hands. Let us not forget that. This is an arrogant opposition that is not listening, not doing any work, and thinks it can just cruise in without telling people what its agenda is.

I am pleased that we have such strong leadership in Premier McGowan. I am pleased that Premier McGowan listens to Western Australians. I have been with him to most parts of the state and I have seen him interact with people. I have never before met a politician who people will wait in the street to talk to. Nobody else wants to do that. I know there is probably jealousy from members on the other side of the chamber. They know that this is an effective government that is delivering for the needs of this state and providing strong and stable leadership under Premier McGowan.

I have been to many regional cabinet meetings. I have been to Collie; I did not go to Geraldton—sorry, member for Geraldton!

Ms L. Dalton: No!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have been to Port Hedland; Karratha; Broome; Kalgoorlie; Margaret River, in the member for Warren-Blackwood's electorate; Nannup; Donnybrook; Bunbury —

Mr P.C. Tinley: Coolbellup?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Coolbellup! Even I would not go there!

The point is that I have been across regional Western Australia with the Premier and I have seen the way the community responds to him. I have been to Esperance with the Premier.

Mr P.J. Rundle: Have you been to Mullewa?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is the problem. Opposition members arrogantly think they can just make these ridiculous claims, because they are jealous. They are jealous of the success of this government. They are jealous that we have been able to control the budget, yet still deliver for the community. They are jealous that we have not increased taxes, unlike under the previous government, which increased land tax by \$1.5 billion. However, we have still been able to deliver expenditure on health, education and community services such as the Western Australia Police Force and the Department of Communities.

That is what they are jealous about. They are jealous of the success of Western Australia. They do not want to admit that Western Australia actually has the most successful economy, certainly in Australia, and potentially in the world. They are jealous of the fact that our policies work. Their real complaint is not that our policies are not succeeding; they are jealous because our policies are succeeding. They are also jealous of the fact that we have in the Premier the best leader that Western Australia could ever want.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [1.24 pm]: I can confirm that I am not jealous of Minister Johnston in any way, shape or form, but I would like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his wideranging reply to the Premier's Statement. To be honest, the minister has missed the mark because we have a Premier who is out of touch. Some of the elements of the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Moore, are very important to our communities. It is all about cost of living. The minister branched off on a number of subjects but he did not actually address the amendment, which states —

... that the McGowan Labor government has abandoned its responsibility to all Western Australians because it is too arrogant to see how its failure to address the cost-of-living emergency is hurting Western Australian families

We have a broken health system, violent crime that is out of control, a housing crisis, and Western Australians struggling to pay their bills, while the McGowan government sits on a huge pile of money. That does not add up. The McGowan government has failed to deliver over the past six years, with projects blowing out in time and budget. The government needs to get back to basics. The public wants to see projects, not press conferences, and it wants to see relief for our WA families.

I think this will be a telling year. As I said yesterday, cracks are starting to appear in the McGowan government as people realise that the Premier does not have any answers to questions about the standard of living that Western Australians are now facing. It is the opposition's responsibility to the people of Western Australia to highlight the issues facing them, which are outcomes of the actions of the McGowan government.

The Premier will tell people that all is well and that he is handling the issues, but I ask people to look around them and see where it has all gone wrong. I refer to a quote by William Glasser: "The ultimate use of power is to empower others." That is what the Premier needs to think about. The Premier is holding onto power so tightly that he has forgotten about the state and the people he represents. He has forgotten that the position he holds can be used for

good and that people should not miss out on the basics of life. As I said, we have a Premier who has the notion that “I know best”. I do not have any cause to think that the Premier is open to discussion or expert opinion, and that is the most troubling thing about this government.

There is a severe systemic crisis happening in WA, and we know there is not going to be an easy fix. There is a perfect storm looming, and it has already landed, with cost-of-living pressures causing enormous stress on families and communities. We have rising mortgage rates, as the Leader of the Opposition said—nine rate changes in a row. We have a very tight housing market; increases in utility charges; and an ongoing crisis in our health system, culminating in a situation to which almost no-one in WA is immune. It is incredibly important for families to be able to afford the extras, like sport for their children, but with the cost of essentials taking priority, a generation of children may never know the benefit of sport, let alone school camps. What used to be accepted as affordable is now seen as a luxury and taken off the list—supplies for schooling, sport and recreation, holidays and even allied health care.

I go back to the crux of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Anglicare and Foodbank are reporting overwhelming numbers of people seeking assistance. Homelessness is in the papers every day and there are people who cannot find a rental, let alone afford to rent. These are people who have never previously accessed help. In a state that prides itself on an unemployment rate of just 3.5 per cent last December, and an excessive state budget surplus, how can we accept that 9 000 people are experiencing homelessness every night? The waitlist for housing is more than two years; those figures come from Shelter WA. There is a steady increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness and accessing Shelter WA services. The number has increased from 2 252 clients per month in 2017 to 3 131 clients per month in 2022; that is a 39 per cent increase.

Across WA, Anglicare helps over 70 000 people—more than ever before. Anglicare provides emergency relief; assistance with education needs; clothing and household essentials; and support, counselling and advocacy for those living through domestic violence, poverty and homelessness. These figures are too high for a state with such wealth and the capacity to help those in need. According to Foodbank, in the last 12 months, more than 116 000 Western Australian children lived in severely food-insecure households and 208 000 households went hungry due to a lack of funds. Of those food-insecure households, 59 per cent had someone working, yet they still could not keep up with the cost of living. The rising cost of living is the most common reason that people in Australia are struggling to put food on the table.

We are not talking about luxuries here; these are basics—food and shelter. This government is failing tens of thousands of Western Australians who cannot afford these necessities. How is this happening in our state? The living cost indexes measure the price change of goods and services and the effect on living expenses of selected household types. Employee households recorded the largest quarterly rise, at 3.2 per cent, since the September 2000 quarter. When we look at mortgage rates, 23 per cent of households in WA with mortgages experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months. Last week, the Reserve Bank once again warned home owners that there is more pain to come.

I will look at examples in my electorate of Esperance. A financial adviser in my electorate sees many people across all walks of life who are seeking advice on money management, but he has never seen a storm of this magnitude of families in crisis, just trying to get through every day. Key points he made are that homelessness is increasing; the lack of public housing or rentals is leading to more people couch surfing or living in cars; rentals are being re-leased at much higher prices, making them inaccessible for people on low or medium incomes; increased interest rates are impacting household expenditure; and the level of debt is higher and climbing. He is giving more referrals to help people pay for their utilities through St Vincent de Paul Society’s Power Assist program, a hardship utilities grant support partnership with Horizon Power. Emergency relief payments through Vinnies have evaporated in Esperance. There was a branch in Kalgoorlie, but since that service was withdrawn from Kalgoorlie, the metropolitan-based Vinnies branches do not even call back people in the regions. I also want to talk about shelter providers in my electorate. Esperance care providers have shared with me that emergency relief, such as food hampers and vouchers for food and household goods, has increased by 30 per cent compared with this time last year. A provider has spent 70 per cent more in grants and funds to provide support than at the same time last year. That gives a bit of a summary of some of the things that are happening in my electorate.

I give the Premier his due: when he is faced with an avalanche of information from experts, he remains steadfast in his opinion. As I pointed out, we saw that recently with the situation at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. The Premier needs to sit down, start listening and start realising what is going on around him. More international students are going to come into the state and we have concerns about housing for them as well. I know that in many regional areas that are lucky enough to have a doctor, it takes at least three weeks to get an appointment. I know of people in my electorate who are just not bothering to ring for an appointment and will either self-medicate or not seek treatment at all. I know of many who are not seeking allied health care for themselves or their families because the wait time is too long or they simply cannot afford the treatment or the travel to Perth for health care. The WA Country Health

Service tabled some concerning figures in Parliament in 2022 about wait times for regional children to see a psychologist or an audiologist. Wait times can be up to a year in the Pilbara and up to six months in the great southern. I am interested to know how these figures will be improved by the McGowan government this year, and whether the Premier would find those wait times acceptable for metropolitan children.

There is a crossover between health and housing. As the member for Central Wheatbelt said yesterday, how can we expect our teaching professionals, nursing professionals, health professionals and their families to come to the regions when we do not have adequate housing to draw them into those regional towns? That is a real element that the McGowan government needs to address. I am very concerned about that scenario. I really do want the Premier to listen to our concerns. The cost of living is going to be a massive issue for not just this state but also all of Australia. This is the opportunity for the Premier to use his power for good. It is a chance for him to release his budget surpluses and ease the pressure on Western Australian families now. He needs to act fast. He needs to really focus on WA families. I do not know why he is hanging on so tightly to the surplus, but I am sure the people of WA would like to know. On behalf of the people of WA, I very much support the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition about the cost of living.

Division

Amendment put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Ms R.S. Stephens) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (5)

Ms M.J. Davies
Dr D.J. Honey

Mr R.S. Love
Mr P.J. Rundle

Ms M. Beard (*Teller*)

Noes (43)

Mr S.N. Aubrey
Mr G. Baker
Ms L.L. Baker
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr J.N. Carey
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke
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
Dr J. Krishnan
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk

Mr D.R. Michael
Mr K.J.J. Michel
Mr S.A. Millman
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

Ms J.J. Shaw
Ms R.S. Stephens
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Dr K. Stratton
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms C.M. Tonkin
Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms S.E. Winton
Ms C.M. Rowe (*Teller*)

Pair

Ms L. Mettam

Mr Y. Mubarakai

Amendment thus negatived.

Consideration Resumed

MS K.E. GIDDENS (Bateman) [1.42 pm]: Before I add my contribution to this debate, I say a very happy birthday to my niece Scarlett, who is 16 years of age today. I cannot be with Scarlett, but I am very proud of her and everything that she is achieving. She is a very fine young woman, and I know that she has ambitions to be both a paediatrician and a member of Parliament.

Ms J.J. Shaw: Don't do it!

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: Ha-ha! Yes. I have high hopes for her. Of course, I will indoctrinate her in the ways of the Labor Party.

I would also like to acknowledge the visit today by two year 6 groups from Corpus Christi College; I thank them for visiting Parliament. Perhaps the next group of members was amongst them. I encourage all schools in my electorate to take up the offer to visit Parliament, as the education team here is outstanding and does a wonderful job. Please contact me and take up that offer.

When I was a teacher, I regularly engaged in evaluation—of course, evaluating student performance, evaluating peer performance and my colleagues, evaluating school performance, and probably most importantly, self-evaluating. The member for Collie–Preston is here, and she knows that that is a really important part of good professional practice as a teacher. Teachers ask ourselves the questions: Am I meeting the needs of my students? Am I doing it in an evidence-based way? Am I getting the outcomes that I set out to achieve? In that vein, two years into the

parliamentary term, it is probably appropriate for me to reflect on my time here in Parliament, and in particular on what I said I would do when I started in this role. Broadly, I categorise my role into two areas—my role here in Parliament and my role as a local member. They support each other and are related to each other, but I will treat them a little bit distinctly in my evaluation.

As part of the McGowan government, I have been extremely proud of the legislation we have passed, the policies we have enacted and the priorities we fund. I list some that come to mind. The police workers' compensation bill was an outstanding achievement and something that police have been calling for in Western Australia for decades, and it finally passed last year in this Parliament. I list ending native forest logging, phasing out single-use plastics and retiring the state-owned coal-fired power stations by 2030 with a real plan. The member for Collie–Preston is here, and she knows the work to transition that has been going on for years in that community. Also on my list are investing in the electric vehicle–charging networks that will be required, bringing railcar manufacturing back to Western Australia, protecting the critical wetlands of Bibra Lake, preventing the harassment of women who are accessing medical procedures through the safe access zones legislation, creating five million hectares of new national and marine parks, and supporting record numbers of apprentices and trainees with fee-subsidised TAFE. Of course, in my other role on the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, we handed down the *'Enough is enough': Sexual harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry* report that shone a light on the systemic failure to provide a safe working place for women in the resources industry, and really set a clear framework for the future of that industry to address those failures and enable women to participate fully in the economic opportunities that industry represents to Western Australia.

In my inaugural speech, I said that one of the opportunities Western Australia has is to leverage off the economic, industrial and intellectual capacity of the \$115 billion-a-year resources industry to support the emergence of new industries in Western Australia. To that end, I have been driving around the backstreets of Bibra Lake and the neighbouring electorate of Willagee with the member for Willagee, looking at some of the incredible industries in that area so close to my electorate of Bateman. I recently visited ChemX Materials, which is making high-grade—will the member for Willagee help me out?

Mr P.C. Tinley: Magnesium.

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: Magnesium! Thank you very much. Magnesium is a very critical element in our transition to battery technology. This very high-tech process is taking place right here in Bibra Lake. We also got to meet Jacob Richardson and Pasaka Otiob, both Curtin University students. Jacob is studying chemical engineering and Pasaka is studying chemistry. These are examples of the high-tech and skilled jobs that Western Australia is well positioned for in the transition to net zero.

Another industry that we visited was a company that makes vanadium batteries, which again are an important consideration for the electrification of our grid, households, cars and transport network. Lithium, of course, is a material that people would be familiar with as being required for batteries, but vanadium is also an effective storage material and particularly good for the kind of storage required for household power packs, for example. It provides an alternative to lithium and, again, is being developed and manufactured right here in Bibra Lake in Western Australia.

Last week, I was able to go to an AmCham event on space at which there was an incredible excitement and contributions were made about what Western Australia offers to NASA and the international space program. A huge focus is on not only the major projects in Western Australia that support that, but also its entire supply chain, including Western Australian businesses. Even if a business is not placed at the high-tech end of that industry, it might be able to provide the electrical work or the software required. A range of industries are involved. That is a very exciting development for Western Australia.

When I first started in my role as a local member, I said I would do three things. The first was to deliver my local commitments. The second was to contribute to the McGowan government's priorities, and I have just addressed some of the ways in which I believe I have achieved that. The third was to be a hardworking and accessible member. I made 15 election commitments and I am really excited to say that 13 have been fully delivered. Of the remaining commitments, one is due to be completed any moment now. Construction on one of my commitments will start in March. The design phase of a \$1.5 million STEM commitment at Applecross Senior High School is now complete. Another commitment to Mt Pleasant and Melville Cares has been repurposed. The City of Melville is no longer going to support the building upgrades, but its funding will be used to create and activate the public open space. That is a really exciting and worthwhile repurposing of that election commitment. I look forward to that being delivered as well. Other funding and grants have also been delivered. STEM boost funding has been provided to Winthrop, Kardinya, Bateman, Brentwood and Ardross Primary Schools. Classroom administration areas have been upgraded at Applecross and Booragoon Primary Schools. Solar panels have been provided to Applecross Senior High School and Mt Pleasant and Bateman Primary Schools.

I will also refer to a number of major commitments and upgrades around road infrastructure. In terms of listening to my electorate when I was first elected, one of the things I did was to put out a community survey. I got an amazing response from the community, and I thank those who shared their priorities with me. One of the issues that came up was around trucks on Leach Highway. Leach Highway has been a political issue that the Liberal Party made out of Roe 8 and 9. It took it to two elections and the people absolutely said no to its proposal for constructing a major thoroughfare through a wetlands area. However, the people in my electorate have told me that they would like the Leach Highway issue to be addressed. The McGowan government has taken immediate action in that regard and created a longer term plan that the Minister for Transport, who has just walked in, knows about with the construction of an outer harbour, the planning for which is well underway.

As an immediate response to the Leach Highway issue, millions of dollars has been spent on improving the safety and congestion along that stretch of road. For example, \$2.6 million has been spent on various lane upgrades including Rome Road, Norma Road, Murdoch Drive, Marshall Road and Winthrop Drive. This will enable traffic to move more smoothly and to avoid the congestion at those intersections with Leach Highway. The upgrade to the Leach Highway–Norma Road intersection cost \$770 000. The upgrade to the Leach Highway–Moolyean Road intersection has just been completed as we speak and amounted to a commitment of \$3 million. The Leach Highway–Webb Street intersection in Bull Creek has also been upgraded. It sits just over the boundary of my electorate and into my friend the member for Riverton’s electorate—of course, congestion does not stop at the boundary of an electorate. All those contributions will improve the flow of traffic along Leach Highway. People will still say: what about the trucks? The McGowan government’s significant investment in freight on rail has taken tens of thousands of freight and truck movements off Leach Highway. But the longer term plan, as I have already said, is to build the outer harbour. Members can be sure that I will watch with great interest and advocate for the progression of that infrastructure to permanently provide a solution for trucks driving on Leach Highway into the future.

I am also really proud to support the champions of the electorate of Bateman. These are people who go about doing what they do every single day without the need for public recognition. They quietly work in the P&Cs or put their hand up to raise money for charity. I would like to take a brief moment to acknowledge those people. I cannot acknowledge them all, but I want to give a shout-out to some of them. Ken Farmer is from Winthrop. Following his own experience with prostate cancer, he now rides every year in the Tour De Gracetown. He raises money for prostate cancer and is a lot fitter than I am. Well done, Ken, for your contribution. After her own experience with breast cancer, every year Michelle Wright has created her own fundraising events. This year it was a large ball, which the member for Warren–Blackwood attended, to raise money for cancer.

There are also some very talented juniors in my electorate. Lenny Golding represented Western Australia in baseball. Gemma Golding—yes, from the same family—was a ninja warrior and was due to represent Western Australia in Canberra. Unfortunately, it happened during the COVID pandemic and I do not think that Gemma got to make the trip. Nevertheless, she has great athletic potential and I am sure we will see her representing WA either as a ninja warrior or in another sport. I am sure that Aiden Chan is going to get into the pro-tennis circuit. I think that he also wants to be a doctor, so he might have a conflict there, but what an amazing talent. Benji Norris from Applecross Senior High School sailed on the *Leeuwin*. Xavier Bell is a young man in my electorate who recognised that there were no street libraries in his area, so he wrote to me saying that he wanted to build a street library and asked me what I thought. I said that it was a great idea and, with a contribution from the Melville Community Men’s Shed, he built a street library that is now functioning in his neighbourhood. I wanted to give these local champions a shout-out for what they have done. In the two years that I have been the member for Bateman, well over 100 projects or community groups have received funding support. I am very proud of that sort of achievement.

During my time listening to local commitments and concerns, an issue that arose last year was that the City of Melville, at some time in the past, had rezoned a public open space to residential zoning. When this was discovered, the community was rightly very concerned that the local parks that they had loved and attended and whose children had played in, were under significant risk. Being state-owned land, it required the Minister for Planning to overrule the zoning decision, but, before doing so, she made the very prudent decision to take the advice of the relevant ministers who controlled that land. That move was interpreted by some in the community as us not having an interest in the rezoning of that land, but nothing could have been further from the truth. The members for Bicton and Willagee, my electorate neighbours, and I engaged with the community on that issue. With the strong support of the community and the Minister for Planning, we were able to get those parks rezoned so that they could be protected for future generations. This is an example of listening and then responding to the needs of community. As the member for Bateman, I have been proud to deliver these outcomes for my community.

The Minister for Planning seems to have to deal with a lot of the good issues. Another current issue in my electorate that is of concern to people, particularly in the areas of Applecross and Mt Pleasant, is the review of the *Canning Bridge activity centre plan*. In response to the concerns raised with me by some members of the community, I took it upon myself to doorknock over 700 homes in Mt Pleasant and 500 homes in Applecross to ask whether this was an issue about which they were concerned. The overwhelming feedback was that members of the community

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felt that the existing *Canning Bridge activity centre plan* enacted by the City of Melville in 2015 had failed to deliver the kinds of outcomes that the community had expected from the increase in density. They acknowledged a need for increased density and the need for a vibrant community. They wanted good amenity. They wanted the things that make living in Applecross and Mt Pleasant to be protected—the beautiful trees, the access to the river and the lifestyle enjoyed by people in that electorate. It is fair to say that the existing *Canning Bridge activity centre plan* had some gaps in it that enabled some areas to experience some unintended consequences.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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