

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Presentation

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Premier) [1.08 pm]: I rise to inform the house of the WA Labor government agenda for 2024. Before I begin, I would like to thank each and every Western Australian. Whether they are raising children at home, operating machinery at a Pilbara mine site or caring for patients in our hospitals, everyone has a role in our state's prosperity.

Government is also central to ensuring that we build on this prosperity and ensuring that the path ahead is clear so the next generations can be afforded the great opportunities that WA offers. Over the last seven years, this has been an incredibly productive government. We have used our time in office wisely, building infrastructure for the future, from Metronet to schools to housing; creating education, training and job opportunities for our children's future; building the foundations for a clean energy future; and restoring the state's finances to ensure that we do not burden future generations with debt and using the strong financial position to help all families through cost-of-living pressures. We have not wasted a moment, and we will not waste a moment in 2024 either.

As we all know, this is the final sitting year of the forty-first Parliament of Western Australia. Importantly, this team, this WA Labor government, remains hungrier than ever to continue its work, continuing the work of taking this state forward, building on Western Australia's hard-earned status as the most successful state in Australia, confronting the challenges of the current global economic cycle and ensuring that we make WA a place that is always—always—fair, prosperous and full of opportunity. We are excited for 2024 and another year of delivery, and, importantly, delivery of more housing and more cost-of-living support for Western Australians, because we recognise that the pandemic was a shock to the global economy, and the ripples of that continue to be felt right across our state.

It is incredible to recall that the first case of COVID-19 reached our shores almost exactly four years ago to the day—four years! In WA, we are proud of the fact that our response has been acknowledged across the world as exemplary. Our response resulted in the best health outcomes for Western Australians. It saved hundreds, if not thousands, of Western Australian lives, and it was the best health response that led to the strongest economic outcomes for Western Australia. Western Australia's employment reached a new record high of 1.57 million people in 2023, but, like the rest of the world, we, too, experienced shock waves from the pandemic, just as we, too, were affected by Vladimir Putin's cruel and unjust invasion of Ukraine, which exacerbated world economic disruptions caused by the pandemic—supply chain disruptions, inflation and the Reserve Bank's subsequent interest rate rises. But we are getting through the thick of it, and because of our economic success, our careful management of the state's finances and our cost-of-living support, there is no better place on earth to be than Western Australia.

There is also plenty to be optimistic about. The good news is that inflation is easing. Perth's inflation rate fell to 3.6 per cent in 2023, the lowest rate of the mainland states. The good news is that wages are increasing. Wage growth in Western Australia is climbing faster than inflation. The good news is that building approvals are increasing once again, while costs of construction are stabilising. There are major signs of confidence in Western Australia, and I am not just talking about our record exports and our ongoing delivery of surpluses. Slowly but surely, we are repaying the Mt Everest of debt created by the previous Liberal–National government.

This confidence is in the streets of our towns and suburbs and in small businesses. Indeed, in the last two years alone, we have seen 15 383 small businesses created in WA. That is right—more than 15 000, but it should be noted that one-quarter of our small businesses are located in regional WA. Each one of these new small businesses is a gesture of faith in our state, and, in return, the WA government has put its faith in local businesses. It is backing innovators with grant funding, removing red tape through changes to the planning system and supporting small businesses through the hard times with electricity credits. We do this because we know that every good idea, every next big thing, starts with something small. If we need an example, we can just look at our mining industry. Look at the thousands of other businesses and innovators the mining industry now supports. Businesses like Portable PPB, which was the winner of last year's WA Innovator of the Year award, is bringing disruptive technology into the gold industry. This humble business in Canning Vale is driving efficiencies in gold exploration not just in WA, but abroad as well.

We know that, here at home, we can innovate and we can build things that work well for us. For nearly a century, we built and maintained nearly all the rolling stock and train engines at the Midland Workshops. As we know, over time, that was reduced to practically nothing and was closed by the Liberal–National government in the 1990s. The same political parties got back into government in the next decade. We saw bigger hurdles put in front of trainees and apprentices. TAFE fees were hiked up by over 500 per cent in some cases. Course enrolments plummeted and the number of students doing apprenticeships collapsed. That is the Liberal and National Parties' legacy: the end of railcar manufacturing and massive hikes to TAFE fees.

This meant that suburbs like Midland and others were stripped of not only pride, but also hope and a pathway to a better future. When we came into office, we wanted to change that, but when Labor first proposed building the

next generation of railcars locally for Metronet, we were criticised—too expensive, too idealistic, too difficult. I say to that, “Where are the voices now?” As we prepare to commission the first C-series railcar into the network, we have proven those voices wrong. WA Labor’s policies have created jobs and training opportunities and have restored the pride that Midland once held in its rail craftsmanship. Not only that, the iron ore sector is replicating that model for its vast fleet of wagons. That was a shift facilitated by this government through our local manufacturing investment fund. Local company Gemco Rail will build 100 rail wagons for Rio Tinto in the next six years. It will also repair and refurbish key wagon componentry at its new facility in Karratha. Industry is forming around the rail industry once more. I look forward to catching the first Metronet C-series train with some of those local rail workers in the near future, along with the Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport, who pioneered this policy for Western Australia.

Our resurrection of local railcar manufacturing has coincided with the resurrection of quality training. There has been a massive investment in our TAFE campuses across the state, including the Metronet trade training centre, which opened last year. We have three Aboriginal apprentices working on the Metronet WA railcar program. All three are undertaking a four-year certificate III in engineering—mechanical trade (fitting) at TAFE and keeping busy on the workshop floor to build our C-series railcars. It is not only an opportunity for the apprentices to gain skills and develop their careers, but also a chance to connect with communities as role models for other young people looking for employment in the rail industry. We have examples of this all over the state. Access to quality training has never been easier with fee-free qualifications for skill sets at TAFE. There were nearly 39 500 fee-free course enrolments recorded in 2023. Enrolments for 2024 are ongoing, but we have already seen a record number of applications to study fee-free courses. We have seen a 29 per cent increase in applications compared with this time last year.

Labor understands that a person will carry a skill for life. Labor understands that more apprentices and trainees are needed to boost local industries and sectors faster, and Labor understands that vocational education and training is vital to grow and build the capability of the construction workforce. Last year, it launched the highly successful wage subsidy scheme to help small to medium-sized businesses employ more aspiring tradies. At last count, this had helped get 300 apprentices and trainees into a job. Half of those positions were allocated to the construction sector where they were desperately needed. In 2024, we are confident that Western Australians, no matter their age, disability or location, will continue to upskill in record numbers, because no-one should be barred from opportunity.

Beyond this, our state is spawning new businesses that are broadening our economic base. There are also those that are either building on or leveraging our traditional economic strengths like the rare earth refineries under construction in the goldfields and midwest regions or those refining the various materials required for battery manufacturing, helping WA to work its way up the value chain. For decades we have been experts at finding, extracting and exporting the raw products. Now, increasingly, we are refining, or even manufacturing the actual batteries in some cases. Even more dramatic breakthroughs are on the horizon as we look to galvanise our role in the rapidly growing green steel industry.

The innovation that we have applied in the mining sector is being applied to other parts of the economy. WA has world-leading capabilities in areas such as robotics, remote operations and radioastronomy, which have the potential to drive huge economic benefits. The stories of ingenuity and diversification across our state are boundless. We see it in energy, defence industries, agriculture and the medical sciences, and it is not all by accident or chance; the government has actively supported these sectors because we know that they are integral to our future. My vision is to fortify the economy through diversification, because my vision for our state and our home has always been about the future—a bright, prosperous and diversified future.

Our state must comprise strong industry and quality jobs to take us through to the next century with the kinds of jobs that pay well, restore pride and give our younger generation a great sense of self-worth. That is what I was afforded and it is what most in this chamber were afforded. Our young people should also be given the same opportunities. Granted, it is harder in some places than in others, but what has stuck with me when visiting places like Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley is meeting the crew that helped build the new Fitzroy River Bridge six months ahead of schedule in one of the most remote regions in the world. The bridge construction was an opportunity for locals, and more than 240 worked on the project; it changed lives. One man I talked to has leveraged his experience working on the bridge to springboard into a permanent, well-paid job in the mining industry. Others are keen to apply the skills they gained on the bridge to work on the next road project. By the way, we also heard from locals that there was a dramatic drop in crime thanks to the project. Why? It is because of people having pride in their work and having something to work towards. That is happening on projects all over the state.

Tara is a 43-year-old mother of five children and a local Wadandi Yamatji Noongar woman. Tara had no previous work history, but she joined the Yaka Dandjoo program on the Bunbury Outer Ring Road project in late 2021. She now operates rollers and water carts on the Bunbury Outer Ring Road project, our largest regional road project in a generation. In addition, her husband and son have since completed the Yaka Dandjoo program and also gained employment on the project. Tara said the following about upskilling —

I learnt to not live in the past, but to live and look forward to our future dreams, which can come true. No one knows what tomorrow brings, but I just take one day at a time, and I am so thankful to be where I am today

There are many stories just like Tara's, and their stories are why we have also been bringing regional road maintenance crews back in house. That means more skills, more jobs and more pride in our regional communities. They are delivering the biggest package of transport infrastructure works in our state's history. Once again, this program has delivered other transformational infrastructure projects that will enter the delivery phase in the coming years, like Westport, which is a new container port to support our trade growth for the next century and beyond, or the upgrade to the south west grid to power Western Australia into the renewable energy future. I know there are doubters amongst some members of the opposition about our energy transition, and perhaps they have some apprehension about climate change in general, but I will say this: ignore it at your peril, because we are at the precipice of an enormous economic opportunity, and Western Australia is fundamental to the green energy transition and the global fight against climate change. Yes, we have a responsibility to decarbonise our state, but our resources are so great that we arguably have an even bigger responsibility to help our neighbours decarbonise as well. We will do all we can, as a responsible government, to clear the hurdles for industry to assist in that endeavour.

The energy transition is also an economic transition, and our state is poised to become a renewable energy powerhouse. Western Australia is the strongest economy in the nation and I want it to stay that way. A pipeline of projects worth \$318 billion is under development. The potential for Western Australia's future growth and success is huge, but to deliver it we need to streamline our environmental approvals and make them more efficient. We will achieve that this year with amendments to the Environmental Protection Act, which will help to clear the path towards our renewable energy goals. Green tape cannot unnecessarily hinder the innovators, risk-takers and investors that we need to take our economy to the next level. Our policies and regulations need to be in tune with the realities of doing business in WA. This year, we will overhaul our environmental assessment regime. We have already boosted funding by \$18 million to streamline approvals. From a legislative perspective, we will make some sensible changes to enable simultaneous assessments, which will cut assessment time frames by months. This will enable the Minister for Environment to direct the Environmental Protection Authority to assess projects or proposals of state significance within a specified time frame. We will also expand the EPA board to nine members. The intention of these reforms is simply to streamline approvals while ensuring strong environmental protections.

In clearing the way for our major energy projects, we will also put our decarbonisation targets into law. Our commitment to decarbonise our economy and reach net zero emissions by 2050 will be locked into law. It will ensure that the state's commitment to climate action is enduring and consistent. It will ensure accountability. As the economy transitions, it will also enhance investor and business confidence, and accelerate investment. Our Climate Change Bill will also facilitate the transport and storage of greenhouse gases.

In Western Australia, we live among the most beautiful landscapes in the world, and they must be protected. At the start of this year, the ban on logging in south west native forests began. This policy builds on the legacy of the Gallop government's decision to end old-growth logging in 2001. It means that an additional 400 000 hectares of karri, jarrah and wandoo forests will be protected into the future. To coincide with our efforts to preserve more of our forests, we will also enhance our urban centres by creating more housing. Like our approach to cost-of-living pressures, we are pulling out all the stops, or, to borrow a well-worn phrase from the Minister for Housing, John Carey, we are pulling every lever to increase supply.

All Western Australians deserve the opportunity to own or rent their own home. Any Western Australian who finds themselves outside secure housing should have a safe place to stay. We have thrown a lot at it—a massive \$2.6 billion towards housing and homelessness measures in the last budget—and we are steaming towards 2 000 social homes being delivered. That is right: nearly 2 000 social homes! Just last month, Minister Carey announced a further \$47.6 million in new funding to enable the continuation of 15 critical homelessness services across WA.

As a dad living in Kwinana, I know that rental prices are high and the current market is white hot. In recognition of this, the government has partnered with the Western Australian Council of Social Service to assist private renters—those who are not eligible for commonwealth rent assistance, such as families that are privately renting but are falling into arrears because of a range of different personal circumstances—to keep a roof over their heads. Our \$24.4 million WA rent relief program will help financially vulnerable WA tenants remain in their private rental homes.

For some, this may involve the payment of arrears. For others, support will cover part of their future rent costs for up to three months' rent, up to the value of \$5 000. Further to that, we have offered incentives for short-term accommodation owners to convert their property to the rental market. This year, we will build on this by passing laws to improve the rights and protections of renters in Western Australia. These changes to the Residential Tenancies Act will address a range of issues facing renters. The laws will include limiting the frequency of rent increases, more flexibility for pets and minor modifications, and banning rent bidding—just to name a few highlights. They will also balance the needs of landlords to ensure investment in housing continues. Our tenancy reforms will be complemented by our reforms to the short-stay rental accommodation market. The new laws aim to level the playing field between

traditional accommodation providers and short-stay rental accommodation. They will provide the state and regional local governments with better tools to manage the sector and, most importantly, provide more supply to the housing market. Short-term rental accommodation will continue to play an important part of Western Australia's tourism offering, but the aim of increasing the supply of long-term rentals is the priority right now, because more supply means a more stable rental market for everyone.

Our protected entertainment precincts have been in place for a year now, keeping dozens of violent offenders out of popular destinations. Our enhanced banned drinkers register is preventing more problem drinkers from accessing alcohol in the regions. Our Home Safe program, which was recently extended, is keeping unaccompanied kids off the streets and diverting them from the youth justice system. Also, off the back of recruitment campaigns, there are more police officers than ever before.

Earlier today I announced that our government will introduce new laws to criminalise assaults on retail workers. Someone stocking shelves at a local grocery shop or a teenager working an after-school job in a fast-food store should not be subject to violence at work but, sadly, many are. That is why our new laws will increase the maximum penalty for assaulting a retail worker to seven years' imprisonment. This is part of our commitment to keeping the community safe.

That serious commitment will be further bolstered this year through a complete overhaul of Western Australia's firearms laws. Unfortunately, there have been a number of high-profile gun incidents during recent years. Each of those demonstrate the need for these important reforms. Western Australia is the last jurisdiction to rewrite its firearm legislation since the Port Arthur massacre. Our reforms will strike a balance between legitimate, responsible gun ownership and enhanced public safety.

We are a government that prioritises the health and wellbeing of Western Australians everywhere. That is why this government is focused on delivering a world-class health system. We are strengthening our health system by investing in hospitals, increasing our health workforce and building the new women's and babies' hospital. Just this year, we started construction on 40 additional mental health beds at Fremantle Hospital. We started construction on Western Australia's first children's hospice, Boodja Mia, in Swanbourne. We also announced that the new patient transport coordination hub, or PaTCH, would be rolled out broadly following a successful trial. PaTCH addresses one of the underlying causes of ambulance ramping. It is part of the Labor government's \$487 million investment in improving access to emergency care. This includes four major reforms: the Western Australian virtual emergency department; a state health operations centre; introducing new, dedicated teams in hospitals to address unnecessary discharge delays; and reducing the number of long-stay patients awaiting aged care or NDIS support.

There are positive signs. Things are heading in the right direction. The latest figures show that ramping hours were reduced across the state by 21 per cent in 2023. In December last year, ramping hours were reduced by 44 per cent compared with those in December 2022. Momentum is already building in 2024. My government is getting on with the key tasks of addressing the cost-of-living pressures, tackling housing supply and ensuring access to world-class health care. This year, we have already seen the success of our free public transport period over the summer holidays, with an increase in patronage of over 40 per cent compared with the same time last year. We have now committed to free public transport for school students, as well as free travel on Sundays for everyone. We made a groundbreaking agreement on public education funding between the state and federal governments. We started work on 40 additional mental health beds at Fremantle Hospital. Work has already started on the new film studio in Malaga. That is a key plank in our economic diversification policy and will create new jobs for Western Australians in the screen and arts industries. Nearby to that, we are extending the heritage tram in Whiteman Park to the new Metronet station, our second big battery in Kwinana is making great progress, and an immense array of work is happening in our CBD, including the new Causeway bridges, the CBD university campus, the Aboriginal cultural centre and a new vision for the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. We are transforming our state for the benefit of Western Australian families and future generations and I look forward to working with each of you to bring our state forward. Just as we have done in previous years, we will always do what is right for WA.

[Applause.]

Consideration

The SPEAKER: The question is —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [1.36 pm]: I take this opportunity to recognise the Premier's Statement and look forward to responding to many items that are in my portfolio and have been brought up with me by many constituents in both the regions and Perth. I firstly recognise the volunteers who have worked over the summer to ensure our safety. I particularly recognise local volunteer firefighters, who have had a particularly difficult summer. We have had an increasing number of fires. We know that as soon as those firefighters see smoke or get called out by a group text, they are there, and they will work until the fireground is safe. This

year, we have seen several incidents, some of which have had devastating consequences. I particularly acknowledge the Stead family in Esperance, who lost their son Harry during a fire near the property. The whole community stands with them in their grief, knowing that Harry was doing his bit in protecting his community. I thank all our public servants, who I do not think receive the recognition they deserve. I certainly recognise our teachers, nurses and police, who have all worked hard, despite the challenges that this Cook Labor government has put in front of them. It was good to see the Labor Party getting out over the Darling scarp last week on its trip to Albany.

Mr R.H. Cook: The member for Kalgoorlie gets across the Darling scarp quite a lot, actually.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, there are exceptions. It was good to see the Labor Party out and about in the regions. I think it was good, too, for some government members who did not fly to Albany to get out there and see what happens on the ground. It was good to see the Minister for Transport at the CBH Group site in Broomehill. It was good to see the minister and Minister Papalia have a doughnut or a sausage roll.

Ms R. Saffioti: My biggest regret would be not having the doughnut.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That was in Bannister, in one of our quality establishments. It was good to see them out there. I hope that they took note of the condition of the roads between Broomehill and Cranbrook, which carry a massive amount of road transport. There are some real challenges there with the condition of our regional roads.

I would like to start on a positive note and recognise the new minister, the member for Victoria Park, and congratulate her on her transition. I would also like to thank the Minister for Transport on the School Bus Services. I was on the Public Accounts Committee with the members for Bicton, Darling Range, Cottesloe and our honourable member here, as well, the member for Mirrabooka.

Ms M.J. Hammat: You remembered Mirrabooka!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is right!

There was also our new minister, the member for Vic Park. We did a fair bit of work on that and I appreciate that the minister has seen fit to increase the conveyance allowance. I want to thank Adelaide from the minister's office and Anthony Cattai from School Bus Services for their help with some of the bus runs and other challenges that we have seen along the way. They have helped me and some of these families work through some of the issues. That is very much appreciated, because school buses are important to regional families and we cannot underestimate that. As far as I am concerned, the ability to look at the community, social and economic factors is very important, so I just wanted to put that out there, minister. I appreciate that.

Something else in the minister's portfolio that I think was a summer highlight was the United Cup tennis tournament in Perth. Not many people realise that this event is among the top 10 world tennis tournaments, in terms of prize money. A lot of people underestimate it, but it was great to see the WA crowds flock to that tournament this year. The attendance numbers went up by around 30 000 from, I think, around 46 000 spectators to somewhere around 76 000. That was a great highlight, from my perspective, on the sporting landscape, along with the World Rugby sevens event, which was also held here over the summer. That was a fantastic event as well.

They are some of the positives that I wanted to highlight before I moved into somewhat negative territory. It was good to see the Premier and several other members at Middleton Beach having a bit of a dip in the cool waters of the Southern Ocean, but while he was in the region I would like to have seen the Premier come to the Katanning saleyards to talk to the farmers, transporters and other people affected by the live export issue; that would have been nice. That is something I will be talking about a bit later on in my contribution.

One good thing about the Labor Party going to Albany was that it has taken the opportunity to build on some fantastic royalties for regions projects. There have been further renovations at the Albany Surf Life Saving Club; the member for Albany built upon a fantastic royalties for regions project that I was involved with as chairman of the Great Southern Development Commission. I am disappointed that the Minister for Energy; Environment is not here today because he was out at The Gap with, I think, the Premier and the member for Albany, building on another fantastic royalties for regions project. I remember being there when Hon Albert Jacob opened the new facilities as part of a \$6 million government contribution. It is good to see the new toilets as part of the government's spending. It is a great tourism highlight. I wanted to mention those few things about the visit to Albany. The opening of Hon Louise Kingston's office last week was also a highlight.

I hope government members got a taste of what regional voters are feeling. They are not happy with the attacks on farming, fisheries, forestry, marine parks and electoral reform—the list goes on. I want to reiterate that the people of regional Western Australia are worried, and I am worried for regional Labor Party members because the tide has well and truly turned. The people of regional Western Australia understand what is going on. They understood electoral reform when the former Premier said that it was not on the agenda. The level of anger in the community is rising. This government's failure to acknowledge the issues that confront people in the regions is quite concerning,

especially the challenge facing people in the Warren–Blackwood electorate after the government decided to cut off the forestry industry at its knees. We will see what happens in March 2025.

Mr D.A. Templeman: They haven't seen such a hardworking member in years.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Relax.

I will continue with what is happening with our schools, which is very concerning. Already, within the space of two weeks, we are looking at teacher shortages in some remote and regional schools. Of course, I know that the Minister for Education will probably stand in response to a Dorothy Dixier and tell the chamber that there is a teacher in front of every classroom. I can assure the minister that the cracks are starting to appear.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am very concerned about the health system in regional WA.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Madam Acting Speaker, I am not taking that interjection.

It is very concerning that there is only one MRI machine north of Perth. I look forward to the Minister for Health addressing that issue. Many of our bigger regional hospitals do not have an MRI machine. The people of regional WA are very concerned.

The lack of housing in regional areas, which I will talk about later, is another issue, and it flows through the whole public service in regional areas. The challenge of getting people into regional areas because of a lack of housing is a real problem that has not been addressed. Yesterday, I received another email from a constituent in Munglinup about land being allocated and the Departments of Education and Communities agreeing to build a house on that land, but the rug was pulled out only months ago. It was decided to allocate a house in another place, which left that community stranded. It is trying to attract good, quality teachers and principals.

On another positive note, it was great to be with the Minister for Education when he opened Henley Brook Primary School, which has 194-odd students. It was very nice to see that brand new \$31 million school. I am glad that the education minister is in the chamber because I do have some concerns. I went back to my contribution to last year's Premier's Statement debate in which I expressed concern that the ATAR participation level was 32 per cent. We have seen it now drop to 28 per cent. When the Minister for Education first came to office, he spoke about diverting the focus on university entrance and early offers and the like, but we have seen a four per cent drop in ATAR participation, and that is very concerning. In times ahead, I look forward to hearing what the minister is doing to improve the participation level.

The Carmen Lawrence–led review *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia* has 46 recommendations, which I am sure the minister is taking on board. The recommendations succinctly outline the problems encountered by our teachers, principals and support staff. I am very supportive that this was —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am not taking interjections.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Minister! Thank you.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It was good to see the Carmen Lawrence–led review put out those recommendations that give the minister something to go on to support metropolitan and regional students. Of course, together with those findings, the November 2023 review authored by Viviane Robinson and Peter Hamilton called *Understanding and reducing the workload of teachers and leaders in Western Australian public schools* supports the Lawrence review findings. The report states —

While the salary and conditions of employment, such as the amount of programmed non-teaching time for teachers, are relevant to the attractiveness of teaching as a career, our analysis indicates that *the problem goes to the more fundamental question of whether the job of teaching as currently performed and organised is doable and sustainable*.

We conclude that it is not, and that some long held beliefs and expectations will need to be challenged and changed.

As far as I am concerned, commissioning a review of this nature reveals a lot about the Department of Education's thinking processes. The brief being so targeted means that the department knew there was a problem; it just did not know how to fix it. Let us hope that it takes notice of those two reviews.

Certainly, as the minister knows, workloads are an increasing issue and are causing retirements, resignations and career changes. That is no secret. In the opinion piece in *The West Australian* on 31 January 2024, the president

of the State School Teachers' Union of WA, Matt Jarman, pleaded with the government to address the crisis in classrooms, which is now real and present. He said —

... 86 per cent of members who responded to the union's survey said they had considered quitting the profession in the past four years.

ATAR participation is down to 28 per cent, and 86 per cent of teachers are thinking about their futures. The opposition has been trying in vain to alert this government to these teacher support issues. I welcome the minister recently signing up to the federal funding.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I look forward. I notice that the Grattan Institute's report pointed out that one in three Australian children are struggling with reading. I welcome the minister enlightening us about the conditions attached to that funding because I know that some other states are looking at phonics and explicit instruction as part of their programs to improve reading. I look forward to being enlightened about what this state is doing and whether that was a condition of the minister signing up.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister! Thank you.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am also looking forward to the budget because, as we know, Esperance Senior High School is once again being treated like a second-class citizen. I very much look forward to the budget to see where Esperance Senior High School will sit. I must say that I have heard the Minister for Education say, "Watch this space".

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have heard him say "Watch this space. We're going to be cutting red tape".

Dr A.D. Buti: We have! We started last year!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I just want to talk to the minister and the chamber about the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia. The minister has gone out and said, "Look at this, we've brought in 103 international teachers." That is good. However, the Teacher Registration Board is making life very difficult for some people. I have had several retired or semiretired teachers ring me. They say they would be happy to come on board to teach but for the challenge of dealing with the Teacher Registration Board. They are being put through the mill. They have to log 20 hours above their teaching commitment a year of formal professional learning, such as professional reading. For professional engagement to demonstrate currency, a teacher needs to have taught for a minimum of 20 days a year during the period of their registration. The list goes on.

We have teachers out there who are actually prepared to come into the mixture, but the Teacher Registration Board guidelines make it so difficult. We also have over 500 people in the system with limited authority to teach. They are not actually fully qualified, yet they can teach in a classroom without necessarily being supervised. Somehow, they seem to be able to come into the system without too many headaches. The minister said he would cut red tape. The Teacher Registration Board is an opportunity for him to improve the situation and get teachers at the coalface.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is normally a courtesy that the other side listens to this debate in silence, which we did for the Premier's Statement. I ask that government members do the same.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): There is no point of order. Member for Roe, please continue.

Debate Resumed

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: If I can, I will move on to a couple of other areas that concern me that relate to commerce. I think we have some real issues in the commerce portfolio, as we saw demonstrated over the weekend. Some households have issues such as pipes bursting, and, of course, there are also challenges facing the building regulator. I look forward to seeing the response from this government. Up until now, we have had a very minimal response from this government about how it is going to help protect innocent people who have been caught up in this. The situation at Shenton Quarter is another building scenario. I think we are looking for some leadership from the Minister for Commerce.

As I said, there are people who have been struggling with a pipe issue. The building regulator has apparently created a website for people to put their names on; however, there does not seem to have been a lot of action on top of that. I am certainly looking forward to the Minister for Commerce coming forth with some solutions to help

out those innocent families who have been caught up in those building scenarios. I am looking forward to seeing some leadership from the Premier in that space as well, because we are certainly finding that these families are really having a challenge in cutting through.

I will leave the health side of it to others to speak about. As I pointed out earlier to the Minister for Health, it is very concerning that, north of Perth, we have only one magnetic resonance imaging machine. We have seen the recent publicity around the MRI machine going back up to Geraldton, so I implore the health minister to look at the number of MRI machines around the state.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 27.]