

APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2023–24) BILL 2023
APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2023–24) BILL 2023

Second Reading — Cognate Debate

Resumed from 17 May.

MRS R.M.J. CLARKE (Murray–Wellington) [10.24 am]: I rise today to speak on the 2023–24 budget and what it means to constituents, businesses, community groups, not-for-profit organisations and everyone else who lives or works in the electorate of Murray–Wellington. Last Thursday, 11 May, the Premier; Treasurer, Mark McGowan, handed down this year's budget. It coincided with the sixth anniversary of the day in 2017 on which I and many other members of this place were sworn in as members of the Legislative Assembly.

In the few days since the budget was handed down, I have attended various events, such as the Peel budget breakfast at our local Murray–Wellington sporting club, the Yunderup Sport and Recreation Club, and the south west budget lunch at the Quality Hotel Lighthouse in Bunbury, at which I was engaged in many conversations with local government councillors, CEOs, business owners and members of the community. I heard about many marvellous things that have been achieved across the state and in the electorate of Murray–Wellington.

Murray–Wellington received record spending over the last six years. Many community members have stopped me on the street, called my office or spoken to me at community events about the clear difference they have seen since the once safe Liberal seat changed hands. Important infrastructure has been built. Regional roads have been maintained, improved and expanded to account for the rapid growth in the electorate. Schools have had maintenance completed during our school maintenance blitz, and received new or upgraded STEM and science labs. Sports clubs have received new lights under our Club Night Lights program funded through the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. That is just to name a few of the amazing grants and funding programs that our state government has to offer. It feels like I am heading out weekly to a community, sporting or recreation group, or one of the many other groups in Murray–Wellington, to announce a new project or funding to improve facilities or deliver services. I recently visited the Brunswick Junction Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services with the Minister for Emergency Services, Hon Stephen Dawson, to present the brigade with a brand new light tanker. I want to thank the Brunswick VFRS brigade, along with all the other emergency services within Murray–Wellington, for their outstanding service to our community and for keeping our communities safe and strong.

I had the absolute pleasure of attending the fifth birthday celebration of Peel Bright Minds, which assists local students to expand their abilities in the field of STEM. I had the honour to present the group with a \$100 000 Lotterywest grant to continue its work developing the best bright minds that the Peel region has to offer.

I also congratulate both the Shire of Murray and the Dwellingup 100 on receiving funds through the regional events scheme to continue both the Pinjarra Festival and the Dwellingup 100. Both are major events in the Shire of Murray.

Supporting local Aboriginal groups is a key commitment of the McGowan government. The Harvey Aboriginal Corporation successfully obtained funds through the Aboriginal business development and capacity building grant program to assist it to deliver cultural programs and services. These grant programs are not the big, flashy, headline-grabbing announcements we see for other projects, but they mean a lot to these small groups and organisations that normally run on the backs of hardworking volunteers or staff who go above and beyond what is required. That money goes a long way, and it would take a few sausages sold at Bunnings to match those grants. They mean a lot to people in the tight-knit, small communities of Pinjarra, Waroona and Harvey, and the other 48 towns in Murray–Wellington.

I want to congratulate the Premier; Treasurer on another outstanding budget that delivers for all Western Australians. The Labor Party has constantly been attacked by the other side for not being good at managing the state's or the country's economy and finances, but it has done a remarkable job of delivering yet another surplus while other states and economies around the world are getting more into debt. The government is also bringing down the large debt that was left by the Barnett Liberal government. There is still more to pay off, but we are certainly on the right track. Many members of the community have told me that they were traditionally Liberal voters but they had either converted to voting Labor because of our government's spending record or are pleased to see what is happening. I give credit to the Premier, every minister in the cabinet and all their hardworking staff: we cannot do it without their consistent support for the regions.

On reading the budget, I was pleased to see that it continues to deliver for the Peel and south west regions. Murray–Wellington sits in both regions. Harvey, in the south of the electorate, sits in the south west, while the Shire of Murray, the Shire of Waroona and the City of Mandurah, in the north of Murray–Wellington, are located in the Peel region. I am pleased to see the government's continuous cost-of-living support for residents, along with its significant investments in health, housing and Western Australia's transition to cleaner, stronger, reliable and affordable energy. This budget features a massive \$11.2 billion investment in regional infrastructure, as well as

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billions more in regional service delivery. The state budget includes \$4 billion in royalties for regions expenditure over the next four years on initiatives that will strengthen regional communities and ensure services remain close to where people live. Regional Western Australians will benefit from the McGowan government's \$715 million commitment to deliver further cost-of-living relief, which includes providing every WA household with a \$400 electricity credit and additional targeted support totalling \$826 for households that need it most. As part of our commitment to keep power and water affordable for all Western Australians, the McGowan government will spend \$2.7 billion over the next four years to subsidise the cost of providing water and electricity to regional communities.

The McGowan government is delivering a record \$2.7 billion additional investment in WA's health system. The 2023–24 state budget features a significant investment in regional health and mental health, including over \$2.2 billion per annum on regional health and mental health services, and \$28.5 million for initiatives to attract and retain key health and mental health professionals primarily to work in regional WA, with priority to be given to hard-to-staff sites.

The 2023–24 state budget strengthens the McGowan government's record investment in housing, including \$450 million into the social housing investment fund to deliver more social housing across the state, and \$12 million over four years to deliver more development-ready land throughout regional WA through the regional development assistance program.

There is major investment into WA's future. The government will tackle climate change through a \$3 billion package that will ensure that the state has cleaner, stronger, reliable and affordable energy into the future, as well as an investment in the environment. The initiatives include a \$2.8 billion investment to transition WA's energy system for a low-carbon future; \$18.8 million to continue the Healthy Estuaries WA program to improve the water quality of estuaries across the region; \$36 million to transition to new jobs to help deliver the historic decision to end native forest logging; \$22.2 million to assist industry to transition to the mandatory sheep and goat electronic identification system to bolster WA's animal biosecurity defences; \$20.2 million to extend vital drought resilience initiatives that will help futureproof Western Australian farms; and \$10.4 million to boost WA's emergency animal disease preparedness following overseas outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease.

The McGowan government's 2023–24 state budget continues to deliver on the WA jobs plan by diversifying regional economies, creating new jobs for the future and developing a pipeline of skills in the regions. Key initiatives include \$6.5 million to implement the *Aquaculture development plan for Western Australia*; \$2 million to the new industries fund to support regional entrepreneurs in the innovation sector; \$2.5 million to increase the travel and accommodation allowance for regional TAFE students; \$2.9 million to provide a weekly allowance for regional students who are studying a diploma of nursing; and \$6.8 million for upgrades at agricultural colleges across the state.

The McGowan government continues its record investment in regional road and transport projects. The budget contains a further \$407 million for regional road projects and initiatives, bringing the total investment over the next four years to \$5.3 billion. There is also a \$175 million boost to the regional road safety program, which is jointly funded by the commonwealth and state governments, so that it can continue to deliver lifesaving works on regional roads.

The McGowan government will help to build safe, strong and fair regional communities by providing \$11.7 million to continue the rollout of Target 120 across the regions, including in Mandurah; \$1.1 million to continue the respectful relationships teaching support program; and the provision of culturally appropriate services for victims of family and domestic violence in regional areas. The budget includes \$4.9 million for the regional athletes support program to help regionally based talented athletes meet their potential, and \$700 000 to continue the Rural, Regional, Remote Women's Network of Western Australia to support regional women. The McGowan government will also invest \$77 million to manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in WA, which includes support for the new Aboriginal cultural heritage services.

I was so excited about the next announcement that I had to call the CEO of Waroona, Mark Goodlet, and shire president Mike Walmsley as soon as I could. This budget also includes an extra \$2.4 million to complete the Waroona town centre revitalisation project. The McGowan Labor government had already committed \$1.3 million to the project, as well as a \$450 000 Lotterywest grant. This project will bring new life back into the town centre of Waroona and give tourists who are travelling through Waroona via South Western Highway the incentive to stop and spend money at the Waroona Country Cafe and newly refurbished Waroona Hotel, visit the many other small businesses and see the beautiful town that Waroona is.

I said it last year and I said it the year before—I have said it many times—but I will say it once more, loud and clear, for those opposite: that is not a bad commitment to the regions for a party that is accused by those on the other side as not caring about the regions. The McGowan government has more respect for our regions and has supported them more than any other government or party has done. We have the strongest representation in the regions with active, hardworking members who deliver on the McGowan government's commitment to our regions. Our government truly represents the regions. This budget builds on many of the great projects that are either

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already completed, funded or in the planning stage, or for which consultation is underway, such as the \$160 million redevelopment and expansion of Peel Health Campus, which we will also bring back into public hands; \$11.2 million for the new performing arts centre and sports hall at Pinjarra Senior High School, which is currently under construction and due to open in the coming months —

Mr D.A. Templeman: That is all because of you. You did that.

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: I thank the member for Mandurah.

There is also \$1.5 million for the new STEM building and \$72 million for the new Lakelands Metronet station, which is due to open in June. The budget includes \$250 million for the Pinjarra heavy haulage deviation, \$110 million to duplicate Mandurah Estuary Bridge and \$28.1 million for the expanded Common Ground facility to accommodate and support vulnerable people in Mandurah; planning is underway for all those projects. The budget also contains \$1.35 billion for the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, which is under construction. These projects are either being built or at the planning stage, yet we have a loud, misguided and outspoken opponent—namely, the federal member for Canning. The member for Canning has really gotten into his role of being an opposition member after being a key player in the ousted Morrison regime. He did nothing then and is just opposing everything now. He refers federal issues to state members' offices, stating that he is in opposition and cannot or will not help.

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: I am not taking any interjections from the other side, thank you!

He loves being in opposition. All he does is oppose, abuse and denigrate people and projects. It is easy to criticise when you are not accountable. Like an electron, the member for Canning is always negatively charged. He attacks the people in our local hospital by focusing on issues that staff are working hard to deliver. Remember, member for Canning: the Liberal Party privatised the Peel Health Campus when it was first built. The Liberal Party —

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: I am not taking interjections from the other side.

When the Liberal Party was in power and the then member for Dawesville, Kim Hames, was the Minister for Health, it let the infrastructure run down. It was the do-nothing party. Only Labor committed to bringing our hospital back into public hands and only Labor has committed a record \$160 million to transform our hospital into a truly regional hospital. We want to get it right for the future of our region.

Let us not forget about the Dawesville Bridge duplication project, which, again, has been committed to by the Labor government. The Liberal Party had years and years to do something about it, but it never committed to anything, not even when we had a federal Liberal government. Again, it was a do-nothing Liberal Party with its do-nothing members.

So, member for Canning; who is the real hollow man? The member for Canning is all bluff and bluster but there is no action when it counts. It was the Peel dream team—comprising me; the member for Mandurah, Hon David Templeman; and the member for Dawesville, the hardworking Lisa Munday—that secured the \$110 million to build the new bridge.

Mr D.T. Punch: Commendable.

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: I know! We are great, aren't we?

The planning, scoping and consultation is concluding. It is because of a Labor government that the bridge will be delivered —

Mr D.A. Templeman: They talked about it for so many years and did bugger-all!

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: That is it, member for Mandurah!

After years of talking about it, members opposite never delivered anything.

Another project under attack by the “electron member for Canning” is the Pinjarra heavy haulage deviation. After years of promises, the former federal Liberal government delivered funding for only stage 1 of the project. After intense advocacy from me and the Minister for Planning, Hon Rita Saffioti, the project will now be delivered in full by the McGowan Labor government with funding of \$250 million. That funding will deliver the whole project in one go, not in the four stages that the federal member advocated for. This \$250 million project has been pushed out to ensure that appropriate community consultation is undertaken with the Bindjareb traditional owners. We are doing the right thing and working with the Bindjareb people to undertake this project in a culturally responsible way.

[Member's time extended.]

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Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: The deviation will require the construction of a road and bridge over the banks of the Murray River where it is believed the remains of Bindjareb traditional owners rest after the 1834 massacre. On 28 October 1834, a group of about 25 soldiers, police and settlers, led by Governor James Stirling, Thomas Peel and John Septimus Roe, killed—it is estimated—dozens of Bindjareb people. Accounts of the notorious massacre remain hotly contested, with Stirling’s official account reporting that about 15 Bindjareb men were killed. Other accounts estimate that up to 80 Bindjareb men, women and children died. The Bindjareb traditional owners recently met to discuss the project’s impact and collate any concerns to present to the government. The outcomes from the meeting, facilitated by Aboriginal Land Services, are currently being collated. The McGowan Labor government is doing this better—and guess what? There is more negativity, more slander and more insults from the member for Canning. The member for Canning needs to have a yarn with the local Bindjareb mob to understand the history of the region. He is out of touch and shows no respect for the Bindjareb people and, quite frankly, he is insensitive.

There is a common theme here, is there not? Labor builds and supports our communities and the member for Canning wants to tear it all down. He is like a child who walks off the oval with his football when he is no longer winning. Weekly, my office is swamped with accounts of the negativity that the member for Canning shares with the community. Frankly, people are sick of the vile and disgusting mistruths that he spews from his mouth and the insidious mail-outs that demand donations towards the sovereignty of our nation. He is being misleading and very deceptive in asking for donations towards protecting Australia when, in fact, they are for his re-election campaign—or is he going to rent a patrol boat and patrol the coastline of WA with the money donated to him?

As our country prepares to embark on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Voice referendum, I am again sickened and disgusted by the words coming out of his mouth. “Mr Electron”, the member for Canning, is negatively charged and sounds like a conspiracist incel who gets advice on the dark web. He uses phrases such as “The Voice will undermine the equality of citizenship”, “It will create a special class of citizens with more say and more rights than the rest of us” and “It will undermine our Westminster style of government”. In one article, he compares the Voice with the House of Lords. For those who paid attention during the marriage equality debate it is not surprising that the member for Canning who said many homophobic and bigoted remarks during that campaign is now going to spew more vile and bigoted nonsense up until the Voice referendum. He promotes continuous negativity about the McGowan Labor government not delivering for the Peel region and not caring for our constituents. I ask the member for Canning: when have you ever cared for your constituents? He was on the wrong side of history when he voted against his constituency’s wishes during the marriage equality debate. Almost two-thirds of the Canning electorate voted yes to marriage equality. Where was the member for Canning when the Morrison government voted against easing cost-of-living pressures by slashing penalty rates that guarantee secure jobs and better pay? Where was the member for Canning when the Morrison government undermined the McGowan government during the pandemic by supporting Clive Palmer? Where was the member for Canning when the Morrison government voted against increasing and extending support for welfare payments? I could go on about the member for Canning and his unwarranted attacks on the McGowan government, particularly the Premier, and the member for Mandurah, the member for Dawesville and me. I make it clear that the member for Canning has never been on the side of his constituency of Canning. He has never delivered, nor has it been seen. We are all still waiting for his heralded meth action plan, which was promised in 2015. It must be due to come out anytime soon. Do not throw rocks at glasshouses. The member for Canning is not my member, nor does he represent the people of Canning. End of rant!

Several members interjected.

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: Moving away from the negativity, I acknowledge that this week is National Volunteer Week. Yesterday was Wear Orange Wednesday to thank our State Emergency Service volunteers. Murray–Wellington has so many amazing volunteers in its emergency services, community groups and other organisations that help our communities. I thank them all. They are the links in a chain that keep our communities safe and strong. Thank you always.

Tonight, I will be attending the Shire of Waroona Emergency Services Recognition and Thank You Dinner, which could be interesting because the member for Canning will be there!

Mr D.A. Templeman: You’ll do amazing!

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: I know. “Mr Electron”!

I will have the honour of presenting my husband, Charlie, his five years’ service medal. He is a lieutenant in the Preston Beach Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade. Congratulations, Charlie, and thank you to all brigade members for their friendship and comradeship. A big thanks to our chief fire officer, Steve Thomas, for his leadership and experience.

Lastly, I would like to end on a positive note and give a shout-out to a few local Murray–Wellington legends. Pastor John Coman recently participated in the World Transplant Games right here in Perth. He won gold in the 400-metre and 200-metre freestyle and bronze in the 100-metre and 50-metre freestyle. Greg Watts, the chief executive officer of local Murray–Wellington soil carbon solutions company C-Wise, recently participated in the

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2023 Variety WA 4WD Bash and raised \$12 936 for his efforts. Harvey Bowling Club's Calvin and Jason won gold and silver at the world impaired vision championships in Queensland. On behalf of the member for Mandurah, Hon David Templeman, I congratulate the City of Mandurah on winning the Top Tourism Town for 2023. Congratulations to the Shire of Murray for Dwellingup winning for the third year in a row the Top Tiny Tourism Town. We live in the best part of WA and represent the most beautiful region.

Lastly, I give a heartfelt thought for Paul Briggs and the Busher Boys for my good friend and Labor Party life member Trish Briggs. Trish passed away suddenly a year ago this Saturday, 20 May, the night before last year's federal election. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think of you, Trish. Charlie, my office staff and I miss you and we will always love you.

I commend the 2023–24 budget to the house.

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston — Parliamentary Secretary) [10.48 am]: I, too, rise to make my contribution on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023. I start by noting that I, along with you, Madam Acting Speaker (Ms A.E. Kent) and a number of our colleagues, including the Premier and ministers, attended the federal Treasurer's Leadership Matters breakfast with Hon Dr Jim Chalmers. I would like to start my contribution by reflecting on his positive comments about the work of the McGowan Labor government and, particularly, the Premier in his role as Treasurer. He gave us a statistic that I think is startling and highlights the incredible work of this government. He said that CPI in Perth in June 2022 was the highest in Australia, but in May 2023 it is now the lowest in Australia. He reflected on and gave a number of reasons for that, but I want to highlight the one that I feel most equates to what this government is doing for my electorate of Collie–Preston. The federal Treasurer said that, in a significant part, he put that down to the way that Western Australia has managed the energy system and kept power prices low, in comparison to what the eastern states' energy system is currently undergoing and the prices they are currently paying and are likely to pay for energy in the future. In his speech, it was a stark contrast as he reflected on what is happening in Western Australia. I would like to begin my contribution by reiterating the federal Treasurer's comments today.

I will go back and talk a bit about history, and that will then, obviously, come back to the point of my contribution today, which is the McGowan Labor government's support for, in my case, the seat of Collie–Preston. I would like to start by talking about the opportunity to “compare the pair”, a phrase my research officer likes to use often. I will start with three things I would like to compare and contrast. This is the old teacher in me coming out.

Mrs L.A. Munday: I remember those essays.

Ms J.L. HANNS: I know; we all remember those lessons. Let us compare the opposition's approach to the energy system with the current McGowan Labor government's approach. If I had to pick out the top three things I want to talk about from the opposition's energy policies or strategies, the first would be the Liberal energy policy of 2021, which was to close the power stations and the coal mines by 2025—almost unfunded by a coalition government. I say “almost” because it is in stark contrast to what this government has done and has committed to do in funding the transition.

The second point I would like to highlight is the other approach the Liberals took to the 2021 election and much more strongly to the 2017 election, which was the idea of privatising Western Power. That was a terrible policy and one that was resoundingly rejected at the election. Casting our minds further back—I want to make sure that members remember the number I am about to mention because it is significant—there was a point at which the Barnett Liberal government decided that it would restore the previously mothballed Muja A and B units at Muja power station. That was in response to the Varanus Island gas crisis, which we were plunged into due to the explosion at Varanus Island. The energy system was certainly facing significant challenges, but the Barnett government thought that the best way to approach it was to refurbish the previously mothballed Muja A and B, and get that up and running, and that would solve all the problems. A report commissioned by KPMG and tabled here in Parliament said that the post-completion review of the future Muja A and B project was put at a cost of \$308.4 million. The report was published in 2013. I am no mathematician, but I can only imagine what the inflationary rate would mean for that right now; it is probably in the order of nearly double that in today's money. It was a significant spend and undeniably an abject failure.

I would like to draw people's attention to the fact that in Parliament, the former Western Australian Premier Colin Barnett refused to confirm the amount of money spent on that particular project, but the former Minister for Energy Mike Nahan said that work was suspended on the project and he expected to deliver a report about the costs. He confirmed —

“It will be mothballed. At some stage it may be reactivated but I think that's unlikely.”

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That is the bit he got correct: it was unlikely because it has not happened. It cost taxpayers a significant amount of money and contributed to the state of the finances that the McGowan government inherited in 2017, which were appalling, to say the least.

Here is where we compare the pair. I will now talk about the Labor government's approach to the energy system and how it has committed to transition. I will talk about that briefly today. We were able to put the transition in place because we corrected the state's finances and were able to commit to a significant transition package for the energy system, something that is desperately needed in Western Australia. Hon Mick Murray was the previous member for Collie–Preston, and he listened to the community. At that time, I was a shire councillor, and he listened to the council and the community who said, "We need dates for a transition. We know it will happen, but what we need as a community is to be certain about what that looks like." They did not need an overnight closure, essentially, of the coal-fired power stations and the coal mines by 2025, with no transition plan. When the Liberal Party pitched that to the community, it had the community outraged. The Labor Party listened to the community, and, in response the Premier, the local member Hon Mick Murray and the Minister for Energy worked very closely with the community of Collie to plan the transition for our community.

Back in 2018, the Collie Just Transition Working Group was established, and that working group, which I have mentioned a number of times in the chamber, consists of state government representatives, local government representatives and, very importantly, local industries impacted by the transition, local unions, local workforce impacted by the transition, and general community members. As a community, we have worked through the issues over those years. In addition, the Collie Just Transition Working Group said that if the transition is happening on a large scale, the community needs significant support and funding from the state government, and that is exactly what the McGowan Labor government delivered for this community. The government funded the transition. I mentioned the fact that the Liberal's policy for the transition for Collie was virtually unfunded. Our transition package sits at around \$652 million to support and assist the community transition away from coal-fired power stations by 2030. That is significant. I will talk a little more about this shortly, but I want to mention the recent budget announcement about the government's commitment to build a big battery in Collie. That forms part of a \$2.3 billion package for the renewable energy system, and one of those systems will be located in Collie.

The upshot of all this is that my community got what it asked for. It asked for clear time lines for what the transition might look like. It asked for funding, and it got that funding. The funding is already happening and is on the ground. I will talk about some projects in a minute. New industries are being attracted to create new jobs and futureproof our local economy. The funding is also shoring up the network for the entire south west interconnected system. What I think cannot be understated in all this is that we, as a government, are futureproofing my community and the south west from decisions that are often beyond our control.

I want to look at the facts around being able to set up a business that does not necessarily have green credentials. If someone is trying to set up a new industry that is not using renewable energy, it makes things incredibly difficult from an economic viability perspective. Decisions are made by private companies that are outside the influence of government, the workforce and the general community. That has been demonstrated over and over again. South32 just last year said it would transition from its coal-fired power station to a gas-fired power station to run its refinery, and, ultimately, to renewables. Griffin Coal is one of its main providers of coal, and there are certainly some challenges around the ongoing operations of Griffin Coal. I will talk about that in a minute. All this certainly says that this government has the interests of both the residents of Collie–Preston and the broader Western Australian community first and foremost in its mind.

As the member for Murray–Wellington said, opposition members are often very negative in their commentary around what the government is trying to achieve. The Premier yesterday described the attitudes of the opposition as "apocalyptic". I thought that was quite appropriate because the term I use is "harbingers of doom". There are some synergies there.

I draw members' attention to comments by Hon Dr Steve Thomas, Leader of the Liberal Party in the other place. The Liberals have certainly had it in for Collie. That is absolutely apparent when we talk about the 2021 Liberal energy policy. We refer to it as a thought bubble because some of the comments Hon Dr Steve Thomas has made in Parliament as recorded in *Hansard* are back of the envelope calculations. The Liberals have had it in for Collie and their energy policy is one example of that. I will mention briefly the Liberal policy around the electoral reforms that were aimed to wipe Collie off the map entirely. Since 1904, Collie's name has been proudly featured in recognition of its significance in Western Australia and the role it has played in developing the state. If the Liberals had their way, Collie would be no more in an electoral sense. The proposal is that the member for Roe would gain Collie. I am not sure how he feels about that; I am interested to know. At the previous election, the polling places in Collie had an 80 per cent or more majority to Labor. I am not sure how the member for Roe feels about that part of the redistribution.

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Mr P.J. Rundle: That was the Liberals.

Ms J.L. HANNS: I did not mention the Nationals at all.

Mr D.A. Templeman: The Liberal Party is always looking after your interests!

Ms J.L. HANNS: Absolutely.

It takes me to my point that the Liberal Party does not take Collie seriously. On the one hand, it wants to close the power stations, walk away and redistribute boundaries so that the member for Roe ends up with Collie. I was astounded by some of the comments Hon Dr Steve Thomas made in the upper house this week about Collie. The uncorrected *Hansard* contains comments such as —

There are some issues around coal mining in Collie ...

Okay; no rocket science is required there. He goes on to say that it is something of a running joke, but that the joke gets better. Hon Dr Steve Thomas clearly does not live in Collie—he is the member for South West Region—so he does not appreciate that our community does not see it as a joke. It astounds me that he takes this approach. In the same uncorrected *Hansard*, he states that “my media in Collie on this is fantastic”—that is, on the coal situation. They are telling words that he uses—my media in Collie. I would like to ask him what he meant by that. I have here a collection of articles from the local media in Collie in which Hon Dr Steve Thomas is featured very regularly. I can tell members right now that I am featured nowhere near as regularly as Hon Dr Steve Thomas is featured; nor even is the Premier when he visits Collie. Hon Dr Steve Thomas makes comments in *Hansard* and in the local community playing up on the issues, but he does not demonstrate his support for the workforce in Collie. He does not support what this government is trying to do to prevent Griffin Coal from basically having to walk away with those workers losing their jobs. This government is not interested in that happening in my community. I commend the government for that approach, and I condemn the Leader of the Liberal Party in the upper house for his approach to this issue.

I will not go through the articles, although they are a very interesting read. He says, “Help the workers in Collie.” The state government helps the workers in Collie. He says, “You are spending too much money helping the workers.” He says, “Save Griffin Coal.”

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms J.L. HANNS: He then says, “Don’t save Griffin Coal; you’re spending too much money.” He says that the lights are going to go out and the government needs to buy coal, and when it buys coal, he says that it should not have bought coal and it was a waste of money. He quoted \$300 million as the cost to government. I take members back to the initial point I made at the beginning of my contribution; namely, that mothballed Muja A and B failed to deliver for the energy system in Western Australia. Its cost was \$308.4 million in 2012 when a report was tabled in Parliament. Hon Dr Steve Thomas needs to be very careful about throwing stones in glass houses, as the member for Murray–Wellington alluded to in her contribution.

I place on record my absolute thanks to the work of the Just Transition working group in Collie. It has done an incredible job working in partnership with the state government, local government and all the people I have spoken about today. At his budget lunch last week in Bunbury with Hon Don Punch, the member for Murray–Wellington and me, the Premier said that Collie had been noticed by the federal government. The comments from the federal government are around Collie being the model for how to transition communities in this day and age.

Mr W.J. Johnston: The Prime Minister said it.

Ms J.L. HANNS: I was not going to name-drop; the minister is well placed to name-drop. That comment was made by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. There has been international interest in how transition for communities is managed when governments and/or private companies make decisions about changes to a local workforce and a local economy more broadly. I have worked hard as the local member for Collie to ensure that we attract as much funding as we possibly can for all the projects we are looking at in Collie. The state government has done an incredible job of funding up-and-coming industries. The Premier recently announced in Collie funding for Green Steel of WA and further funding for Magnium Australia. Those two projects are significant steps forward for the creation of new industries. International Graphite is doing amazing things. All these projects are around either manufacturing or the critical minerals strategy to help evolve not just the local economy of Collie–Preston and the south west, but the economy of Western Australia and Australia more broadly.

Today the federal government announced that it will continue to work in collaboration with the state government. Hon Madeleine King announced some projects today that will receive federal government funding. I am so delighted to be able to report that the federal government is also funding International Graphite, a project that will be based in Collie, and will also co-contribute to Magnium Australia to commercialise the pilot plant in Collie. That is incredible news on behalf of Western Australia and the people, workers and community of Collie–Preston. I am really proud to

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stand here and be the local member and say that I have, hopefully, had a hand in those things being achieved for my community. I absolutely have to say thank you to Hon Mick Murray for his incredible work in the initial stages to reach the point we are at today with backing from the federal government and a really bright future for my community.

My contribution so far has taken a whole lot longer than I was hoping it would, because I have lots of other amazing things to talk about. I want to speak to the increase in the community sporting and recreation facilities fund that came out of this particular budget. We are all approached as local members to ask for support in upgrading community sporting facilities and community recreation facilities. This fund is an incredible way to be able to do that. I was very pleased to see the start of construction on the Reg and Jocey Fishwick Pavilion in the Shire of Dardanup a couple of weeks ago. The Shire of Dardanup, Eaton Cricket Club and Eaton Junior Football Club are all partnering on this amazing new facility, which will bring their much-needed facilities into the twenty-first century—that is right? Yes, good—even into the twenty-second century, hopefully! I note that the member for Central Wheatbelt is also in support of this project. I know that she visited Eaton Junior Football Club and called for money to be put into that project as part of the previous election. I am really pleased to be able to say that we have delivered on that. The Shire of Dardanup has contributed a significant amount of money to that project. The state government, through the CSRFF, will fund \$700 000 for the construction of the new Fishwick pavilion. That is a huge step forward for local sporting facilities. It will allow the change rooms to be female friendly and will open up those facilities to a much wider range of sporting codes. I am really pleased that that is able to go ahead in my community.

Another thing that I would like to mention is that Capel Equestrian Park was previously awarded \$250 000 from the CSRFF towards a new build of its pavilion. The state government is working in consultation with the Shire of Capel to deliver that project.

The Shire of Dardanup was the beneficiary of support from the state government for the upgrade to its skate park that happened last year. It received federal and state government funding. I am of the opinion that we should try to get money out of the feds and it does not matter which party is in power—to us it does, but to the community it does not. Working really well as a local member in consultation with one's federal government counterpart means that greater and bigger things can be delivered for the community. CSRFF money was put into the pump track at the skate park. The Shire of Dardanup also partnered with Lotterywest and the federal government to achieve that fantastic upgrade.

The Shire of Dardanup president, Mick Bennett, has been a long-time member of the council; I think he has been a member of the local council for 34 years. He has just announced that he is not going to be running at the next local government election. I would like to take the opportunity to thank him for his tireless work on behalf of his community over those years. Having been a councillor, I know it is sort of like this job to a certain extent in that there are people who agree and disagree with the decisions that you make. It is a challenge for local government councillors, particularly in the regions where they literally make a decision in council and are then in the shopping aisle with the people who are unhappy —

Ms M.J. Davies: That is a part of local government, absolutely.

Ms J.L. HANNS: Yes. Councillors hear from those people who are unhappy with the decisions they made because they play footy with them and those sorts of things —

Ms M.J. Davies: You play footy with them, go to the supermarket, at the pub —

Ms J.L. HANNS: Yes, absolutely.

I also wanted to very quickly mention that on Friday last week, I went to Collie Hospital and had a tour of the facilities on behalf of Minister Sanderson, who was not able to get there. Collie Hospital reached practical completion and handover on Friday last week. That particular upgrade was a \$14.7 million investment into the Collie Health Service. It has a brand new operating theatre—I will talk about the outstanding theatre redevelopment in a minute—upgrades to the waiting room and reception, new consultation rooms, state-of-the-art telehealth technology and local artworks.

I would really like to say a huge thankyou to Barry who is the director of nursing at Collie Hospital. I think Barry told me that he has been a theatre nurse for 30 years. I believe that what Barry does not know about operating theatres probably cannot be known at this point in time. He was very excited—I passed his comments on to Minister Sanderson—because he was told that Collie's state-of-the-art operating theatre is the most up-to-date in Western Australia as we speak, until the next operating theatre is opened. The really special thing about Collie's operating theatre is that it was designed by Barry—I am actually getting goose pimples—who put those 30 years of nursing experience into practice to make sure that when a patient comes into the operating theatre, they are dealt with in the friendliest, kindest and most caring way, which is no surprise to anyone who knows any of our nurses or doctors in the health system. He is able to have a circular operating theatre system so that patients do not pass any point in the operating theatre more than once. What that means in terms of technology and the advances in the sterilisation processes and making sure that it is a safer operating theatre for patients and their ongoing care cannot

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be underestimated. I am really proud to be standing here as the local member for Collie–Preston, not just in relation to this hospital, but also in recognition of the outstanding and record spend on health in Western Australia.

I will leave the rest of my comments for another time and place. I will finish by saying that I absolutely commend the bills to the house.

MR M. HUGHES (Kalamunda) [11.17 am]: I rise to make a reasonably brief contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023. This morning I attended the breakfast at which federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers underscored the importance of the Western Australian state economy to the wealth and fortunes of the nation. I think it is important that we recognise the strong contribution that this state has made, certainly over the period of the COVID pandemic, to provide the basis for the federal government to have a balanced budget for the first time in many years and deliver some important support to large sections of the community.

I would like to begin by reminding ourselves of a few pertinent facts that underscore the demonstrated capacity of the McGowan government to continue the planned diversification of our state’s economy and manage the state’s finances well.

As the Treasurer outlined in his second reading speech, since coming to office in 2017, this government has seen over 220 000 jobs created, including 122 000 jobs since the 2021 election, prior to which the government had set a target of creating 125 000 jobs during this term of government. That is a significant achievement and it should not be something that we pass over lightly. It stands in strong contrast to the previous Liberal–National government, which saw a net reduction in the number of jobs in this state during its term in office. As it stands, the unemployment rate for the March quarter was a low 3.4 per cent, and it is forecast to remain in that position for the foreseeable future. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics information for the March quarter, we have 1 524 100 Western Australians in work.

Since 2017, this government has capably managed the state’s finances, again in stark contrast to the debt and deficit approach of the previous Barnett government. We all know the annual budget deficits of the Barnett government and the projected debt levels inherited by this government when it came to office in March 2017, so let us not rehash the details again. Prudent financial management is the hallmark of WA Labor. It is of interest to me that the new federal Labor government has picked up on the opportunity to bank what will be windfalls as a process of reducing debt over time. It is an important lesson for all jurisdictions to learn.

As it stands, our Western Australian economy is strong and our financial management also leads the nation. These facts cannot be disputed, despite the efforts of the opposition. The 2023–24 operating surplus is forecast to be \$3.3 billion, with projected surpluses forecast to continue over the forward estimates out to 2025–26. The result of getting the state’s finances in order is the capacity to support funding for the state’s future. Unlike the previous administration, the Barnett government, we are not burdening future generations with ballooning debt. As we have heard, the operating surpluses are enabling a record \$39 billion in infrastructure investment to be made over the next four years, including new and expanded hospitals; improvements to existing schools; construction of new schools for our new suburbs; continuing work on the transformational Metronet project, with major investment in roads across the state; and progress on decarbonising electricity generation for this state.

The budget places net debt at \$27.9 billion as at 30 June 2023, which is, in anyone’s terms, a whopping reduction of close to \$16 billion in the projected deficit when Labor came to office. We have heard that this will result in something in the order of \$4.3 billion in interest savings. WA’s net-debt-to-revenue ratio now stands significantly lower than that in other states. It is one of the features of the circumstances we are facing that was commented on by our national Treasurer this morning. This budget is the continuation of a carefully considered approach to Western Australia’s future, building on our record of strong financial management to keep the WA economy growing, to create quality local jobs, to invest in key services and to deliver on our election commitments for all Western Australians.

Returning the state’s budget to a sustainable footing has taken significant effort and discipline by the McGowan Labor government in its first term, and this has continued over the first two years of the forty-first Parliament. The government has kept its promise to maintain a healthy budget, to deliver quality services and infrastructure, and to keep fees and charges low, while ensuring that we have capacity to respond to unforeseen crises. Importantly, it has enabled the government to significantly contribute to easing the pressure on family budgets through a range of sensible and carefully crafted measures that synchronise with the announcement that was made by our federal colleagues.

By maintaining a steady and strong focus on local manufacturing production, by creating WA jobs and by investing in training for the jobs of the future, this government is delivering on its comprehensive WA jobs plan. I remember well when the opposition derided the WA jobs plan in the fortieth Parliament as ambitious. We were asked to quantify it: what was the basis of the projections? That cynicism has been dispelled. The jobs plan has proven to

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be achievable by a determined and responsible government, and includes a range of initiatives to further diversify the economy in areas like high tech, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism and the defence industry. Whether it is investing in areas such as hospitals, mental health, social housing and homelessness services, providing for safer, stronger and fairer communities or addressing climate action and renewable energy, this budget is part of a coherent, long-term plan to make sure that our state has an economic future that is properly grounded and sustainable.

For the last six years, I have listened to members of the Nationals WA constantly deny that the McGowan government is committed to governing for the whole of WA, particularly the regions. It is a simple fact that under WA Labor, regional WA will benefit from a record \$11.2 billion investment in regional infrastructure, and, of interest, only nine per cent of this will be contributed from the \$4 billion allocated to royalties for regions. We were accused at times of simply robbing royalties for regions to support infrastructure in other quarters. It is not the case. This budget includes \$5.3 billion in regional road funding and billions of additional dollars for the delivery of quality regional services in health, education and policing across the state.

I was pleased to see that we are committing another \$750 million to significantly boost housing supply and housing choice initiatives in WA, with a particular focus on supporting those most in need. I am particularly pleased that this includes a \$450 million increase in funding to the social housing fund, which will increase the total number of social houses to be added to 4 000. Affordable and available housing is needed across age demographics, including for people who rent properties in my electorate. In that regard, I welcome the recent decision of Amana Living not to proceed with the demolition of the social housing units comprising Parry Village in Lesmurdie. I am very pleased that Amana Living has listened and that this decision has been reversed, as, perversely, it would have meant that the land would have been cleared of rental accommodation for the construction of a replacement residential aged-care facility. I will come to the question of land availability for aged care a little later in my contribution. That decision has meant that 40 social housing units that would have been lost to the district will be retained. In the process of embarking upon that project as originally envisaged by Amana Living, 26 of the units have remained empty for two years, with many long-stay tenants having been moved out, with all the unnecessary dislocation and upending of lives that this caused. I would like to reflect upon the fact that this not-for-profit was essentially looking at maintaining housing stock for the most needy. In what I think was a very short-sighted business plan, it made a decision that it could dispense with those important social housing units to provide what would be seen to be a more profitable income stream for that organisation. As a former teacher and a former principal, I am of course always very interested in seeing what we can do in education. This budget provides a \$960 million boost, close to \$1 billion, for education and training. In total, this year's budget spend to deliver quality education for the twenty-first century stands at \$6.4 billion, which is a record.

I reflect on the fact that when I made my first contribution to this house, I lamented that many of the schools in the electorate of Kalamunda had been overlooked for close to two decades. I now run through what this government has provided to the electorate of Kalamunda since 2017 to contribute to improving the quality of school buildings. A total of \$3.9 million has been spent on the maintenance blitz across the district. We often forget that we came to the conclusion that we needed to get rid of some of the maintenance backlog in our schools. A further \$530 000 has been expended in minor improvements to schools across the district; \$1.5 million has been expended on the administration upgrade to Kalamunda Primary School; \$1.1 million has been spent on an administration upgrade to Falls Road Primary School; \$2 million has been allocated to a science, technology, engineering and mathematics project at Lesmurdie Senior High School; \$1.7 million for STEM-associated upgrades at Kalamunda Senior High School; \$730 000 to Gooseberry Hill Primary School to upgrade existing classrooms and air conditioning; \$18.09 million to rebuild Lesmurdie Primary School on its existing site; and \$26.3 million on a major upgrade of Kalamunda Senior High School. If my arithmetic is correct—I was an English teacher, of course, not a maths teacher—that is at least \$55 888 000 spent on school buildings in my electorate since we came to office. My electorate is grateful for the focus that Labor has placed on upgrading school facilities across Kalamunda.

The work to improve schools in my electorate does not end there. I appreciate the need to prioritise expenditure on school buildings and to balance upgrades to existing schools with the demand to build new schools to meet the needs of new communities; however, there is a need for this government to examine the suitability of classroom accommodation for early childhood phases of learning in schools in my electorate, particularly Glen Forrest Primary School. The existing facilities are not the best and the school would benefit from a major upgrade of its facilities, particularly the construction of a purpose-built early years learning centre. I am very, very pleased that the new Minister for Education, Minister Buti, has agreed to come out to the electorate and look at this on the ground. He will pay that visit on 1 August. He will also attend a combined hills and Bibbulmun school principals network meeting representing the 17 public schools that service my electorate. That will be hosted at Glen Forrest Primary School.

In addition to the significant first phase, I hope, the existing funded project at Kalamunda Senior High School requires a continuation of a phased redevelopment in the campus in accordance with its new master plan to include

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an upgraded manual arts facility and the consolidation of its performing arts accommodation. I strongly argue that we need to look at the quality of special purpose learning areas that look to provide skills for students who are not necessarily going on to take ATAR subjects, and that the program activity in our high schools could be more closely linked to the TAFE courses that they might consider taking up. There is a great opportunity for high schools in the electorate of Kalamunda to take advantage of the fact that we have our new railcar manufacturing facility in Bellevue, and to look at ways to both develop curriculum offerings and the facilities required at our school.

Mrs L.A. Munday interjected.

Mr M. HUGHES: I am glad the member agrees with that.

In conjunction with the hardworking member for Swan Hills, Jessica Shaw, MLA, I hope to prosecute the case for a comprehensive review of the facilities at Eastern Hills Senior High School.

There has been a massive boost in the health budget. I listen almost day in, day out to attempts by the member for Vasse, the Leader of the Liberal Party, to rug the efforts of this government in providing quality health services across our communities. She wants to see a crisis at every turn, and, again, as I was saying, not least in hospital services. The member for Vasse ignores the fact that we have one of the best hospital services anywhere in the world, meeting the needs of what is a very large geographical area. The opposition's claims, member for Vasse, are laughable. The facts are plain. Since coming to office, this government has increased spending on health by 33.4 per cent from \$8.8 billion in 2016–17 to \$11.8 billion in this 2023–24 budget. The mental health budget has had a whopping increase of 57.3 per cent in the same period and has received a record \$1.4 billion allocation in this year's budget. What more can we do to convince the member for Vasse that we are not undershooting the health needs of our community in the area where we deliver, not in the GP clinics, but in our hospitals and mental health services?

I will crave an extension. I was told maybe 20 minutes was the maximum, but I will indulge myself. Other members have done that, so I think I will extend that indulgence to myself, if I may. I might get whipped out of the chamber, but that is what I intend to do.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M. HUGHES: I am thrilled that previous budgets have provided significant investment in Kalamunda Hospital. It has already received a \$9.5 million allocation for staged work to create a centre of excellence for palliative care for the East Metropolitan Region. This work is all but complete and I look forward to the Minister for Health officially opening this major project in the next few months. I am also very pleased that this year's commitment to provide a \$1.2 billion investment in public hospital infrastructure means that in 2027, \$81.1 million will go towards the expansion of the public services at St John of God Hospital in Midland, which services my district, through the provision of 60 beds and three operating rooms to the great benefit of the district.

Members will be aware of my work in aged care—not that we needed to bring it to the attention of the government—ensuring that in light of the pre-election commitment of September 2016, we would be fast-tracking aged care in WA by establishing the aged-care working group. We produced an aged-care availability report in 2019, which this government has acted on. We looked at ways in which we could provide land suitable for aged care and potentially make it available to the market so we might have a more even distribution of residential aged-care facilities across the state.

I am editing as I am going, but I was pleased to see the construction of the long-awaited Hall and Prior residential aged-care facility at Karingal Green, which is now in its third year of operation. It is in the Forrestfield electorate but services my community. I am particularly pleased that Hall and Prior has established a home-care wing, so to speak—I would describe it that way—and has recently opened an office in the centre of the township of Kalamunda. Karingal Green home care provides 34 clients in the area with professional assistance to continue living safely and independently in their own homes, which is the preferred option for many people now, rather than looking to go into an aged-care facility to receive that support. I have commented on this in a previous speech. By delaying entering aged care, people ensure that they enter when they have a greater level of comorbidity. But that, again, is probably something I can reflect on in a different speech. The home-care program is very flexible and offers services tailored to the specific needs and goals of the individual client. The program also offers in-home respite assistance to carers looking after those in most need in their own home. That is an important aspect of aged care that we often forget. Carers need opportunities to be unburdened from the responsibility of looking after their elderly loved ones. The Karingal Green home-care program is provided to people in a radius of 20 kilometres of Hall and Prior's principal site in High Wycombe.

I will cut this short. I wanted to talk about economic development in the hills and the work we are doing with the Pickering Brook sustainability and tourism strategy, but I will save that for another day. I am keen for the government to respond to the changing economic circumstances faced by orchardists in my area and do whatever it can to assist local governments to broaden permitted land uses that are compatible with the rural and agricultural amenity of the district.

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As I begin the process of winding up, I would like to pay particular thanks to Hon Alannah MacTiernan for providing a dedicated senior departmental project officer to work closely with growers in the hills and the Swan Valley. I am deeply appreciative of the particular interest shown by our new Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Jackie Jarvis, MLC, who continues to look to practical ways to sustain horticulture in the hills for its strong potential for renewed growth and its links to associated tourism enterprises.

It was my privilege, on 4 May, to open the AusCider national conference held in Kalamunda on behalf of the minister and then join her at the conference dinner later that day held at Core Cider, which is one of the premier producers and hospitality venues in my district. A couple of days later, the minister was back again, giving her time to attend Canning Orchard for the inaugural long-table dinner to showcase our district's produce and culinary expertise. I look forward to working very closely with the minister over the next 18 months or so before the next election.

To wind up, the McGowan government was elected in 2017 with a solid plan promising a solid future for the people of our state. We have delivered. This budget continues the process of building on our achievements since we came to office. The WA Labor government is focused on Western Australia being a modern, inclusive society in which each Western Australian wherever they live is treated equally and afforded the same access to services and opportunities. WA Labor brought a fresh approach to dealing with the state's transport needs, including establishing our fully funded Metronet, facilitating transport-oriented development in the metropolitan region and creating long-term manufacturing and service jobs in my district, which will flow on into the future accruing benefits to the economy as a whole. Above all, we have benefited from WA Labor's achievable plan for jobs creation, reducing unemployment and dealing with the economic challenges the state faces as it responds to climate change and the need to move towards clean renewable energy. I commend the bills to the house.

MRS L.A. MUNDAY (Dawesville) [11.45 am]: I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023. I want to thank the McGowan Labor government for delivering the 2023 state budget with another year of record investment for people all over WA, particularly in regional areas such as my electorate of Dawesville. The electorate includes the suburbs of Dudley Park, Erskine, Halls Head, Falcon, Wannanup and Dawesville itself. With rapid population growth for over a decade and growing economic and tourism opportunities, there is a huge amount of potential in our area, and as a result we have seen an increase in demand for services and funding. Again, we have seen record investment in areas such as health and mental health, community safety, education and training, infrastructure and more—everything that our everyday constituents are looking for.

WA's stable and responsible budget management continues into 2023, and the McGowan Labor government is setting up the Peel region for the long term by diversifying the economy and creating jobs, boosting regional health and mental health investment by a record amount, and providing important cost-of-living relief to local households.

We are also providing \$712 million in cost-of-living relief to assist households, with the return this year of the \$400 household electricity credit to every WA household. My dad is a pensioner—after mum passed away, he went back to a single pension—and this will make a huge difference to him. He was very excited to know that he will not have to look at paying an electricity bill until probably the end of the year. In additional support, this year there will be an option of \$826 per household for those in our community who are doing it extra hard—how wonderful is that! It is good that the Premier; Treasurer has noticed it is hard for a lot of people.

The people of WA have again seen the difference that strong, persistent and decisive leadership from their government can make. This budget shows our state's strength. We are using our success to deliver for our future. I support this budget delivered by Mark McGowan, particularly with its focus on the Peel region.

I have been a member of Parliament for nearly two years now. I spent 20 years as an ambulance paramedic and more recently qualified as a registered psychologist. My experience in the areas of health and mental health and improving patient outcomes in our community are the reason I decided to enter politics. I am proud to be giving my third speech on the state budget as the member for Dawesville with the knowledge that this state budget is set to include a record investment of \$2.7 billion in our healthcare system and mental health services across WA, taking the total additional spend since 2021 to \$10 billion.

The package will deliver \$28.5 million for workforce attraction and retention, including paying up to \$12 000 of HECS fees for 350 newly qualified nurses and midwives who commence employment in regional WA, with priority given to hard-to-staff sites, plus funding for wraparound support for up to 1 200 graduates in our hospitals. There is an allocation of \$75 million to address emergency department pressures and ambulance ramping, increasing the total spend to \$452.7 million committed in this term of government.

Our government is committed more than ever to putting patients first in regional WA. What does this mean for our Dawesville electorate residents? It means quality health care closer to home. Over the last five years, the Labor government has invested millions in regional healthcare infrastructure and will continue to do so. Something close

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to my heart is the extra regional paramedics being funded to help support our hardworking volunteers who give up their time for training and to work in their local towns. I was one of two paramedics who opened the St John Ambulance sub-centre in Dawesville some time ago. I think it was in 2010 or 2011. I worked to train and retain volunteers. As an aside, last night, I represented the member for Mandurah who is a life member of the Mandurah SES and the member for Murray–Wellington at a fun night to celebrate volunteers. It was Wear Orange Wednesday in recognition of their hard work. There was cake and games of two-up, and lots of awards were given out. I said to them last night that volunteering is super important for the community across the board, but I personally feel that the commitment is different for those who give up their time to volunteer in the emergency services field. Those people not only give up their time, but also put their mental health at stake, because they will often see difficult things that are really emotional. Sitting with people on often the hardest day of their life is quite tough. It is very meaningful and rewarding, but it can also be tough. I give a huge shout-out to all our emergency services volunteers.

Our government is funding extra regional paramedics through the modernised contract with St John Ambulance WA, which is amazing. That came into effect on 1 January 2023. The government will boost the number of paid paramedics in the bush by almost 31 full-time equivalents. The government is also dedicated to creating a flying squad roster of paramedics to help support regional volunteers. That is being funded under this contract to provide relief as well. My husband, Steve, who is a paid paramedic in the metro area, did some country relief in Kalgoorlie. The member for Kalgoorlie was saying how hard it is to retain paramedics. He was meant to be there for four weeks last year, but ended up staying six months to help support the permanent paramedics there. It is hard going out to the regions. It is a different kind of job. There is a lot of support in the metro area—backup ambulances are a phone call away—but paramedics in the regions sometimes go out for hours on end to places that have no phone service and no support, so it is just them and their crewmate. It can sometimes be difficult. It is really good that the Minister for Health is supporting country paramedics.

On Friday last week, the member for Mandurah, the member for Murray–Wellington and I held a state budget breakfast for the community. City of Mandurah Mayor Rhys Williams asked a question about where we are at with the Peel Health Campus upgrade. Before I go into that, I will list what is going to be delivered: 63 additional inpatient beds, 12 chemotherapy places, 20 mental health inpatient beds, one additional operating theatre, at least 15 palliative care hospice beds, more outpatient services, new builds of better medical imaging services and the introduction of a 10-bed mental health emergency centre. That is absolutely amazing. This is in addition to the expansion of the emergency department that has already taken place and the extra car park. Getting back to where we are at, it is probably easiest to quote an article from the *Mandurah Coastal Times* dated Tuesday, 16 May, headed “‘We’ve got to get this right’: David Templeman says Peel Health Campus redevelopment bill likely to increase”. The article states —

Mr Templeman said the history of Peel Health Campus was convoluted and had become a “political football” over the years, before reassuring attendees the State Government remained “absolutely committed” to the project.

“We’ve got to get this right,” he said. “We’ve got to get this hospital, and all of the associated health issues with having a major redevelopment of a hospital, right.

“This is going to be our one go at this.”

The member for Mandurah went on to say —

... intensive scoping work was being undertaken to ensure the hospital catered to both current and future demand.

“Will it cost more? I think it will,” he said.

“The scoping and the planning has got to be done in the most time-managed way as possible.

“Then, we need to have a commitment (on) the real timeline, about when we might see something happen.”

Mr Templeman said planning should be completed towards the end of the year.

“That will effectively determine what extra cost is going to be required, then we want to see that work start,” he said.

But Mr Templeman did not indicate whether there was any sort of timeline in the works.

“What I care about is making sure we get a hospital that delivers to the current and future needs of our growing population,” he said. “That is the critical factor.

“If it costs more, I will demand more. And I think that’s going to be something that’s going to have to happen.

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“I can tell you absolutely, me, Robyn and Lisa are committed to make sure we deliver it. Because it has to happen for our community.”

I think the member for Murray–Wellington would agree, as I do, with the member for Mandurah’s comments. In a press conference on Tuesday, 16 May, our very hardworking Minister for Health reiterated the commitment of the McGowan government to the Peel Health Campus upgrade. At the press conference, a journalist said —

You mentioned servicing the southern corridor; Andrew Hastie is ... raising concern about the slow progress of the Peel Health Campus. Where is that at? Will you give us an update?

Minister Sanderson replied —

Well the Labor government has had a longstanding commitment to the Peel Health Campus, and I remind Andrew Hastie that it was a Liberal government who privatised it and we saw some disastrous outcomes from that. So the Labor government is doing a transition back to public hands and that will be completed next year. So all of those services will be delivered by the public health system. I also remind Andrew Hastie that it is his government that saw a decimation of general practice and bulk billing practices in the Peel region and did absolutely nothing to fix it. So there is pressure on the hospital there and we are working through that.

But we are committed to developing that hospital and we are going through that process now. There will be significant grounds work that we expect to start soon.

What is the saying, members? It is: be careful when pointing a finger at others, because there are three fingers pointing back at you. If we are going to shine a light on anything, I point out that the state Liberal Party had the perfect opportunity to address the needs of the Peel Health Campus when Dr Kim Hames held my seat of Dawesville from 2005 to 2017—a whopping 12 years. I think he was the Deputy Premier for a great deal of that time and he is also a doctor. If the Liberal Party had had the foresight to put even half our funding into Peel Health Campus infrastructure, the people of the Peel region would have a fit-for-purpose hospital to cope with the population now. Luckily for my region, the McGowan-led state government and our awesome Minister for Health have shown a commitment to making a difference. This government has handed down another massive budget surplus of \$4.2 billion for the current financial year. It is because of the Premier’s leadership and strong approach that we can now right the wrongs and invest over \$152 million into transitioning this health campus into a long-awaited regional hospital.

One last comment I will address is the completely fabricated and highly dangerous suggestion by the federal member for Canning and the state opposition that when patients are ramped at hospitals, they are ramped in the back of ambulances. That is simply not true. Yes, there is a ramping, but there is never any ramping in the back of an ambulance. The policy of St John Ambulance is that when an ambulance crew is ramped at a hospital, they are to take their patient either on a stretcher or in a wheelchair, or walk them, into the hospital. They are triaged into the hospital system as soon as possible, but the care of the patient remains the responsibility of the ambulance crew until they are handed over to the hospital. If a patient can come off the stretcher and into the waiting room, they are then the responsibility of the hospital and the crew can clear for another job. I was astonished by the federal member’s ability to stoop so low to score political points by misleading the public on every forum he could find, whether in the local newspaper, on social media or through a mail-out. It is political pointscoring like this that makes me concerned about vulnerable people in our community who might believe this rubbish and fail to call 000 in their time of need. During my 20 years as a paramedic, I have helped many elderly people who laid on the floor for hours overnight because they did not want to worry us. This fearmongering campaign that critically ill people are ramped in the back of ambulances is extremely dangerous, so much so that I wrote to our local paper to put matters right.

Our federal member has also told a huge pants-on-fire furphy about a constituent from my electorate being ramped in the back of an ambulance without food or water for eight hours. I cannot tell members the number of calls and emails I received from my ambo mates asking me to call him out, because his mistruths brought them into disrepute. How dare he suggest that we would leave a poor old lady in the back of an ambulance without meeting any of her basic rights; it was simply disgusting! A paramedic colleague of mine was so incensed by this insinuation that she does not care about her patients that she rang Mr Hastie’s office to complain. What transpired was a very interesting conversation and an admission by his staff that they might have embellished the story about Lyn. What a disgraceful attempt at political pointscoring.

To be clear, no patient is ever ramped in the back of an ambulance and critically ill patients are never, ever ramped—full stop. Anyone who is a priority 1—if they come in with lights and sirens—is immediately handed over to the department and put in a resuscitation bed. Priority 2 patients, who might come in with chest pain, a stroke or something like that, are immediately handed over as well. They might have to wait a minute or two for a bed, but they are seen by a doctor and a nurse straightaway and treated straightaway until they are stabilised. Priority 3

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and 4 patients are different; they can be ramped. Those patients might have cellulitis or they might be a dementia patient with a fracture. Those people are ramped. They stay with us and we care for them; we take them to X-ray, we give them bloods, we can give them pain relief and we are in touch with doctors and nurses within the hospital. If they start to decline, they are handed over. At no stage is any critical patient left in any way, shape or form ignored in the back of the ambulance. It is simply not true.

Moving on to more positive comments, the 2023–24 state budget demonstrates major investments into WA's future by tackling climate change through a \$3 billion package, ensuring that the state has cleaner, stronger, reliable and affordable energy into the future, as well as investing in the environment. Peel initiatives include the \$2.8 billion investment into transitioning WA's energy system for a low-carbon future and \$18.8 million to continue the Healthy Estuaries WA program to improve the water quality of estuaries across the region.

From a local perspective, I have the pleasure to co-chair, with the member for Mandurah, the committee for Bindjareb Djilba, otherwise known as the Peel–Harvey estuary protection plan. This is a whole-of-government response to improve water quality in the Peel–Harvey estuary system in a way that responds to climate change impacts and the pressure of urban development and agricultural expansion. We have made a commitment, as the government of Western Australia, to implement this plan and work across local and state departments together, creating new and innovative ways to link land use, planning and development to water quality outcomes that support both human and environmental needs.

I will mention the people, other than me and Hon David Templeman, at the table who are investing their time and, just as importantly, their teams' time and efforts. Trudy Evans is the senior environmental officer for the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation. Trudy is the stalwart. She does the hard work. She is the secretary to everything. She is like the right hand to David and me, so a big shout-out to Trudy for her support and help. We really appreciate it. There is also Simon Taylor, executive director, regional delivery, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation; George Walley, a Bindjareb Noongar elder and local environmental tourism business owner; Jane O'Malley, chief executive officer of the Peel–Harvey Catchment Council; Jacquie Stone, director of policy, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage; Andrew Ward, CEO of the Peel Development Commission; Brett Brechley, executive manager, natural environment, City of Mandurah; Andrew Trosic, director, development services, Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale; Greg Delahunty, manager, planning and environmental services, Shire of Murray; Jason Mackay, principal, drainage and liveable communities, Water Corporation; Karen Oborn, director of infrastructure and development; Simon Hall, director, sustainable development, Shire of Harvey; and Mark Cugley, district manager, Swan coastal district, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

[Member's time extended.]

Mrs L.A. MUNDAY: There is also Heather Percy, principal research scientist.

Ms C.M. Rowe: Short.

Mrs L.A. MUNDAY: Short. Okay! There is a lot of other people. Thank you very much to everyone.

I give a quick shout-out to the Western Australian Seabird Rescue Group in Mandurah. I had the opportunity to head out very early one morning with Danny, Barb and Lee to go birdwatching, or more like bird checking. Seabird Rescue is a tight-knit network of seabird and waterbird rescuers based in our region. It was founded in 2003 in Mandurah. Every year, its members rescue and rehabilitate hundreds of waterbirds, including herons, swans and ducks. They are available 24/7 every day of the year, including Christmas and New Year's Eve. These people are super-dedicated volunteers who man the hotline and turn out rain, hail or shine to rescue birds. So far this year, they have received 623 phone calls and rescued 334 birds. They are enthusiastic and they need more volunteers and support. Reports of distressed seabirds and waterbirds can go to the hotline (08) 6102 8464. I give a quick shout-out to Lee, Barb, Jo, Danny, Jacqueline and Bourke. There is only a handful of these people and they do an outstanding job in the Mandurah area.

I am proud of this state budget delivered by the McGowan Labor government and its commitment to invest in the Peel region, particularly in the growing electorate of Dawesville. We have seen many investments in the community, infrastructure, quality training and education programs and the much-needed expansion of our health and mental health care system to include more innovative services. It is clear that the McGowan Labor government has not forgotten about regional areas in this budget and has worked to ensure that we have the same level of access to, affordability and availability of, service delivery as the rest of the state. I am excited that my electorate will see the benefit of these policies for a long time to come. I want to thank the Premier; Treasurer for his investment in this state budget for the people living in the south west region and the people in the suburbs of the Dawesville region. I commend the bills to the house.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [12.04 pm]: I am pleased to provide a response to the government's seventh budget, the Premier's third as Treasurer. This is a budget he claimed was about sowing the

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seeds for a strong economy, providing for generations to come—a budget that should have delivered significant opportunities and provided a legacy for those future generations of WA on the back of the wealth gifted to the McGowan government during the greatest boom Western Australia has ever experienced. Instead, it was a budget of empty promises and missed opportunities—a missed opportunity to provide meaningful relief to our most vulnerable in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, a missed opportunity for taxation reform, a missed opportunity to diversify our economy and a missed opportunity to pay down the debt as was promised again and again when the Premier was in opposition.

The McGowan government has been the recipient of \$19 billion in surpluses over the past five years thanks to booming iron ore royalties and GST returns put in place by the former coalition government. Another \$11 billion in surpluses is forecast across the forward estimates period. This has nothing to do with good financial management, but rather a significant change in fortune thanks to the GST floor legislated by the previous Liberal–National government, coupled with huge global demand for iron ore and a sharp increase in its price, which has gone from a low of \$58 per tonne to a high of \$215 per tonne and is currently sitting at around \$US100 a tonne. This has delivered more than \$44 billion in royalties since this government has taken office. It is simply astounding that on the back of such a healthy budget position gifted to this government that this is the best the government could come up with—no inspiring ideas, no game-changing infrastructure and very little tax reform. This is a government that, despite the dollars pouring into its coffers and unprecedented control, has overseen a broken hospital system, a housing crisis and record levels of police leaving the force.

What this budget did deliver was more of the McGowan government’s spin, building on its legacy of empty promises. One does not have to look very far to find the first glaring broken election promise—forecast debt in the forward years. When in opposition, the Premier promised Western Australians that he would repay debt slowly, like a mortgage, claiming he was a safe pair of hands with sound economic and financial management. The Premier used every opportunity to tell anyone who would listen how bad debt had become in Western Australia. This was promoted with a ridiculous so-called debt monster that accompanied the now Premier to his press conferences. Upon forming government, Labor took every opportunity to tell everyone how bad things had become, declaring WA’s financial situation was the worst since the Great Depression and that everyone would need to contribute to budget repair.

After all the hard talk in seven years of the McGowan government, what has actually occurred? Debt is expected to fall to \$27.8 billion in 2022–23, down from \$29.5 billion at the time of the midyear review. Most would consider this to be a good outcome, given that debt was \$31.9 billion in 2016–17 when this government was first elected. Astoundingly, however, we will see debt rise to \$36 billion in three years’ time, with the budget papers showing cash deficits every year for the next four years. It is simply beyond belief that after receiving \$19 billion in surpluses, debt will still increase under this government—a government that was elected with a promise and mandate to pay it off.

There is also an opportunity for tax reform. After all, there is no better time to reform state taxes and/or royalties than when the finances are doing well. As the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia has stated, Western Australia has one of the highest rates of payroll tax, or tax on jobs, in the country. Therefore, this budget could have been a great opportunity to address that, along with further reforms to stamp duty. Instead, it was another missed opportunity to throw our small business sector a bone in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis.

What about WA households? What part of the \$4 billion surplus recorded this year will be passed on to the thousands of Western Australians struggling to make ends meet and keep the lights on, particularly with so many people due to come off their fixed mortgages on the back of 11 consecutive rate rises in the last year? The government’s \$400 electricity rebate will undoubtedly be welcome, but I question why the government, with such a healthy surplus, felt compelled to increase fees and charges on a range of services as well. This is a budget that gives with one hand and takes with the other. Western Australian households will have to find an extra \$150, on average, to pay for the increased fees and charges the government is slugging them for water, electricity and licensing fees, to name a few. The budget papers also highlight that these fees and charges are expected to increase by 2.5 per cent for each of the next three years, adding another \$167 in fees in 2024–25 and going up to \$175 in 2026–27.

These fees come at a time when approximately 528 000 energy customer accounts have debt, an increase of 104 000 accounts compared with June 2022. In addition, approximately 108 000 customer accounts are classified as having some kind of financial difficulty, which is an increase of 16 000 compared with June 2021. This has resulted in disconnections continuing to occur at alarming rates. Charities and not-for-profits have been carrying the load of the cost-of-living crisis; they are being inundated with requests for emergency food, housing and financial counselling support. The opposition alliance called for a \$300 million boost over the next two years to support them, but this was ignored by the budget. We are not the only ones saying that the government has this aspect wrong. A *WAtoday* article states —

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Anglicare WA chief executive Mark Glasson said the state's strong economic position provided an opportunity to invest in long-term strategies to improve support for families in WA, but that had been lost with today's announcement.

"For those families that are in the midst of a cost of living and housing crisis this state has never seen before, there is very little in the way of long-term benefits for them in today's budget," he said.

"We needed a serious commitment to long-term pipelines of housing construction that is social and affordable, but that's not in there.

"We needed support immediately available for people to secure their rentals now, so they don't become homeless the next time their lease expires, but that's not in there either."

It is another missed opportunity to provide targeted relief to the agencies helping our state's most vulnerable.

Although the McGowan government is now enjoying the significant windfalls of the resources boom, it needs to take a step back and realise that this is the result of the hard work of previous governments that opened up the state to trade and, more importantly, the hardworking people of Western Australia. No sound economic and financial management has been involved in delivering the outcomes Western Australia has received over the last three years. Instead, it has relied on two factors only: the higher iron ore price and the federal Liberal–National government fixing the GST. You would think that any Premier graced by such good luck would just keep quiet and enjoy the windfalls he has received—not ours, though. Instead, he chooses to rile the other states into potential action. Another WAtoday article states —

Western Australian Premier Mark McGowan has warned "wildly angry" states from attempting to dismantle GST reforms after his government posted one of the country's biggest ever budget surplus on the back of booming iron ore prices.

...

In a chest-beating presentation filled with stark comparisons to the deficit-laden budgets of his eastern states counterparts, Mr McGowan declared if WA were its own country, it would be the second most prosperous region in the globe after China.

...

"If you compare us with other states, I kid you not, they will be wildly angry and will be wanting to undo the GST deal because they failed to budget properly," he said.

I note that in last year's budget speech the Premier bragged about how other state premiers looked like they had "swallowed a bumblebee". These comments not only are unstatesmanlike, but also do little to alleviate the GST tension that exists between jurisdictions. The Premier is now using \$1.6 million of taxpayers' money to employ three so-called GST fairness fighters to protect the windfalls he has been flaunting in front of our eastern states counterparts—what a ridiculous state of affairs.

We do not need to look any further than law and order to see this government's failings to do the basics and keep our community safe. The government goes to great lengths to obfuscate the issues facing Western Australia Police Force and crime levels in our community. It says crime is trending down, but the devil is in the detail. The figures the government relies on are the result of falling drug-related offences, due to border restrictions, and people staying at home during COVID, which reduced property-related crime. A closer look at the statistics reveals that violent crime is up 14 per cent and family-related offences are up 34.9 per cent. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, WA has the highest rate of reported family and domestic violence-related assault offences against females across all states, with 1 254 assaults for 100 000 females reported to police in 2021.

I recently met with police and community members in Laverton and Leonora. These communities are crying out for support to address the increasing levels of alcohol-fuelled violence. There has been a 60 per cent increase in violent crime in Kalgoorlie, a 22 per cent increase in Laverton and a 32 per cent increase in Leonora. Towns across regional WA have been pleading to the McGowan government to help deal with the increase in youth crime, and their pleas continue to fall on deaf ears.

Unfortunately, our police officers also feel that their concerns are falling on deaf ears. This is highlighted by the alarming number of officers quitting the force, which can only be described as a damning reflection of the McGowan government's treatment of our frontline workers. There were 473 police resignations in 2022, which included 128 resignations in November alone. Between 1 January and 14 February this year, another 61 officers resigned. This is the highest number in the state's 189-year history. Parliamentary questions revealed that at the end of last year there were 182 vacancies, with 96 of those in the regions.

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Our police are also struggling under the pressures of the job. In 2019, 777 personnel accessed mental health support. In 2022, 3 327 police officers accessed mental health support services. You would think that the stresses attached to the job would be ringing alarm bells for the government, but what does the government do? Rather than look at the figures and try to improve the morale and culture within the force or address workplace pressures, the government says, “Nothing to see here. We will poach new officers from overseas and cut mental health programs, including mental health first aid.” No wonder there is an exodus of police leaving the force; they simply do not feel supported in their jobs. The opposition supports WA’s policemen and policewomen, and the McGowan government should too.

I turn now to the state of the health portfolio, which has become a complete mess under the McGowan government. Lives are being put at risk unnecessarily. This is a government that effectively took a razor to the health budget in its first term in government, and now we are seeing a desperate game of catch-up in the health system, which is under incredible pressure. Is it any wonder that we have seven of the eight worst-performing emergency departments in the country, an elective surgery waitlist that has skyrocketed, and record numbers of ambulance ramping of more than 66 000 hours last year? One of the main challenges with ramping has been a lack of capacity in the system. The budget’s planned additional 600 beds are good news but, as always, there is very little detail. I look forward to better understanding where these beds will come from and when they will be delivered, given that we had the lowest number of beds per capita in the country, going into COVID.

The \$2.7 billion for health and mental health announced in this year’s budget is a great headline, but a quick look at the newspapers illustrates how misleading this is. Almost half is for capital works programs that will have no immediate benefit to our health system until they are completed. It also includes \$544 million over the next four years to start the women’s and babies’ hospital. After \$9.5 million has already been spent on this project—no doubt, for consultation, design and plans—the Minister for Health ignored it all and moved the project to a site 20 kilometres south of the river. This project has been talked about for more than three years, yet we are now back to square one. Where is the business case that says we should move the project? Where is the advice? How much of the \$1.8 billion allocated in initial funding for the project will be used to fund upgrades to the Osborne Park Hospital to bring it up to scratch? Will the scope of the project still include upgrades to the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre, as outlined in the original plan? Significant issues and concerns around this plan have not been addressed yet, but we have seen the Minister for Health ignore concerns raised by experts and instead make a classic captain’s call. The decision to abandon the original location of this hospital without consultation from health and amid a range of very serious public concerns from neonatal experts that the new location will increase the risk of death and disability for the state’s most at-risk newborns is a major issue. The former head of the neonatal intensive care units at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women and Princess Margaret Hospital, Professor Karen Simmer, called this a dangerous decision. I am sure there are many who cannot speak up for fear of retribution who agree with her—and I bet the Minister for Health knows that. The \$760 million for general health over the next four years equates to \$190 million a year, while our overworked and overstretched emergency departments have been given \$75 million over the same period. An additional \$150 million for mental health will do little to address the chronic shortage of mental health services in this state.

It is simply astounding that funding for mental health prevention services falls to just 1.3 per cent in 2026–27. Given that the *Sustainable health review: Final report to the Western Australian government* states that prevention should be at least five per cent of the mental health budget, this is simply inexcusable. In the asset investment program this year we see a six per cent investment in health compared to 35 per cent in transport. It comes at a time when the sustainable health review also remains largely unfunded and unimplemented. That document provided a road map for the future of our system and if it had been implemented, perhaps the government would not be scrambling to address so many issues and problems.

The other health initiative announced in this budget included HECS–HELP to graduate nurses and midwives, but only if they move to the regions. What is missing in this budget announcement is where these critical and much-needed healthcare workers will live and incentives around that. It is another empty promise for an initiative that cannot be delivered without appropriate community-based housing and services.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms L. METTAM: This brings me to training and skills shortages. One of the first decisions of the McGowan government in 2017 was to make changes to the state skills list and remove Perth as a regional centre. It does not matter which way we look at this. In the fullness of time this decision will be seen to be one of the worst policy decisions the McGowan government has made and it has contributed significantly to the skills shortages we are currently experiencing. The Premier gloated at the time that no longer could overseas workers be fast-tracked into bricklaying, tiling or electrician jobs. The impact of this decision saw skilled migration fall by 51 per cent in the first three years of this government, while training also fell by 17 per cent over the same period. Astoundingly, we are now trying to import migrants to fill those very trades that the Premier bragged about stopping. The Master Builders

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Association of Western Australia said that WA would need to attract around 26 000 tradies by 2026. That will include targeting more than 1 000 overseas tradies to move to WA, with financial incentives and tweaks to the visa system. This has created yet more challenges: how do we house the migrants this government desperately seeks to attract to build our houses, work in our hospitals and support our police?

Housing is one of the most significant challenges in the state with commencements falling to some of the lowest recorded this year. This is exacerbated by a lack of available private rentals and rent increases that are pushing families to the limit. Vacancy rates are currently below one per cent and many Western Australians are forced to live in tents or cars as they are unable to find appropriate accommodation. WA is now the sleeping rough capital of the country, with more than 2 315 people sleeping rough according to the latest census data on homelessness—a 114 per cent increase from 2016. It is all good for the Premier to stand in this place and say that we are one of the most affordable places to live in Australia; however, that does not help families who have to find the additional money to deal with the highest capital city rental hikes in the country at 12.8 per cent a year. With a median rent of \$560 a week, renting is currently out of reach for many single-income and low-income households. When questioned on where the additional migrant workers who were being attracted to the state were going to stay, we were told that it was a conundrum but not to worry because they would live in shared accommodation. It is extraordinary that the McGowan government has allowed this crisis to get so dire that there is an issue of where to house the workers required.

Social housing numbers should also be an embarrassment for this government with the most recent figures highlighting that more than 600 fewer social housing dwellings are available now compared with the situation in 2017. This government has sold off more homes than it has built in the social housing space. It is a reflection of a government that has lost its way and is increasingly out of touch with the challenges Western Australians face. Having \$600 million sitting in a social housing investment fund does nothing to get people into the homes they desperately need now—nor does it provide any time frame for when more dwellings might be provided. The social housing list has grown from 15 072 households in 2017 to 18 963 households last year, which is almost 34 000 individuals who are waiting two years or longer to get a home. That wait is due to a blowout from the current 115 weeks to 130 weeks. This is a government that fails to deliver.

The McGowan Labor government's legacy will not be shaped only by the significant once-in-a-lifetime opportunities it has had to invest and build a better Western Australia, but rather by its failure to effectively do so. This Labor government is unable to build or deliver infrastructure; it is big on spin and empty promises but cannot deliver. The women's and babies' hospital was promised in 2020 but will not be delivered until at least 2029.

This government promised in 2017 to build three medi-hotels across the metropolitan region. Six years on all that has been delivered is four beds at Royal Perth Hospital. That is fewer than one bed a year for a key health election commitment to address the serious bed capacity issues in the system. After seven budgets, we are yet to see a single Metronet station opened, with an additional \$1.2 billion provided this year alone for cost blowouts. What started as a \$3.7 billion commitment is now a more than \$11 billion project. The only ribbon that has been cut was on the Forrestfield–Airport Link that was started by the former Liberal–National government. Westport's outer harbour project, which former Treasurer Ben Wyatt stated would happen last term, is funded only to complete a business case. The government's so-called flagship homelessness project, Common Ground, is still a patch of dirt three years after the East Perth site was secured. These are all projects that should have been at least in construction now but have failed to be delivered.

This budget also provides seed funding for the state's transition towards net zero. The alliance opposition supports the transition; however, there are significant challenges for industry and government, some of which relate to the decision that Western Australia's state-owned coal power stations be retired by 2030. The \$2.8 billion in this budget, which includes a 500-megawatt battery energy storage system in Collie, is a significant investment for the state and the local community. However, as the shadow Minister for Energy pointed out, the funding for the battery project and its benefits, such as how many homes it will back up on the worst energy days, is opaque at best. This major funding allocation came a day after the WA energy minister flagged a major expansion to the south west interconnected system, foreshadowing that more than 4 000 kilometres of new transmission lines would be required within 20 years. Transmission lines are costly and it is unclear who will pay. The minister stated that the current system was too small to accommodate an expected tripling in demand as the private sector begins transitioning to green energy to power heavy industry in WA. This represents a significant challenge to households and also for industry, given the significant costs associated with energy. Let us not forget that this government just attempted to increase household fees by stealth by increasing streetlight tariffs by 44 per cent. We all agree that we must reduce our emissions, but it remains a reasonable question: how much will the transition cost and who will ultimately pay?

Western Australia needs to be an open and competitive trade-oriented destination and jurisdiction, one that is nimble and responsive to changing markets and growing global demand. Demand has created a significant opportunity

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for this state, thanks to our critical mineral reserves and our reputation as a trusted and reliable supplier. Increasingly, demand for our resources is expanding beyond traditional commodities such as iron ore and gold. The pace of technological development has been accelerating and with it the demand for minerals critical to the defence, aerospace, automotive, renewable energy, telecommunications and agritech sectors. However, the ability for the resources sector to move into further processing on Western Australian soil is dependent on the ability to process these chemically complex raw materials competitively. This has been highlighted by the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies, which stated —

“Western Australia needs a more focused approach to diversifying our economy, and one that leverages off the strength of the mining industry, with investment in downstream processing to realise greater value from our resources here at home.”

The development of critical minerals can enhance the state’s strategic importance and geopolitical standing. Many countries heavily depend on imports to meet their critical mineral needs, which, as highlighted during the COVID pandemic, makes them vulnerable to supply disruptions and price fluctuations. By developing a robust domestic supply chain, Western Australia can ensure its self-sufficiency and strengthen its position in global trade. In an increasingly competitive international environment, the McGowan government should be doing everything in its power to foster innovation, attract investment and create new economic opportunities in our state.

Finally, turning to my electorate of Vasse, we have seen the McGowan Labor government illustrate a lack of vision with no new funding for the expansion of the Busselton Margaret River Airport terminal or the redevelopment of Margaret River Hospital and emergency department upgrades, highlighting the government’s out-of-sight, out-of-mind attitude to people living in regional areas. The Premier made a big deal about support for regional Western Australians, but the devil is always in the detail and the lack of detail for any major job-creation and infrastructure initiatives shows that this government has really run out of ideas. Budgets are supposed to be forward looking, but the biggest investments that the McGowan Labor government has committed to are largely road projects and other infrastructure projects already underway—nothing new and more of the same.

There was a missed opportunity to invest in upgrades to and the expansion of the Busselton Margaret River Airport terminal, which would have built on the region’s international reputation, interstate capacity and the growth that the airport has already experienced as a result of the former government’s commitment to the expansion project. The government spends millions on international and interstate advertising to drive tourism and jobs in our region, but it does little to back it up with a funding commitment for a more modern and welcoming airport. The lack of funding to upgrade Margaret River Hospital is a glaring oversight that exposes the government’s smoke-and-mirrors commitment to people living in the region. The WA Country Health Service identified priority upgrades to the hospital more than two years ago, but nothing has been committed to.

In conclusion, this budget should have delivered significant opportunities and provided a legacy for future generations. Unfortunately, it has done neither. Instead, it simply highlights that the McGowan Labor government has done exactly what it promised no government should ever be able to do again and squandered the greatest boom this state has ever experienced.

MS R.S. STEPHENS (Albany) [12.33 pm]: I am very happy to rise following the member for Vasse’s contribution about the money spent in regional areas. I am proud to stand here as the member for Albany to highlight and bring attention to some of the projects that are happening in the region.

I was a bit miffed by my mayor, Dennis Wellington, with whom I have a very good working relationship. He came to the budget briefing with Minister Whitby in Albany on Friday. We also had some of the member for Roe’s constituents from the great southern. It was a really great briefing. For the mayor to walk away saying it was a pretty standard outcome for our region was, I think, quite disappointing, given that we have \$37 million going to the Albany ring-road, which will really finish that project. He highlighted other things around mental health and I hope that I can highlight some of the contributions and money that will be spent in the regions on that issue and others.

This budget delivers cost-of-living relief for regional Western Australians. It is investing in infrastructure for regional health, housing, jobs and training. We are spending more than \$4 billion delivering the royalties for regions program. The McGowan government is delivering cost-of-living support for great southern residents while investing significantly in health, housing and the transition to cleaner, stronger and reliable energy. This budget features a massive \$11.2 million investment in regional infrastructure. That is an incredible amount of money that will also be spent on regional service delivery. Obviously, I have sat here, as many other members have, for the last few days as we have talked about the cost of living for households, including the \$400 electricity credit. Many constituents in the Albany community come to my office about the cost of living and housing; they are the two main issues that come through those doors. I think the \$400 credit and the additional targeted support of \$826 for the households that need it most are really good initiatives.

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I want to turn to the regional airfare caps. The government has invested \$20.7 million to meet the demand for capped regional airfares. We are not having a great run with regional flights in Albany at the moment. I can put on the record that I am one of the many residents who has been caught up in the Rex Airlines delays—we say that we have been “Rexed” again!

Mr P.J. Rundle: What is the Minister for Transport doing about it?

Ms R.S. STEPHENS: It is funny the member for Roe should ask that because I was in a meeting with Rex a few weeks ago to talk about some of the issues that it is facing, like many others post-COVID. One thing that Rex does not do is highlight what it is actually doing. It has built its own flying school. Rex is training its pilots in Victoria. I did not know that, and it was very reassuring to hear about that. I know Rex is doing everything it can to ensure that flights are on time, but I acknowledge that they have not been. I am hoping that I can get home tonight —

Mr P.J. Rundle: The minister is putting on more flights, but we actually want reliability of the current flights.

Ms R.S. STEPHENS: Rex is meeting all of its contractual obligations. The contract is out for tender and I look forward to seeing who gets that. But I am grateful for Rex, and I do not want to see it go, because delivering four flights a day to Albany is a really good thing for my region, businesspeople and me. I can get on the 6.30 flight to Perth on a Tuesday and spend an extra night at home to watch my kids play sports. I really hope that Rex can get back on track, because I think living in a regional area and getting four flights a day is quite incredible.

Mr P.J. Rundle: So do I.

Ms R.S. STEPHENS: Yes.

I hope I get home tonight; if not, that will be another story! I really want to acknowledge those capped regional airfares. To go from Albany to Perth and return for \$400 ensures that our community members can get to Perth to see family and loved ones, or maybe go to Coldplay if they can get tickets—whatever it might be that they might want to come to the city for. It is really important.

I acknowledge that our airline is used by people to get to medical appointments. That is another issue I see through my office. I am really grateful for the contribution through the patient assisted travel scheme. There will be times when people need to come to the metropolitan area to get health services. I explain to residents in my community that if they want the best of care, the specialists are sometimes in Perth. We have some significant people moving to our region to work in the hospital. I can see that in our community. Some of the parents of kids who go to school with my kids have really chosen to call Albany home. We are attracting some incredible professionals in the medical field.

Through the Rural Clinical School of Western Australia, we are proudly training the next generation of doctors right in Albany with incredible professionals like Kirsten Auret from the Great Southern Palliative Care Service and many others. I really consider Albany to be a place where we have some extremely high level professionals in health, but I acknowledge that sometimes people need to come to Perth for other services.

Flying Doctor Day yesterday was great. I was able to host one of the families from Albany—mum, Sherie, and little Luna. Luna had to jump on a Royal Flying Doctor Service flight when she was eight days old, suffering from respiratory syncytial virus. My sister and my nephew and my dad have had to use the Royal Flying Doctor Service. It was really lovely to see that family and for them to really appreciate what the Royal Flying Doctor Service does in our regions.

One of the things in the budget that we have not really spoken about—I have not heard anyone else speak about it—is the doubling of the accommodation at Ronald McDonald House. When regional families have to come to Perth, it is pretty traumatic. My sister turned to me and said, “I have to pack all my things into this little bag and I have to get on the plane. What do I do when I get there?” It was only yesterday that Sherie explained that she had had the same experience and was transferred from Jandakot to Perth Children’s Hospital and they got separated. Ronald McDonald House provides beautiful support to families who are going through a hard time. I acknowledge the government for the extra \$20.7 million in funding over the next four years for that incredible facility that is there for regional families.

Another thing happening for the health system in Albany that is not very sexy or exciting is the addition of car parking bays. As anyone who goes to a hospital will know, extra car parking bays are critically important. We are adding 100 car parking bays to Albany Health Campus. This is a \$2.1 million investment that will complement the recently opened radiation oncology unit. We are also doubling the capacity of the dental service, which was an election commitment in 2021. I welcome that project going ahead; it is going well. I look forward to seeing the doubling of the capacity of the dental service.

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Housing is a big issue in our regions. I am very proud of the organisations in the not-for-profit sector in Albany that work in our housing space. Advance Housing is an incredible organisation that has about 380 houses around Albany, Katanning and Kojonup. It runs an incredible operation. The Country Women's Association has some empty holiday units in Albany. It was only on Monday that I sat around a table with people from Advance Housing, Anglicare, the local government and the Albany Community Foundation. All these agencies are hoping to enable this empty block of units to be changed into short-term accommodation. This was purely about looking at some of the properties that are vacant and enabling that to happen. I was sitting at the table with this incredible bunch of people talking about this program being driven by the Albany Community Foundation, which does great work in our community. Funding will be put towards bringing these apartments and little houses up to scratch in the hope that we can move some of our most vulnerable people into them as soon as possible.

I spoke about this at our budget briefing. What I like about our budget is that there is large and significant investment that is not pinned to a certain project. That is really good practice and common sense for projects that might be shovel ready or what the community needs in six or 12 months. It enables the minister to ensure that the projects can go ahead when they are presented. I know that some of the community housing providers are grateful and are looking forward to those different opportunities when the next stage of the funding round opens. I am sure that other members have people come to them with incredibly innovative ideas such as building modular homes—a gentleman wants to use a 3D laser printer to build a concrete house, which blew my mind—or using concrete tilt-up panels, which can obviously speed up the build time and get people into houses as soon as possible.

I know that I do not have much time, because I very kindly gave the member for Vasse the opportunity to go ahead of me.

Ms M.J. Davies: You could come back after question time.

Ms R.S. STEPHENS: I could do that actually!

I spoke briefly before about the \$37 million for the Menang Drive–Chester Pass Road grade separation. This \$37 million will finish the ring-road, which will mean that trucks will be able to use the flyover over the Menang Drive–Chester Pass Road intersection and make their way to the port without having to stop. I know that the community has wanted to see that project completed in its entirety, so I am really proud that the government has been able to find the additional funding to ensure that this project is completed.

The other thing that I thought the mayor might have picked up but he did not is the additional funding for the port. There is \$17.4 million for upgrades at the Southern Ports Authority and another \$6.8 million for electrical infrastructure at Albany port. Obviously, the port is one of our main pieces of infrastructure and it is right in the middle of our town, so it is really important we ensure that it is highly functioning so we can continue to export from that location.

I want to move on to sport. The member for Collie–Preston mentioned the boosting of the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. I used to work for the Department of Sport and Recreation, and I am very passionate about ensuring that our communities have the best sporting facilities. We are increasing that funding. We are also changing some of the parameters around the amount that can be funded and the funding streams. Any member who has been in Parliament or local government will know the third–third–third strategy, which has been around for a long time. That will be changed slightly, which is quite exciting.

The other one is the regional athlete support program. We have undertaken to change the academy in Albany to the great southern academy of sport. A new committee was formed a few months ago. Peter Watson, the former member for Albany, is the chair, which I think is a great thing. The members of that committee range from Kathryn Slattery, a former Hockeyroo, to other members of our community and the great southern community. It is \$4.9 million. The great southern has not been getting much of a chunk of the pie. I look forward to seeing that academy grow. That funding will ensure that our regional athletes can compete on the same stage as metropolitan athletes. My daughter wanted to try out for the state soccer team and when she got to the trials, she found that she was the only kid from the regions, which blew my mind. It has a cost effect. Athletes have to miss out on attending their weekly sporting events if they want to make it to the next level. I hope that this funding can provide the same opportunity for our young children that has been provided for the talented people we have in our regions. I know that some of our sports do it well. The Storm academy and the basketball program are doing a really amazing job in the great southern. I look forward to that money being spent on our children so that they can compete on the world stage.

I would like to mention some of the other projects underway in the great southern. The performing arts centre at Albany Senior High School is nearing completion. It was great to take the Premier through it a few months ago. It is being turned from a basketball court and the place where we did our exams when we were younger into this incredible performing arts centre, with a stage, retractable seating and all the modern technology. It will also be open to the community to use. It is really fantastic that the students will be able to perform on the stage and also

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do other vocational education and training programs, including music and hospitality. There is a cafe where the hospitality students will be able to practise. That is nearing completion and I look forward to opening that facility with the Premier and the minister. We hope to attract some former students of the school. We might get former Premier Alan Carpenter or The Waifs—I do not know. We have bred some amazing people in Albany, so we will see who comes to that.

I would like to finish by talking about the new trade training workshop at South Regional TAFE. This is another amazing facility. Again, we are investing an incredible amount of money to ensure that we can provide the best infrastructure and opportunities for those people who want to train in our regions. That is \$22 million to create a new trade workshop that will host workshops for heavy diesel mechanics and working at heights. It will ensure that the next generation can live, work, train and stay in our amazing city. With that, I will finish—no, I will keep talking for a little bit longer!

Mr P.J. Rundle: Talk about the landslide.

Ms R.S. STEPHENS: The landslide, okay, I thank the member for Roe. There was a budget item for the landslide.

Mr P.J. Rundle: What about some compensation for those people?

Ms R.S. STEPHENS: Member for Roe, I have been doing some significant work with the community in Mira Mar. I am sure the member has read the report that was handed down.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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