

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Peter Rundle;
Ms Merome Beard; Ms Hannah Beazley; Ms Lara Dalton; Mr Terry Healy

STATE ECONOMY — WORKFORCE

Motion

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [4.00 pm]: I move —

This house condemns the WA Labor government for its stark failure to adequately address the ongoing skills crisis plaguing our state, its failure to properly prioritise the fundamental needs of our workforce and industries, and its inability to work with the federal Labor government to bolster our skills supply.

The member for Cockburn told us we would be disappointing him very shortly. I can see the member in the Speaker's chair, so he is now in a position to be disappointed for a good hour or so. I think he has the very difficult task of chairing private members' business. Well done.

We know that during the 2017 state election campaign, the former Premier of Western Australia promised that a McGowan Labor government would on day one tear up the current list of occupations that fast-tracks overseas workers to Western Australia. True to that promise, the former Premier slashed the skilled migration list from 178 occupations to 18 occupations. He proudly announced —

The old Skilled Migration Occupation List is no more.

There used to be 178 occupations that could fast-track overseas workers into jobs.

Today, we have a new list. And that list has just 18 occupations.

No longer can overseas workers be fast-tracked into bricklaying, tiling or electrician jobs.

And the ones that are left are occupations like gastroenterologists, rheumatologists ...

And the like —

most of the 18 are highly specialised medical jobs like these.

We've put WA jobs first, like we promised. We're putting WA workers back to work with more local jobs for WA.

...

This was the first action of my Government, and I'm proud to get this done within the first 100 days.

...

I always said that from Day 1 of a Government I lead that we'll put WA jobs first!

He went on to talk about sending a letter to the then Prime Minister, a fellow called Malcolm Turnbull. He wrote to Mr Turnbull saying that he wanted to reduce the number of occupations on the Western Australian skilled migration occupation list. The letter's final paragraph says —

I would like to request that Perth be removed from the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS). My government is currently conducting a review of the West Australian Skilled Migration Occupation list ... and will provide an updated list once the review is complete.

On 17 March 2017, which was very soon after the 2017 election, he wrote to the then Prime Minister. Subsequent to that letter, the list was slashed from 178 occupations to 18 occupations, all of which were highly specialised and unlikely to be filled locally in the ordinary course of events. Clearly, the former Premier had doubts about the future of the Western Australian economy. At that stage, he had read the tea leaves and thought that the iron ore industry and commodity prices were continuing to fall, and he made some damaging decisions, I think, on the back of being spooked by Treasury's pessimistic outlook in the budget papers. As a result, he made decisions about the skilled migration list that are still having ramifications today. If a government tells people that they are not welcome and it does not want them, and if it takes steps as he did from 17 March 2017, the effects are widespread and long lived. People take the hint and decide they will not bother going there. We know that we have been unable to keep up with the supply of skilled migrants ever since.

We know that COVID did not help. As a reaction to a unique set of circumstances during the pandemic, we were left in a situation in which the borders were very tightly closed. That meant that when people were considering coming in and out of Western Australia, many decided that they would not come back once they had left. For instance, some FIFO workers and people contributing to our industries were coming from Queensland and as far away as New Zealand. When they were able to come back to Western Australia, many never did so because of their concern about the borders.

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We supported most of the restrictions to close borders at the height of the pandemic, but we always pleaded with the government so that properly quarantined people had the ability to come in to fill those desperately needed placements. Many members in this chamber frequently wrote on behalf of businesses and industries that required skilled workers to come in to fill the shortfalls. Once the borders reopened, it remained difficult to attract people into Western Australia because of the ongoing concern about what might happen. That continues today.

The federal government slashing the skilled migration list by 70 per cent sends a signal to the rest of the world that Western Australia is not really open for business for them. That was a decision of the federal Labor government. I note that the minister is here and will be able to explain what she thinks of the federal Labor government. I am sure that she will have some colourful things to say.

Mr P.J. Rundle: She did a good job of making up for the Prime Minister in the press conference the other day, to be honest.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I do not know whether it was a good job because it did not reverse the decision, but I take the hint that she tried to some extent. She seemed to be unsure about how to leave the podium with the Prime Minister without appearing to be too close to him and his decisions. It was very uncomfortable to watch on Channel Seven, but the footage was very well shared. That Channel Seven news clip has been well shared, and many of the comments I have seen attached to it have referred to the disconnect between federal Labor and Western Australia. Of course, we know that even with a record number of federal Labor MPs, there still does not seem to be any ability for Western Australia to be heard. We can have the cabinet over here, but they do not listen. There are 14 Western Australian Labor members of the federal Parliament, but they do not listen.

Mr P.J. Rundle: Set up the embassy.

Mr R.S. LOVE: They have a press conference with the minister, but they do not listen. That is the take-home message for Western Australians about federal Labor.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): Ministers!

Mr R.S. LOVE: When we go to the next election, the people of Western Australia will remember how ineffective their federal Labor representatives have been in this period and how embarrassing it is to be lectured by Canberra. The federal Treasurer said there is no need for an embassy because they are all here listening, but they are not doing very much listening. I am afraid that the federal Labor government does not listen any more than the state Labor government listened to people concerned about getting people to come in to fill industries' needs in every occupation one can name in the state. From truck drivers right through to the most highly qualified medical staff, engineers, all sorts of process workers, construction workers, you name it, we have been short. For years we have been pleading with the government to enable these positions to be filled and make meaningful steps to attract these people into our state, and we have been met with deaf ears by this government. Now it is apparent that the Labor government in Canberra does not think we need too many more people, so it will not assist with the import of skilled migrants into the future because, bizarrely, it claims it cannot do its job of processing the visa applications. Labor has been in federal government not for a day, not for a week. It has been in government for well over a year and it is still trying to blame things on the previous government.

It is approaching, if it has not already reached, the halfway point of its term, yet it is still whingeing about the previous government and the job that is in front of it. Newsflash: it might not be doing the job come 2025, because it does not deserve to if it is going to spend its time simply complaining about the previous government and not getting on and doing the work that is required. Obviously, the COVID disruption internationally would have led to some backlogs but that is no excuse now. We have moved beyond COVID now. This government cannot claim COVID as the reason for backlogs in its health system. The federal government cannot claim that COVID is the reason for backlogs in its migration list and it has no other excuse. It is the government. If this is an issue, it should get on and fix it so that Western Australia can get the skilled people in that it needs, not only from the next year, but from the backlog of applications that still need to be processed.

One thing we all know is that it is very difficult for business and anybody trying to enable someone to come in on a visa for work. We will hear from other members about how that plays out in communities, but it is not an easy thing. We need to make sure that we do not discourage people from making an application in the first place. I was concerned enough about the Labor government in Canberra and its tin ear to Western Australia that I wrote to the Prime Minister some time ago when this was first announced. Of course, I did not really expect to hear back from him because he does not listen. His government does not listen. He does not listen to the minister. I do not suppose he is going to listen to me. I pointed out to him in that letter —

... the proposed cuts to Western Australia's allocation ... will see our 8,140 strong allocation slashed to just more than 2,350. A reduction of 70 percent.

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Given our contribution to Australia's productivity, our booming industry and more crucially our acute skills shortage, that announcement came as a complete shock. I wrote —

As the “engine room” of our Nation, which you and your colleagues have acknowledged on many occasions, Western Australia has a clear need for a consistent—if not increased, allocation under the Program. WA needs more skilled workers, not less, and our economic strength relies upon this.

Further on I said —

We have shortages across the health system which see nursing staff take up *triple shifts*. Our lack of Midwives is such that women are traveling hundreds of kilometres to give birth. Houses promised to families in 2019 remain concrete pads —

Or piles of bricks —

because of the severe lack of skilled tradespeople in our construction industry. Businesses are restricting their services or closing their doors, only worsening the demand for skills and impacting the vitality of our communities.

Our productivity and the health of our community hinges on a proportionate allocation of workers under this and other programs. We need skilled migrants, and we need them urgently.

Prime Minister, I implore you to reconsider your decision and instead work with us to find long term solutions which may lessen our reliance upon such programs over time. Don't pull the rug out from under our economy.

But, of course, we know from the interview played on Channel Seven that the Prime Minister has not listened to that. He has not listened to the minister. I have some sympathy for the minister in that, as it must be very difficult when she knows that she is ineffective and unable to initiate change with her colleagues in Canberra. It really must come home to the minister that although in Western Australia she might be a big fish in a relatively small pool, on the national scene she does not have any clout at all. As for establishing an embassy in Canberra, I do not think a piece of real estate in Canberra will make much difference if we do not have people on the ground who know how to make an impact on the federal Labor government.

I think what makes an impact on the government federally, of course, is its desire to maintain government. In that regard, I expect federal Labor would have listened to the former Premier more, expecting that he may have been able to help their election chances more greatly than the current Premier, who does not have anywhere near the profile of the former. Of course, we know that the Western Australian Labor government has had to backflip on some of its decisions because of its increasing unpopularity in the state. It is worried and I would say the Prime Minister is also beginning to disregard them to some extent.

We know that in our community the current skills shortage is pushing businesses and key government sectors to their limit. We know that at all levels of government there are skill shortages, whether it be in the service industries, such as the provision of nurses, which I have spoken about and I will speak about again throughout this discussion, with the member for Vasse and others. They are in not only those very often mentioned industries but also areas such as local government, planning and providing environmental approvals. Our state is grinding slowly to a halt behind the scenes because people cannot get their projects approved. We hear of extraordinarily long time frames for approvals coming out from industry. This government spoke about streamlining, but we know that that has made no difference. I think it introduced the green brigade or the green berets or whatever it calls them to further the approvals for those industries that are seen to be related to the new renewable energy and green economy, but my understanding is that that group of people are not new people. The government has just ripped them out of the Environmental Protection Authority and other agencies.

Mr R.R. Whitby: That is not true.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I have heard this on the ground from people working in the minister's department so he should listen less to his directors general and more to the people down the line who tell me that people are being ripped out of other areas because they do not have the people. The government needs to bring some people to the state to do these jobs. For instance, businesses are unable to use their new premises or unable to open a shop or unable to complete a real estate development because Western Power cannot get the connections done. Why can it not get its connections done? It cites that it does not have any staff or the workforce to get it.

I went out to the Dowerin field day this morning and on the way out there I drove through the town of Goomalling. Goldacres Sprayer Centre has a beautiful big shed there and the emporium wrote to me some time ago about what it could do to get the shed connected to the power. It is huge. It is an enormous asset sitting there that they could not use because this government and its oversight of Western Power has allowed a situation in which Western Power did not have enough staff to do the design to simply connect a building to the existing network. I mean, it cannot

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be all that difficult. The powerlines are running right past it. It is a pity the Minister for Energy is not here. He could explain why that is the case, but I suspect that the inability to attract staff into Western Power to do that design work is somehow related to a lack of direction from government. It should get on and prioritise development in this state and to ensure that projects such as that can be connected and to ensure that the particular skills shortage is not directly impacting upon those businesses that are looking for that work. I am sure the member for Roe would agree that international education is a hugely important sector, and in a way that is also related to skills shortages. Often when people come in they may not always have the skills we all think about, but they certainly provide the labour force our state needs. When students come to Western Australia to study and work part time, they make an enormous contribution to the economy, but we know that Western Australia is not performing well compared with other states in respect of the international education sector. Of course, that also feeds into concerns about the lack of workforce generally. Leaving aside the word “skilled”, there is actually a workforce shortage in every field. We are not talking only about specialist skills; it is right across the wide gamut of workforce need in our state.

I fear that because of the combined effects of the inability of the Minister for Environment’s organisations to actually undertake approvals in a timely fashion; the inability of the Minister for Mines and Petroleum’s departments to undertake their approvals in a timely fashion; the inability of Western Power to connect in a timely fashion; and the inability of business to move forward at the moment due of the lack of coordination across all those areas because there is no staff to actually make things work at a middle management level, our state’s bottom line could well be affected. The government lauds Western Australia’s strong economy, and it is true: Western Australia has a strong economy built on great regional industries that are powering the economy of not only Western Australia but also our whole country. But underneath all those big mining outfits that are churning out the dollars at the moment, the federal government is fighting the gas giants to try to claw back a bit of money through the petroleum resource rent tax. The operational mines from which all those dollars flow into federal and state coffers need a pipeline of projects behind them to succeed the current ones when they reach the end of their time. We know that we need new gas fields, but what have we seen? We have seen a lack of coordination and commitment from the state government, partly because it does not have the people in its departments to carry out approvals processes, and partly because the state government cannot get on the phone and talk meaningfully to Canberra to create a system of cooperation instead of what is basically a stand-off between the federal and state environment ministers in respect of bilateral assessments. That has now fallen away; there is no bilateral movement, as I understand it, happening on Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act matters between the two jurisdictions.

Eventually those industries will not be able to bring on the new projects they need. All this has been glossed over because we have so many of those projects that if some of them do not get up, there will still be enough for it to look okay. But that means we will miss the opportunity that is in front of us to develop this state meaningfully and to integrate the development of things like critical minerals and renewable energy projects to allow WA to become something other than just a provider of primary resources. That is something that could be achieved if we had the skilled workforce to make it happen, but we do not. We have a federal government that seems to think we do not deserve to have those critical skills coming in, and we have a state government that sits on its hands and appears to be wounded that the federal government is not listening to it, but is not doing anything to really get the message across. We have 14 WA Labor members of the federal Parliament who have been ineffectual in putting that message out there, and the ones suffering in the system are the industries and businesses of Western Australia—those who want to get on and grow our economy so that there will be more jobs in the future. If we can get a few jobs going now, it will lead to many more jobs down the track. There is a pay-off in developing those types of industries.

The state government thinks its economic progress is somehow good, but it is not looking at the missed opportunities. It is not looking at what could and should have been, and still could be if it were actually able to get on and get some essential approvals done. It needs to gain an understanding of how to actually fill our workforce shortages into the future. We have a state government that does not want to take on any new ideas; it just wants to accept the status quo, throw up its hands and say, “Oh, it’s Canberra’s fault. Too hard. We’re not going to bother. We’ll just set up an embassy next to the Russian embassy 3 500 kilometres away and that will somehow fix everything.”

It is actually about commitment and making sure that we are establishing relationships with the federal government. The state government clearly had a much more cooperative relationship with the former federal Coalition government; there was a lot of commitment to Western Australia and, undoubtedly, a large amount of money flowing in. Some of it flowed into my electorate through the development of the rare earth refinery in Eneabba, which won a quarter of a billion dollars in funding, which was the type of thing the previous federal coalition government did in this state. The relationship between the Albanese government and the state Labor government is something completely different. The federal government just sees us as a problem. It thinks, “We’ll take as much money out of them as we can at the moment. We’re going to increase the tax on the gas people, but we’re going to make sure, through Minister Plibersek, that we frustrate any future approvals. We’re going to dress it up as not supporting gas into the future while we take all the money that we can get.” Otherwise, how is it explained? How do we explain

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a situation in which the state government allows federal government departments to create such chaos that companies are really at the point of throwing in the towel on a whole lot of projects because they simply cannot get EPBC approval from federal government agencies? Industry figures across Australia have told us about the number of projects that never get to the end of the environmental approval process, so they give up. Some projects might have been waiting for approval for seven years, and they give up.

These things drive international investment away from our state. I know the Minister for Training is probably going to give the government's first response, but one of the most important things in my view is getting people into those enabling sectors if we want to grow our economy going forward—the approval sector and the construction sector to get the housing we need, and to ensure we can overcome the shortage of labour and skilled labour that we know is facing industry right across Western Australia.

I am getting mixed signals from the member for Roe here; he has been doing this and doing that and I am not sure what I am supposed to do!

Mr P.J. Rundle: The member for Vasse, followed by the minister.

Mr R.S. LOVE: He probably just needs to be quiet and let me finish my contribution; I will sit down, and what will happen will happen!

The state government's policies are inadequate and unproductive. It is actually sending the message out there: "Don't come. You're not welcome. We don't want you." It has been doing that since it came to office in 2017 and now it wonders why people do not believe in it. The government cannot turn it around when, for years, it gave the impression that overseas workers were not welcome here. The government did that to students and the migrant workforce. The government is now living with the consequences of the 2017 decision by the former Premier that members opposite all supported—most of them were in cabinet. The minister who will respond to this debate was certainly a member of the government at that stage and would no doubt have had some discussions around the decision to slash the skilled migration list and take Perth out of the migration scheme. The minister cannot disclaim responsibility because it happened a number of years ago. She was a part of those decisions. She is now facing the consequences of that. It is up to her to explain how she is going to turn that around to enable Western Australia to grow and develop into the future.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.30 pm]: I rise to contribute to the debate on the ongoing skills crisis in Western Australia and, in particular, the WA Labor government's continued failure to adequately address it. The skills crisis stems back to 2017, and I will start by focusing on Labor's priorities when it first came to office, which were clearly about promises to the union movement. In March 2017, within hours of becoming Premier, former Premier Mark McGowan moved to limit the number of pathways for foreign workers to enter Western Australia. The then Premier wrote to the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, requesting that Perth be removed from the regional migration scheme. That letter also advised that the government was conducting a review of the WA skilled migration list and that an updated list would be provided. As the Leader of the Opposition said, there was a drop in the number of occupations on the list; it was reduced from 178 skill areas or occupations to just 18, mainly in the health sector—midwives, psychiatrists and several classes of registered nurses. Removed from the list were bricklayers, electricians and other trades. Those workers could not migrate to Western Australia to take Western Australian jobs, as stated by the Premier at the time.

The government promised a revamped TAFE industry that would enable WA to fill those positions. Although the objective to lift the local supply of workers was admirable, the pursuit of that objective led to the exact opposite, with the number of apprentices and trainees in our system actually falling. The data from the June quarter of 2017, when the McGowan government first came to power, shows that the state had 34 605 people in training. In March 2018, 33 065 people were in training. By March 2019, the number had fallen further, to 30 125. In March 2020, the number had fallen again, to 28 825—a 17 per cent decrease since 2017. That is an appalling statistic and an appalling representation of this government's commitment to what should be a key priority of any government.

Mr T.J. Healy: Was that connected to an increase in TAFE fees by any chance?

Ms L. METTAM: At the end of 2021 and 2022, we saw those numbers start to turn around.

Mr T.J. Healy: Have you looked at the 2021 numbers, after four years of TAFE increases?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Southern River!

Ms L. METTAM: I have quoted what the numbers were, up to March 2020.

Mr T.J. Healy: Keep going. What was 2021?

Point of Order

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Dr D.J. HONEY: Despite your good admonition, the member is constantly interrupting. I ask that he desist.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): There is no point of order, but I do ask that we try to get through the debate in as orderly a way as possible. The Leader of the Liberal Party has the call.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you, Acting Speaker.

At the end of 2021 and 2022, the numbers started to turn around. When we consider that most apprenticeships for trades such as bricklaying take four years, those apprentices are still quite a way off alleviating any pressure on the system.

As the Leader of the Opposition touched on, the policy of the McGowan government was basically a highly restrictive approach to the skilled migration program, and that had a significant impact on international students. While international education grew in other states, WA's market share fell significantly. In the first quarter of 2018, WA recorded a 13 per cent decline from the same period two years earlier. At the same time, South Australia reported a nine per cent lift and Tasmania a 28 per cent increase—states that had traditionally struggled to gain significant growth. We heard of international students bypassing Western Australia for those other states. The effect was far reaching across the WA economy, resulting in lost revenue for the tourism sector, which was highly critical of those policy changes. International students were not choosing Perth or WA as their study destination, as perceived opportunities for employment after studying were critical to attracting students to Western Australia. The government completely missed the mark. Following the significant drop in the number of international students, pressure from universities and Western Australian businesses resulted in a major policy change. In October 2019, the McGowan government announced that Perth would open its doors and be classed as a region, making it easier for international students to further their studies and gain work, which improved our capacity to attract international students and also supported the economy.

Like many jurisdictions, Western Australia was shut off from the world during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that contributed significantly to the skills shortage across the tourism, hospitality, agricultural and health sectors. At the same time as our international and interstate workforce was effectively locked out, in March 2020, due to the pandemic, the government halted the refresher pathways program that had helped experienced Western Australian nurses re-enter the workforce. That program restarted only in 2021. This was such a valuable program for training mature-age nurses and encouraging them to re-enter the workforce.

A lot of concern was raised across the community about the go-slow approach of the government, particularly by advocates for health workers, including the Australian Nursing Federation. The then Minister for Health, who is now the Premier, announced a so-called recruitment blitz in April 2021. That advertising campaign was very slow to start—it did not start until several months later, in October that year. The *AFR Weekend* reported in February 2022 that WA was having to lure doctors with up to \$4 000 a day. Locum jobs ranged from emergency department specialists, ED GPs, surgeons, anaesthetists, paediatric consultants and psychiatrists.

Moving forward to June 2022, when the state was talking up a recruitment blitz, the ANF reported that nurses were leaving the state in droves, with New South Wales and Victoria offering a \$4 000 bonus and wage increases of between three and 3.5 per cent for nurses and midwives. These states are quite clearly very hungry for this valued workforce, something not shared by Western Australia. Although WA at that time boasted a \$5.7 billion surplus, our nurses had slid from being the best paid in 2016 to the second-worst paid in the country, with a 2.5 per cent wage increase and \$1 000 sign-on bonus. In the first half of this year, nurses reported that they were consistently asked to work double shifts and on some occasions triple shifts, with staff shortages compromising their safety and that of patients. That is why we have consistently seen morale amongst our health workers being at such poor levels, with about one-third of those workers feeling uncomfortable or unsafe to speak up in their workplace.

The shortage of workers, particularly the delayed return of backpackers to the state, resulted in crippling staff shortages for the hospitality industry. That has been felt right across the entire state, from the north right down to the south. In my electorate, we began to emerge from the pandemic with many small businesses having reached the point of having to reduce their opening hours because of a lack of hospitality workers and the additional pressure of being understaffed causing fatigue and morale issues as well. Businesses like the award-winning Blue Manna Bistro in Dunsborough had no choice but to reduce its opening hours to just three or four days a week. It was forced to close a part of its business, having an impact on its bottom line and its ability to attract staff for full-time roles, which were more challenging to offer. This employment challenge, particularly in the regions, has also been exacerbated by housing shortages.

Regarding the skills shortage, I recently met with the managing director and some of the team at Goldstar Transport about the professional truck driver shortage. It has a fleet of 170 trucks and it is not unusual for 10 per cent of the fleet to be parked up because there are an insufficient number of drivers. This manifests in products not being

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available to Western Australian consumers and, as we have seen reported in the media, supply chain issues that have a flow-on effect that impacts the cost of living, including the cost of goods and groceries. A PricewaterhouseCoopers report commissioned by the WA government indicated that the road transport industry will need to fill an additional 9 100 positions in 2024–25. This is one sector of an industry that is really feeling the pinch. It is an issue that has the potential to impact all consumers. The Northern Territory has added professional truck drivers to the migration skills list. The Goldstar Transport managing director has appealed to the WA state government to make similar representations to the federal government on this matter.

There remains an acute lack of forward supply across the housing sector due to ongoing supply constraints, which is a significant issue that, together with lack of skilled labour, has hampered the delivery of housing in the market. As we know, activity spiked after the pandemic building stimulus; however, there is a lot of ground to make up due to the chronic under supply of housing to the market over an extended period, which has seen the working poor living in their cars. We could be facing a 20 000 dwelling shortfall over the next three years, according to the Urban Development Institute of Australia's urban development index, which has analysed official data from the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation. Urban development index survey respondents say 25 current land estates in the Perth metropolitan area will complete and run out of lots by the end of next year and a further 16 will close in 2025. This means the supply of affordable greenfield land is running out. The forward land supply is reliant on complex infill and more constrained sites that take longer and are more expensive to bring to the market.

In terms of the skills shortage, the federal government incentive for international students, which has been effective from 1 July 2023, means that those who complete a degree in a skilled shortage area are to be given an extra two years to stay in Australia after graduation, increasing that period from two years to four years, if they complete a bachelor's degree and three to five years if they complete a master's degree. In May, for the 2023–24 state budget, there was \$13 million in the funding package to attract international students to WA, including \$1 500 to assist with accommodation, cost of living and course fees to study in Perth. There was little comfort when we saw *The West Australian* headline, "Sorry, but Perth is full", also carrying a story about three international students paying \$1 000 for a two-bedroom apartment in the city—25 per cent above the advertised price—out of sheer desperation, as a result of the shortage of supply in Western Australia. That is obviously exacerbated by the skills shortage, which is the theme of our concerns. A Curtin University student and international students committee president said he spent much of this time trying to reduce the stress of the rental market and said —

"People might have money but even with money they can't find accommodation," ...

Real Estate Institute of Western Australia rental data vacancy rates in Perth in February were at 0.7 per cent, which is a 0.1 per cent increase in the vacancy rate since December 2022, when Perth recorded its lowest vacancy rate in 42 years.

This month the federal government notified the state government that its allocation for the nominated migration program would be drastically cut. As the Leader of the Opposition stated in this place, clearly this government has no influence over the federal government when it comes to representing the best interests of Western Australians and any of their concerns. A weak Labor government is unable to represent the best interests of Western Australians. It is now up to our Premier and our Minister for Training to ensure that this mess is rectified as a matter of urgency. Others will speak after the Minister for Training, but we have seen a history of a go-slow approach, a very lacklustre approach by the WA Labor government to the skills shortage and training. Clearly, it has no clout with the federal Labor government, which is not listening. This is having an impact right across the Western Australian community, whether we are talking about the housing crisis, with less social housing now than in 2017, or international students, who no longer feel welcome with those significant drops and the reputational damage we saw in Labor's first term. Now they are being locked out of renting properties or can rent properties only at extraordinary prices, with some reports of prices being up to 25 per cent above the advertised price. There are also the impacts of cost-of-living pressures on WA households given that the transport industry, amongst many other sectors, is also feeling the pinch. They are desperately calling out for a government that will listen and one that has any form of clout with the federal Labor government.

I will leave my comments there and look forward to the response from the minister.

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Training) [4.51 pm]: I am very pleased to speak on this issue. Obviously, I will not be supporting the opposition's take on it. When the member read out the motion yesterday and asked for a contribution from the government about what we have been doing on vocational training, it felt like a Dorothy Dixier, because we have been doing so much. Our commitment, our resource allocation and our engagement with industry and the public since coming to office in 2017 has been light years ahead of that of the opposition. I will stand very proudly and outline a number of our contributions and our record on this issue.

I will start with the opposition's go-to on the question of training. Members opposite talk about what the McGowan government did when it first came to office, and that was to alter the skilled migration occupation list in 2017. It

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is true that we went to the election in 2017 saying that we were going to prioritise WA jobs and make sure that local people were prioritised to take up Western Australian jobs. We were going to put WA jobs first. This approach came at a time when unemployment was at 6.5 per cent and youth unemployment was at 13.1 per cent, so it was absolutely appropriate. In fact, we were looking at a domestic recession and a neglected training sector. It was absolutely the right approach in 2017; in fact, it delivered excellent results in the years following, with the economy recovering and over 76 000 local jobs being created by 2020. What governments do in office is change their policy settings. Members opposite are talking about circumstances from before the pandemic, before the budget was brought into surplus, before debt was brought under control and before the ratings agencies recognised the state government's efforts and acknowledged our state's nation-leading record on economic management. In 2017, we had to deal with the mess that they left us and the then Premier, Hon Mark McGowan, altered our skilled migration occupation list.

Things change when a government comes to office. Over time, we have first and foremost significantly increased our effort on vocational training, and I will outline that. We have talked about it a number of times. When members opposite first lost government, the then Leader of the Opposition was the previous Minister for Training and Workforce. She had presided over a massive increase in TAFE fees. Some fees increased fivefold. If we are talking about sending a message to the market, that sent a very unequivocal message to people who were thinking about vocational training. They exited that market in droves.

I will compare some of the fees that members opposite left us with where we are today. In 2013, someone who wanted to study a standard non-concession diploma of building and construction would have paid \$2 123. In 2017, when we came to office, it cost over \$7 000 to do a diploma of building and construction. Do members know what someone will pay now? They will pay just under \$2 000. They will pay less now than what someone would have paid in 2017—\$1 976. That is a huge reduction under this government. Let us look at the advanced diploma of building surveying. That is another area that is a huge enabler in allowing planning to proceed. Local governments talk to us about this all the time. In 2013, it cost just over \$2 000. In 2017, prior to it coming onto our Lower Fees, Local Skills list, it cost just under \$12 500; it cost \$12 449 to undertake that advanced diploma. Now it costs \$2 400. It is a massive difference. Finally, in 2013, it cost someone \$3 383 to do an advanced diploma of electrical engineering technology. In 2017, the previous government was charging someone over \$11 000 to do that qualification. It is ridiculous. Do members know what someone will pay today? They will pay less than what someone would have paid in 2013—\$3 149. That is the commitment that we have made; we have put real dollars into subsidising vocational training, not just in the TAFE system, but also for private providers. There is a massive number of fee-free courses, courtesy of the federal government. It is a real partnership with the federal government. It is significantly reducing the cost of courses for a number of qualifications—both full qualifications and short courses. If people who have existing qualifications want to uplift their skills, we have an avenue for them to do that. If people want to test whether they want to change careers or enter a career for the first time, they can do a skill taster, or a short course, many of which are free. We also have full qualification courses that are free.

Members opposite should not talk to us about our training effort, because they have absolutely zero credibility on vocational training. Their side did nothing. I know this because I sat on the other side of the chamber. I worked in the trade union movement for a number of years. I sat on the State Training Board for five years before entering Parliament. I know this area very well. Members opposite did absolutely nothing. In stark contrast, we are investing over \$340 million in a number of fee-free courses, most of which is courtesy of a partnership with the federal government. We have significantly reduced fees and invested nearly a quarter of a billion dollars in TAFE infrastructure. That is sending messages to the WA market that we want people to train and to uplift their skills. The majority of that capital investment is in the regions, because we want regional Western Australians to get the message that we want them to increase their skills. We know that that investment will be rewarded and that people who live in regional communities will increase their skills. They have housing, they are invested in the community and they have a commitment to the community, so they will stay there. I am very proud of the work that we are doing.

Members opposite talked about the relationship with the federal government. How many times did the federal cabinet meet in our state when they were in government? None. The member for Roe is looking a little quizzical. I can answer that question. It was none—a big zero. This government has brought the whole federal cabinet over to Western Australia twice to genuinely understand our issues and to engage with our community. I am very proud of the work that we are doing, particularly in training, in partnership with the Minister for Skills and Training, Brendan O'Connor. We are very close to reaching another five-year agreement. Under the previous federal coalition government, members opposite were not able to get an agreement with the states and territories, even those on their own side. They could not get one state or territory to sign on to a new national agreement.

In the interim, we have had a huge injection of funding to deliver fee-free courses in 2023. Members probably heard this week that initially that was slated to be 18 800 places. As I said, they could be either short courses or full qualifications. In fact, we have exceeded 34 000 fee-free places. I meet people all the time who have taken up the opportunity to get into the workforce for the first time and have a taste of gaining new skills or increasing their skills.

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I am very proud of the work that we are doing. As I said, we have also significantly slashed fees by up to 72 per cent for about 210 courses. The results are quite significant. The member for Vasse spoke about the number of people in vocational training when we first came to office. When we came to office, we were trying to get the budget under control and put in place a professional, rigorous budget planning and allocation system, unlike the chaos that was presided over by the previous government. We immediately froze TAFE fees. It took time to arrest the declines that resulted from the huge increases in TAFE fees and haphazard mismanagement of the vocational training system under the former government.

I could describe the metrics in many ways, but they are all very positive. Currently, 45 000 Western Australians are either in apprenticeships or traineeships. Yesterday I mentioned in question time that North Metropolitan TAFE alone has over a thousand electrical apprenticeships. It is very, very exciting. Training enrolments are at a record high with 10 000 apprentices and trainee contracts being registered in just three months this year. Whichever way we look at the metrics, they are very healthy.

I am also particularly proud of the hard work we are doing as a state. We are looking at what other jurisdictions are doing for not only commencements, but also retentions and completions. For instance, in the construction industry we have sent a very clear message to apprentices working in the building trades. Often it is very tempting for them to leave in the last couple of years or 18 months of their apprenticeship. They can do a lot of work on site and are very productive, and often they do not need a licence to do the work they need to do. An electrician or plumber must have sat their final test to be licensed, but often in building industry it can be a struggle to keep apprentices for the final year to get their certificate. In 2023–24, we are offering people a \$2 000 bonus if they finish their building and construction apprenticeship. The member for Carine is looking at me expectantly like he wished he had done a building apprenticeship so that he could get the \$2 000 bonus. He would also get a \$500 bonus for safety equipment and tools. That is the sort of work we are doing with industry to understand their requirements.

I have talked in the chamber about the targeted work that we are doing in the regions to give people who live in regional areas an incentive to do their off-the-job training in classrooms if they need help to relocate for that component of their training. If they are in a regional centre and need to leave that centre to get some practical experience, they can get an incentive to do that. The incentive varies depending on the region and the type of work being done. That is the sort of work we are doing across the state to understand what the right policy settings and adjustments are that we need to make to get the results that we want. We also have TAFE lecture retention incentives in the Pilbara, Kimberley and Kalgoorlie. A huge amount of effort has gone into not only resources, but also engaging with sectors and looking at what other jurisdictions are doing and engaging with industry to understand what it needs.

Just this morning I was pleased to present at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia's skills round table. We heard from probably 30 employers around the table about their issues. That included employers working in the manufacturing and advanced manufacturing sectors. The hospitality sector was represented by Crown Perth. BGC Construction was there as well as organisations that represent fitters and general maintenance work. The power industry, the tertiary education sector and, of course, the disability care and community sectors were also represented. It was really good to talk to them about what we are doing, but mostly to listen about their experiences of our vocational training sector and their feedback about how we can improve it. It was good feedback. One member from the housing sector told me afterwards that it was good to hear me say that I understood the different skilled migration settings and understood what would work for small and medium-sized businesses. He said he found that refreshing because what works for large companies will not often work for SMEs. We need to make sure that our vocational training and our skilled migration settings are fit for them. I am getting more exposed to the portfolio now that I am seven or eight months into the job. It is good to have discussions with the other states and understand what is working for them and to understand the case I need to put to the federal government and to be involved in the national discussions about what is important for Western Australia.

Yesterday, it was a great pleasure for the federal minister and me to open BHP's FutureFit Academy in Forrestfield. It is a massive new facility. It is a combination of two former facilities that used to be straddled together. Well over 500 people will go through that facility every year. As members can imagine, BHP does not do anything on a small scale. It had its national management there, which was really good. I also spoke to some of the people who are training at that facility. I met a number of women. Over 72 per cent of BHP's apprentices and trainees are women. It is an incredible effort, I have to say. It is long overdue in male-dominated industries, but all credit to BHP for setting some ambitious goals and working very hard to meet them.

I met some of the people there. It was bittersweet because I met one woman who had left the child care industry and another who had left the health care industry. They had decided to change their careers and become qualified as trade assistants. They were not doing an apprenticeship to become tradespeople; they were doing their pre-qualifications to become a trade assistant to do lower level maintenance work. I did not meet this woman, but I heard about a 55-year-old woman who lived in a family full of diesel fitters. She spoke to BHP and said that she had always

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wanted to do it and BHP took her on. She is a diesel fitter at the age of 55 and is getting a chance with BHP, which is absolutely fantastic.

There is a lot to like about what is happening out there in our state for vocational training. Yes, it is hard to get the message out that vocational training is not a poor cousin or second-class option to studying at university or taking another career path, but we are doing that work. It is often years of prejudice against that blue collar work that we are hitting up against, but we are giving it a red hot go. When we think about the work we need to do to transition to clean skills and the AUKUS agreement and the work we need to do to gear up our workforce for defence, I am not only confident that as a government we have the ambition and the capability, but that our government agencies in the Department of Training and Workforce Development, our TAFEs around the state and private providers are well primed to do that work. We are in a very good position and I think we are geared up to do that.

Finally, before I sit down I want to say something about the skilled migration program. We understand that this has to be part of the mix. That is why in the last state budget the government announced \$11 million for specific allocations for people working in the housing sector. This is a dilemma for how we build more houses. Do we hold off migration because we do not have the houses? But in fact we need more skilled labour here to build the houses. I think people understand that it is a conundrum. We have an incentive for about 1 100 people to come in under skilled migration into the housing construction areas. There is an incentive for their employers and to help skilled migration costs, relocation costs, equipment, skills recognition and those sorts of expenses. We are working very hard, particularly with the Housing Industry Association, which put this idea to the government, and we listened.

I know it is a novel idea for the opposition, but we are engaged with industry. We listen to its proposals and we are implementing them. That is the case with the Housing Industry Association plan. Workshops are being held. There was one in Geraldton and there have been some workshops in the metropolitan area as well to get employers on board and also to get the message out to overseas markets that we want people to come in. This government is on the record as saying that we are disappointed in the federal government's decision to slash our state nominated numbers, and we will continue to work to get whatever outcome is necessary to get more people into Western Australia to meet our skills demand. I do not mind whether it is part of our skilled migration nominated list or whether it is some other formulation, but we want to do the work to get skilled migrants here. I have given that message to the Prime Minister, to my counterpart skills and training ministers and also briefly to Minister Giles, who has responsibility for immigration. I cannot think of a better portfolio to see people reach their potential.

As TAFE teachers say to me all the time, this work is life changing. It is so exciting to see the fee-free courses and discounted fees and the investment in TAFE infrastructure. I am very proud of the work we are doing in industry to meet their needs and to link up people, and I am amazed that the opposition would have thought to bring on this debate in this house.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.13 pm]: I thank the Minister for Training for her contribution. I know she has to move on, but I certainly appreciate her responding. I am sure the member for Southern River, along with other speakers, will also respond at some stage.

Today I want to focus partially on the state government's failure to properly prioritise the fundamental needs of our workforce and industries and its inability to work with its federal Labor government colleagues to bolster our skills supply. To me, that is a large part of the focus of this motion today. We saw during the week a Prime Minister who is out of touch. The Prime Minister came over here when there was an election on. He needed those three or four seats to tip the scales and he turned up saying, "I understand WA. I understand what it's all about, but, by the way, we've cut our skilled migration intake by 70 per cent." I do not know what planet he is on. I know he has other issues on his mind at the moment, but there needs to be some engagement. As I said during the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition, there needs to be some engagement between the Minister for Training and the Prime Minister because, quite frankly, the press conference on Channel Seven the other night was an embarrassment. To the credit of the Minister for Training, she saved the day with a Prime Minister who is so out of touch with what is going on in WA that he had to shut down the press conference and walk out the door. I give credit to the Minister for Training in that respect.

I hark back to the letter from Hon Mark McGowan on 17 March 2017 to the then Prime Minister, Hon Malcolm Turnbull. It states —

Dear Malcolm

As you are aware Western Australia has an economy in transition as the State moves from the mining construction boom of recent years. This mining construction phase required a range of skilled workers which were not then available in Western Australia, the influx of which then placed high demands upon services and infrastructure.

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Western Australia now needs a skilled migration program that reflects the changed economic condition that the State is experiencing. It is a priority of my government to place Western Australians first when it comes to securing Western Australian jobs.

I would like to request that Perth be removed from the Regional Sponsored Migration scheme ... My government is currently conducting a review of the West Australian Skilled Migration Occupation list ... and will provide an updated list once the review is complete.

I tell you what: the previous Premier ensured there was a transition—the transition to a shortage of skilled labour in this state. I can still remember it. I was sitting a couple of chairs away over that way and I can still remember the Premier proudly standing up and talking about how he was cutting the skilled migration list from 178 occupations to just 18. That was in 2017. By 2021, the former Premier and the Minister for Training were holding a skills summit to fast track training for critical industries because the number of vacant positions for skilled workers was reaching a serious level. This is what I am talking about. The Premier then said we had that transition happening and the government was going to cut back the skilled migration list. As I said, he ensured that the transition happened and we are still feeling the transition to skilled shortages in just about every occupation in this state.

My information is that this will take a generation to fix. A generation is 18 years, so we have some serious gaps in our skilled workforce, and I am curious how the federal and state governments will fill those gaps. From the recent press conference with the Minister for Training and the Prime Minister, I do not think the Prime Minister has much idea. I go back to a similar occurrence with the former Premier at the end of the COVID-19 arrangements. The state had a reopening date of 7 February and then the Premier, against all other advice that I can understand, made an executive decision that he would shut the gate again. International students spread all over the world were returning to WA or coming here for the first time. There were students in Hong Kong, Europe, North America and India—all over the place. I was talking to vice-chancellors who were in a state of shock because they had met in Parliament House with the former Minister for Education and the former Premier and were told that on 7 February everything would be back on. Then the Premier made that executive decision and that was the beginning of the downhill slide for this government. The Premier's decision to overturn that COVID border update, if you like, was the real turning point. That is when the people of WA started turning.

The Premier left people stranded all over the world, and some of them had no money. That is part of the reason that our international education sector now has 5.8 per cent of the market in Australia and the lowest international education number of any mainland state in Australia. The Minister for International Education now has to pump in millions of dollars to try to repair the damage that the previous Premier did. For those who were not here at the time, like the member for Rockingham, that is what happened. The previous member for Rockingham certainly fixed things up in a big way and that will take a long time to recover from, along with, as the member for Vasse said, the cost of housing and rent. An article in *The West Australian* described two students paying \$1 000 a week for a two-bedroom apartment.

I want to give some figures from 2010 because it is interesting to see the history. In 2010, 33.7 per cent of the WA workforce comprised persons born overseas. That was well above the Australian average of 26.9 per cent. The attraction of skilled migrants has helped WA regularly achieve historically high workforce participation rates and low unemployment rates over the past decade. The constant theme of research papers over the decades is that any strategy for skilled migration must be managed with the cooperation and coordination of all stakeholders, especially industry and the business community. That was sadly lacking in the federal government's announcement and, seemingly, WA Labor was not consulted. This is the bizarre thing about it. We saw the Prime Minister sitting at the cabinet table and saying, "I get WA." Then we saw him walking out the door from a press conference with the training minister, and she was left holding the baby to try to explain why the federal government has cut the intake by 70 per cent. I do not know what is going on here. I do not know where the consultation is, but it is quite concerning.

I move on to some local figures from my general electorate, around the great southern and the wheatbelt. In April 2023, 77 100 people were employed in the regions. In that region, the unemployment rate was 2.7 per cent. The agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors are the highest employers, with 16.9 per cent of the share of employment, compared with 2.1 per cent nationally. Just while I am on it, of course, we know about this government's assault on the regions. We know about what I call the assault on the three Fs—fishing, forestry and farming—but it continues with electoral reform and the south coast marine park under the Minister for Environment. If it is not one thing, it is another. If it is not shutting down the forestry industry, it is demersal fishing, electoral reform—the list goes on. The debate occurred earlier today on the Aboriginal cultural heritage arrangements. People of the regions of Western Australia are feeling it because there is a constant assault from this government. I am sure regional Labor members are feeling it, like the member for Geraldton. There is a constant assault on regional people in Western Australia. It is getting to the point at which regional people, certainly in my electorate, have totally lost faith in this government and cannot wait to see it moved on, quite frankly.

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The National Skills Commission employment outlook to November 2025 gives a good insight into the Australian labour market, and high on the list of industries driving growth are health care and social assistance; accommodation and food services; professional, scientific and technical services; education and training; construction; and retail trade. In Western Australia, employment in the mining sector is expected to increase by 16 200. The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre report published in July 2023 said that WA has been leading the way in mining growth, with employment in that sector up by a whopping 40.3 per cent since February 2020. The jobs are out there. It is a matter of filling them. Unfortunately, these moves by the federal Labor government, in consultation—or perhaps in consultation—with the state Labor government, are not helping whatsoever.

I will give a couple of examples of regional agricultural jobs in WA as of 29 August. On Seek, 587 jobs were posted; Workforce Australia, 31; Indeed, 123; and Jora, 1 241. Going into harvest, that is 1 982 jobs out there with no-one to fill them. That does not include the many posts on Facebook, through which, quite frankly, most employment happens in regional WA. I will give some of the other areas in which jobs are available out there. On Seek in health care, there are 1 679 jobs; mining, 7 741; hospitality, 2 792; construction, 5 842; education and training, 1 413; nursing, 755; teaching, 1 375; corrections, 4 436; and for electricians, there are 3 879 jobs available, with 479 in the renewable energy specialist field. This is an example. The government is talking about renewable energy moving to net zero and all the rest of it, and we have shortages everywhere, including in renewable energy jobs. The disconnect between the federal Labor government and the state Labor government has never been more pronounced. Quite frankly, the federal Labor government seems to be more intent on making irresponsible decisions based on social licence with no historical facts.

We are starting to see this pattern emerging. the government is not focusing on proper economic activity and the likes of energy jobs. Instead of focusing on those elements that drive our economy, it is focusing on a lot of social issues to the detriment of the people of Australia, who are in a cost-of-living crisis. What is the strategy? Where will all the people come from to fill the thousands of vacancies in critical areas such as mining, building and construction?

Training and assessment in critical industries is at risk, with a dearth of trainers and assessors for apprentices waiting on sign-offs. That is a very important element. We have heard arguments about TAFE numbers and so forth. I acknowledge that. I also acknowledge the shortage of industry-trained assessors and lecturers. That is the challenge on which this state Labor government needs to pick up the ball. We have a skilled migration rate for electricians, for instance, of only three per cent, with 5 000 apprentices in the system. The member for Moore, the opposition leader, spoke about Western Power. If we are trying to hook up a business, or a house for that matter, in the regions, it can take anything up to 12 or 18 months. We have businesses operating out of farmers' sheds and all sorts of things because Western Power cannot get an electrician to turn up and run a wire from one side of the chamber to the other. It takes 12 to 18 months to run a wire 10 or 15 metres from a transformer on a pole across to a shed. It is a disgrace. These are the things that upset our regional stakeholders—lack of lecturers and lack of ability to get apprentices fully into the workforce.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The federal Labor Minister for Skills and Training, Brendan O'Connor, said —

“There are people that are not in the labour market right now that want to get a job and we need to invest in them, we need to provide them the skill so they can work in areas of demand here and now,” ...

We saw the display earlier in the week with federal cabinet in Perth. Now is the time for him to create some action. Of course, we saw the article in Tuesday's *The West Australian* titled “Cook wants visa reversal” following the federal government's decision to cut WA's state-nominated migration program by 70 per cent. The federal Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Andrew Giles, said, “We are not cutting the visas coming to WA or indeed to other states.” I cannot make head nor tail of it. Andrew Giles said that and Brendan O'Connor said something else. Prime Minister Albanese walked out of a press conference leaving our Minister for Training to pick up the baton, which she did well, under the circumstances. Those are the sorts of things that make the people of Western Australia wonder what is going on between the federal and state governments.

I will close shortly. I want to highlight what I think is a concern around the lack of skilled workers in the building and construction sector. We saw this demonstrated in an article by John Flint in *The Sunday Times* the other day. We have seen 52 building companies collapse in WA in the past 18 months. People who ordered houses to be built in 2019 are still waiting for their homes to be built. It is causing major headaches, with families having to rent or move in with their extended family. There was an example on 6PR this morning of an original build from 2019 through the Slatter Group—which has gone under—that was going to cost \$500 000. With the builder having gone broke, the buyer will have to pay another \$400 000 to get the building done. Because the build is now over \$500 000, the Builders Registration Board will not look at it. Apparently, the Builders Registration Board insurance scheme has not been indexed for the past 20 years. Some of these families are trying to get their houses built. We saw that period after the COVID-19 pandemic when the federal and state governments put up \$45 000 in grants. That

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caused a boom in which builders just had to get the pad down and the said, “We’ll worry about it later.” We are seeing the consequences of that. In the article on the weekend titled “Hey Minister, when will you dig in and finally fix the mess”, Rod Harris stated —

“At times, I feel like ripping up my (builder’s) registration. I feel ashamed of where the industry is at the present moment.”

He continued —

... the quality and the ethics have gone out the door ...

The article states —

Mr Harris believes the State Government ... is oblivious to the trauma customers are going through, saddled with mounting debts and struggling to get any help.

The state government is ultimately responsible for this nightmare. That is what is happening at the coalface. I thought the article summed it up very well. The Minister for Commerce does not seem to want to deal with it. We saw the regulatory reform called the *Building confidence report*, which was released six years ago. Ministers were eager to adopt the reforms; however, WA has made little progress—the least of all jurisdictions. The report’s author said that WA has the most work to do in order to implement the recommendations. The report recommended mandatory inspections; however, WA does not require these inspections.

Once again, this government is focused on rushing through legislation and not focused on protecting consumers and the people of WA who have businesses to run, whether they be farmers, builders, miners or small business owners—you name it. That needs to be the focus, along with the federal government–state government relationship, which has obviously deteriorated. Obviously, it is focused on other issues. The Prime Minister is not up to it. He wanted to leave the press conference the other day. There is a real problem, and I think the state government, rather than worrying about setting up an embassy in Canberra, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, to do the job of the 14 federal Labor MPs who are meant to stand up for WA in Canberra, should worry about the Prime Minister coming over here and saying that he gets WA but, by the way, is going to cut our skilled migration intake by 70 per cent. It is not good enough.

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [5.36 pm]: I rise today in support of this very important motion. It will be no surprise, again, that I will focus on my electorate in the northern area of Western Australia. For me, some of the changes from the review of the skilled migration program and the working holiday visas are greatly concerning. I can personally attest through many years of experience in the regions to the incredible contribution our skilled migrants and working holiday-makers make to communities, industries and regional development—it is enormous. Sometimes I feel it is overlooked. It is taken for granted by some people because they have always been there and are always there. We saw what happened during the COVID pandemic when they were not there. I know how critical that group of workers is to industries across the region. I have grave concerns about some of those elements and the potential impacts if this review has no modifications. I have written to the minister in Canberra, pleading with her to review the incentive for workers to travel to the regions. I think if it reverts to a one-year visa, we will be in huge danger of not being able to pick fruit and vegetables, open businesses or have those run-of-the-mill things we take for granted.

It will affect food production and small business. It is going to affect our communities. When visa holders go to those towns, they play sport in the local teams. Some of them are there for six months on their second working holiday visa. They immerse themselves in the towns and in the communities across the regions. It is not unusual to see half a dozen of them playing in the local rugby team. I think everyone understands, with the drain of people out of the regions, that is really important.

Buried deep on page 88 of the report, I was alarmed by something that put up a red flag for me. I believe that the removal of the incentive for working holiday visa holders to travel and work throughout the regions is potentially catastrophic for the state. It has sparked concern across the industries in my patch and in the north. They are very concerned about the breadth and depth of consultation that may not have taken place, because that is something that is really important to the regions.

The agriculture, tourism and hospitality industries are struggling, and the visa holders are just coming back. It was quite confronting for people to read the review, thinking that the flow might stop. A lot of people will be very concerned if that flow is stemmed again. I understand that around 137 000 working holiday-makers are currently in Australia, which makes up about 80 per cent of the horticultural harvest workforce. They fill key roles in regional economies. When that tap was turned off during the COVID-19 pandemic, farmers let crops drop on the ground and they picked what they could with the people they had, including their families. Prices will obviously increase over time if that happens. In the town where I live, 150 growers produce around 70 per cent of Perth’s vegetables for winter. They are extremely concerned. The grapegrowers are also very worried.

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A lot of workers who come through the regions might work for three months of their six-month extension in the north and then travel south to Margaret River and the south west agricultural regions, picking crops or whatever they can do. They are plugging a gap in more than one region. They are travelling around and working in the fishing industry, the pastoral industry or the tourism industry. Sometimes they have two jobs. Sometimes they work in a bar or cafe at night and work on farms during the day. It is a particularly important cohort of people. If anyone travelled north during the COVID pandemic, they would have seen all the signs saying, “Sorry. Closed. No staff”. That is indicative of what I fear could happen again. People will not be able to buy a coffee and the shops will be closed for certain hours of the day. When a representative who was in Broome during the COVID pandemic visited me, they said they had their “Fully booked” sign on the front door, but only 60 per cent of their rooms were occupied because they had no cleaners, no-one to help serve and no-one to carry out the maintenance and the gardening. They also had to limit the opening hours of their restaurant, which was well known. Many people frequent that restaurant, even if they do not stay in that establishment. The owners had to cut the number of diners back to the people who were staying there. It damaged their brand. There is a lot of sensitivity around that particular part of the change, as outlined on page 89, which people keep referring to.

It is not unusual when we travel across the north west and visit towns in the Murchison and across the regions to find that the two barmaids, yardies or whoever are backpackers plugging the gap. They become very entrenched in the local culture. They become very good friends of the locals. They are happy to work and they are happy to stay. They save money. They move on, but they often come back for their second year. They are very comfortable to come back. They are happy, they are trained, they save again and off they go. They actually become a large part of the family when that happens.

Members are well aware that I have a hotel. It has been raised in this place several times, for whatever reason, but not always good. In this instance, up until about 2015, we employed between 60 and 75 international backpackers who stayed with us. We would transport them to the river for their work or transport them to the fishing boats. That is the nature of this industry. People say to me, “But shouldn’t locals be getting the jobs?” Locals want full-time work, and this is seasonal work. Sometimes it is only for a month and sometimes it might be for three months. The locals who want to work generally want permanent work. It is perfect for the seasonality and how we cater for the workers, especially the growers who have jobs available, and people sign up. I had a look at the Facebook sites today. A number of backpackers are seeking 88-day extensions because they want to stay a second year and they want to continue travelling. They may continue to travel to the east coast. They want to stay longer. Migration, in whatever form it takes, is vital for jobs in regional or remote parts of WA, particularly in the more remote areas where people are not enticed to live in roadhouses and similar places.

If people go north in the summer, they find they have plenty of space and there are not a lot of people around. That is the nature of the north west. It is the same in the south west, but obviously it is closer to Perth so it is not as noticeable. A lot of these workers who travel north are after experiences. I had a conversation with someone in Canberra who said they want to promote cultural experiences. I beg to differ, because I believe that the cultural experiences that they are getting now are enormously important to them and to the communities. I will go back to the 60 or 70 people who stayed with us for a long time. It depends how we view cultural exchange. For some people, it means going to a session every Sunday or going to the beach and learning about the lifesaving movement. For others, it is about going to a football match. When we travel through the regions, as we all know, people in some of the farming areas go waterskiing on the dams. That is a cultural experience that they do not get anywhere else. If we think about the diversity across our region, with that extension of 88 days and the incentive to encourage people to travel to the regions, they can have a more holistic and larger cultural experience across the regions.

We transported people to the river for many years. My three-year-old at the time, who is now 18, learnt Japanese for three months from three boys who caught the bus every day. I had to try to validate what some of the words meant. They assured me that they were not bad, but who knows! They really immersed themselves in any situation they found themselves in. Those same groups of people travelled east. We would get phone calls from them asking whether we could help them with this or that. They anchored themselves to a lot of experiences. They would have international food nights, when they would cook upstairs and sing their local songs. The member for Mandurah would have loved it. They would invite locals from the river to have dinner with them to experience their cultural foods. Then they would exchange. I believe that the removal of the 88 days will probably jeopardise that cultural exchange from a regional perspective. They get to work on pastoral properties, they ride horses, they go mustering and they camp out with mobs of sheep—things that they would never do in their own country and things that they would never do if they were not encouraged to have those 88 days because they would fly through on a rushed visit. I really hope that is not focused on as a negative, because I think it is a positive.

With people coming into the regions, we see skill sharing. For example, we employed an Italian guy who was the maître d’ at The Ritz Hotel London. He popped in and worked for a month. The locals loved him. He was an amazing person, full of personality.

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Mr D.A. Templeman: Where'd he work?

Ms M. BEARD: He worked at our hotel in the middle of nowhere. He brought his skills with him. He worked in several places around town and did the same thing. He upskilled all these people and shared stories and experiences about what happens at The Ritz London and why he did what he did. There is definitely benefit in visa holders spending extended periods of time here. That is evident from some of the experiences that I have had and some of the experiences that people have relayed to me.

When I made the call to Canberra, the people I spoke to said they were worried about the exploitation of workers. I understand that. I know that they have spoken about that in the past. The feedback I have had from growers and people within the industries is that no-one should be exploited; it absolutely should not happen. They asked whether it is happening to just those people. We need to look at this more broadly. They believe that this is happening to a minority of people. Some of the checks and balances that they put forward to me relate to the horticultural and agricultural sector. It has an ethical sourcing compliance through Sedex and Fair Farms. Under this, all staff have to receive induction kits that include workplace policies, procedures, codes of conduct—the list goes on. Most importantly, they include a fair work statement that outlines the rights and legal obligations of backpackers, and the relevant award and possible pay rates according to what they are doing.

All this information is available through the Australian Taxation Office's single touch payroll. Plenty of checks and balances are in place. If it is not being policed, it should be policed. If those agencies are talking to each other, this should not be happening with all these tools in place. Some suggestions include certain things workers can do when they tick off on their compliance. There is an opportunity to provide this information to working holiday visa applicants on the second occasion. They are asking whether the Department of Home Affairs could provide fair work statements to people who apply for the new working holiday visa, and whether more people are needed to police this. There has been pushback on that aspect from a lot of the people I have spoken to in different industries.

I turn to skilled migration. I will share a sad story. A lovely family lives in the town of Carnarvon. They live there now, but that is not where they started their journey. A husband and wife travelled here from Kenya over 10 years ago. He studied a double major in information technology and business at Edith Cowan University. His wife works in the health industry as a nurse. He completed his studies and they decided they liked Australia and the opportunities here and they would apply for a skilled migration sponsorship visa, which would afford them the opportunity to apply for permanent residency. In doing that, they went to Gascoyne Junction—I am not sure whether anyone here has ever been there. It is a great little town, but it is enormously isolated. It is 170 kilometres inland. It is very, very small. There were maybe eight kids in the school at that time. They went to a regional and remote area under the impression that it would help them find a pathway to receiving permanent residency. In that time, they managed and looked after a facility that has accommodation, a restaurant, a bar, kitchen and the general store, so they did everything. It was the one-stop shop. They managed that for a very long time—years. During the COVID pandemic, it became very difficult as there were no customers, so they volunteered some of their time. They kept the business going. They now have three beautiful children and have relocated to the town of Carnarvon. They hit their roadblock in 2019, and they have been under enormous pressure ever since trying to remain in the town and in Australia. Now they run an apartment complex of 22 self-contained units. The wife is a nurse at the hospital and is extending her qualifications.

Here we have two people in town who are amazing citizens with three beautiful children, taking part in sport, school and the community and holding down jobs in industries for which we cannot find people in regional towns, but they face being turfed out. I find that extremely disturbing. I hope we can find a pathway forward for them. I understand the magnitude of that situation for the family. I also understand the importance of skilled migration for regional development and growth. We have a flood of people leaving and people struggling to come into the regions, and we have a family of five who are more than happy to make the regions their home. I find that very sad. I use it as an example of how we need to make sure we focus on these areas. There is so much benefit in having people like these families helping to grow and develop our regions.

Another thing I have not touched on is that many backpackers coming through now say that they think things will change, that the price of visas will increase and that it is much cheaper for them to go to New Zealand. I hope the government can address some of those issues or it will be *deja vu*, and there will be a catastrophic impact on our regions.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M. BEARD: The employment pathway for the regions is extremely complex. We need to look at our industries. In my electorate, there is a hairdresser who cannot find another hairdresser to work for her because she cannot offer the 88 days required under this visa. Every backpacker who is a hairdresser she speaks to says they need their 88 days, but, in fact, the community needs a hairdresser. I harp on about it, but holiday-makers are critical. They

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are a really important part of the employment puzzle in the regions. They are much loved and very, very valued and an essential part of the overall make-up of the regions.

I turn to the major changes around the corner that have caught my eye and that of many people in my region. I have written to the Minister for Home Affairs seeking an assurance that the regional incentive will not be removed in the final cut. That cohort of working holiday-makers is crucially important. As I said, they bring a range of things to the regions—skill sets and cultural exchange—and it fills an unmet gap. I cannot emphasise enough just important they are. We will not have our fruit and vegetables picked like we need. We need to address this. I urge the WA government to fight really hard for this region—I know I am being biased here—and for all of regional WA. It will have a massive effect because there are no alternatives out there. We do not have students or the families that are in the metropolitan area. I hope we do not get this migration review wrong. I hope things will change; otherwise, I feel that our community really will not have been listened to and the depth of consultation will not have been there. I urge the federal government, with the help of the state government, to respond to the migration review, specifically with regard to working holiday visas and skilled migration across the regions, and to test the understanding of it and make sure it matches the outcomes we need.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [5.56 pm]: I rise to bookend the opposition's contribution to the debate on this excellent motion. In the first part of my speech, I will go through the contributions of members who have spoken and then add some further comments of my own. The Leader of the Opposition outlined in great and important detail the failings of this state Labor government in the current skills shortages we face and the historic lack of focus it has had on training.

It is interesting listening to members on the other side speak, and I look forward to the contributions of other members in a little while. I refer to the degree to which this government tries to deny any culpability or responsibility for actions it has taken that have led, predictably, directly to the situation we have now. It was predicted at the time that we would end up —

Mr T. Healy interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have barely started!

The ACTING SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, but member for Southern River —

Mr T.J. Healy: I thought he was apologising. He apologised for the apology!

The ACTING SPEAKER: If we can listen on. Member for Cottesloe, continue.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Perhaps if the member listened more and spoke less, he would learn more.

It is fascinating that I have heard ministers, the former Premier and this Premier talking in great colour about what a wonderful relationship they had with the former federal government. What a pity that it is not duplicated with a government of their own colour. It appears they have a hostile federal government. As has been pointed out on this side, we will call the current Prime Minister the 30-second-grab Prime Minister. It is embarrassing to hear him try to talk for more than that time. He is a master of the 30-second grab and loves to come over here and say he is fighting for Western Australia, but I think he is fighting against Western Australia. I feel sorry —

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: That is an interesting contribution, Leader of the House, because I tell you what —

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: The Leader of the House is being deliberately provocative and is interjecting so loudly that the member for Cottesloe cannot make his contribution. I ask that he desist.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): It is not a point of order. Member for Cottesloe, are you taking any interjections?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I do not mind moderate humorous interjections, but persistent badgering I am not so interested in.

The ACTING SPEAKER: If the conversation comes through the chair, we might be able to moderate that a bit better.

Debate Resumed

Dr D.J. HONEY: The contribution from the Leader of the House fascinates me. Our Prime Minister loves to come over here and say how he gets Western Australia. He comes over here for the photo opportunity. He still has not made an ironclad commitment to maintain our GST floor. The only thing he has said is that he will ensure that it is fair. He has not said that he will guarantee the current arrangement or improve the current arrangement, but only that it will be fair. I ask members opposite, what does "fair" mean? Members opposite should ask the Prime Minister what fair means. We have had no commitment from him or the Treasurer. The Prime Minister can pop over here

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for his photo-ops, go into a control room in Port Hedland and point at the ships, and go around with his hardhat and vest on, but if he is not listening —

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am glad I have excited members on the other side to get engaged in this debate. If the Prime Minister is not listening to the Premier or the state Minister for Training, what is the point of him coming here? In relation to that last interjection by the member on the dollars, his colleagues like to point out to me the enormous sums of money that the former coalition government devoted to this state to help it. I contrast that with the paltry sums of money that his own party is giving here. The Prime Minister can pop over for all the photo-ops he likes, but the problem is that he is not listening. I have a degree of sympathy for the Premier and the ministers who are trying to interact with their federal colleagues. It has been profoundly disappointing. As the point was made here by a couple of speakers, imagine having 14 members in the federal Parliament from Western Australia who are useless; they may as well not be there. They clearly cannot articulate the needs of the people of Western Australia. I thank the speakers on this side because they have done a good job of articulating the needs of the people of Western Australia. I have to dwell on this only for a little while before I go into that broader summary, but imagine having 14 federal members of Parliament and the state government has to set up an embassy in Canberra. That is the most damning indictment that I have ever heard of the failure of Labor federal members to represent us.

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Is this badgering?

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is good natured, to date. Members may have realised that I do not sound 100 per cent, so if it keeps us all alive, that is not so bad.

What an absolute joke. I will tell members what good federal members do. They do what the former coalition federal members did; that is, secure the GST arrangements for Western Australia that was one of the salvations of this state Labor government. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the attacks on this state such as the changes in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and the ban on live sheep exports. Ninety-eight per cent of live sheep exports come out of Western Australia. When the federal government says that it is stopping live sheep exports, it is stopping a major Western Australian industry. It is affecting a major Western Australian industry. The federal government is not attacking anyone on the east coast because that is all it cares about. It only cares about Sydney and Melbourne, and as was pointed out colourfully federally a little while ago, the senior federal members spend most of their time in Vaucluse going to exclusive dinner parties. They do not care too much about this state.

The federal government is talking about fiddling with the petroleum resource rent tax. In Australia, 70 per cent of gas exports come out of Western Australia. If the federal government increases the tax on natural gas exports, it will be increasingly taxing Western Australia, overwhelmingly. I have sympathy for colleagues opposite, but that is their test, is it not? Their test is to use their wiles and their capacity to liven up their 14 federal members who are asleep to fight for Western Australia. I wish them all the best with that. If I can give them any help, they should let me know. They may not ask me, but I am here, ready, willing and able to help them in that cause.

The member for Vasse pointed out the loss of students from this state and its root cause. When the government cut the skilled migration categories from 178 to 17, as a couple of members said in their contributions, they took away jobs for students. Government members might say that they were not quite sure that that was going to happen and it was an unintended consequence, but the only problem is that leading industry figures told them that at the time, and, furthermore, that if they cut that skilled migration category, they would cut the jobs for students. The majority of foreign students who come to our state rely on part-time work. In fact, many members know this, and I think this is actually an issue, because many of those students end up needing three or four jobs, which is a problem that needs to be resolved. Nevertheless, they rely on part-time work. Those students were the backbone of part-time work in the state of Western Australia. The other thing with those students coming over here is guess what their parents would do? Many of their parents bought apartments in the state so that their child would have somewhere to live or the parents would have somewhere to stay when they visited. The construction industry told the government that if it took away those jobs, it would take away demand for those units. We saw that collapse in demand due to a lack of foreign student numbers at that time. Now we have around half the share of foreign students in the state than we should have as a pro rata share. We are down to 5.8 per cent, and I will talk a little about that in a minute.

The member for Vasse talked about how the government stopped the Refresher Pathway Connect program. That program brought back people who had maybe moved onto other jobs or retired early to fill those critical skills shortages, particularly in our hospitals. That program was stopped in late 2021, and we wonder why we have a hospital crisis and cannot get staff. The Western Australian hospital system has always depended upon, still depends upon and will depend upon into the future a continuous and significant import of people migrating from

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overseas into Western Australia to fill those critical positions, but this government stopped a program that was getting more people into the state.

I move onto the Minister for Training's contribution. The minister talks about the things that she is doing now. This is what we see all the time from this government—panic. It makes a decision. It is a bad decision. It does not listen to well-meaning advice from this side of the chamber or from industry figures or others. It thinks it knows better. It goes ahead and does these things, and when there is a consequence, it panics and tries to pour massive amounts of money in to fix a problem that it actually initiated. I welcome the fact that funding is going into this area. I welcome that now we are starting to see a return of students in training to more normal levels that were present in 2016 and 2017 before this government came into power. I welcome that and I hope that continues to improve, but unfortunately it will be two, three or four years before those trainees hit the market and make a difference in our workforce. Meanwhile, all the problems outlined will continue. We hear about \$340 million, mostly in federal money, and \$250 million in TAFE infrastructure.

I want to tackle one topic—that is, the mythology that the Labor government has woven around getting the budget back in control. What a farce! Go and look at the budget, members. The spending is out of control. Go and have a look and do a little bit of homework. I am sure we will have a chance to discuss it in detail in this place. Have a look at what has happened to public sector wages after two years of COVID. There is an order of magnitude increase above the one per cent pay rise; there has been a 26 per cent increase in the number of FTEs in the public service over two years. The government is not controlling its expenditure. That is a myth. The last time I looked there was an overall increase in expenditure of around 30 per cent in the first term of government. That is a massive increase in expenditure. The only thing that happened was there were even more massive increases in revenue caused by factors that were completely out of the government's control. One factor was the excellent GST fix that the federal Liberal members put in place. The second factor was that the iron ore and other mineral resources prices went through the roof. It is a myth for the minister to say, "Boy, have you blown out FTEs."

Mr D.R. Michael: Do you think it's too high?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes, I think the government has dramatically increased the FTEs in the public service too far. There are no efficiencies in the public service; the government has simply increased staffing levels. I would absolutely be looking for efficiencies in the public service. It is an area that the government has failed to control. It has blown out. We will have a chance to go through this in agonising detail another time, members.

Mr D.R. Michael: Nurses, police—which ones?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I love police and nurses; it is all the others who are not doing those frontline services that have blown out.

Mr T.J. Healy: Look at the camera and say that again.

Dr D.J. HONEY: We can play it back. Let us talk about reversing decisions. Five weeks to introduce regulations to enliven an act only to bail on it is the best example of a reversal in the history of this Parliament.

I was fascinated to hear the minister claim that BHP's training facility was a government achievement. We might look at this another way and say that the requirement for the training facility is a lens on the government's failure because it has become so desperate that instead of relying on the public education sector to provide the workers that industry needs—that has been the proper thing in the past; industry has trained people once it has them in their workplace—one of our major industries in this state desperately had to go and spend its money to establish its own training facility, and the minister has the gall to come in here and claim that is a government achievement. Imagine that! The government is failing so badly that the private sector has to come in to fill that gap.

The minister talked about the skilled migration program and that she is disappointed, but that is the test for this minister and this government. There is a significant presence of Labor members in the federal Parliament and we hear that, apparently, government members have a good relationship with them. I seriously doubt it based on what we see happening in this state, but that is the test for this minister and this government.

I particularly enjoyed the contribution to this debate from the member for Roe. He reminded us of the history of the Premier of the day, Hon Mark McGowan, puffing out his chest and boasting.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: The Premier puffed out his chest and said, "What a great job I have done ceding to the union masters." To be fair, I am not sure whether they were his union masters, but they are the union masters for most of the members opposite. He puffed out his chest and boasted that he had gutted the skilled migration program and had taken us out of the regional migration scheme and cut those categories. What was the effect of that? It destroyed the pipeline of students coming into the state and it destroyed the construction industry. I should have dwelt on the construction industry a little bit before. The government destroyed the pipeline of new apartments coming in. It

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destroyed students coming into the state. Then, to try to get the apartment construction going again, the government panicked and gave up on stamp duty and the like for buyers, and they are mostly overseas buyers who buy off the plan. Again, we see a pattern of ill-thought-out decision-making. The government does not listen to industry and then panics and spends lots of money later to try to cover its tracks. The government removed us from the regional migration scheme and took down the skilled migration categories.

I will dwell on the shutdown of the border during COVID. I said this at the time and I have said it a couple of times since: I had no problem whatsoever with the government managing casual visitors during the COVID period. I said at the time, and other members said it, too, that if the government stopped workers coming into the state with the shutdown, it would cause harm to the state's economy that would go well past COVID.

Ms H.M. Beazley: We also saved lives.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It was entirely predictable. We did not save a life doing that, member; in fact, we in Western Australia demonstrated that we could successfully bring people into the state in a controlled manner. Some tens of thousands of people returned to the state because a lot of people came home. A large number of people came into the state, so do not promote the fantasy that somehow or other everyone was stopped from coming into the state.

At the time we said that if the government stopped skilled and semiskilled workers coming into the state, the impact of that would continue well past COVID. The Premier wanted a “strong on COVID” headline grab, so he did it anyway. I know that industry figures were talking to the Premier at the time because they spoke to me as well and said that this was madness. They said that they had lost all their casual workers and would not be able to build apartments or carry out housing construction activities. A substantial number of workers in the building industry are semiskilled. They are people who have skills, but they are not plumbers or bricklayers and the like. They are the ordinary workers who do labouring around the site, but they are critically important. In many cases, the builders told me that they had a shortage of semiskilled workers because there were no casual workers coming into the state during that period, and that stopped an enormous amount of construction activity. That was a decision of this government, rather than taking a subtle approach.

The government stopped people coming over for twenty-first birthday parties or to see the Bungle Bungles because that had been their dream all their life or whatever. If we overwhelmed our capacity to handle migration, that would have caused a problem, but the fact is that that could have been managed. But for a headline grab and political advantage, the Premier of the day, Hon Mark McGowan, was prepared to harm this state. As I said, it was not an idle decision. It was not done without any input or feedback from anyone else, and it had a massive impact. The member for Roe talked about the percentage of overseas workers that we have in this state. I liked, and will now adopt, the three Fs: fishing, forestry and farming. We see a dogged attack on these primary industries. Labor Party members hate primary industry. They hate it and want to destroy it. They want to regulate it out of existence. That is what they want to do, unless it is on the latte strip of Belmont.

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Belmont is a very sophisticated suburb. My aunt and a number of my cousins live out there and it is a place I enjoy. I worked out there for a time with Western Mining as well. Unless it is in the latte strip of Belmont, the government does not want to know. If it is outside the city, it sort of knows mining is important, but anyone who is doing productive agricultural activity is in the crosshairs and it will do them in.

The member pointed out the scale of job and position vacancies across the state. I think the Labor Party has a plan to deal with the worker shortage. We would have to say that it is a lateral sort of a plan; that is, if we have too many jobs for the people available, kill the jobs. Get rid of the jobs and bring in restrictions. We saw the government's failed attempt to bring in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act and regulations, which in the form they were in were going to be a nightmare for every landowner or anyone who did any work on land in the state, including the miners. I have said this in a recent debate here, but I really mean this: I hope Labor members talk to their federal colleagues about the absolute stupidity of the time line that the federal government has for the 43 per cent emissions reduction target, because that will kill more jobs in Australia and Western Australian than any other single thing. I have said many times I have no concern with the aspiration. The time line is utterly stupid. As it is applied and, more particularly, as the tax on the so-called high emitters is applied this year and progressively more next year and the year after, we will simply see manufacturing shut down in this state. We have seen the attacks on sheep exports and the like, as I have already talked about.

The collapse of building companies is, again, a matter that sits entirely at the feet of this government, although, we will take some skin on this one; it had some aiding and abetting on this with the federal government. At the behest of some people in the industry demanding massive amounts of federal and state money going into encouraging young people to buy houses that they could not otherwise afford with these first home owner grants, it was massive

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amounts of money. I think it was up to \$70 000, but I am happy to stand corrected. That was the combination of federal and state grants. What did it do with that? We might say they brought that in. But when it brought that in, that money could be paid not at stud height, which always had been the tradition—I know some people here are experts—and not when the walls were complete and the roof was ready to go on because the building was substantially built and it just needed to be finished off with the roofing and the interiors of the house, but when the cement pad was laid. Guess what? Some members would see it in their electorates. What do we have all over Perth? We have cement pads that have been there for two or three years. We have heard that houses commenced in 2019 are still not completed because of that.

It was utter folly to do that scheme. It helped the people who owned the land and sold it. That is who it helped. All that money went to them because the prices went up by more than the amount of the grant. That is what always happens with those types of schemes and now those houses cannot be built. Furthermore, it encouraged builders to take on far too many customers on fixed-term contracts and now they have been destroyed by high interest rates and rising costs. That is a direct consequence of this state government's decision. Because that payment could be paid on the cement pad, vastly more builders entered into arrangements with customers than they otherwise would had it been a requirement that that payment could be paid only once the construction had reached stud height. Again, we see decisions by this state Labor government having led directly to the problems we have now.

I thought the member for North West Central gave a very lucid explanation of the critical importance of agricultural workers. Again, I admit and accept that those are federal changes, but it is a challenge of this state government to have the capacity to engage their federal colleagues to deal with that issue and to recognise that changing those visas to one year will be catastrophic. I have had a good opportunity to spend time with the member for North West Central in her electorate and to visit a number of areas in the north west. Those workers come back year after year. They will come over for six months for work and then they will go back and study for a time and then come back again. I really enjoyed the member's presentation and contribution because she outlined it beautifully. They become members of the community. They contribute with the critically important work because they do the jobs that most people from Perth are not prepared to do. They will not only do the critical seasonal work that people do not want to do—they like it, however, because it fits their lifestyle—but also add enormously to the fabric of the whole community there.

I implore members to please lobby, harass and cajole their federal members and, if they have any relationship with any of the relevant federal ministers, talk to them about it and the impact that will have on Western Australia. The whole farming sector, literally from Esperance to Kununurra, absolutely relies on those workers that are prepared to do that seasonal work.

Ms M. Beard: Tourism.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The tourism sector also relies on those migrants, as the member for North West Central points out. Unfortunately, I do not have time to cover all the contributions, but the story of that beautiful couple and their children in Carnarvon resonated with me. I have met that couple and their children. They are wonderful citizens of Australia—at the moment on a temporary basis. How wonderful it would be to see them stay in Australia. Members can talk about and try to resile from their past, but this government has caused enormous harm to our economy. The government has benefited from a massive increase in the price of minerals and royalties. It has benefited from the GST fix from the federal Liberal–National government, and that has covered a lot of its tracks. I hope it learns from its past.

MS H.M. BEAZLEY (Victoria Park — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.26 pm]: I also thank the opposition for bringing forward this private members' business motion this evening because it gives me an opportunity to point out everything that we have been doing in the training sector and industries and how well we are collaborating with the Albanese federal Labor government. It is ludicrous to state that this government is not addressing the acknowledged ongoing skills crisis or that we are not working collaboratively with the federal Labor government on this issue.

Firstly, I know it has not been missed and it has been stated tonight, but the state and federal governments are now of the same colour, and that means we share values and priorities. As the Labor Party, our top priority always has been jobs and skills. It is not that this Labor government needs to be the same colour as its federal counterpart in order to work collaboratively or effectively. That is evidenced by the amount of federal funding that we were able to negotiate from the previous federal Liberal government for our state Labor projects. I know that our success in that space has also been mentioned a number of times today. It is ludicrous given the Liberal and National Parties' record in training and skills when they were last in government.

By the wording of its own private members' business motion, the opposition acknowledged the ongoing nature of the state's skills shortage. I am not sure whether the opposition is aware, though the member for Vasse touched on this, but it can take years of study, further years of apprenticeships and traineeships, and sometimes a number of years of work experience to be considered skilled in an area. Just in case members have forgotten that type of time frame, I will take us back to the Liberals' last stint in government. I remind the opposition what it did to our

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training sector when it was last in power. Under the former Liberal–National government, TAFE fees rose by over 500 per cent and enrolments drastically decreased as a result. That has meant fewer workers and fewer skills in our industries for a generation. As the member for Roe said, a generation is roughly 18 years, so we are only six or so years into the at least 18 years of damage the former government’s policies and training cuts created and that we are working desperately to reverse. When we came into government in 2017, we reversed those massive fee hikes. We froze TAFE fees and reduced many others by at least 72 per cent. We now have the Free in ’23 program, which makes tens of thousands of TAFE places free.

During our six years in government, we have worked hard to repair the sector, and it is starting to pay off. It has been paying off for years, actually. Apprentices and trainees in WA have reached the highest number in a decade. We are making sure that Western Australians have opportunities to train, retrain and upskill in high-demand areas that will provide locals with secure and well-paying jobs. Our latest state budget included funding of \$93.4 million for our training sector, including initiatives that support students in the regions to access training, women to access apprenticeships and Aboriginal youth to gain employment. This amount includes \$2 000 training completion grants to help improve apprentices’ completion rates in residential construction trades, as we know tradespeople are desperately needed in the state, and up to \$500 worth of rebates for tools and safety equipment. Also, \$48 million was committed to training and other initiatives to expand the state’s construction workforce to complete the record 27 500 new homes that will be built over the next year.

In July this year, the government released the *State training plan 2023–24*, which sets the priority areas for the government’s investment in vocational education and training for the next two years. The priority areas are advocating for WA’s skills needs in national skills reform, preparing a skilled workforce for energy transformation and decarbonisation targets, managing a sustainable pipeline of apprentices and trainees, and building regional workforce skills and capacity.

Our Cook Labor government has also made a significant investment in free and low-fee training in early childhood education and care. As a result, in the 12 months leading up to 30 April this year, WA recorded a 37 per cent increase in traineeship commencements and a 94 per cent increase in completions, compared with the same time last year. This means that the sector has benefited from almost 2 400 new entrants. This is supported by our joint \$112 million 12-month skills agreement with the federal Albanese Labor government to provide fee-free TAFE and vocational education and training places. We work collaboratively with the federal Albanese Labor government, and this joint package includes many other initiatives, such as infrastructure upgrades at Midland TAFE for a renewable jobs and training hub, \$3 million for a trade training centre at Ellenbrook Secondary College and a \$2 million state-of-the-art commercial kitchen at Bentley Pines Training Restaurant at one of the TAFEs in my Victoria Park electorate.

I was at Bentley TAFE earlier this week with both the federal Minister for Skills and Training, Hon Brendan O’Connor, and the state Minister for Training, Hon Simone McGurk—because, you know, visits like that happen with ministers and governments that do not work well together! It was wonderful to speak to the trainees. All the trainees I spoke with have benefited from either reduced-fee courses or free courses or both. Sometimes their first couple of years were reduced-fee courses and then their third year was completely free. Some students were new to their skills, and others were upgrading theirs. One student was a woman who already owns a popular cafe in Kelmscott, just around the corner from the office of the member for Burt, Matt Keogh. Apparently, he frequents her cafe quite often. She was improving her skills to improve her business. If her business improves, her profits improve and she will be able to employ more skilled people. It is fantastic stuff.

Our \$112-million partnership with the Albanese government targets courses in the care, technology and digital, agriculture, construction, hospitality and tourism sectors. It covers course fees for 58 full TAFE qualifications and provides reduced fees for 56 skill sets. There has been strong demand for the fee-free TAFE places currently on offer. We have smashed the targets for fee-free TAFE, with more than 34 000 enrolments in free courses this year alone. Free in ’23 has been so successful that there has been an increase of more than 40 per cent on last year’s numbers alone.

Our state Labor government also introduced the defence industry internship and graduate skills program, boosting the number of interns and graduates in WA’s priority defence industry. The program will place 190 interns and 50 graduates in the WA defence industry over the next three years to ensure a pipeline of qualified workers. We have enhanced services for First Nations people across 19 jobs and skill centres, ensuring culturally appropriate and specialised support for Aboriginal clients—another multimillion-dollar investment. We have also opened a new jobs and skills centre in Fremantle.

Since 2017, our new industries fund has co-funded three innovation hubs that look to help develop emerging industries, such as data science, artificial intelligence, life science and cybersecurity. Each hub is governed by a unit with a university partner. My local Victoria Park university, Curtin University, is a partner in the data science case; the University of Western Australia in life sciences; and Edith Cowan University in cybersecurity. Last year,

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a fourth hub was announced to the WA creative tech innovation hub, now known as Creative Tech Village, located in Bunbury.

Our state government has committed an additional \$9.1 million to boost our new industries fund, or NIF, across the next two financial years. Every dollar invested by the government in the NIF generates a gross value add of between \$1.30 and \$5.20. It is an amazing investment in our economy and people.

In April this year, we opened the new \$5.4 million Metronet Trade Training Centre. This centre is the first of its kind at an Australian TAFE. We are leading the nation. It meets the needs of the Metronet program and supports local jobs in the rail industry. As Western Australians know, the Cook Labor government is serious about returning skills, jobs and meaningful work to our local rail industry. After all, we are the ones who reopened railcar manufacturing in Western Australia.

In addition to keeping fees affordable and the Free in '23 program I mentioned earlier, we are delivering a record \$268.3 million to upgrade TAFE infrastructure and equipment across the state. This is the biggest TAFE capital works program in WA's history. There are 15 major upgrades, of which over half are in regional WA.

Amongst so many other initiatives, we have also introduced various job ready programs that provide entry-level candidates with a pathway into traineeships and jobs in targeted industries. Almost 930 Western Australians have been employed following their completion of a full range of job ready courses. All job ready programs are part of the Free in '23 initiatives. Of the early childhood education and care job ready program participants whom I mentioned earlier, 78 per cent are women, 43 per cent are aged under 25 years, and 40 per cent are Aboriginal people.

A recent Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force survey estimated that the number of Western Australians employed as childcare workers or managers has increased by 1 600 to a total of 14 600. Of the almost 2 000 participants who have commenced job ready programs, almost half report that they have already secured employment in the industry or further training, adding to the pipeline of skilled workers needed across a range of essential sectors.

We have launched the job reconnect program to support more mature age workers and jobseekers into the workforce by providing support with work-related costs and through an employer incentive scheme. We are investing heavily in our construction workforce. We have given a \$7.6 million boost to WA's skilled residential construction workforce, and \$34.2 million in initiatives to encourage WA businesses to take on local workers, complete apprenticeships and expedite occupational licensing. We have expanded our wage subsidy scheme to include residential construction apprentices and trainees. We have given \$11 million in targeted visa subsidies to attract skilled workers to WA's construction industry, and have temporarily relaxed migration criteria to meet ongoing skills needs. Our \$1.26 million driver's licence training support program is removing barriers for young people in the building and construction industry to get more young people into the industry more quickly.

There is \$4.2 million to deliver a new apprentice completion grant program to tackle skill shortages and build a sustainable construction workforce. Eligible apprentices in this program receive a one-off \$2 000 completion payment. We have expanded our highly successful heavy vehicle driving operations training program to the Kimberley and Pilbara to help train local people for local jobs as part of a \$3.5 million expansion. We are diversifying the economy by investing a further \$463 million to drive growth in industries that will support the jobs of the future through a number of different mechanisms, including new funding to expand export markets; developing priority sector and cross-sector activities to create jobs for the future; supporting a range of local industries, including energy, tourism and events, international education, primary industries and science, and innovation and technology; opening a jobs and skills centre in Collie; and providing free career and training support to help local workers take up new opportunities through our \$662 million investment to support Collie's economic diversification. The latest new funding takes the state Labor government's total investment in economic diversification initiatives to support job creation and set up WA's long-term future to more than \$3.8 billion since 2021. We are looking outside the state to strengthen our economy and workforce by opening brand new Invest and Trade WA offices in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam and Austin, Texas in the United States.

When preparing to speak this evening I had a look at the announcements the Cook Labor government has made recently in the training portfolio. I found the following announcements in this month of August 2023 alone: the completion of the state government's \$2 million refurbishment of Central Regional TAFE's *Master Class* maritime training vessel; WA TAFE launching new cybersecurity training, the first in the nation; the expansion of training for early childhood educators for WA; and training boosts for the Kimberley, with a new Kununurra health and hospitality training centre. There is also plenty to smile about with TAFE's new \$2.6 million specialist dental facility; and clean energy skills are on the rise in WA. The last announcement was a joint announcement with the federal Albanese Labor government, through which we let the public know that skills ministers from across the country met last week in Fremantle to progress negotiations on a national skills agreement to tackle widespread skills shortages. As we all know, those skills shortages are not just statewide, but nationwide and global.

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I again thank the opposition for bringing this motion to the chamber in private members' business. It has given me the opportunity to touch a little on what this Labor government has achieved in the training sector in the last six years, and what we are underlining in order to fulfil our deep commitment to Western Australians to secure WA jobs and skills into the future. I yet again point out the terrible irony of the opposition's criticism of our work in this area, given its track record: 500 per cent increases in TAFE fees and a decrease in TAFE enrolments. The opposition's attempt to wash its hands of the legacy consequences of that terrible, short-sighted action is laughable.

I obviously do not support the premise of this motion. Thank you.

MS L. DALTON (Geraldton) [6.42 pm]: I thank the member for Victoria Park for that absolutely fabulous contribution. She pretty much stole all my thunder! Truthful stories are always worth listening to. Coming to this place as the member for Geraldton I am quite bemused by this motion. Out of anything one could look at under the Labor government, training and investment in skills is certainly something that we are very good at. As many members know, I came to this place with a background as a TAFE lecturer. I was a TAFE lecturer for nearly 20 years at Central Regional TAFE. I also had my own business, a cafe in Geraldton called Salt Dish that I had for about five years, so I certainly am not someone who is unfamiliar with training and employment. It would be ridiculous to suggest that we do not have issues in the regions. I take on board the member for North West Central's comments around how hard it is to find people to work in our industries. I come from a hospitality background, too, so I certainly understand that. But they are not new problems. We have had these problems for a very long time, particularly in the hospitality industry. I can speak from experience: it was often very hard to fill positions. However, to say that this government is sitting on its hands—a term that members opposite used—is absolutely ludicrous. I cannot believe that members opposite would even suggest that.

I was a TAFE lecturer from 1999 to just before I came to this place in 2021, so I was a TAFE lecturer under both governments. Between 2013 and 2017, the former Liberal–National government increased TAFE fees by over 500 per cent, therefore cutting funding to TAFEs. That just about decimated TAFEs. I remember when I was first working in the training sector that I met our previous Premier, who was the training minister at the time, when he opened one of our skills kitchens. We could see that we needed that industry to be flourishing so we were investing in that area. What the Liberal–National government did to TAFEs just about killed us. I was part of the “Save our TAFEs” campaign; we worked really, really hard. I had had certificate III and IV classes and traineeships that were filled to the brim, and then it all just imploded. We were struggling to find students because they just could not afford to do their qualifications at TAFE. One of the bastions of our TAFE system was that we were offering training to people, both young and old, who could not necessarily afford to go to university. Enrolling in a TAFE course was something that the average Joe could afford to do, but between 2013 and 2017, it was certainly not affordable for people anymore. That was really devastating.

We are skilling Western Australian workers. As the member for Victoria Park mentioned, the government has provided access to affordable training; lowered fees; introduced the Free in '23 program; introduced low fee settings for existing worker traineeships; provided job ready programs; introduced group training organisation wage subsidies; introduced the job reconnect program for priority cohorts; made significant investments in TAFE facilities and equipment—I will touch on the impact of that locally; provided more jobs and skills centres across Western Australia; introduced defence industry initiatives; and enhanced Aboriginal services at jobs and skills centres statewide. New 2023–24 budget initiatives include scholarships for women in non-traditional trades, work placement and travel assistance for regional nursing students, an increase to the travel and accommodation allowance for regional apprentices and trainees, and expanded programs for Aboriginal jobseekers. They are just some of the initiatives of this Labor government.

I will talk more specifically about my old stomping ground of Central Regional TAFE and some of the investment that has happened there. For those who are not familiar with Central Regional TAFE, it services four regions spanning around 58 per cent of Western Australia, covering an area of about 1.52 million square kilometres. As the main training facility in the midwest, Central Regional TAFE delivers quality training to residents of the City of Greater Geraldton and surrounding local communities, so within the Shires of Northampton, Meekatharra, Carnamah, Morawa and Perenjori. The Batavia Coast Marine Institute is part of the CRT campus located at Separation Point. It is a beautiful institute—a state-of-the-art specialist facility that supports training in aquaculture, maritime and fishing operations, and conservation and ecosystem management. It helps to train locals for the jobs they want. The BCMI also has close links with the industry and partner agencies and is integral to the development of a skilled workforce for the future in high-value industries, including fishing and the oil and gas industries.

We have already spoken about some of the infrastructure upgrades. As part of the government's record investment of \$24.3 million for infrastructure across WA TAFEs, we recently saw the completion of the \$2 million upgrade of the CRT's maritime training vessel, the *Master Class*. The Minister for Training recently visited Geraldton. We looked at the new upgrades, which are absolutely fabulous. I was working at TAFE when the *Master Class* first came

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into Central Regional TAFE. It was absolutely fabulous to see the new upgrades. It was great to take the minister for a little jaunt around the marina. The staff and students are really proud of that training vessel. It will support maritime students in the midwest and the Gascoyne. It will provide logistical support for other qualifications, such as aquaculture, fishing operations and conservation and ecosystem management. We are really proud of the fact that a local builder, Dongara Marine, completed the major overhaul of the vessel, which included new engines, gearboxes, hydraulic systems, electrics, air conditioning and navigational systems. When I was on the vessel with Rohan, the owner of Dongara Marine, we talked about how many people actually worked on the vessel during construction. Thirty different trades and skills, including apprentices and trainees, were all part of bringing that vessel to life, which is fabulous. Rohan employs around 30 migrants as well as local community members, which is a great testament to working with the federal government to make sure that we have strong migration employment. Importantly, this vessel helps to upskill local people for local jobs in our beautiful seaside town.

I have a lot more to say about how this Labor government is doing all it can to pull out all the stops and make sure that we are preparing our workforce for the future. I absolutely do not support anything the opposition said. We understand that it is hard to find skilled workers. I find it amusing that the opposition could suggest that this government is not doing everything it can to make sure that we are upskilling our future workers. I know that other members would like to contribute during the last few minutes, so I will conclude my contribution.

MR T.J. HEALY (Southern River — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.53 pm]: I rise to address the private members' business motion. I indicate that I will not be supporting it. I would like to acknowledge the very great credibility of the member for Victoria Park, who has a great record within business and industry, and thank the member for Geraldton, a former TAFE lecturer. I come to this debate as a former high school teacher who had to sit with young people who were turned away from TAFE because the member for Cottesloe's government priced a generation of young people out of the market to complete their training. I refer to the comments made by the member for Cottesloe. He said that our government should take responsibility for the mess we are in. He took the interjection but he did not apologise for the fact that 500 per cent TAFE fee increases —

Dr D.J. Honey: There were more kids in TAFE.

Mr T.J. HEALY: "The poor kids at TAFE"—is that what you just said? "The poor kids at TAFE." This was by your government, which you were a part of as a senior member of the Liberal Party, well before you came into this place after being elected at a by-election for Cottesloe. When I was a high school teacher, I had to sit with many young people who wanted to do certificate courses and apprenticeships but missed out because of what the Liberal government did. I find it interesting that the member for Cottesloe would say to us that we should take responsibility when he refused to apologise.

The 500 per cent TAFE fee increase was one of the reasons I ran for Parliament in the first place. When I was a teacher and careers officer at Southern River College, I came up here and spoke to Mark McGowan and said that this was not fair. I said to Sue Ellery, who was the shadow minister then, that this was not fair. I commend this government for delivering on its promises to freeze TAFE fees and reduce fees for 210 priority courses when it came to power in 2017. I commend the federal Labor government for its support and what it has done in allowing us to deliver job ready programs in priority industries, with \$25 million invested in modern, state-of-the-art TAFE infrastructure and equipment upgrades. The largest amount in Western Australian history, \$43 million, has been invested in TAFE capital works programs in 14 TAFE colleges across the regions. Priority Start and the Metronet Trade Training Centre delivered on each of our promises. The defence industry pathway is a brilliant program. I was at South Metropolitan TAFE Bentley campus last week for a graduation of an incredible program of young people and mature age apprentices who are heading into key industries to support the nation and Western Australia. There are also the year 9 career taster and truck driving programs.

I was very honoured to be the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training when the government held the first ever Western Australia Skills Summit at Kings Park with all ministers of cabinet. As parliamentary secretary to the training minister, I then hosted each of the 10 regional skills summits around Western Australia—something the Liberal–National government never did in terms of respecting regional communities. We went to Bunbury, Northam, Geraldton, Kununurra, Karratha, Port Hedland, Broome and Albany, and we spoke about their importance. We spoke with industries, leaders and local governments about their needs, and they were very appreciative of the work the government was doing across a number of different areas.

I would like to mention a couple of brief things. The member for Moore spoke. The member for Vasse spoke. I have referred to the member for Cottesloe. I would like to close on one thing: the member for Moore spoke about the McGowan Labor government freezing TAFE fees. I agree that we have a skills shortage in leaders of the opposition. That is the main thing I took away from his speech. I am happy to table some documents, if the Leader of the Opposition would like. One thing we could offer the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Moore, is the certificate II in leadership, a course now available at a very affordable price, as delivered by this government. The course description says —

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The Certificate II in Leadership is designed to further develop and enhance your ... leadership skills.

A major component of the course is active participation in a team ...

With practical projects, it will develop skills and self-confidence.

This government is making sure that all young people and mature age students have access to affordable industry placements and TAFE training programs. The member for Vasse spoke about the decrease in training numbers. She did not acknowledge the fact that in an answer to question without notice 382 asked on 16 June 2022—I am happy to table this for the benefit of members—this chamber was informed that, in 2021, Western Australia had the highest ever recorded number of publicly funded course enrolments, at 150 000.

Deputy Speaker, I understand the time, but I will have to keep speaking until you tell me to stop speaking because this is an incredible achievement of the Western Australian government that the opposition is ashamed to talk about. I seek leave to table the document for the remainder of the day.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, leave is granted.

[The paper was tabled for the information of members.]

Mr T.J. HEALY: It might be only 30 seconds, but it is an important document, Deputy Speaker!

This government has always delivered on its promises to the community and our sector. I thank the government for all the great things that it does—we will keep fighting!

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
