

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

COST OF LIVING

Motion

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

That this house decries the McGowan Labor government for its failure to deliver key services and meet budget commitments, compounding cost-of-living pressures on Western Australian households.

We know that the combination of inflation, an overheated housing market, the rising cost of food, the supply chain issues besetting our industries and our retail sectors and the limited amount of government assistance that has been made available has meant that many households have struggled over recent months just to cover their basic necessities—the cost of living. We have seen the erosion of the purchasing power of their wages. Many on fixed incomes are finding it particularly difficult, but even families with a wage coming in are finding it very hard to make ends meet. The cost-of-living crisis is engulfing much of Western Australia.

We know that this state has been supported by the high demand for many of our products, particularly iron ore, and there has also been strong demand for agricultural produce. We have had some very good seasons throughout much of the grain-growing area and in other areas we have had strong demand for agricultural products, but that has often been in the midst of labour shortages that have sometimes affected the amount of food available. Getting the food to market has not always been as smooth as it has been in the past. Of course, that all feeds into the price of the product. In some areas, it has become quite difficult for people to access fresh produce. I note the particular issues of those people who are struggling in the Kimberley at the moment. Meanwhile, and distressingly, many Western Australian families are struggling with high interest rates and high living expenses. These families need to be considered in the upcoming budget. Today it was disappointing to see that the Premier ruled out freezing fees and charges, so we will see a repeat of the increases in the recent past under this government. At a time when it has a massive budget surplus, it is increasing costs for households and Western Australian families. That is flowing through to families to such a degree that they are now facing a very steep rise in the cost of living.

The West Australian reported it recently examined a broad range of grocery items —

... commonly purchased by consumers and found the total cost had jumped from \$90.26 in 2019 to \$141.68 in 2022—a 57 per cent increase.

I doubt that many households have had their income increase by 57 per cent. Obviously, householders in Western Australia are having trouble making ends meet. The *Foodbank hunger report 2022* showed that over the previous 12 months, 280 000 households in Western Australia had gone hungry as a result of insufficient income. That is not 280 000 people; that is 280 000 households. A very significant portion of the Western Australian economy is doing it tough. That means that people may be skipping meals and kids might be going to school without breakfast. The breakfast program is run in many schools. Foodbank contributes to that program in many areas. In the communities I represent, I know just how essential it is for that program to continue. A child who has not had adequate nutrition in the morning will find it very hard to study, learn and interact properly at school. In some communities, especially communities in my electorate that have larger Aboriginal populations, it is very important that local people are involved to make sure that solutions are in place.

I was recently at a school function in Three Springs. The ladies who organise the breakfast club were acknowledged. They are running it out of the goodness of their hearts and not getting any return. They make sure that the kids who go to school have something in their bellies so that they can learn while they are at school. Foodbank reports that for the time it has been in operation, most of the people who came to it did not normally have a wage, but at the moment, more than 50 per cent of the people who actively use Foodbank have a job or someone in their household has a job. If someone wants to use Foodbank, they have to be referred there and go through a process to ensure that they are in financial distress. That just goes to show that things are changing for many people on lower incomes in Western Australia. They are certainly feeling the stress in these hard times.

A group in my electorate that is doing a tremendous job and stands out to me is called Toodyay Locals Care, which is run by a lady named Roz Davidson. Years ago, out of the goodness of her heart, she set up a program to assist many people in the community. I am pleased that oftentimes at Christmas, the group puts on a Christmas lunch for the community. I am pleased to be able to support that and occasionally go along on Christmas Day to help with the lunch. Every week, Toodyay Locals Care regularly hands out 100 meals to people in that small community who need them. There is no Meals on Wheels or any formal services that people can turn to at the moment. Roz Davidson reports that she is aware of 20 individuals or families who live in substandard homes but are paying skyrocketing rents and going without power because they cannot afford to pay for it. These people are in dire straits.

It is appalling that in the wealthiest state in the wealthiest country we are seeing people going hungry in a beautiful place like Toodyay. Nobody in Western Australia should be going hungry. Nobody should be experiencing that

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

level of distress. That needs to be acknowledged and some help needs to be given to assist organisations that are a backstop for those people. The opposition asked that \$300 million be allocated to further fund these services that are under such demand at the moment. I am not sure whether that request will be considered in the budget. The Premier has been quite consistent in responding that he did not believe that allocations like that reflected good economic management. That would seem to prohibit that sort of fund being set up. He says it is possible that there might be a global recession and that the windfall surpluses that his government has been gifted by the mining boom need to be put aside. He talks about the possible recession ahead. I wonder whether he considers how negative sentiments like that could impact business confidence going forward. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia advises that Western Australia is well placed to weather any financial storms associated with a possible global recession. However, it notes that confidence levels for the next 12 months are now at their lowest since before the beginning of the pandemic. *Business News* reports that the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported a drop in private capital expenditure of 7.6 per cent over the quarter to September 2022. New investment in machinery and equipment dropped by 10.7 per cent over the quarter, with capital spending on buildings and structures falling to a lesser extent by 5.3 per cent.

The budget surplus in Western Australia is largely powered by mining. The other sectors are important for the domestic economy, but much of the money rolls in from the mining industry. The iron ore price that Treasury used to forecast was set at \$US66 a tonne. It has been set very conservatively, and that seems to indicate that we will have further surpluses going forward. In fact, Morgan Stanley, an investment bank, predicts a second quarter 2023 average price of \$US140 a tonne, well above the \$US66 a tonne that is mentioned in the budget. I am sure that we will continue, at least in the medium term, to see some level of surplus coming into this state. The excuses the Premier puts forward are beginning to wear very thin.

The state's mining sector has delivered growth in capital expenditure since 2019, but non-mining has failed to keep pace. Investment decisions need to be based on business confidence. Talking down the state and talking down the economy going forward has a depressing effect on business investment. If we take away the massive projects, the investment does not look as good.

I want to raise a specific issue of failure—that is, failure to provide a reliable power supply to many households in many areas of the state. That matter has been topical since the Christmas blackouts and the Shepherd report that was subsequently produced. Around the time that happened, there were continuing rolling power outages throughout the midwest, the region I represent, and other areas of the state such as Kalgoorlie had incidents. A petition went to the other place calling for a review of the power supply in regional areas, outside of the Shepherd inquiry into the Christmas blackouts that affected mainly the metropolitan area or nearby, and some regional areas also. That petition was the first e-petition to be presented to the Legislative Council since its inception of the electronic petition methodology. However, the request for an independent review fell on deaf ears. In the midwest power outages two weeks ago, 24 000 to 27 000 households were affected, depending on which hour of the two days of power outage is considered—six hours on the Wednesday and seven hours on the Friday. The minister was forced to apologise for the failure to provide power into the midwest. That is the first time I have heard that minister apologise for anything and I think it is reflective of an understanding that he is gaining that maybe he made a mistake when he ruled out not having an inquiry into the regional power situation specifically. It is obvious that areas of the midwest are suffering greatly from the lack of power and the lack of a reliable power infrastructure. It is not just the weather; the infrastructure is not up to standard. This is affecting business badly. I know it is not just in regional areas. I note that a power outage recently affected the Mullaloo IGA and it lost \$100 000 worth of stock. Equivalent shops in my electorate have had to spend tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars to properly equip themselves with power supplies that are independent of the grid or continue to lose stock at the sort of level the Mullaloo IGA lost on that occasion.

Mr P.J. Rundle: Did they get their \$85?

Mr R.S. LOVE: It would not have got that because the outage probably did not last for the required number of hours on that occasion and I do not think it would get a response for \$85 for \$100 000 worth of stock. However, I note that as a result of some of our pressure, the government lifted that \$85 power fund. Interestingly, on the Friday, when the power supply in the midwest was so badly affected, the CEO of Western Power and a bunch of people were in Dongara at a drop-in meeting with local residents. As a result of the parlous state of the power supply in Dongara, the CEO responded to a written request from me to communicate with the public. It was enormously instructive to him to arrive in Dongara when there was no power—yet again. Of course, that was a perfect opportunity for people of the area to put to him their displeasure with the supply of power. I have had constituents come into my office and sit in front of me and tell me that they are putting their houses on the market because of the power supply situation. Obviously, that is a huge issue in the midwest and in other regional areas as well. I know it is not just the midwest that is affected, but Kalgoorlie and other places.

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

The CEO of the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Joanne Fabling, has been outstanding in her advocacy for improved power supplies into the midwest. When we are thinking about what money could be spent to enable further economic development, a proper power supply to what is surely going to be one of the future economic powerhouses of the state makes perfect sense. Instead, the midwest has been left with a system of wooden poles and wires as the main transmission line from Three Springs into Geraldton. That system is over 50 years old. It was extensively damaged in cyclone Seroja, yet no plan is in place to put in a proper transmission network into the midwest—something that would greatly reinforce economic growth for the whole state going forward. They are the types of investments that need to be made into the future, not investments that are entirely based on vanity projects that will not provide that level of economic impact and that level of opportunity for economic growth going forward. That area's power supply system was badly affected by cyclone Seroja. People are leaving the area. Those towns are hollowing out. That is a worrying situation indeed and needs to be addressed into the future.

If we want to make use of the boom we are in and enable Western Australia to escape from the boom-and-bust cycle that we have had for a hundred years, we need to invest in other industries and in other types of infrastructure other than just iron ore and the traditional industries. This government has made much of programs that it has supposedly put in place to promote diversification of the industrial base and economic base, but I am not sure that we are seeing much of a result from that at this time.

Diversification of our economic base is something that I strongly support, as it is certainly a very good idea to not have all your eggs in one basket. Having all your eggs in the iron ore basket to produce income for the state will be eminently risky way down the track. One day there will be a correction, but the indication is that that is not coming soon. We should use that boom to ensure a secondary boom is coming along in new industries and that we have a mature economy, rather than an economy based on one or two primary industries—great though they are. We need to ensure we do other things as well. While we have surpluses, this is an opportunity to not only support households in a more targeted and effective way, but also improve opportunities for economic development and business growth.

One thing holding that back to an extent is a lack of meaningful engagement with businesses around things like payroll tax reductions. The government has had an opportunity with the rivers of money flowing in to actually kickstart business in other directions, especially by ensuring that small and medium businesses hit by payroll tax are given some form of relief. There will no doubt be more to say about that over the coming years as we move towards the election cycle. At the moment, suffice to say, studies have shown that payroll tax has some really negative impacts on our society in discouraging employment. In fact, the Economic Regulation Authority has raised concerns and said that a business may be inclined to send its operations offshore or to another jurisdiction, or may decide not to expand because it does not want to be hit by that initial interaction with payroll tax. That business may instead choose to use contractors or outsource work or perhaps just limit growth that it would have otherwise undertaken.

We also know that this state has one of the most distressing situations that has developed in recent times; that is, the situation of people without homes. Right throughout the metropolitan area and in some country areas people are homeless and have nowhere to shelter. This government has made much of its commitments to social housing and the homeless. It developed a portfolio for homelessness. I think homelessness is something that we used to see little of in Western Australia, but it is now becoming distressingly apparent that people are falling through the cracks, and the charities and services that support them are also coming under pressure. As I said, we have put forward ideas to try to relieve some of that pressure. I am sure other members will talk on this matter as well. When the opposition points to failures of the government on this issue, government members make up a fairytale based on programs announced and budget figures that bear no relation to what is being delivered on the ground. The delivery is not there and we know the government has gone backwards in the number of houses available. The government has not been able to get on top of that.

I want to talk about another issue in the minutes I have left—namely, supply chain constraints I mentioned earlier impacting business in Western Australia. At the moment, we know the government is very committed to Westport and to shifting industry out of Fremantle and into Kwinana as the major port for Western Australia going forward. I went to Kwinana, along with the then Leader of the Opposition, for the first time in a number of years to have a look, and I saw some of the industry there. I have been back several times since. I was quite taken aback by just how constrained that area seems already in terms of available land and infrastructure coming into it. The rail system is barely adequate and seems to be almost reaching close to capacity. We know a whole range of industries there are not directly related to the port, and it has been left to grow in a different sort of way I would say. Making it the pre-eminent port is already going to be difficult with land constraints around it. More consideration needs to be given to some regional ports. That would certainly make a lot of sense. I note that the Pilbara Ports Authority is doing quite a bit of work on this. It has been able to bring in more general cargo, containers and the like, straight into the Pilbara, which is an eminently sensible idea; I personally support more of that happening in the future. It has a couple of benefits. First, more efficiency can be achieved relative to the cost of getting materials through alternative ports as the system would not be tied to one or two operators. It would also create transport efficiency in terms of

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

the miles travelled going mainly into Asia and Europe. There is also the other advantage of not having to freight stuff back up the Great Northern Highway into the Pilbara from Perth and Fremantle. Clearly, a lot of benefits and efficiencies could be gained. As we talk about trying to minimise greenhouse gases, cutting the miles product has to travel makes a lot of sense, not just in dollar terms with the freight cost but also in the carbon output of the freight task. To me, more road freight needs to be supplanted by more efficient ways of travel.

Interestingly, Bunbury port is connected to Perth by rail but has no ability to take containers. For producers in the south west, which is something of a food bowl, there is a lot of potential for a container system to be developed in Bunbury as well that could serve many smaller producers and industries in the south west. I know that other opportunities are coming in certain types of new industries into the future. Again, looking more holistically beyond just Kwinana could provide a good outcome.

Interestingly, I asked the minister a little while ago what happened to the \$2 million fund allocated to the feasibility study into the future of a live export facility after the closure of Fremantle as a live export facility. Apparently, that study has been given to a little committee of four that the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has announced. That committee will look at the destruction of the sheep livestock export industry—with that, in many areas, the destruction of the sheep industry as that will have a lot of run-on effects for people. I applaud the work that has been done by the likes of David Littleproud, and also our own members here in Western Australia such as the member for Roe whose community will be greatly affected by this. I applaud other National and Liberal members who have been much more vocal in their support of the industry than the Premier or the Minister for Agriculture and Food in Western Australia. I applaud and thank them for their work. They are doing what they can to make up for all the Labor members of Parliament who cannot talk to each other or get the message across.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Does the member support livestock export?

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Do you support livestock export?

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Do you support livestock export? No.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): Leader of the Opposition!

Mr R.S. LOVE: I talked earlier about business confidence, and put a regional focus on that. A study conducted by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia surveyed business confidence in some regional areas. In December last year, that survey showed that two-thirds of those surveyed in the wheatbelt, more than half the businesses in the south west and half in the midwest and Gascoyne were concerned about the supply chain issues I spoke about earlier and identified that as a barrier going forward.

As I also mentioned, communities are suffering in the aftermath of cyclone Seroja and they face constraints. We are also aware of the situation in the Kimberley following the 100-year flood event that knocked out transport links. We have limited transport links in and out of and through Western Australia. We need to make sure that we develop the Goldfields Highway, the Outback Way, Tanami Road and other routes so that we have more transport options in Western Australia. The recent flooding of the Fitzroy River has shown that the Kimberley is particularly vulnerable. We actually have only one road north and that puts us at some peril. I think we need other transport opportunities through those regions so that we do not see a repeat of the distressing situation emerging in the Kimberley at the moment. It is hugely expensive to turn a 3 000-kilometre freight task through Port Hedland into a 6 000-kilometre freight task through Port Augusta. I think that, along with the flooding of the Trans-Australia Railway and cuts to highway traffic et cetera, shows that we need a more robust transport network in Western Australia.

I know a committee was established. It seemed to be a Maritime Union of Australia-dominated affair, but it acknowledged that this is a problem that needs to be addressed. To get beyond a situation in which the next cyclone or the next fire leaves a region imperilled, we need to make serious efforts to improve those transport links.

I note the Minister for Transport's announcement today on the development of the new Fitzroy River bridge. I refer to an article in *The West Australian*. There was also a media release from the minister on the matter, but I had a look at *The West Australian* report because those reports are always better written and more enjoyable to read. The article refers to the project and the ambitious time line. I welcome that Georgiou Group has been contracted for this task. I have much more confidence in it as the contractor for the construction than I do in the minister running her program. I welcome the announcement and wish Georgiou Group all the best. For the sake of the Kimberley, we need that road done as quickly as possible. I have more confidence in Georgiou Group than I have in the minister.

I remember when the minister announced that a barge solution would be found. I have a picture of the barge. It is not a terribly big picture—but it is not a terribly big barge! Is that barge the solution? I thought it would have taken

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

three days to find that barge and take it on a truck up to where it had to go. Instead, it took weeks. We were promised something that would move road trains, but one would have to disassemble a road train and break it down into small pieces to get it across the river on that barge, and then carry its cargo across one by one.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: They might put two cows on at once, but it would not be much of a trip. I think it would probably tip over on the way if they moved to one side.

I think that barge with a couple of outboard motors on the back is a damning indictment of a solution that was purported to be a heavy transport link. It was very disappointing, but we are used to being disappointed by that minister.

I was again disappointed to learn that the minister does not seem to care much for the environmental disaster that she is responsible for at Jurien Bay. When her government came into power, it stripped away \$8.5 million of funding that had been allocated for the marina, but it has taken no responsibility for the ongoing environmental disaster that it has become.

We hear this government make large policy announcements across many areas, but it fails to deliver on those announcements. The Premier insists that he has big surpluses, but he is also putting money into special purpose accounts so that he does not have to report it in the surplus. He is squirrelling away an immense amount of money and claims it is for a rainy day.

Dr D.J. Honey: About March 2024.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Funny that—but I will say it must have been raining a little bit when we debated the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill. The Treasurer had to come to Parliament and ask for an extra \$3.1 billion to keep the lights on in Western Australia. That was quite a rainy day. It must have been a bit of a storm in a teacup on that day the Treasurer asked for \$3.1 billion!

The government's last budget delivered very little in tangible relief for Western Australian households. Sadly, given the Premier's response today and lack of concern for the plight of Western Australian families and people doing it tough, I do not think the next budget will be any better.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.37 pm]: I rise to contribute to this debate and support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I will cover a range of areas of key government service delivery. As the shadow Minister for Health, I have spoken a lot in this place about the obvious failures we have seen under the McGowan government. The government has effectively overseen the running down of the hospital system since it came to office. Last year, there were 66 000 hours of ambulance ramping, which is the highest level of ramping on record. We have seen the elective surgery waitlist blow out as well. There has also been a number of tragic events under this government's watch. After all, investment in the health system to address and arrest ambulance ramping and elective surgery waitlists is about the health and welfare of Western Australians.

This afternoon I want to focus on an area of health that I do not get the opportunity to speak on much at all—that is, the early childhood years. Following the 2021 election, we made a specific portfolio for the early childhood years. Our shadow for that portfolio, Hon Donna Faragher, is in the other place. She has done an extraordinary amount of work in this area, which has pointed to a real waitlist crisis that we are seeing under this government.

It is reflective of what we know about this government's priorities when it comes to health. Recently, I was speaking to a leader in health who believed that this government does not get health. That is the comment they made. They also said that the Premier is not interested in investing in and ensuring that there are good outcomes. I am sure that members of the opposition and members of the government have heard about the significant issues of waitlist blowouts, for children in particular, that we have seen under this government.

Our shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education has raised these issues. She has called for an inquiry into this area, and it is good that it has received support. The petition for an inquiry into Child Development Services received significant support, with over 3 700 signatures. It is good that the government supported this inquiry, which was driven by the opposition. However, although it is critical that this inquiry is underway, it is important that work continues on, and is not held up by, the significant issues that we are seeing across the board.

This call for urgent action to reduce waitlists deserves to be heard. New figures reveal that families are now waiting for almost 18 months to see key health specialists. The wait time for primary school-age children to see a clinical psychologist is now 17 months. That is an increase from 12 months in February last year. In key health services, the current median wait time to access a paediatrician is 17.8 months. The current median wait time to access a speech pathologist is 12.2 months. These are significant issues. As the local member representing the Vasse electorate, an area of regional WA, I often hear how exacerbated these issues are in regional areas.

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

The south west community has been rocked by the recent suicide of Jye Dyer. His mother, Michelle Offer, recently spoke on ABC radio. Jye had autism. He was very much a well-loved person of that community. Michelle explained how he had started to struggle with focus and had behaviour issues at school, which led to suspensions and withdrawals.

I quote —

“He was still a happy kid at home, he was still away fishing and crabbing, right up to the last couple of days,” ...

She said that she struggled to get an appointment for Jye with a psychiatrist or a paediatrician after her doctor suggested that he had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. A private psychiatrist was able to offer her an appointment but not until November 2023, and she was advised that there was an 18-month wait to see a paediatrician. This story is not unique. It is absolutely tragic. I directed to the minister’s office another case of somebody in a similar situation trying to get appointments for their child. After attempting to seek out a paediatrician last year, they were not able to attain an appointment until mid-this year, which is distressing. It is fair to say that Michelle is certainly very brave in her comments on ABC radio. She said that if her son had been able to get ADHD medication, he would still be here. Obviously, we do not know whether that is the case. Michelle Offer states —

“I’m sure that it would have calmed down so he could just focus and relax,” ...

Child specialist wait times are too long —

...

“I honestly don’t think there’s anything I can do to help anybody, because we can’t speed up the waitlist,” she said.

We have seen a blowout in the waitlist for speech pathologists as well, and those wait times are particularly significant. They have increased from 8.7 months to 12 months. There are now over 6 100 people on the waitlist to see a paediatrician.

Early intervention is vitally important. As a member representing regional WA, I understand the significant challenge in accessing services. It is happening in not only the regions, but also Perth. We need to see a significant uplift in funding, which is currently not there and has not been there over the last few years.

Our shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education also highlighted the need for the government to think outside the box in the delivery of child development services. Hon Donna Faragher has talked about the need for the government to work better alongside allied health services. Obviously, this has a significant impact on learning outcomes if it is not properly addressed. Members can imagine, and I think it is clear and obvious, that if a child cannot see a speech pathologist or paediatrician in a timely manner, if that waitlist is a year, it will have a significant impact on that child’s learning outcomes or worse, as we understand.

Another issue our shadow minister raised is when it comes to early intervention, there are gaps with child health nurses. We are seeing significant issues across the state. According to questions asked in the Legislative Council late last year, there were about 40 full-time equivalent vacant positions for community child development health nurses across the Child and Adolescent Health Service and the WA Country Health Service. They had about 20 vacant positions each. At the time, we also saw that 233 children were on a stand-by list for a child health check. For the Swan region, there was a significant jump in the number of children on the waitlist, from 26 in June, several months before, to 92 children. The central west region had 41 children waiting; in Bentley and the lower west regions, there were 25 children on the stand-by list for a child health check. We need to ensure that these timely health checks happen. The government should be doing everything it can to ensure that these checks not only happen in a timely manner, but also people are encouraged to take steps towards any early intervention measures that may be required to keep children healthy. Child health workers and nurses across the system are continuing to do more with less. They are under extraordinary pressure. They play a vital role in delivering this early intervention care. When services are unable to be provided or are stretched in this way, it puts our whole system under pressure. I hope that it does not lead to people turning away from vitally important steps towards an early intervention approach to better health outcomes.

A local family contacted me about their son and grandson; I spoke to both his mother and grandmother. They told me that in the middle of last year, he started to struggle at school, displaying behavioural issues that have led to many suspensions. He had been referred to a clinic in Busselton, but the earliest available appointment for him to see a paediatrician is not until July 2023. That is about a year from when he was referred. The family are very fearful for his mental health and wellbeing. They have listened to the heartbreaking interviews of the brave mother of Jye and what she has said about the significant wait times. These wait times are clearly not acceptable. They represent a real failure in the delivery of key services to our vulnerable children to ensure that they will be better prepared as they grow up.

Another concern has been raised with me about community nurses at special needs schools. A parent from Burbridge School in Koondoola contacted me specifically and she was happy for me to raise her concerns here.

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

Burbridge School is a special needs school, and I understand that it has 63 students. Last year, it barely managed with three full-time community nurses onsite. In December 2022, the school was advised by the Department of Health that from term 1 of this year, the department would provide only 1.4 FTE onsite community nurses. I have been advised that the school is stepping in to fund nurses to fill the void that has been created by this cut in funding for the school, but that is clearly not sustainable for the school.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L. METTAM: The feedback I have had is that this temporary measure will mean that some students will have to remain at home and miss out on the education that they are as entitled to as any other student. Given their special needs, they need to be in a safe environment.

I also focus on a couple of issues that continue to be raised with me locally. One is the community local area coordination program. This was a valuable program that had provided local face-to-face contact for residents across the Margaret River region, including Busselton, Margaret River and the Capes region. It was essentially an early intervention community triage service that helped people to find and gain the right kind of support before they reached crisis point. It provided a range of different supports. I raised a grievance in this place last year about this program. The service was well patronised during the 12-month trial period. The local area coordinator had seen more than 150 short and long-term clients, including many women and vulnerable children, and the importance of this service cannot be underestimated. The Margaret River community has experienced significant trauma, particularly over the last five years with a number of suicides and a mass shooting, and there were very real concerns that this community triage service was not able to continue. The local area coordination program was always intended to be a two-year trial, but it is concerning that when the trial finished, there was no public report given on the success or otherwise of the trial. A real gap in services has been left in its wake, with a perceived reticence by the department to employ new staff as positions were vacated prior to the end of the trial both in Margaret River and Busselton. I have raised a grievance in this place about that. The Margaret River and Busselton communities have stepped up to provide some support to those who are vulnerable. There have been significant cries from the Margaret River and Busselton communities about the fact that this program has not been able to continue. It is a significant community concern that this program did not continue and that there was no transparency around the success or otherwise of how that trial actually went.

The other issue that I and the former Leader of the Opposition, the member for Central Wheatbelt, have raised in this house is the need to upgrade Margaret River Hospital. I understand that the local member, the new member for Warren–Blackwood, has declined to join the call for urgent funding to support this project, but we on this side of the house—the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA—certainly support what the WA Country Health Service has stated is an urgent need and a priority project. The community has been let down by the lack of support for this vital project. The stalled master plan included the expansion of the Margaret River emergency department. Shadow cabinet was at an event last year. An article states —

One of the region's most prominent doctors has launched a passionate appeal to the State's Health Minister on behalf of the beleaguered Margaret River Hospital ...

The doctor was quoted as saying —

“People come in and say ‘where is the emergency department’ and we say ‘you’re here,’” ...

The article continues —

The doctor asked about the status of a long-delayed master plan for expanding the campus which has seen a dramatic increase in presentations during the COVID pandemic buoyed by the region's population growth and tourism appeal.

...

Dr Milligan said the hospital's emergency department was now spilling out into the carpark and ambulance bays.

...

“When can we expect to see an infrastructure upgrade in Margaret River?” she asked.

I go to the government's response in the article —

Ms Sanderson did not directly comment on the funding issue, reiterating lines about Labor's “record” \$3.2 billion investment ...

Dr Milligan again raised concerns about that. That is very disappointing. The government continues to neglect the health needs of the people of Margaret River and more broadly across the region, including the seat of Vasse. There are real pressure points there as well. More broadly, there is a real crisis in children accessing the health support

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

they need, whether that is speech pathology appointments, paediatricians, child health nurses or psychiatrists. There is clearly an urgent need to address this. Our children cannot wait because if timely support is not provided when they need it, these small issues become exacerbated.

Ms M.J. Davies: They are more expensive to deal with.

Ms L. METTAM: That is absolutely right, they become more expensive for the state to deal with and more challenging for the individual and their parents.

The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations had a hearing last week with the Child and Adolescent Health Service. I had asked some questions of the Minister for Health about the ministerial task force that had been provided with information about a very tragic suicide that took place over two years ago. Again, the lack of funding for one of the key recommendations in the related report, as highlighted through the estimates committee process, is a real concern. It raises real questions about the extent to which this government is making health a priority and, importantly, whether this government is making the health of our children a priority. This side of the house continues to raise issues, as does the shadow spokesperson for early childhood in the other place, because there is whole-of-community concern. It is vitally important that the government acts urgently because our children cannot wait.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.04 pm]: I rise to support this motion, which states —

That this house decries the McGowan Labor government for its failure to deliver key services and meet budget commitments, compounding cost-of-living pressures on Western Australian households.

I refer to the disappointing response from the Premier today when asked what he would do in the budget. He is the Treasurer and the Premier and has his hand on the tiller, and what did he do? He spoke about what the Liberal–National government did 10, 12 and 15 years ago. That is what the community of Western Australia gets from the Premier. He wants to be the Treasurer and he wants to be the Premier, but he does not act on behalf of vulnerable people in Western Australia. The deflection from the Premier today when asked what he would do in the forthcoming budget was a real disappointment. I support the Leader of the Opposition’s motion.

I point out the fantastic community of Esperance in my electorate of Roe, and some of the great voluntary services work being done in that community. Quite often, it is work that these community groups do on behalf of the Department of Communities because over the last couple of years, the Department of Communities has been hard to find when it comes to families in crisis in the Esperance region. On behalf of all of us here, I thank the likes of Chris Meyer and his team at Esperance Care Services. They do a fantastic job and won an award for active citizenship for the community for the organisation’s support programs. The services at Esperance Care Services include emergency relief, counselling and referral services, and running a local thrift shop. I have been there several times. Some of the work done is amazing. In the past year, Esperance Care Services has provided help to more than 389 people, with 1 934 emergency relief programs. That is a very short summary of what the organisation does. It is an important part of that community. There is also Meredith Waters, who won the Esperance Community Citizen of the Year. She has many volunteering roles in the community. Veronica Lavars was awarded Senior Citizen of the Year. She has worked for over 40 years with vulnerable community members in Esperance. Dane Holdman won the award for the Young Community Citizen of the Year. He volunteers in many community organisations. I talk about those people because the Australia Day awards in Esperance give us a realisation of the good work done in the community. As I said, in many cases, unfortunately, the Department of Communities has been pretty thin on the ground in assisting some of our more vulnerable members of the community in Esperance.

I want to mention, as some of our members already have, the good work of Foodbank. I was out with Foodbank recently with the member for North West Central and the Leader of the Opposition, and it was amazing to see the great work it does in the Perth community and in many parts of the state. On that day we saw how much people rely on Foodbank. I see the need growing every day as we enter this period of higher interest rates. Inflation figures came down a little bit today, but I think we have a really difficult period ahead.

The other thing I will mention apart from the great work of Foodbank is the great work of the Clontarf Foundation and—not every school in the state do this—many of the schools in my electorate in providing the school breakfast program. The other week, I was at Nulsen Primary School in Esperance and I was shown what it does with its breakfast program. In Katanning, Narrogin and many other towns in my electorate, that is such a great service provided by our community members and schools. Unfortunately, this program seems to be slotting into everyday life at some of our schools. The government needs to be very much aware of what is happening out there at the coalface.

I want to talk today about some of the programs that the other states are providing. When the Premier is asked how he is going to help our vulnerable communities with the cost of living, he goes on about what the Liberal–National government did many years ago. Before the recent election, the New South Wales Liberal government had about

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

70 voucher programs for eligible people. Some of those programs include a \$285-a-year low-income household rebate; the Premier's Back to School NSW vouchers program, which provides \$350 vouchers for eligible students to buy school uniforms, shoes, bags, technology and textbooks; a gas rebate to a total of \$110 a year; and up to \$250 for the regional seniors travel card. As we know, under the former Liberal–National government's great royalties for regions program, we had the Country Age Pension Fuel Card. It is good to see that this government is continuing with it, although we would like to see more upward indexation. New South Wales also has a \$100 voucher for creative and cultural activities for kids and a \$100 voucher towards the cost of swimming lessons. The member for Central Wheatbelt and I are very much aware of how important swimming lessons are for people in our communities and of the many challenges we have at times with swimming lessons over the summer months. New South Wales also has \$100 for the Active Kids program; a life support energy rebate, which helps with the cost of running energy-intensive medical equipment at home; a medical energy rebate; access to concessional car parking; and the Rent Choice subsidy, which helps people pay rent for up to three years. They are some of the programs in New South Wales. I hope the new Labor government in New South Wales continues with those programs.

Queensland has up to \$1 500 to support foster carers; a \$175 electricity rebate, with \$372 a year for seniors and pensioners; a grant for two weeks to households in housing crisis to meet some of the costs of moving into private rental accommodation; a rebate for an oxygen concentrator or a kidney dialysis machine; an electricity concession for chronic medical conditions; and a \$150 voucher for children's sport.

South Australia has cost-of-living concessions to help people on low or fixed incomes and no interest loans of up to \$2 000 for essential goods and services such as household essentials, car repairs and registration, medical and dental services et cetera.

What do people in WA get when they google "cost-of-living assistance"? They get a page from the Department of Communities showing a phone number for people to ring to apply for a Seniors Card. There may be more vouchers and rebates, but try to find them. That is the challenge. It is very challenging for a vulnerable person to find how to get these rebates and make some progress. The Premier's statement that he is the leader on cost-of-living support is misleading and disingenuous. The evidence is clear for everyone to see, and we saw it in question time today.

The Premier's main focus is on the price of iron ore and the royalties that he can draw in to build up the treasure chest so that he can look at programs like Metronet, which we hear about all the time. We know it is the priority of this government.

Ms R. Saffioti: You don't like it?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Unfortunately, we have a lot of vulnerable people in our community. I have no problem with Metronet. I have a problem with the way this Premier is treating the vulnerable people in our community. He has over 20 special purpose accounts. He is trying to build up the coffers and then gradually feed in the Water Corporation dividend and things like that when he needs it to boost his billions of dollars of surplus. We are awake to it. We are awake to the lack of assistance to our vulnerable community members.

I do not have long to talk today.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: In actual fact —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am glad the Minister for Education has arrived.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am glad the Minister for Education has arrived.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Roe, are you taking interjections?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I asked the Minister for Education —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, please.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: On 21 February, I asked the Minister for Education what he was doing for parents who are using Afterpay to buy essential school supplies. His response was that if parents go to the school, they will receive

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

assistance. How many parents know this? What are the criteria? How much is this assistance? Does it go as far as camps? What happens if parents cannot afford a new uniform or public transport? We are talking about a duty of care to our public education students.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister has just walked into the place and has not stopped talking since he got here.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am happy to continue.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): The member is on his feet, minister, thank you.

Debate Resumed

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I want to go on with what the member for Vasse was talking about earlier, and that is the scenario in which we have a waiting list as long as your arm, with the likes of a two-year wait for an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnosis, which not only stalls the therapies available to the child, but also prevents funding to allow the teacher to have assistance through an aide in the classroom. It is a huge issue at the moment. This is coupled with 5 000 children waiting to see a speech pathologist and 6 000 waiting to see a paediatrician, adding to the rise in the cost-of-living worries of already stressed-out families. That is what the member for Vasse was talking about earlier.

The other thing I want to talk about is the KidSport voucher system. I believe this government has a real opportunity. It doubled the amount for one year, but it has halved it again. This is an opportunity for the government to get these vulnerable kids off the streets. Sport is such an important thing to a whole generation of kids to know the joy of playing in a sporting team for their school or their club. Regional families know the amount it costs to assist their children into higher levels of sport. The regional athlete support program neglects the very people who are crucial to developing talent. It is the parents who get the kids to training centres in Perth. We know they have to travel each week, and sometimes twice a week, to give their kids the opportunity to get into a state team or the like. We know that sport is also a big incentive for Aboriginal children to attend school. Without financial support, parents and carers will no longer be able to offer their children the chance to play sport. A sports coordinator contacted us and told us that she pays the difference between the KidSport subsidy and the cost of subs, uniforms, footwear, equipment and sometimes mouthguards for 20 children per season. If she did not do that, those children would not be in a position to play sport. I certainly urge this government to take the opportunity to look at the KidSport voucher program, especially because it ensures that vulnerable kids can turn up to training every Saturday morning or during the week, and it makes such a difference.

As I said, this government has lost touch. The CSRFF is another one. I know that the member for Central Wheatbelt, who was once the sports minister, knows the importance of the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. We have \$10 million spread around the whole state, whether it be regional or metro. It just is not enough money. Our local governments, our sporting groups and the department have the chance to join on a one-third, one-third, one-third basis. The government, with a \$6 billion surplus, could take the opportunity to make sure that we have many more infrastructure buildings for our sporting clubs. It creates a great community balance. From my perspective, that is an opportunity that the Minister for Sport and Recreation could certainly look at.

As I said earlier today, my real disappointment with the Premier is that he is ignoring the vulnerable members of the community. He has lost touch with the average person out on the street. He might be remembered by the big end of town in some ways, but he will certainly be remembered for his treatment of our homeless people and low-income people and families.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [5.21 pm]: I thought I would jump up and take the call because that was a terrible contribution from the opposition. I thought I would wake up everyone and talk about what this government is doing to support vulnerable people in the community and also address the issue of cost of living. I note the motion is —

That this house decries the McGowan Labor government for its failure to deliver key services and meet budget commitments, compounding cost-of-living pressures on Western Australian households.

Those contributions seemed to be all over the place and did not address the motion that was moved. My colleagues will touch on some of the issues with services in the community, but I want to start by saying that one of the best things we can do to ensure that families can get ahead in this state is to make sure there are jobs for the community. If we look at all the indications in the labour force data, Western Australians have reached record employment levels

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

in this state. Employment reached record levels in Western Australia, growing by 0.4 per cent in February 2023, with rises in both part-time and full-time employment. Despite some volatility in the monthly data, there has been a trend towards full-time work, which aligns with strong demand for labour. The unemployment rate was 3.9 per cent and our participation rate was 69.3 per cent—again, the strongest in the nation. When we look at how to make sure that Western Australians can get ahead, it is to make sure that they can get a job.

I think it is important to note that the new Minister for Training is here in the chamber. The state government has put in effort to make training available to young Western Australians so that people who might have not have ever got a job or have missed out on opportunities are now being provided opportunities in this state. Remember the massive hikes in training costs under the previous coalition Government. As I recall, there were increases of up to 500 per cent in the cost of training for Western Australians. When we came into government, we put a massive focus on training Western Australians and creating job opportunities for Western Australians and, as a result, we have the highest participation levels, the lowest unemployment rate, and also the highest employment levels in the nation. Making sure we continually have a pipeline of job opportunities has been a focus. As a result, we have seen that translate into the market.

I note some of the issues that were raised in relation to some of the services and wait times. It is true that it is a very hot market out there and there are labour force issues across the entire economy. We will continue to work through that by not only training Western Australians, but also looking at how we can support further opportunities for people to move to WA to support those essential services. We saw the Minister for Police recently travel overseas and not only target police officers but also workers across industries to see how we can support more people coming to the state to address the many labour force shortages. It is a very, very hot economy, but, importantly, Western Australians are in employment like never before and have made enormous inroads to training and training Western Australians to get jobs.

The next issue I want to raise is housing. We need more housing opportunities in this state. We are driving more housing outcomes, but, again, every time we have put forward more ideas to support more housing in Western Australia, the opposition has opposed more housing and the diversification of housing supply. We continue to have a renewed focus on supporting more diversity of housing supply, more homes in this state and more places for people to live.

I want to talk to the issue of cost of living. We know that there are many cost-of-living challenges out there for people, in particular because of the interest rate rises. I think everyone who has a mortgage and who has not been on fixed interest rates, or those that are moving from fixed interest rates to variable, understand that these interest rate increases have impacted Western Australians as they have impacted many people. We know it is challenging for those who are working and trying to balance the mortgage costs with other costs of living. This state government has done more than any other government in history to support Western Australians and their household budgets.

I note in all the descriptions that the opposition raised today, it refused to acknowledge the \$400 electricity credit given in the previous budget. I note that the \$400 household electricity credit meant that representative household expenditure, as represented in the *Economic and fiscal outlook* of the state budget papers, fell this year. Two years before that, we had a \$600 WA household electricity credit. They are real things that happened but the opposition just skipped over those without acknowledging that because of the strong budget management, we have been able to support households in the last two budgets out of three by providing, in total, \$1 000 of electricity credit. That has really helped all Western Australians. I want to make a point. This credit was given to all Western Australians. Not only those who have been targeted with other programs in the past but all households were given this credit. The feedback that we got from many households was that they very much appreciated the \$400 credit and they very much appreciated the \$600 credit that we gave before that. Again, there was no acknowledgement in question time or in any of the discussions today of the electricity credit.

We are the only state that gave households a credit. It amounted to \$1 000 over the past three budgets. When we consider the total basket of the household budget, this graph from the *Economic and fiscal outlook* shows that under the previous coalition government, there were only increases—increases, increases, increases. When the coalition won government, we saw significant increases in electricity prices. In the past three budgets, our government has delivered a \$1 000 electricity credit to all Western Australians. Many initiatives have been undertaken by this government to support those who are struggling. None can be clearer than the initiative announced on Monday, with the support of this state government, to give job security to workers in the Activ industries employment space. The Premier met workers in the former Activ industries. Because of the state government's efforts and initiative, we are making sure that those working in the disability space have job security. That is just one example of how this government has provided extra support to those more vulnerable members of the community.

The opposition spokesperson has disappeared, but I will go through a couple of initiatives the government has undertaken in my area to support the cost of living and also vulnerable people in society. The first involves the driving access and equity program. The government has committed millions of dollars and is out there on the ground

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

supporting people who have never had a chance to get their driver's licence, particularly those in regional and remote areas, and giving them the chance to get a licence. It is a dedicated program targeting people in the Kimberley, Pilbara, goldfields, Gascoyne and midwest who would not normally have access to specific programs to get their driver's licence. We have already seen enormous success. There are many stories of people who basically had no chance of getting a job, even though there were jobs in their local community. They are now getting jobs as a result of our access and equity program. We will provide more details of the success of the program that is resulting in more jobs and more opportunities for people who normally would not have been given that opportunity because they did not have a driver's licence.

I will mention a couple of initiatives in my portfolio, such as the regional airfare zone cap scheme. I understand parliamentary debate and the concept of motions and so forth, but the opposition has to give us credit for some of our initiatives that are making a real difference. It completely ignores things such as electricity credit and does not recognise the regional airfare zone cap, which is delivering hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars in savings to regional Western Australians. I am not just saying this because it is one of my initiatives, but it is one of the best initiatives I have ever seen supporting regional transport travel!

Mrs L.A. Munday interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: What was that?

Mr P.J. Rundle: It was the member for Dawesville—you're being heckled, minister!

Mrs L.A. Munday: It is great—I was supporting you!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: She was supporting me! There is another initiative the member for Dawesville will be very excited about when I reflect on it in a minute.

The regional airfare zone cap is delivering hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars' worth of savings. I will go through them. Some destinations already had capped airfares. In communities that had capped airfares, there have been savings of \$133, for example, for residents of Port Hedland; for Kalgoorlie, \$205; for Kununurra, with one airline, \$76; and for Paraburdoo, \$99 with Qantas. However, there were flights to places where there were no residents' airfares. For residents in Kununurra, there was a potential saving of \$1 100 on an airfare; for Geraldton, a saving of \$298; and for Exmouth, a saving of \$564. All over the state, local residents can save hundreds of dollars per airfare, and the price is guaranteed. They are real savings of hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars over a year. When we announced the cap, there was a bit of scepticism out there because people did not believe that we could deliver such a program. We have already seen a massive increase in take-up of the fare cap scheme. For example, in Karratha in the December quarter, 8 512 residents took advantage of the regional airfare zone cap scheme—a 32 per cent increase on the previous quarter. In the six months from 1 July to the end of December, 66 000 airfares were sold under the regional airfare zone cap scheme.

As I said, I do not mind having a discussion and a debate, but I ask members to please recognise some of the initiatives the government has implemented that are saving hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars for regional Western Australians. Whenever I go to a regional town, the feedback is that it makes life so much easier. People can pop down and see family members, they can make that medical appointment, and they can enjoy special celebrations with family members in Perth that they probably would not have been able to attend before. It is a real initiative that is saving thousands of dollars. We have seen 66 000 airfares sold under that regional airfare zone cap initiative in its first six months. It is one of the projects that I am particularly proud of because I know that it really does save money and it can help to change lives and make it even more attractive to live in regional Western Australia.

Another two-zone fare cap applies in our public transport system. The Liberal and National Parties talk about vulnerable people. We implemented this public transport policy to support everyone in our community, particularly the vulnerable. Does the opposition know what that means? It means that if there is a good public transport system, people may not need a car, or an extra car in the household. Especially for families that have two or three cars, or for young people, cars are expensive to own and run. The total cost of having vehicles includes the cost of maintenance, the cost of petrol, the cost of depreciation and the interest paid on a car loan. Cars are expensive. What is one of the best things we can do in the suburbs to help people manage their budget? It is to support public transport. I am passionate about public transport because I think it is a cost-of-living initiative as much as anything else. The National Party has insulted and ridiculed Metronet and public transport for its entire existence. It does not believe in public transport and nor does the Liberal Party. When I think of public transport, I see it helping people manage their budget, stay connected and have access to opportunities they would have never had without the public transport system.

I am a massive supporter of public transport because it is not only infrastructure; it can deliver opportunities. The opposition continually criticises Metronet, but it will provide world-class transport for first home buyers moving to and living in new suburbs. That may mean households will not need two or three cars. They can get rid of one car, and that represents thousands of dollars in savings. I think some economists state that having a car cost between

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

\$15 000 and \$20 000 a year. If we support public transport, we are helping people move around to access jobs, education opportunities —

Ms S.E. Winton: Cheaper education opportunities.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes—cheaper education opportunities. They can access medical appointments and centres. That is what public transport does, and that is why I am so passionate about it. Members opposite cannot stand up and talk about cost-of-living pressures and then insult investment in public transport. If they were serious about cost-of-living pressures, they would be serious about public transport.

We looked at how we are investing in our public transport. Some key feedback on surveys undertaken in the past was that affordability was becoming an issue. We looked at the zone structure and saw it would cost quite a bit particularly for people living in the higher zones, such as the member for Dawesville’s electorate. I think people were paying up to \$11 each way on public transport into the city. I can understand why previously the equation of the cost between driving and travelling on public transport was not that clear-cut. When people were paying that amount for a public transport fare, they may have considered driving. With the two-zone fare cap, we have made it much cheaper for people in zones 3 to 9 to travel. We did the calculations. I think the calculations on travel from the member for Dawesville’s electorate, based on someone travelling 230 days a year—so we took away weekends and annual leave—showed a saving of over \$3 000. That is an incredible cost-of-living outcome.

National Party members do not like public transport or they will say, “How about the regions?” They cannot say that now because we have a two-zone cap for regional flights as well. The two-zone fare cap for flights and public transport investment are saving people across the suburbs thousands of dollars.

It is important to highlight that strong financial management has allowed us to make these investments. The opposition does not want us to manage the finances, but, instead, to act like it did when it was in government and send the state bankrupt. That is not going to happen. Careful management of the finances allowed us to deliver things like the \$400 credit. Strong financial management allowed us to deliver initiatives like the airfare cap and the two-zone public transport fare cap. Without strong financial management, we could not deliver real savings to Western Australians.

I am glad the Leader of the Opposition is in the chamber. I want to reflect on the record of the Liberals and Nationals in government. They increased power prices by 90 per cent. They increased water, sewerage and drainage prices by 67 per cent. They increased all utility costs by significant amounts. They increased land tax, which, of course, would have flown through to rents. They increased power, water and sewerage prices, but never gave anything like an electricity credit back to the Western Australian public. We are managing the finances sensibly, we are making sure that we support the most vulnerable, and, with some specific initiatives, we are delivering savings of thousands of dollars.

Unfortunately, I had to pop out when the Leader of the Opposition stood to talk about a couple of issues in my portfolio. The Leader of the Opposition is happy that Georgiou Group got the Fitzroy River bridge contract. I am very happy that the Leader of the Opposition trusts them to deliver the project—fair enough. He had negative personal commentary on a number of issues. Regarding Westport, the Leader of the Opposition wants containers to move to Bunbury. Is that correct?

Mr R.S. Love: We want a diversity of options for Western Australians—Bunbury and the Pilbara.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So the Leader of the Opposition wants to move the container port to Bunbury; is that right?

Mr R.S. Love: We want more options for the south west to get their produce out, yes.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So is that the policy position?

Mr R.S. Love: It is my view that we could work towards that.

Ms S.E. Winton: It’s hard looking for a policy—you nearly got one out.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: He nearly got one.

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It could be a policy. If the Leader of the Opposition does not want to build a container port in Kwinana, it is up to him.

Dr D.J. Honey: Leave it where it is.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Cottesloe reckons we should leave it where it is. What is the position: the container port in Bunbury or leave it where it is?

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: You guys can have a chat and come back to us and tell us what the policy position is.

Dr D.J. Honey: Linear thinker.

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Linear thinker—honestly! I was thinking about the member for Cottesloe this morning. I felt sorry for him a bit because he is always by himself and no-one from his side talks to him. I thought: Jeez, imagine being like that. Then I thought I should be nicer to him but he came in and said that sort of stuff. Honestly, why would he do that? The member's own side does not talk to him. I actually feel a bit sorry for him. But he came in here and called me names, so I cannot feel too sorry for him. A linear thinker—I have never been called that before.

As my colleague just pointed out, there was a 300 per cent increase in TAFE fees under the previous government. Now we have the National Party wanting a new full container port and the Liberal Party not wanting to move it.

On regional roads, the Leader of the Opposition said that we need to develop the Outback Way and Tanami Road. We are doing that. We have secured the funds for those projects and will deliver those upgrades. Again, we are doing things that the former government failed to do.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Pardon?

Mr R.S. Love: Our colleagues in Canberra funded it.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Leader of the Opposition has no idea. He sits there being negative and awful, and never gives any credit.

Mr R.S. Love: I know that the Liberals and Nationals in Canberra enabled most of the projects that you're now working on through the funding that they gave.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Leader of the Opposition never gives us any credit. How come the previous government did not get any?

Mr R.S. Love: Because there is now a Labor government and we don't have a relationship with them.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No. This is my point: there was a Liberal–National government —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Break glass—there was a Liberal–National government in Canberra when members of the opposition were in government. How come they did not get it?

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There was a federal Liberal–National government when the opposition was in power, and it did not get anything. We won and we get things, and somehow it is all the doing of the federal government. If the federal government were so generous and wanted to give us things, how come the opposition did not get them when they were in government? How come they did not get money for the Tanami upgrade?

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: How come they did not get money for the Outback Way, Albany ring-road, Bunbury Outer Ring Road or for the Great Northern Highway upgrade? They got nothing!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Minister, are you still welcoming interjections?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I do not mind.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Okay; that is all right.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think it shows how sensitive the Leader of the Opposition is to this point. That glass jaw —
Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Members opposite sit there, and every time that we say that we secured funding from the previous federal government, they say, "Oh, it's all them." Why did members opposite not do it? Why did they not secure any funding? Do members know why? It was because they did not do any work. What did the opposition do? They put all their eggs in one basket. Do members remember what that basket was? It was the Perth Freight Link, which was the only project that members opposite focused on.

Mr P. Papalia: Which never got a cent. It was all contingent. It was all contingent liability! You got bought off with a mirage!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes. It was contingent liability. That is what the opposition did. It did not actually focus on any other project. It had all its eggs in one basket.

Mr R.S. Love: Move on.

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am going to talk about the Perth Freight Link for the next half-hour, given how rude you are. Let us go through it.

Members opposite did not secure any funds from their colleagues. They would not talk to each other. Let us look at all the projects we secured funding for. Let us go through the north. We got funding for the Tanami, the Outback Way; Great Northern Highway; Wiluna–Meekatharra Road; the Bunbury Outer Ring Road; Tom Price Manuwarra Red Dog Highway; and the Albany ring-road, and, more importantly, we secured hundreds of millions of dollars for regional road safety. Again, these are projects that members opposite will never give us credit for. They live in this bubble of negativity in which everything we do is bad and somehow you guys are the experts on everything. Out there, the public do not even know who you are.

However, it is good that the member came back. Honestly, this was a motion that was awful to watch. There were three lame contributions, and we will hear a couple more. This is a government delivering on all fronts. As I said, all across the government, we are supporting the most vulnerable, tackling cost-of-living pressures and supporting jobs through our enormous training infrastructure programs. As I said, I seriously think that someone should ask to reduce private members' time to two hours as you guys cannot fill three hours—or when you do, it is so exceptionally boring that we all want to disappear.

Anyway, I think I have demonstrated how this government takes the issues of the cost of living and delivering services to the vulnerable seriously, and, more importantly, it supports strong economic growth to create jobs and make sure all Western Australians can get ahead in the state.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [5.53 pm]: I rise to join this debate. I am glad to have the opportunity to join the debate after the Minister for Transport. I was certainly keen to make a few comments that are relevant to the Minister for Transport, but I am assuming that buffet night is on and it is perhaps time to leave the chamber early. I will go through the minister's comments because it was a fascinating contribution to this debate on the cost of living. If this is the substantive argument from the government, what a complete failure by the government! Members opposite come first up with these excuses for things: "The thing with housing is that it is a hot market." Who is to blame for the lack of labour in the state of Western Australia? It is this Labor government. Remember. The Labor government came in during its first term and it was so clever that it reduced the skilled migration categories from 178 to 18—was it, Leader of the Liberal Party?

Ms L. Mettam: Yes.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I think it was 178 to 18. The Labor government took Perth out of the regional migration scheme, even though leading figures in the construction sector said that it would do two things—one, it would cripple the supply of unskilled labour that is critical and underpins the construction sector, and, two, it would cripple the ability for overseas students to come into the state and gain employment because they relied on those categories for employment. That is why. The government then doubled-down during COVID, despite the best advice from this side of the house, and stopped everyone from coming into the state, including doctors and nurses! Imagine stopping doctors and nurses from coming into the state during a global health pandemic. It was fair enough to stop backpackers or people coming over for an idle twenty-first birthday party, but it stopped doctors and nurses from coming into the state! Of course, the government also stopped all that skilled labour, whether it was police or others, from coming into the state.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Member for Cottesloe, are you taking interjections?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am not, because it is wasting my time. Thank you.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, the member for Cottesloe is not taking interjections. We will hear his message in silence, thank you.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. I have limited time, but I am otherwise happy to go to the members' bar and have a chat.

I will say that it was members opposite who stopped labour coming into the state and caused the problem. It now likes to blame the problem —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! The member for Cottesloe is not taking interjections.

Dr D.J. HONEY: We had the minister talking about the government supporting household budgets with their election bribes. Let us be very clear about when those payments were made. In terms of cost of living, they were made when the inflation rate was one per cent going to two per cent. Now the inflation rate is what—six, seven or eight per cent? There are no cost-of-living relief measures now, not when the cost of living is going through the

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

roof. Rather, it was timed just before the state and federal elections. But it was fascinating to hear the minister's enthusiasm that everyone appreciated that \$1 000. It did occur to me that I can imagine when the Premier was up at Nigel Satterley's house at the \$1 000-a-bottle wine tasting evening, perhaps Nigel Satterley said, "Premier, thanks very much for that \$1 000 that I got because, you know what, Premier; that will cover the cost of one bottle of wine tonight!" Maybe that was the discussion the minister was thinking about when she said that everyone was happy with it. We on this side of the house said that we agree with relief, but we wanted to see targeted relief to households. That is why this side of the house suggested that this government should put \$300 million towards not-for-profit agencies to help people struggling and really in need—not people who live in \$10 million houses who have \$1 billion in the bank and can afford to shout the Premier and others to \$1 000-a-bottle wine tasting evenings. It should go to people who are really struggling.

I will give the government full credit on the Activ decision. I thoroughly support it. That was a fantastic decision. It is not that the government does not do anything good. It was a great decision; I really appreciate it. At least a significant part of Activ is in my electorate, and I know the importance of it. Well done, minister. The regional airfare zone caps were well received by people in the community, and I am happy to recognise and congratulate the minister on that. I am fascinated by Metronet. I have used this analogy before, and I apologise, but it comes to mind every time I think about it. When I think about the Minister for Transport, I think of *Mandrake the Magician*. For those who are old enough to remember, *Mandrake the Magician* could gesture hypnotically and get anyone to do what he wanted them to do. He could convince people he was a lion or, I do not know, a prize-fighter—whatever it was. I am beefing up the minister. The minister clearly has a hypnotic capacity on her colleagues in cabinet because she can get them to commit any amount of capital to her projects! As I recollect, something like 43 per cent of the capital budget is going into Metronet. This is where the magical part comes in—convincing cabinet to do that when there are other critical capital priorities, which I will talk about, facing the state. On top of that, despite the fact that these great projects are billions of dollars over budget and years behind schedule, the minister goes into cabinet a year ago, gestures hypnotically again and her colleagues then commit to another \$2 billion to upgrade the Armadale line. We have said on this side that once the government commits to those projects electorally, no side can go against them and, in the fullness of time, those projects are needed. But there are capital projects that would actually help the state. I will not go into great detail, but I am especially focused on the Oakajee strategic industrial area project, which would literally provide thousands of jobs in the midwest and secure future prosperity for the state. When the government has money, surely that is a high priority.

I noticed the other day that the Premier is more enthusiastic about the Metronet project. I would have thought that the Minister for Transport would have announced the first laying of the rail line for the Metronet project, or at least respond to a Dorothy Dixier in the Parliament or do a small ministerial statement in question time, which seems to be the case these days. But the Premier got up and stole the minister's thunder on that announcement. Then the minister was reduced to a storybook exercise around the Liberal Party's —

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Cottesloe has made it very clear that he is not taking interjections.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The Minister for Transport was reduced to a storybook exercise on what the Liberal Party achieved.

There are other capital projects that this government could focus on in the next budget. An issue I raised in a grievance to the minister is that of the enormous traffic congestion in my electorate at Stirling Highway and Curtin Avenue. I invite any member here to go to Mosman Park Primary School. I doubt that they have a school in their electorate that is as run-down as that school. It includes a school for profoundly deaf children. It has three times the metropolitan average number of Aboriginal kids going to the school—six per cent—and a very large cohort of kids who come from underprivileged households because there is a high concentration of state housing in the area. Good proposals have been put forward to upgrade the school. I hope this budget includes something to do with that.

The other thing I heard the minister boast about was the great financial management of this government. What a joke! The only thing that has happened is the iron ore price has gone from \$US55 a tonne up to \$US160 a couple of years ago and has been at \$US120 over the last year. That is what has happened. On top of that, there was the federal Liberal coalition government's outstanding work by, initially, Senator Dean Smith, then Hon Mathias Cormann and then Hon Scott Morrison in the time that he was Treasurer. They organised the GST fix for this state; it was not the Premier or the Treasurer or the backbenchers in the Labor Party. That top-up alone has delivered almost \$5 billion of additional revenue into the state coffers. There is also the royalties. I think that last time the royalties delivered an extra \$6 billion into the budget. Therefore, every single penny in the government surplus is due predominantly to the GST fix, the increase in iron ore prices and some good exchange rate movements. That is what has made the difference. It is a farce. Government members come in here talking about the great job they have done managing the state. It is purely because of an income increase, which they have had nothing to do with, and despite their best efforts at bankrupting the state with Metronet, they are not delivering other areas.

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

Households in Western Australia face enormous challenges. Inflation is creeping up at over eight per cent, and that is an enormous challenge for households to face. If we look at what this government has done about it, we see that in 2017, electricity was 26.5¢ a kilowatt hour and it is now 30.06¢. That is an increase of 13.5 per cent, which is way above inflation over that time. It is fascinating hearing—it is not the rewriting; although, it is if it is in *Hansard*—the retelling of history. We had the great Gallop government reform of the electricity sector whereby it took one government agency and divided it into four, then, lo and behold, prices went up. The Liberal Party came into government to a catastrophic situation. Before Gallop left, he had planned price increases of 10 per cent a year over 10 years. That is what the Liberal–National government had to face when it came into power. Again, the Gallop government had held back increases to water charges and power charges, which were way below the cost of recovery, and there was a catastrophic budget situation that had to be fixed. That was the situation, that was the story and that is what *Hansard* will record from my contribution. That is the truth of the matter.

Government members love to retell history and spin it in some way, but it was an absolutely disastrous change, particularly dividing the electricity corporations into four parts with four boards, four sets of CEOs —

Ms M.J. Davies: It got re-merged.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes, absolutely. What a joke!

That is what caused that. Under this government, we see massive increases in costs. In the 2017 budget, the government announced all its increases would be a cumulative total of 29.7 per cent in four years. Some of that was held back because of the COVID pandemic. But let us not pretend. Although the minister says that the government gave a \$400 rebate and therefore did not increase charges this year, all the underlying fees and charges went up. Guess what? Next year, there will be all the increases from this year plus all the increases for next year. That is what we will have. All the underlying fees and charges have gone up, so it was only temporary relief, as I have said, timed entirely to coincide with the federal election to help get Labor across the line, which it did by just a nose. But there have been enormous increases.

Look at the massive hike in the electricity daily supply charge. The Minister for Transport talked about vulnerable households and how the government has helped those vulnerable households. One thing that no-one can escape from is the daily supply charge. A lot of people are fastidious at turning off lights and minimising the use of electricity. What happened to the daily supply charge? It increased from 48.6¢ to 107.8¢. That is a 117.5 per cent increase in the daily supply charge. No household could escape that. No vulnerable household that the minister claims the government is supporting could escape that.

What will we see in the future with the absolute failed management of the government's energy transition? We know that we are again staring down the barrel of massive price increases because of the way that transition has been mismanaged. The premature closure of the Collie power station will put an enormous strain on the system. The member for Moore outlined the unreliability of that system, and it will inevitably translate into a substantial price increase, and the minister still has not given us the plan.

I turn to the issue of water. Given the time, I have to focus on a couple of key areas. Do members remember the water guzzlers? Water guzzlers are big families. The data that we obtained showed that overwhelmingly families who used more than 500 kilolitres of water are large families. I say to those members in the outer suburban seats, east and north of Perth, water guzzlers are large families in the outer suburbs. They were the people who were belted by an increase in charges, yet the increase was put as if it would punish people in the western suburbs. I will use the example of Nigel Satterley, given that he was the Krug supplier for the wine-tasting evening. Do members think that Nigel Satterley cares whether he uses 500 kilolitres, 1 000 kilolitres or 10 000 kilolitres? It is chump change to him, but those families struggling in the eastern and northern suburbs in those outer areas, on bigger blocks, where they use a lot of water—typically that is where a lot of larger families go because they have to save money, so they buy cheaper housing in the outer suburbs—are the people who got belted with it. For larger families, there was a massive increase of around \$1 000 on their water bill charges. Then there were tricks played with gross rental value rates and the like. We saw the metropolitan rate on charges related to gross rental value increase by 30 per cent, and for properties over \$25 000, those fees increased by 321 per cent.

This government has not helped the small person. We get the spin. If feeding families was based on the number of press releases a government has, the number of glossy events government members attend, or the number of times they have donned a hard hat and reopened the same Metronet station about 15 times, we would be in good stead. Instead, this government worries about the top end of town; it does not worry about people who are struggling, and it is failing to help those people in Western Australia.

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Training) [6.10 pm]: I rise to address this motion. Perhaps with the exception of the last speaker, who did his best to rile us up, I refer to other contributions to this motion. I remind the house that the motion that we should be debating states —

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

That this house decries the McGowan Labor government for its failure to deliver key services and meet budget commitments ...

This debate is about cost-of-living pressures on Western Australian households. In fact, the discussion on the other side has ranged far and wide. It always amazes me. Members on the other side have managed to talk about an incredible range of issues such as freight movements, supply chain restraints, business confidence, cyclone Seroja and the like. I was a bit surprised at the wideranging contributions from the other side, but I think it demonstrates the lack of discipline and focus by members opposite on how they would manage some of these issues and how they would manage government if they were actually in office, God forbid.

I will talk about some of the things that we have done in the six years that we have been in office, because I am actually really proud of them. We acknowledge that these are difficult times for householders—there is no question about that—but we have provided an intelligent and disciplined approach to government, which has meant that we have got the finances significantly back on track, and credit agencies have rewarded that discipline with an improvement in their reckoning of how we are managing the finances. We managed a pandemic under the leadership of the Premier. He took good advice and made hard decisions. We saw a little glimpse from the member for Cottesloe of how he would have managed some of these approaches if he had been in office. As I understood it, he said that we should have kept the borders open during parts of the pandemic. He said that we should not have changed any of the migration settings at all early on, and then, during the pandemic, in fact, we should have opened the borders; that is what I heard him say.

As a result of a disciplined approach, we are now seeing record numbers of jobs in the market. Yes, that has pressures, but it means that not only are there jobs out there for Western Australians if they want them, but also people who are vulnerable and sometimes find it challenging to enter the labour force are actually able to get a job for the first time. That is quite an exciting possibility for people who would otherwise really struggle to get into the labour market in our state. As the Minister for Training, I am very focused on making sure that we are able to provide training opportunities to give people the best opportunity to get into the labour market.

The best thing that a state government can do for all Western Australians, particularly vulnerable Western Australians, is to manage the economy well, make sure there are jobs out there and make sure the finances are in a position whereby we can provide targeted cost-of-living relief, and that is what we have been doing. I will talk about some of the specific things that we have been able to do. I mentioned the training sector. Let us be honest: in 2017, the training sector was in a mess. I had watched this area quite closely because I was on the WA State Training Board for a number of years, including when the coalition was in power here, and things were going from bad to worse. In fact, there was a move to completely deregulate much of the vocational training sector. Under the previous opposition leader, we saw an increase in fees between 2013 and 2017. Some of those fees increased fivefold; it was a massive increase. We saw a plummeting of annual student enrolments in vocational training by over 25 000 enrolments. It was a massive signal to the Western Australian community that the government did not want them training in TAFE and other vocational training areas and was going to send signals accordingly. The fee hikes put TAFE out of the reach of ordinary Western Australians. We had to set about fixing that. That was not only bad for young people who were thinking about their future and people who were thinking about changing their jobs, but it was really bad for some of those sectors that really rely on vocationally trained workers for their supply of skilled labour—for example, early education and care. One of the big challenges we have in supplying workers to that sector is that they are not generally well paid, as we know, so if we ratchet up the course fees for people entering the sector, they will not be able to afford to go into that sector. That is what happened under the previous Liberal–National government. We are still paying the price for it; we are still trying to get the message out there that there is fee relief. We are encouraging people to train and move into those sectors, particularly in regional areas.

When we came to office in 2017, we immediately froze TAFE fees so that students had cost certainty. Then we slashed fees by up to 72 per cent for 210 courses, particularly in priority areas. This was an immediate change to send the message to the Western Australian public that it was not business as usual; we wanted them to think about vocational training. In fact, there were some concerns from the other side of the chamber when we did that. The Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Vasse, had some concerns about that freeze. In an article, she was quoted as saying —

“The previous Liberal-led Government implemented important reforms to make the TAFE sector more sustainable,” ...

That was how she put it. She did not want us to freeze and in some cases cut fees; she said that this might not be good for the TAFE sector. She said —

“While I have no issue with keeping TAFE fees low, as the shadow Minister for Small Business and Tourism I do have a concern with how the Government plans to pay for it.”

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

Guess what? We pay for it because we are good economic managers. The Premier; Treasurer is a good economic manager. As a government, we have been disciplined and careful in how we have managed the finances, and that means that we have paid for those fee freezes. We have paid for the reduction in fees. We have paid for the cooperation with our federal counterparts and have been able to offer Free in '23 for over a hundred courses this year. In fact, we have invested to the tune of \$320.5 million to make training more affordable so more Western Australians can access quality training for quality jobs. We have invested \$320.5 million. It is a massive contribution. I would be interested to hear what the other side has to say about its record on vocational training when it was in office, and also what it would do if it came to office. What would the opposition do about vocational training? What is its policy to make sure that local people are training up to be able to walk into the jobs that are out there in Western Australia? Apprenticeships, traineeships and enrolments in vocational training have reached record highs compared with pre-pandemic levels, and that is largely driven by the significant investment from this government—that is, lower fees for students and employer incentives. As I said, there is the Free in '23 initiative, which provides fee-free training in over 130 courses and skill sets across high-priority areas like the care sector, IT, cybersecurity, agriculture construction, hospitality and tourism. They are crucial areas that people can get qualifications in, or just get a taster for if they are not sure whether they want to move into certain industries. Women and young people are making the most of these fee-free training opportunities. Women make up two-thirds of enrolments and young people make up over 40 per cent of those enrolments. That is really exciting. Maximising the participation of women in the workforce is crucial. We are sending the signal that we want them in these training areas and jobs. Two-thirds of those fee-free courses have gone to women, and over 40 per cent of those to young people. That is incredibly exciting. Finally, with regard to the records in training—which I am really proud of, being part of this government and now being the Minister for Training—in 2021 publicly funded course enrolments reached 150 000 in WA, which is the highest ever recorded. Those enrolments remain historically high. Apprenticeships and traineeships continue to be a popular choice in Western Australia, with over 11 000 people completing an apprenticeship or traineeship in 2022. That is 11 000, up 13 per cent from the previous year and something we should be really proud of. We are doing the hard work, we are managing the finances, we are giving people training opportunities, and people are enrolling in those courses, and that is really exciting.

I also want to talk about water fees and charges because it is something I have followed closely. The member for Cottesloe probably led with his chin on this by saying that our water pricing policies had been in error. In fact, the member might be interested to know that the water efficiency pricing model has resulted in high residential water users in Perth now using 1.6 giganlitres less water per annum. That is 1.6 giganlitres less water per annum, saving \$7.4 million in billed charges in 2020–21. As a result of the signal being sent to those users to reduce their usage, there is \$7.4 million overall less in billed charges. Just so the member is clear, 1.6 giganlitres of water is 1.6 Optus Stadiums of water; it is a huge amount of water. The member for Cottesloe should remember what his lot did with water prices. In the first six years of the Barnett government water charges went up 52.8 per cent; in the first six years of the McGowan government they have gone up 18 per cent. I will just repeat that: in the first six years of the Liberal–National government water prices went up 52.8 per cent; for us it has been 18 per cent. In the 2020–21 financial year we saw the first reduction in the average household water bill for more than a decade. I am proud of that. I am proud to be part of a government that has focused on keeping water bills affordable. I remember that the former Leader of the Opposition and previous Minister for Water, the member for Central Wheatbelt, used to squirm a little bit when she was reminded that the previous government had a mean-spirited approach to families doing it tough, restricting more than 200 families a month having difficulty paying their bills. Now, the average number of Water Corporation customers a month who have their water access restricted is 33. Under the previous government 200 families a month had their water restricted —

Dr A.D. Buti: A month?

Ms S.F. McGURK: It was 200 families a month because they were having difficulty paying their fees. As a result of a focus on understanding the reason that people were having difficulty paying their fees and providing a careful and considerate approach to fee relief by intervention and understanding, that average has now reduced to 33 a month, which is an 85 per cent decrease. If people are having trouble with overdue accounts, interest charges do not apply to concession card holders, those in payment arrangements, customers experiencing financial hardship or Aboriginal communities. With those support measures this government has put in place, we have significantly reduced the number of customers who owe interest and the total amount of interest owed.

A number of hardship measures have been put in place under our government. There is the Medical Assist allowance for customers who qualify, for instance those who require the continence aids payment scheme or are on home dialysis and need higher water usage. An allowance of up to 30 000 litres of water, free of charge, is applied to every two-monthly bill, saving customers nearly \$400 annually. The Start Over package assists customers in hardship with long-term outstanding debt. The Water Corporation will match a customer's payment over a two-year period when they clear any outstanding debt, so it is a motivation to clear some outstanding debt so the Water Corporation matches their payments. There is a Time Assist program for customers with a consistent payment history who

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

experience a recent event resulting in them being unable to pay. Bills can be put on hold for three months. The Water Assist program matches eligible customer payments dollar for dollar for up to \$150 a month. There is also a range of other programs such as water audits, help for bill shock, payment for a plumber, referrals to financial counsellors, a partnership program with the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing, assistance with the water services code of practice for people experiencing family violence and the Waterwise Public Housing Project. There are a lot of specific projects that are really targeted to assist people who need it.

Despite what the opposition says while it is in the cheap seats, when it had the opportunity to put these sorts of policies in effect when it was in power, it did not do it. It did not do the work to understand what those customers in hardship needed and did not provide a considered and compassionate approach.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms S.F. McGURK: I want to mention another example of a compassionate approach, and that is the assistance that the Water Corporation has put in place under our government to people affected by the Fitzroy Crossing floods. This is dedicated assistance to those affected by the floods. The Water Corporation designed a customer assistance package that has been automatically applied to the accounts of Fitzroy Crossing and Camballin customers, waiving water and service charges across two billing cycles, including existing charges and any outstanding debts. In Fitzroy Crossing that assistance has been given to 311 customer accounts, with an estimated total of over \$463 000 given to those customers. In Camballin 46 customers have benefited, at an estimated total of \$8 000. Well over \$470 000 worth of assistance has been given to those customers. In fact, customers in that area have been given an extra water allowance to clean up the effects of the floods, as they would need extra water to wash out their houses and to clean up. That has not been well taken up. They all have an extra 70 kilolitres of water allowance —

Dr D.J. Honey: They've got too much water there already, minister!

Ms S.F. McGURK: Yes, that is right.

Ms S.E. Winton: That's right; make light of it!

Ms S.F. McGURK: It was an idea —

Ms S. Winton: You are clueless! Make light of it!

Dr D.J. Honey: You are just rude.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister! Member!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister! Members!

Several members interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Perhaps the member for Cottesloe was again a little tin eared in his comment about the people in Fitzroy who were affected. This was a very real issue for them.

Ms S.E. Winton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Ms S.F. McGURK: It was a considered approach to give them some free water. The Water Corporation has been making an effort to get out to those households and ensure that customers understand that they have a free —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Several members interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Acting Speaker —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Minister! The Minister for Training has the call.

Ms S.F. McGURK: The Minister for Community Services has been up to the Kimberley a number of times and met the people who have been affected by the floods.

Several members interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I make the point to the Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for North West Central and the member for Cottesloe, who are all feigning that they did not mean to offend anyone in Fitzroy Crossing, that the Minister for Community Services has been up there a number of times since the floods and understands the

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

difficulties that people are going through. It was a practical measure of assistance to give them an extra water allocation so that they could clean, and a lot of people have not understood that. The member for Cottesloe made a joke in particularly poor taste and that was the nature of the exchange that has just occurred. We did not need the contributions from the member for North West Central and the Leader of the Liberal Party. They were not listening to the debate very well. I will move on.

This government has continued to provide considered assistance and has worked hard with the community sector. As the former Minister for Community Services, I know that well. We have worked hard with the sector to not only provide additional assistance, but also reform areas of work within the community services sector, whether it was in general community services, responding to family and domestic violence, providing child protection or assisting vulnerable families. What the Leader of the Opposition said—I am trying to remember the expression that was used; it might have been “smoke and mirrors”—was quite offensive, because workers in the Department of Communities and in the community services sector have done a lot of work over the last six years that has effected real change for families. Opposition members brush over any sort of improvements that have been made and the millions of dollars that have been put in to assist vulnerable families as though they do not matter because they are unaware of them. They do not take the time to understand what a difference some of the work that the workers in the community services sector and in the Department of Communities makes in assisting families. I ask the member to take the time to understand some of that work and to not brush over some of the improvements that have been made in that area. Those improvements have been well recognised by the community services sector as an effort made by this government to properly understand what reform is needed in community services to provide an intelligent approach to assisting vulnerable families. I am very confident that under the stewardship of the current Minister for Community Services; Child Protection; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence that reform work will continue. It is complex, difficult, not easily understood by the public and often not easily understood by the media. I expect that members of this place, including senior members of the opposition, would take the time to understand those issues. They refuse to acknowledge the contributing factors of alcohol on communities. The difficult efforts that are being made to start to constrain access of alcohol in some of those communities is very telling on the capacity of the opposition to really start to deal with some of the more complex issues in our community, particularly in regional areas.

I cannot remember how many times members of the opposition have asked to debate the compounding cost-of-living pressures or issues that are going on in our community. We are not unaware of the pressures faced by average Western Australians. When the Minister for Transport was speaking, she talked about the pressures of interest rates and inflation in particular in our community. We are not unaware of those issues. Do we hear a constructive policy from the other side? Do we hear practical ideas from the other side about what should occur? No, we do not. We never hear those things. We hear simplistic responses. We hear the member for Cottesloe saying that a primary school in Mosman Park is perhaps one of the schools in our state that is struggling the most.

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [6.36 pm]: I rise to support the motion. Everyone knows that I will obviously speak from a regional perspective. I want to say from the outset that I do not deny good things are happening, but I will continue to stand up, given that I live and breathe what happens on the ground in the regions, and raise issues on behalf of my constituents. That is what I am here to do.

In relation to living costs and the issues faced by people across the state, it is tough for everyone. It is well known that it is tough for people in Perth, in the metropolitan area, but it is also tough for people in the regions because of the nature of where they live, smaller populations and the geographical landscapes. For those smaller populations in remote locations, a small change in the operating landscape, such as population loss, will have a massive impact on what happens to small businesses in particular. It will have an enormous flow-on effect and greatly impact economic development and prosperity of services, community morale and mental health. There are other issues associated with the rising cost of living and doing business in the regions.

The member for Cottesloe mentioned the borders during COVID. In the regions, that affected the skilled occupation list and the people, chefs and the like, who could not get through, which caused issues for businesses that had no workers and were not able to fully open their businesses. I wanted to clarify that.

Tourism is a major industry in our state. It has been impacted by rising costs. When people think tourism, they think cafes, accommodation and tours, but everyone in tourism is affected—plumbers, butchers and people working in councils. Whoever they are and in whatever location, they are all contributing to tourism. While communities and people across the state are feeling the pinch due to the cost of living, doing business is becoming extremely difficult. There is no disputing that those in the regions are going to be hit harder. That is just a product of being in the regions.

The Minister for Transport mentioned the airfare caps, which have had a significant impact. I do not deny that. The issue now is that a lot of flights are being cancelled and the airlines do not have the staff, which is a common situation across the regions. That is causing frustration and people will take alternative modes of transport or drive,

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

if they can. For me, that says that maybe we need to look at doing something to upskill pilots, baggage handlers or whomever it is that the airline services need to get those planes back into the air.

I have noticed other things in the regions. For example, regional managers are a long way from the towns and the service centres, which, whether or not people want to believe that, has a massive impact. Being 1 400 kilometres or 1 000 kilometres from executive directors of departments makes it really hard for people who live in the regions to connect with people and decision-makers on the ground. It is a geographical issue and there is no connectivity between a lot of these towns. People have to come to Perth to see a person from another town who may be looking after a department. The regional manager problem is an issue that keeps being raised and I think for good reason.

Some of these issues that we are facing obviously have been touched on today, including housing and workers' accommodation. That flows through to higher rents. The fewer houses there are, the higher the rents are and the greater the staff shortages. I mentioned this before in the house. Lots of locations, in the north in particular have two-speed economies. People earning money in the mining sector can afford the high rents and people working in cafes cannot. That is creating a lot of angst. Coupled with the worker shortage is the child-care issue in these spaces. People do not have the family support or people around them so they cannot enter the workforce. They are capable, but they are unable to do it.

Some of the costs that are really impacting, particularly in the north west, relate to insurance. Lots of people have come to me and said it is impossible for them to afford it. A lady in Onslow is looking at selling because she cannot get insurance. That is the next step for her. Insurance is a real issue, as it is for tourism. A couple of businesses in my electorate need to close because they cannot get the insurance that they need to cover their business. These are some of the battles with costs that people are facing. Horseriding businesses and adventure tourism are really struggling with that, and I think that will only get worse.

Increased freight costs is another common factor that is popping up regularly. People are finding more and more that they are becoming price-takers. People will pay for products and services only at a certain price point, but the cost of fuel and transport is getting to a point at which businesses are finding it difficult to pass it on to consumers. That is also the same with the increased fuel and travel costs for residents who are living in those regions. They are needing to travel more. There is no public transport in the regions, so they are relying on their cars. Some of the seniors and people with disability have been seeking some kind of help with their licence fees, and if they need to get a farm-plated car licence, they have to take it to Geraldton, which is a 500-kilometre trip each way. People are faced with these added costs, including ones resulting from supply chain issues, which are still an issue, particularly in the north.

The minister touched on water costs in the regions. There is a big disparity between a business in Perth and a like business in the north. I think water per kilolitre costs three times more in the north, which makes it really difficult for people to remain sustainable in that place with the different costs that they are trying to structure. Businesses are attracting people and tourists from the south who are used to paying a certain price and they are unaware of the difference and they are thinking it is the same price for everybody.

One of the things that the member for Roe touched on was sport, which is enormously important, particularly in regional areas. I am concerned that the cost-of-living increases will result in sporting teams and kids being squeezed out of playing sport. I am talking about a lot of kids in a lot of different spaces. The KidSport vouchers are fantastic. I heard about a group that travelled to the WA Country Swimming Pennants carnival in Northam. The group received a grant to take that cohort of kids to the carnival, but the grant amount needs reviewing because kids in smaller towns are struggling to raise the money that will allow them to travel to competitions, which is really important for their development and the development of sport in our state. For example, a gymnastics group in Carnarvon is struggling to find somewhere to house their club, which has 100 children and a very active group of volunteers. These are the kinds of groups that we need to work with to find ways to nurture kids sport, whether that be through grants or extending kids sport, because there has been a decrease in the number of kids and sporting clubs as the population in regional towns becomes diluted.

Internet connection and communication are always a challenge, and that is something we need to continue to work on in the regions, particularly in the space of education because students in remote areas rely on the internet and communication. That is also the case for businesses. We need to make sure that businesses remain connected. Some businesses in towns in the north spend a lot of time offline and that can significantly impact on their business bottom line.

There is also the housing issue and the worker accommodation issue. Rental prices are increasing and there has been a reduction in the number of available houses. Airbnb is clearly an issue in a lot of country towns because it is taking rental properties out of the market. Although there is a need for it in the towns that do not have a lot of accommodation, it is a balancing act. Many businesses have battled through. Some are facing the prospect of closing because of the costs and pressures that they are facing. Worker accommodation is a huge issue. Kalbarri and Exmouth

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

are struggling to find worker accommodation, which has yet to eventuate. The lack of housing up and down the north coast is significant. Like I said before, people in the regions do not expect railways and massive stadiums, but they do expect infrastructure and services that will help the ongoing development, vitality and growth of communities in the regions. The north of the state is a rich area, but there is a definite need to continue to nurture those areas.

Some of the shortfalls in these communities have become evident with events such as the solar eclipse, which everyone is clearly aware of. There is a need to help with that event because the shire has a very small rate base and limited ability to provide the needed infrastructure. We all understand that repairing the Fitzroy River Bridge is a massive project that will take some time to get up and running. It is one of the fallouts from the floods—this is becoming more prevalent in the conversations that I have had—because it is the main tourism artery to the east coast and it will be cut off for another year. It is not just businesses on the west side of the Kimberley that have been affected; the tourism nodes all the way down the coast to Esperance and beyond rely on the winter trade that comes from people travelling along that artery. Some businesses are nervous about increasing costs and the potential to attract workers without other avenues and marketing plans in place.

Infrastructure and services on the Wiluna–Meekatharra road are really important. Recently, there was another fatality on that road. It is becoming busy, and that is becoming more prevalent now that we do not that artery up the top. A lot of mining companies are cranking up in the area and that is becoming a significant issue for the region.

I want to make mention of the volunteers in the region—what a fabulous job they do—including the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the helicopters, which are the lifeline for the regions. There is a massive reliance on volunteers and, coupled with the staff of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, they do an incredible job, which sometimes goes unnoticed. We visited the Royal Flying Doctor Service site the other day. My family has used the service three or four times over a number of years. It has been a lifeline.

I think that the Kalbarri State Emergency Service volunteers are coming up to their second-year anniversary. They have done and are still doing an incredible job. The SES volunteers from the north west and across the state rallied for that, as they did for the Kimberley and every other disaster that we have had in the north, and we have had a few. I want to thank that group and recognise the contribution it makes. We need those groups to continue to be supported. They become essential the further one gets from a town.

The health system is obviously a problem for a lot of people in the regions. I know a lady who moved to Paraburdoo and the doctor left two weeks later. She went there to take up a job on the basis that there would be a doctor in the town because her daughter is anaphylactic and, on the second round when she has an attack, needs a doctor. The doctor is now located in Tom Price, which is 50 to 80 kilometres away. These issues are not as prevalent in the city because people can drive down the road to an alternative medical facility. It is the same with maternity services. We had someone taken from Carnarvon to Bunbury to have their baby off country. They were completely lost and struggled in an environment in which they had no family support.

I urge the government to work together on some of these things. Although we have had conversations in here today that have been robust, sometimes it is about taking things on board and listening to what is happening on the ground. I know personally that if you are connected to the ground, sometimes things are not what they appear to be. I urge people to understand that we need to recognise we are a very big state that is the equivalent of three or four states. The landscapes are very different and the requirements are very different, as are the costs. The cost of living is an issue across the state, but it is exacerbated in regional areas purely because of where a town sits.

It is important that the government supports regional businesses and communities that have underpinned the success of tourism and the resources sector in the north. From where I sit, it is about continuing to fight for the regions to make them a better place. It is about getting better services and facilities into those regions for them and their communities to grow.

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Early Childhood Education) [6.52 pm]: I would like to make a short contribution on this motion for a couple of minutes, taking us up to seven o'clock. It is a most arrogant motion that the government will obviously not be supporting. I will start with the member for North West Central's comments in her summary about the government taking on board some of the suggestions made by the opposition. The point is: the opposition does not ever make any suggestions. The point is: all the opposition does is whinge and whine. Opposition members are devoid of any ideas, strategies or policies to actually deal with what are some challenging issues for people in Western Australia. That is absolutely clear.

At the outset, I also want to take issue with the flippant remarks made by the former Leader of the Opposition.

Several members interjected.

Ms S.E. WINTON: They were flippant and the member showed his form in pretending to —

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I note that the minister has been on her feet for less than 60 seconds and there has been no let-up in inane interjections from the opposition.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): The point of order is not upheld. Minister for Community Services, if you could address your comments through the chair, that would be great. Minister, are you taking interjections?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No, I am not. I have only about five minutes.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The minister is not taking interjections, so we will hear her in silence.

Debate Resumed

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you; I really appreciate your protection, Madam Acting Speaker.

I do not have much time. I will start by saying that I took exception to the comments of the former Leader of the Opposition in the debate tonight.

Dr D.J. Honey: What comment?

Mr R.S. Love: Again, are you talking about the member for Central Wheatbelt?

Ms R. Saffioti: Let her finish!

Mr R.S. Love: Who is she talking about?

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I point out that the opposition is ignoring your ruling in a sexist manner. I ask you to direct them to comply with your ruling and cease this sexist behaviour.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Further to the point of order, I was simply trying to gain clarity from the minister on her feet as to whom she is talking about, because the former Leader of the Opposition has not made an address.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. I understand.

Debate Resumed

Ms S.E. WINTON: I apologise; I am referring, of course, to the former Leader of the Liberal Party. It is hard to know who is the opposition leader in this state! My confusion is reflected in the broad sentiment of Western Australians, who have no idea what an alternative to the McGowan government looks like in this place.

In reference to the former Leader of the Liberal Party's comments tonight, he has form in this place for making embarrassing and patronising comments. Tonight in the debate, when the Minister for Water outlined how we are taking practical, real measures to support vulnerable people affected by the significant flooding in Fitzroy Crossing, the member for Cottesloe made a comment implying that they had enough water. Now, it might have been a bit of a joke from his perspective, but I can tell him that the people in Fitzroy Crossing would find that just as offensive as, or even more offensive than, I do.

Dr D.J. Honey: What a load of rubbish.

Ms S.E. WINTON: You have got form for being patronising. On previous occasions that you have been patronising in this place, you have put it in *Hansard*. You stood up and eyeballed a minister and said, "I am going to patronise you", and then you went ahead and patronised them. This time, you tried to do it in a little bit of a cute way by being a bit flippant about it, but that does not take away from the fact that you are an embarrassment, you are a seat warmer and you really should vacate the space to allow the Liberal Party to bring some real talent into this place. Real talent is what you need, because for the last three hours of "Whinge Wednesday", the contributions made by members opposite bordered on—I cannot actually explain it! It was repeat, repeat, repeat. Their contributions were devoid of any policy ideas or solutions to some of the critical issues faced in this state.

The other comment of the former Leader of the Liberal Party that I took exception to was his suggestion that our good financial situation in this state is just a fluke—that it is just luck. No, it is not. All the economic commentators repeatedly said that we got our AAA rating back because of our prudent and disciplined financial management of this state. That is something that you guys do not know about. As a result of our responsible financial management—this is important—we can respond to issues as they occur. Our sound financial management allowed us to respond to a pandemic with expenditure of over \$11 billion, yet we are still in a sound financial position. How is that a fluke? It is called managing money really well. I know members opposite do not like to think that Labor governments can do that, but that is what is happening under the McGowan Labor government. When we have good financial management, it means that we can respond to issues as they occur. We can respond to the floods in the north by

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Bill Johnston

providing multimillion-dollar relief, in real financial ways, to support those people who have been displaced and will continue to be displaced in the medium and longer term. We have the capacity to do that because we are disciplined in managing the books. We are not going to put it on the credit card. We are managing it in a responsible way. I would like to have talked more about the community services sector because it is a really critical part —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I can tell you that they would be just as offended as I am at the comments made over there.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Ms S.E. WINTON: The community services sector receives over \$1 billion in investment from the state government each year to provide critical services to vulnerable families and to support them with cost-of-living pressures. I am proud of the work that those in the community services sector do and I will continue to support them. I will not run them down when it is politically expedient to do so, as the former Liberal leader did by saying that community sector organisations were not doing their jobs properly. I will continue to back them in.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.