

COOK MINISTRY — CONSTITUTION

Motion

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [4.01 pm]: I move —

That this house laments the failure of the Premier to put in place a refreshed cabinet in the recent reshuffle given the multiple failures across a range of portfolios.

As members can imagine, the opposition will be outlining to the house the lamentable history of failure that has occurred in the Labor government in the last six years and the fact that the current Premier has not taken the opportunity to refresh his cabinet in a significant manner. When I look at the same faces across the chamber, I think the only significant change is the departure of the former Premier and his replacement with the member for Balcatta. As we know, the member for Balcatta was already involved with cabinet procedures as the secretary to the cabinet, so in fact we have had very little fresh injection of thought or ideas into the cabinet. We lament that fact.

We chose the term “lament” very carefully because it is almost a poetic expression of the depth of despair that we feel for the condition that Western Australia has descended into under this government. We will outline multiple examples of the government’s lamentable behaviour. The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that to lament is “to express profound sorrow for or concerning”. We are profoundly sorrowful to see the situation in which certain government institutions that this Labor government has overseen for the last six years has descended into. It is almost despairing to read about some of the issues that we have been hearing of in recent times.

The Premier has said that he wants to make a difference in some areas. One of the first areas he spoke about was the situation at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. It may have escaped other people’s attention if I had not brought it to their attention, but largely the same cabinet is presiding over the government of Western Australia now as presided over the government in Western Australia a year ago. Over the last year, when Banksia Hill was literally burning, the same cabinet was in charge of this state. We have seen no substantial change in the cabinet. Most members of the cabinet were sitting at the cabinet table, making decisions, telling the Western Australian public “there’s nothing to see here” when four riots occurred in a few months, the last one resulting in \$30 million worth of damage.

When budget estimates were conducted in this place, I attempted to get some information from the then Minister for Corrective Services around the inspections that had taken place by the Inspector of Custodial Services, specifically because we knew that there had been inspections at Banksia Hill. We now know the extent of the situation of despair that had developed at that detention centre. I have a media release and a report from the Inspector of Custodial Services. It is shameful that a government allowed a significant centre like that to deteriorate to the point that we have seen in the newspapers recently. We have seen pictures of what looks like a war zone, with burnt-out buildings. It could well be Ukraine. This report lays bare the facts around Banksia Hill and the despair that went on while the former Minister for Corrective Services, who still sits in the cabinet, denied there was a problem, saying he was protecting the public, the staff and the detainees. We now know that the staff were also despairing. We know from the report that the situation in Banksia Hill was deeply disturbing for the staff. The fact that there were not enough staff led to continual lockdowns, which led to worse behaviour, which led to even more danger for the staff, which led to fewer staff and so on. It was a vicious downward spiral. Nothing was being done to address any of it.

We have had a change of leader. The new Premier said he is going to make a difference but he sat in cabinet the whole time this sorrowful situation was unravelling, saying that he felt the way it was being run was “spot on”. They were his words. It was not spot on; it was a disgrace. We now know just how much of a disgrace it had become.

The state faces a range of other issues, but the denial by those opposite about the situation at Banksia Hill over the last months, and presiding over what has been a disgraceful deterioration of that centre, is by far the worst example of the issues we have seen. What is being done? The Minister for Police has now taken over from the Minister for Mines and Petroleum; Energy; Industrial Relations as the person who is being charged with changing the situation. I wish him well. I really think we need to see some progress at Banksia Hill. I think everybody in the state would agree that what has been going on is not good enough and we need to see change. I am not sure whether the Minister for Police is the person who has demonstrated the ability to get on top of a situation and make that real change. We have seen escalating crime and lawlessness across many of our communities, especially in the regional areas to the north. Some of those issues are wrapped up with other social issues but the Minister for Police has not been able to maintain law and order across much of our state or maintain a police force which has the staffing, the resources and the level of morale that it needs to combat the situation that we now see unravelling across our state.

Many Western Australian families are suffering from the cost-of-living increases that are affecting many people in our nation, but it is especially sad that people are in such levels of distress in a state that has proclaimed itself the economic powerhouse of the country. Many of the customers of places such as Foodbank are actually working

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

people. It is not just unemployed people who are doing it really tough in our state, and not enough has been done to address that situation. We have seen increases to household fees, vehicle registration fees, the emergency services levy and a range of other charges, and that really does not gel with a situation in which families are doing it so hard already.

The Minister for Housing and the government have presided over a housing situation in which we are worse off in terms of social housing than back in 2017 when this government came to power. Back then, there were 44 087 social housing properties in Western Australia. Last year, there were only 43 380 properties. The Minister for Housing says that the opposition does not have a housing policy. Minister, how about a housing policy that means the government will have more houses at the end of the year and the end of its term than when it came into government. That would be a fairly sound housing policy. It is a policy that the minister should perhaps pursue with vigour.

Metronet and other transport projects overseen by the Minister for Transport have struck some very deep trouble. I have raised the Bunbury Outer Ring Road in this place before. The project started off at \$800 million and that has now become \$1.35 billion. It is the same project—no, actually it is not, because four flyovers have been removed and replaced with roundabouts. When they were removed, the cost was said to be in the order of a quarter of a billion dollars. If we add that to the \$1.35 billion, we are up to about \$1.6 billion, which is almost double. The person who oversaw that extraordinary cost blowout is the Minister for Transport, and she remains Minister for Transport. She has also taken on the task of being Treasurer. We have a minister in charge of the coffers who has demonstrated an inability to develop projects in a timely manner or keep to budget expectations. That is an extraordinary blowout but it is not the only one. Looking at some of the other road projects, there is another \$40 billion for the Albany ring-road, with only a very minor increase in scope, and an extra \$30 million for the Bussell Highway duplication. All of these are worthy projects. I am not complaining about the projects, not at all. It is the execution of the projects and getting them to come in on time and on budget that is so distressing. Similarly, the Yanchep rail extension has another cost blowout of hundreds of millions of dollars and it is years behind schedule.

We know that the Minister for Transport's ability to actually deliver those projects has been shown wanting already, yet that minister has taken on the role of Treasurer. I do not know whether she has sufficient time in her new portfolios to give proper oversight to what she has taken on. In addition, for some reason, she is Minister for Tourism. I do not know whether that particular minister has ever demonstrated an interest in tourism or has a background in it, maybe she does. I will wish her well if she does a great job in Tourism, because we need that situation rectified. The tourism industry in Western Australia is very important for many regional communities as an employer and generator of income. I think there is potential for a lot of Indigenous communities to develop the economies of their own areas, where other jobs may not be available, to grow economic opportunities and thrive.

Tourism is a very important industry in Western Australia, but it could potentially grow and become more important. Whether this minister has a vision for tourism or it is some sort of reward for her to be able to go and look at nice things in lovely places in Margaret River and Broome, time will tell. We will see whether that is the reason.

Why does the minister have a minister assisting in transport? If the minister is not capable of looking after the transport portfolio as a full-time role, perhaps she should consider relinquishing that portfolio so that the member for Balcatta can take it on full time. He does not have a big workload, but I understand he is a new minister, and that is probably appropriate.

Other ministers in cabinet have declared that they are not going to, or have not confirmed that they will, seek election in 2025. That is an extraordinary position. The Premier says that he is taking his grand final team forward, yet we know that at least one person in the other place has already declared that they will not be nominating for the 2025 election.

Mr P.J. Rundle: I heard the member for Mandurah wasn't going again either.

Mr R.S. LOVE: There is speculation around whether various ministers will go forward. It is perhaps unfair to name them all. That may be seen to be poking the bear a little bit while he is sitting over there. The minister will be aware that he has colleagues who have expressed, or have not been able to express, that they are definitely not going beyond the next election. In fact, the cabinet is apparently not committed to the future; cabinet members are committed to seeing out their time. That does not seem to be a dynamic team to promote and go forward to the grand final. I will not make an unfair analogy with the West Coast Eagles at the moment, but it does seem that some teams and organisations hang on to their players too long, and it looks like this cabinet is one of them. Speculation is rife about what is behind that and why people are staying when other members now have enough experience and might want to step forward and make a contribution, bringing a bit of fresh blood into the ranks—someone who can play on the wing instead of the back pocket. But we are not seeing that happen; people are staying. The suspicion is that that is because they are the people with the union numbers who are able to make their own call on who is and who is not in cabinet. That is not the way cabinet members should be selected. They should be selected first of all on merit and then allocated the tasks that best suit their abilities. That is not what we are seeing with this

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

cabinet. Clearly, there has been no attempt to refresh the cabinet and bring in some talented people. I will not name any of them particularly but there are members who have been doing their time on the backbench or in the role of parliamentary secretary who perhaps feel aggrieved that they have not been included in this refresh.

Mr P.J. Rundle: The member for Mandurah has got some talent.

Mr R.S. LOVE: He can sing.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Thank you. Can Hansard record that?

Mr R.S. LOVE: He can sing, and that is a talent. I would not deny that. However, I do not think that it was fair on the other people who have been doing hard work as parliamentary secretaries and members of Parliament but were not even considered because it was a done deal. It was like they were blackballed out of the local club or something and not given the opportunity to excel in their portfolios.

I go back for a moment to the situation at Banksia Hill Detention Centre and the fact that at that stage the Minister for Corrective Services was also the Minister for Energy; Mines and Petroleum. He was here a minute ago and will no doubt come back in later. We saw the image of the burnt-out facility at Banksia Hill, which he had been defending his oversight of—he is, of course, the minister and not the manager of it. His oversight is setting the tone and direction for the department of where he wants that facility to go. That same minister is now tasked with the transition of the energy system, at a time when we are going through a change from mainly fossil fuels to a mix of different energy sources. I listened to the minister speak at some length in a radio broadcast this morning on 6PR, and he talked about the situation at Collie. Three generators or sections have now gone down there, and there is a reliance on a hodgepodge of other electricity generation. He seems to think that is simply a problem for the Australian Energy Market Operator; it is not his problem as the Minister for Energy. When I look at what happened at Banksia Hill and how he denied anything was going wrong, while everything was falling down around his ears, it makes me really concerned about what is happening with our energy sector and the sector's future. I talk to people about the availability of energy, gas and electricity, and people tell me that they have grave concerns about Western Australia's ability to balance its needs for energy with the available sources of electricity and gas in future years. Yet the minister does not think that is an issue, or he thinks that it is an issue for the Australian Energy Market Operator or someone else. I can tell members that it will be the minister's issue when Western Australia cannot keep the lights on.

Another Premier, Dr Gallop, resigned midstream. His successor came in and, funnily enough, Western Australia had lots of energy problems during his period at the helm. Very unexpectedly, he lost the election in 2008. Western Australians do not take kindly to not being able to keep the lights on. That is a real concern for the industry players I speak to. They tell me their concerns but seem unable to make the minister think that there will be a problem. We think that there will be an issue, and that the Western Australian public and industry will pay for that in the future.

Another issue I have had some concern about is this government's management and oversight of the situation at the Perth Mint. The organisation seems to be continuing while there are ongoing concerns about the investigations into its noncompliance with the US model state commodity code. It seems to have been in breach of the law in 23 states. More egregiously, when it knew that it was in breach of the law, the Perth Mint, under the oversight of this government, decided to press on and, in fact, expanded its activities. The Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre is investigating this. In the same week and shortly after the Premier resigned, the CEO of the Perth Mint resigned. Shortly thereafter, it was announced that Crown casino agreed to a penalty of \$450 million for its transgressions or issues in complying with the relevant federal legislation on money laundering and counterterrorism financing. The Perth Mint situation is something that the new Premier would do well to take seriously and not let drift along in the hands of the Minister for Mines and Petroleum without having oversight of his activities. This is a real risk for the Western Australian taxpayer. Fines or penalties in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars, and over \$1 billion in the case of one bank, are not issues to be taken lightly. These issues should be of great concern to all.

Another person who is an interesting cabinet retention is the member for Butler, the Attorney General. The Attorney General has probably pumped out more legislation in this place in the last few years than any other member, but there surely comes a time for a refresh. The government's team has so many legal minds, and it is hanging on to someone who will most likely not go ahead in the future.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): Leader of the Opposition, just pause for a second. We do not need the interjections from the Leader of the House or the Minister for Police.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Thank you. I appreciate your astute legal mind. It is a pity that others perhaps do not share that appreciation.

We now see the chaotic introduction of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. I am sure that others want to talk about this. I know that the member for Roe has firsthand experience of the concerns that people are exhibiting in

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

Esperance. I have been watching reports of a similar debacle in Geraldton, where there were very angry people. Today, we heard the Premier tell me that I did not know what I was talking about; he then found that his minister was trying to tell him that, no, actually he was wrong. The Premier then had to correct himself; he was wrong. Then, in an answer to the member for Central Wheatbelt, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs seemed to stumble and not know the truth of the regulations and framework being put in place. If the minister does not know, how on earth can a farmer at Esperance or Walkaway have any idea of what to expect of this regime in the future? The minister says that it does not affect farmers but, of course, it affects farmers. It affects any land user on a property of more than 1 100 square metres who, in certain circumstances, will interact with Aboriginal cultural heritage. To say that no farmers will be involved is just mind-blowingly ignorant. If that were the case, hundreds of farmers and other land users would not be lining up to attend the meetings, which have been programmed in a rush to try to meet the July deadline. They will not meet the July deadline because the meetings are well oversubscribed. The government could continue to do this education for months, and people would still be coming in trying to get information. I can tell members that my office—I mean my electorate office, not my office as Leader of the Opposition—is fielding calls from people from Halls Creek down to Cranbrook who are incensed, frightened or simply confused about what is going on.

The way that this is being handled is abysmal. What do we see? We see the same old reaction that we always expect from Labor. When those on this side raise a legitimate issue about a sensitive matter, we see the racist tag being dragged out. I utterly reject that assertion. We are representing the community and the concerns of our citizens and are critiquing the shoddy and poorly managed introduction of this act. We were told that it took five years to prepare, and yet at the last minute, the Labor Party is starting to do its homework. It is a bit late. Again, I ask the Premier to please put a stop to this. Just call a halt for six months to enable some information and clarity to be given. People in the community will be coming to ask for advice on whether there are sites of significance on their landholding in the area where they want to undertake land use. A halt will enable culturally knowledgeable people to actually respond to them.

There are many portfolios where we see issues emerging or unaddressed. The way that the fishing industry has been handled is another area that has been of great concern for coastal communities. The Minister for Fisheries is not here but that is fine; he no doubt has other duties. However, if he was, I would tell him again about how some of the ways in which he has handled demersal fishing have been unfair on communities. Charter companies or charter family businesses came in to provide a product in what was a pretty new market at that stage and they developed opportunities for tourism in towns that did not have them before. The quotas of fish that people can take to enjoy, see and catch are being cut. Because they do not have a long history in the industry, the quotas are being cut to only 20 per cent of what they have been catching in recent years. That means that they cannot continue their businesses and those towns will lose another little attraction.

I will use the town of Jurien Bay as an example, because it is the most known to me. If someone goes there and there is not a charter operator to take them fishing and they do not own their own \$40 000 boat, they will be denied the opportunity to actually catch a fish. That is a tragedy because the town loses out on that business and also that attraction for the community. That is something that would have added to the level of attractions in the community so that people going up there could enjoy not only the Pinnacles and other things, but also could go out and catch some fish and have a great time.

The guys who run those boats are very good fishermen—they know where the fish are—but they are also very responsible. Their businesses depend on it. They are not going to catch fish and throw them back to die; they will take the fish that they catch and that will suffice. We are seeing them being locked out of the industry. We also know that as a whole, this government has an agenda that I think oftentimes seems to penalise regional communities. I note the situation of the creation of the marine parks where areas offshore from the Perth metropolitan area have far fewer sanctuary zones than the areas in places like the proposed south coast marine park. In some ways, it seems that many regional communities are feeling quite aggrieved because they seem to consistently get a very rough deal from the current government.

I am sure that the member for Roe will know firsthand, having been involved in some of those discussions with people in Esperance, that it is turning to mud. Fisheries officers have levels of expertise, experience and information built over decades. However, from what I am being told, they are simply not being listened to by the groups setting those parks up. I think there was an announcement today that Western Australia's first green bond had been issued. It was a bit over \$1 billion. Interestingly, there was a Treasury discussion this year about the environmental, social and corporate governance targets of the government. Those were being used as a focal point to improve the budget situation of the government when it goes out to seek finance. It seems that the only people who are paying for this are those in small communities like Jurien Bay, Esperance and Nannup, which lost its primary industry in forestry. I think that is why we are increasingly seeing rural and regional communities concerned about their future.

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

There are so many failures in so many areas, and yet we do not see any moves to refresh the cabinet that presided over those failures, issues and, I would say, unfair situations that have developed in many areas over the state in order to come up with fresh ideas. We lament the missed opportunity that has taken place in the state. The Premier has chosen to take the same tired team to the grand final instead of getting in some new blood and taking a team that might just refresh and take the new opportunities that will exist in coming years.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.36 pm]: I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition that this house laments the business-as-usual approach in the recent reshuffle of the WA Labor government at a time of multiple failures across a range of portfolios, missing the opportunity to right the course.

Further to the reshuffle itself, I would say that the promotion of a failed former Minister for Health represents a backward step. We have seen what has happened under this government's watch to health delivery to Western Australian citizens, which should be a priority of any government. Under the former health minister from 2017 to 2021, we saw the health system go from crisis to crisis. It was a period when we saw cost-cutting, underinvestment and broken promises. The current health minister is now trying to play a desperate game of catch-up.

We are yet to see much confidence about the success of the current health minister. The recent episode in estimates was underwhelming, given that the minister was either unable or unwilling to provide answers to very basic questions on the floor or by supplementary information. It is a very concerning state of affairs. Clearly, WA Labor does not see health as a priority. We have seen poor outcome after poor outcome under the watch of this government. That has led to some tragic events and put extraordinary pressure on our frontline health workers as well.

I turn to ambulance ramping. When in opposition as shadow Minister for Health, Roger Cook, the now Premier, stated that it would be a key priority. It was a key election commitment of WA Labor pre-2017. It was a key area of failure for the now Premier when he was Minister for Health from 2017 to 2021, raising the question that if this Premier could not deliver in the health portfolio, why was he promoted to Premier? In May 2023, there was a total of over 5 000 hours of ambulance ramping. That is up by almost 40 per cent from April. It is the highest monthly ramping figure recorded this year. There were 66 000 hours of ambulance ramping last year, which is shocking and, again, the highest on record. There have been 21 200 hours so far this year. Patients have been forced to wait in the back of ambulances or in hospital corridors.

If we compare over 21 000 hours of ambulance ramping in the first two months of this year with the figure for the first five months of 2017, it is stark. There were 2 946 ambulance ramping hours in 2017 and now this year, in 2023, there have been over 21 200 hours. That is quite a significant difference. That is a 600 per cent increase since our now Premier called ambulance ramping a crisis when in opposition, and more than double the annual figure for 2017 when he became the health minister. The annual ramping figure for 2017 was 9 819 hours, in 2018 it was 15 437 hours, in 2019 it was over 24 000 hours and now it is well above 60 000 hours. The figure has incrementally and significantly continued to climb under this government's watch.

Staffing continues to be an ongoing concern. Nurses and health practitioners have continued to be asked to do more with less under extreme conditions, particularly during the COVID period. Now nurses and midwives continue to feel real concern, feeling undervalued in working conditions, resulting in them leaving their profession in droves in desperation at not being held to provide patients with the care they would like to provide. They feel exhausted because of long hours, double and triple shifts, and constantly being asked to work longer hours and extra shifts. As I said, they are being asked to do more with less under this government's watch. The warnings were there. In December 2021, figures showed that 2 000 nurses had left the WA public health system over a seven-month period. In August that year, the Your Voice in Health survey, filled out by almost 50 per cent of public health system employees, revealed concern about understaffing and plummeting satisfaction levels. Nurses and midwives consistently scored the lowest satisfaction levels in the survey, and 62 per cent of respondents stated that they did not believe their organisation cared about their health and wellbeing. The WA health workforce went from being the highest paid in the country to one of the lowest, with declining morale and feeling completely undervalued by their minister and government. All the while, they were listening to the Premier boasting about a budget surplus.

Nurses, amongst other public sector workers, have sought a pay increase, which may go some way to attracting nurses back into the WA workforce and may also ensure we can retain the ones we have. We have seen the ongoing stoush between the union representing those nurses and this government, with negotiations failing. It has been an extraordinary scene and morale is particularly low. It is fair to say that things should not have come to an ongoing industrial relations stoush between nurses and this government. We have had feedback from nurses that they only have to look to what other states are doing to attract people into the nursing profession. States such as Queensland and Victoria are certainly throwing a lot of support at their workforce compared with this state. Queensland has a \$35 000 attraction incentive as well as an additional \$35 000 to attract nurses to regional areas. There have also

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

been extraordinary incentives in Victoria. It is clear that Western Australian health workers have gone from being the highest paid in the country to being some of the lowest.

I turn to emergency departments. WA has seven of the eight worst performing EDs in the country according to the Australian Medical Association's *Public hospital report card* of April this year, which has illustrated a declining performance of WA public hospitals. There were 21 000 elective surgeries cancelled last year, peaking in November 2022, when almost 2 500 surgeries were cancelled. Despite the comments of the Premier in Parliament today, we argue that this government can no longer hide behind COVID. The peak occurred long after the number of COVID cases had eased, and figures also show that around 2 000 surgeries were regularly cancelled in the months preceding the border opening in March 2022.

Another concerning thing about the promotion of this Premier is that he not only failed in the health portfolio but continues to show a lack of commitment to ensuring the recommendations for Perth Children's Hospital will be properly implemented. Today, I asked simple question about the supernumerary team for Perth Children's Hospital, which was a key recommendation following the tragedy surrounding Aishwarya Aswath, along with 30 other recommendations. We got more of the same glib lines from the Premier, who walked away from the health portfolio due to his failure to deliver. It was the then Premier who emphasised that there were enough staff on the tragic evening that Aishwarya died. In fact, at that time, the then health minister, the now Premier, stated that staffing levels were basically above normal, and the then Premier defended calls for the health minister to resign. The coroner's report of April 2021 on the death of Aishwarya recommended a dedicated supernumerary resuscitation team. The current health minister insisted that it had been funded as far back as August 2021. This year, when I asked the health minister why a dedicated resuscitation team had not been prioritised as a matter of urgency, the response was to accuse me of exploiting tragic and difficult circumstances, which was pretty grubby of her.

We heard from the now Premier that this team had been funded. Just to clarify that, the now Premier, the former Minister for Health, had confirmed that the team had been funded in 2021, and the new incoming health minister thought that it had actually been delivered. We have since heard in February this year the minister being forced to admit that the dedicated resuscitation team is actually not in place. The Child and Adolescent Health Service chief executive then issued an urgent directive to resolve the issue by ensuring that the resuscitation team staff were no longer drawn from the emergency department's base roster of nurses and doctors. This was identified as being a critical gap in the system the night Aishwarya died of sepsis, and three subsequent reports have all highlighted the need for this team to be urgently implemented. It is incredible that this has not been at the very top of the list of priorities for the former and current health ministers, and has today been brushed away once again by the new Premier. In the estimates committee last month, the health minister revealed that the department expects it to be in place in the coming months. That is an absolute disgrace. It is still not in place two years after it was promised. Empty promises are just not good enough. There are no excuses.

The minister will respond that there are serious worker shortages worldwide, but it is no surprise that our nurses are leaving, because they do not feel valued by this government—a government that is now enjoying a \$4 billion surplus this year, as indicated in this year's budget. We saw a \$1.2 billion investment in health infrastructure in the recent state budget, but no financial commitment or real incentives to attract and retain our health workers other than the HECS incentive for regional areas.

In this week's opinion piece in *The West Australian*, Janet Reah hit the nail on the head in her article "WA deserves more than a health system that is merely 'coping'". Pointing to the core of the problem in staffing, she said —

... it's primarily about respect and investment in our nurses and midwives.

She highlighted that patient ratios to manage the workloads and competitive wage outcomes to help retain nurses and midwives would make the roles in WA attractive again. As I have previously mentioned, other states are well ahead in offering incentives to encourage nurses to work there. Victoria makes it free to study nursing, as well as offering financial incentives and relocation assistance. Nurses are paid \$35 000 for relocating to Queensland and another \$35 000 if they work one year in the regions. WA nurses are already the second-lowest paid in the country, and the incentive that this government is offering is \$12 000 off a nurse's HECS debt for three years of working in a remote or regional area.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the neonatal ward at Osborne Park Hospital, which is another example of staffing issues. There was a \$25 million election commitment to expand the services at Osborne Park to allow northern suburbs mothers to have their babies closer to home. The former health minister announced that tenders were open in July 2019, and construction began on a neonatal nursery in February 2020, with the expansion completed by the end of that year. What eventuated was quite an embarrassing bungle. The ward has sat idle for three years. Purchased medical supplies are approaching their expiry dates before they could even be used. Maternity bypasses

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

have been an ongoing concern, with more than 320 bypasses in the 12 months to November last year, and yet we have this neonatal nursery sitting empty. The Minister for Health claimed that the unit was a shell, awaiting population growth in the future, and then conceded on 6PR that finding staff had actually been an issue. Again, that was an embarrassment. Her ministerial colleague, the member for West Swan and now Deputy Premier, called it “not a good look”, which is quite clearly an understatement. The Australian Medical Association president at that time, Mark Duncan-Smith, told 6PR that the government had failed to set aside an operational budget for that hospital. Again, we are seeing our new Premier fail to deliver on the simple election commitments that he made in the health portfolio.

I refer to the women’s and babies’ hospital at Murdoch. There have been reports of the empty neonatal ward following the government’s decision to scrap the new women’s and babies’ hospital at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre site. We have seen this extraordinary decision to opt to build a new maternity facility at Fiona Stanley Hospital, some 20 kilometres away.

During question time in 2019, Mr Cook, the current Premier, talked about the difficulties at the QEII site. He said —

It is obviously a fairly complex piece of work, because although we are moving a hospital to a constrained site, in addition we are moving it onto a site that already has an operational hospital, including Perth Children’s Hospital. It will be a difficult project, but ... one that we need to do.

Since the 2004 Reid report, every review of health infrastructure undertaken has recommended that the women’s and babies’ hospital be at that site. Even the McGowan government’s own sustainable health review overseen by the now Premier recommended the QEII site and recognised the value of having Perth Children’s Hospital alongside a women’s and babies’ hospital. We would argue that just because it is challenging does not mean that the QEII site should not be pursued in the best interests of our youngest and most vulnerable patients. The current health minister has been turning a deaf ear to the chorus of medical professionals begging her to reverse this decision—namely, to rethink this decision and shift from this proposal to having the hospital in Murdoch, amongst the very grave concerns raised by health clinicians about the outcomes for our most vulnerable patients.

I was asked to speak on the health portfolio. Obviously, it is a very real concern. We have a failed former health minister—a minister who turned his back on the election commitments that he made to this important area. Even today, in question time, we heard that the recommendations for Perth Children’s Hospital that were made in the wake of the tragic circumstances surrounding Aishwarya Aswath are still outstanding. The fact that the supernumerary team is still not in place and that we again hear the same glib responses to such an important priority for any Premier or minister illustrates one thing: why this Premier originally turned his back on the health portfolio.

It is clear that the Premier does not prioritise health and cannot deliver on health. It is clear that the negotiations between the unions to promote the Premier of this state have not been done in the best interest of Western Australians. The Premier has allowed our health system to decline. He let down the very people who work tirelessly to look after the state’s health, the people who kept us safe during the pandemic under extraordinary circumstances and work pressure. He put them on a pedestal, all the while failing them by continuing to inadequately invest in our health and our health infrastructure, and failing to provide nurses, midwives and health practitioners with a safe workplace, causing them to leave in droves and seek work in other states or countries that value their workers and support them for what they are worth. Our Premier has left his legacy of failure in a declining health system. For that reason, I endorse the motion presented today and raise very real concerns about how a minister, who failed to deliver and stepped away from his responsibility to deliver on health, has been promoted to Premier of this state.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.01 pm]: I, too, rise to support the motion of the Leader of the Opposition —

That this house laments the failure of the Premier to put in place a refreshed cabinet in the recent reshuffle given the multiple failures across a range of portfolios.

I congratulate the Premier on his new role, but I found it interesting when he said that this is the team he will take to the grand final. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, it appears that several members of the cabinet will not even make it to the last round. I will talk about one or two members, but the opposition and the people of WA are concerned that we have not seen the refresh of cabinet that we thought we would. As the Leader of the Opposition said, we thought there would be opportunities to bring in talented backbenchers who are there, ready and waiting, but instead the unions are taking control and saying that they will put in who they like. In other words, they will keep who they like on the job, fiddle around the edges and not refresh the cabinet at all. This is pretty concerning for the people of WA. The previous McGowan government left an abysmal housing crisis; a failing health system, which the member for Vasse outlined; a broken education system; skyrocketing cost of living; increased utility bills; increasing homelessness; rising crime; a fatigued and overwhelmed agricultural sector; a juvenile justice

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

system in crisis; and a state of blackouts with no backup power strategy in place. That is just the start. When I look at this list, I can understand why the previous Premier departed the scene.

As I said, I congratulate the new Premier, but I certainly question some of his statements since being appointed. He said that the arrangements and how the previous Premier handled Banksia Hill Detention Centre were spot on. I do not think anyone in Western Australia could believe Premier Cook when he came out with that statement. I reiterate that I do not think this is the grand final team. The unions are at the steering wheel in the background and ministers will be departing the scene before the next state election. They should not be there, because this was an opportunity for a change of ministry.

The previous Minister for Education and Training indicated that she would not seek re-election at the 2025 state election. I want to look at her performance and some of the attacks that she made on both the regions and Perth. She somehow remains in cabinet when she and everyone else knows that she is going. I cannot explain it, to be honest. Firstly, the government was going to put Perth Modern School in some sort of high-rise building in the middle of town. What did we see? We saw hundreds of protesters on the front steps of Parliament House. Hon Kim Beazley was working in the background, saying that we could not do this. Hon Malcolm McCusker, another former Governor, and his wife Tonya were on the front steps of Parliament House along with many other previous students of Perth Modern School. Secondly, the former Minister for Education and Training moved on to Moora Residential College and the Schools of the Air. I am sure the likes of the member for Central Wheatbelt can remember very clearly when we all had to march down from the Country Women's Association headquarters in West Perth. It was its first time in its over 100-year history that the CWA marched on anything, but it could not believe the attack on our Schools of the Air students and those regional and remote families.

That was the start of that. The same thing occurred with Moora Residential College. The government wanted to shut it down. Luckily, the federal government came to the rescue with \$10 million, which the state government finally matched. What I am getting to is why, with the opportunity to bring in some refreshment, would the Premier continue with a minister who is on the way out? That is my question to our new Premier, but perhaps this was decided by the union movement.

I digress, because I want to talk about the current Minister for Education and a couple of his extraordinary outbursts over the last few months. Today he went on a tirade about multicultural interests and tried to give the members for Cottesloe, Central Wheatbelt and Roe the breakdown of multicultural people in our electorates. Somehow it is all our fault that we asked only three questions in estimates. When we look at his own performance in estimates, he demonstrated a disgraceful display with his extraordinary outburst to the member for Central Wheatbelt. Apparently, it was her fault that he used an incredibly inappropriate term and had to withdraw it. This is the sort of stuff that we are getting from the current education minister, who, by the way, seems to be changing his advice on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021 on a daily basis. I will come back to that later because I want to focus on the education minister and some of the issues in the education system.

I want to let the Minister for Education know of some of the anecdotal stories that we have heard lately about teachers' workloads. First, a work experience student stepped in to run the class while the teacher was absent. Second, there was an underqualified student teacher in charge of a classroom full of students. Third, teachers with 20-plus years of experience have taken long service leave just because the system is failing them and they need a break, and they usually do not come back. Fourth, parents are being asked to donate furniture for rentals for part-time teachers. Fifth, some schools have capped enrolments because there are not enough teachers to match enrolment predictions.

Sixth, teachers and principals are exposed to more violent incidents than ever before, with serious incident statistics doubling in recent years, leading to more leave being taken. Seventh, teachers with 10 years' or more experience are choosing to leave education to work in a cafe because they are worn out. Eighth, a second year teacher in one class was faced with more than nine children who could not read and four children with undiagnosed serious learning and behavioural difficulties and no funding for an education assistant. Ninth, there are increasing amounts of paperwork and administrative duties to assess and apply for EA funding for support of teachers in classrooms. Tenth, teachers and principals are rotating through a cleaning roster because they cannot find cleaners for the school.

This is what is happening out there at the coalface. The Minister for Education can stand here and carry on like he did today, but last night the member for Central Wheatbelt and I were discussing some of the frustrations that we are seeing out in the regional areas. We have principals who were at school, let us say, six or seven years ago, who went on maternity leave. They retained their substantive position, but are now either not even working or have moved on to another school, and that school in our regional area cannot get a substantive principal. These are some of the things that the education minister should be shouting and yelling about, instead of the display that we saw in the chamber today. He should be shouting and yelling about these things to his director general, deputy directors general and anyone else in education with that decision-making ability because our regional students and

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

communities are the ones missing out. We cannot attract a principal and their family to stay if there is no substantive role there. That is the real issue, and it is something that this current education minister needs to take a look at.

Last year, when the current education minister was appointed in December, it was interesting that he said that he would like all WA schools to provide a broad range of educational, academic, music, drama and sporting opportunities. That was reported in *The West Australian* on 22 December 2022. From what I have seen in our local schools, there has not been a lot of change in that area. They are still choosing subjects that locals can deliver because specialised teachers will not go into the bush. I am sure the member for Mandurah would identify with this, given his past experience, but it is a real challenge for our regional communities to not have that range of quality teachers as they would like out there because of the various issues—one of which is housing. I have spoken many times about the security of housing in some of the rougher communities where we have student teachers. They cannot sustain living there because of the threat of violence and the threat to their wellbeing. It is a real issue for those communities. A few years ago, a young graduate teacher was doing some great work up in the Kimberley. She wanted to stay there, but she could not sustain it because of the threats to her safety that were happening almost every weekend. These are the sorts of things that the new minister needs to focus on, instead of carrying on about the length of time we spent in estimates asking questions on different areas. I have an interesting fact here. In 2022, a teacher in WA was being assaulted or threatened every 40 minutes. Those are the issues that the minister needs to focus on.

Today I tried to bring up the issue of teacher shortages and I got another tirade from the education minister. It is curious because when the previous Premier was the education minister, back in 2007 or sometime around then, he attempted to lure teachers out of retirement and from interstate. As Ben Harvey reported in September 2022, that resulted in an extra 12 teachers for the state. Therefore, the previous Premier did not really manage to round them up, and I look forward to the current Premier and his education minister improving on that.

A WA Secondary School Executives Association paper from 2022 gave a number of reasons why we are losing teachers. The decline in the number of enrolments as well as the increase in length, from one to two years, of a post-bachelor degree, compounded by the increased cost of arts degrees, is reducing the supply of specialist teachers in English literature and social sciences.

Mr D.A. Templeman: That was the federal government. Your previous federal government did that. Humanities suffered hugely under the changes they made to tertiary education.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: This government is coming into its seventh year now. It is time to turn it around, with the help of the minister's colleagues in the federal Labor government if need be. I do not mind which government does it, but we need some improvements because we are losing 25 per cent of our graduates in the first four years. They are resigning, and that disproportionately affects our regional and rural schools. Teachers gave some other reasons for leaving: they prefer to live in cities or large rural centres; there is a lack of access to quality Government Regional Officers' Housing or affordable housing where GROH is not provided; and there is a perceived inability to return to metropolitan locations. The latter is something that I have raised with the director general because we cannot expect teachers to just go out there. I am sure the member for Mandurah knows all about this: quite often, people go into regional areas and they enjoy it and their families love it.

Mr D.A. Templeman: The old days were much better, quite frankly, because there was an expectation you went country, and that was a great grounding for so many of our teachers.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Absolutely. I fully agree with the minister. I brought this up with the previous director general, Sharyn O'Neill, and I have brought it up with the current director general, Lisa Rodgers. This is something that the current director general and the minister need to look at because we just cannot keep going down our current path. When I look at the country teacher allowance, which gives teachers and school leaders in 146 rural and regional schools an annual allowance ranging from \$5 000 to \$13 730, for starters they will just about lose that amount in extra rent, because quite often they might live with their family or have a house in Perth. The bizarre thing is that in the same regional town, let us say Narrogin, some schools get the regional allowance and some do not. That is the most bizarre thing that I have ever seen. These schools are actually a kilometre apart, but 180 to 200 kilometres from Perth. I really cannot understand the logic behind that.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My favourite subject is Esperance Senior High School. It is badly in need of renewal. When the new Minister for Ports goes down to have a look at Esperance port, he might be interested in going up to the high school to look at those facilities because they are not up to scratch. The thing that really upsets the community of Esperance is that the previous Premier, in his last budget in his last days, announced that \$100 million would go to schools in Rockingham and Safety Bay. I certainly have nothing against those students or those communities, but those schools are 10 or 12 years younger than Esperance Senior High School. The then Premier signed off on

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

that. He gave that money to schools in his electorate and then disappeared into the sunset. That is the thing that upsets people in Esperance, a community that deserves better for their secondary school students.

I have many other issues to discuss here, including international students of course. We have the very high-quality Minister for International Education over there, but I am still worried that we have students who are couch surfing or paying thousands of dollars for rentals. Word is going back to their countries that Perth is not the place to go because they cannot get accommodation. At 5.8 per cent, we are the bottom mainland state for international students, according to my figures.

I close with what I am calling “the assault on the regions” by this current government. This was brought to light very recently with the assault on people who are trying to go about their normal lifestyle. We had the messed-up introduction of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021 and a disgraceful parliamentary process over the last couple of years. I am sure the member for Central Wheatbelt will enlighten us more on that if we need it, but we have had a very poor parliamentary process. I was in Esperance the other day with 600 community members and farmers who are very worried and frightened about the implications of this matter. We come back up here and the minister says, “Oh, don’t worry about it. We haven’t got our local Aboriginal cultural heritage services registered, but everything will be fine. We’ll introduce it regardless on 1 July.” Why not take more time, consult the people of regional WA, and those in the city for that matter, given that it will involve anyone with a block over 1 100 square metres? The minister needs to stop giving out contradictory advice. We heard him on the ABC and then we heard him on 6PR giving different advice. I noticed in the chamber today that he is starting to temper his language. He has obviously been told by the department that he needs to back off a bit about his own legislation and his own regulations. That is part of the assault on the regions.

Another assault is the live export situation. I do not know how many times we saw the previous Premier stand up and say, “Look; I’m supporting it with the changes that have been made”, but he did not support it at all. He made no attempt to impress on the Prime Minister and the federal minister how important this industry is to Western Australia, which supplies 97 per cent of the sheep to this market and involves 3 500 jobs. It is a more than \$100 million industry and the previous Premier stood up and said, “Oh, I support it; it’s all good.” Do something about it. It would be different if it were the GST. We heard our new Premier today talking about the GST and how the new Treasurer will stand up for it. What about standing up for the live export industry, which is very important to our regional communities, our farmers and the supply chain—the shearers, the transport operators, the pallet suppliers and the like?

There has been an assault on the fishing industry and demersal fishing. The south coast marine park is another assault on the community of Esperance and Bremer Bay. There was a lack of consultation. It was driven and funded by the well-known Pew Charitable Trusts. Consultation was not done properly. There have been disputes between the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. The communication officer from DBCA, who was doing a good job, does not seem to be there anymore. There are a range of issues that are making communities worried in not only Esperance but also Kalgoorlie. Those are the things that are upsetting our regional communities, let alone what is happening with forestry and firearms.

It was not on the agenda, but, to top it off, regional representation has gone out the door. We will lose 18 spots in the upper house. Regional representation has gone out the door. The Labor Party recently made a submission on the electoral redistribution. It seeks only a minor change, but, by the way, we will have one less regional seat because we need one fewer regional seat. This is a demonstration of the assault on the regions by this government. Quite frankly, as the Leader of the Opposition says, we lament the lack of change to this cabinet that actually might have done something to improve things for our regions. It is not good enough.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [5.25 pm]: I enthusiastically join the debate on the motion that this house laments the business-as-usual approach in the recent reshuffle of the WA Labor government at a time of multiple failures across a range of portfolios, missing an opportunity to right the course. I want to join in and add to the comments of the member for Roe about the lamentable performance of the Minister for Education in this place. This individual wishes to present himself as someone who is erudite and compassionate, but what do we see in this place? We see he has a short temper. He loses his temper. We saw that in the estimates process with the attack on the member for Central Wheatbelt, which he then had to quickly withdraw. We hear gratuitous personal insults in this place. This is the person who had the opportunity to study overseas, supported by his family and those around him, but who comes in here and plays to the crowd, to the Minister for Energy and the Minister for Health, by making gratuitous personal insults, rather than having a substantive debate. That is not worthy of a minister of the Crown, but more like someone who is in a pub having a discussion with their friends.

Of course, we might say this is perhaps a character flaw, but what do we see in that minister’s portfolio? We see schools across the state with teachers who are not fully trained. The Minister for Education boasts about the number of teachers in schools compared with under the former coalition government, but it had fully trained teachers in every school at the start of every school year, despite more than 500 000 people coming into the state over the term

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

of the government. That was the record of the last government. This Minister for Education is putting untrained teachers in schools because his government is unable to get sufficient teachers in schools.

We saw the incompetent rollout of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021. We have a half-baked process that is causing enormous distress—and for good reason. We have a minister who seems to change his story every time he talks to a different media outlet or addresses Parliament, confusing the public even further. Based on the comments I have heard, it surprises me that the minister remembers the act that was rolled out. This act includes, members, that even if someone carries out an act based on a genuine mistaken belief, they will be captured. The minister suggested that people can look up the website and see whether any Aboriginal cultural heritage is on the map. If they cannot see anything and they do something, even if they make a mistake, the act specifically precludes the defence of mistake. It is written into the act. I know because I sat in this chamber for the entirety of that second reading debate and the entirety of the consideration in detail stage that we were allowed to have. This minister likes to portray the image of being someone who is erudite and compassionate, but he resorts in this place to using intemperate behaviour and is failing in his portfolios.

I want to get into one of my main interest in politics and the reason I came into this Parliament; that is, what we are doing in this state about the development of future industries that will be the backbone of jobs for our kids and our grandkids and other people who come to the state.

That is no more evident than in the complete failure to develop a major hydrogen industry in the midwest. There is probably no better place in the world than the midwest of Western Australia—Geraldton to Karratha, but particularly the Geraldton region—to establish a major new green renewable industry or industries. Why? Because it has a fantastic liveable climate, unlike further north in the state, where the climate is more challenging for many people and families. Geraldton has not only a superbly liveable climate but also pre-eminent renewable energy sources. No place in the world would have a better combination of resources. The government has made some progress on hydrogen, at least in part. Wesfarmers is looking to set up its Kwinana project and Waitsia, through its Mitsui partnership, is looking at a hydrogen project based on reforming natural gas. The Wesfarmers project will do that as well, but the Waitsia project is looking to feed more hydrogen into that as it progresses. Karratha has the Sun Brilliance Australia and Engie projects. Those things are going ahead, but we do not see any significant progress at Oakajee, the industrial estate that has been identified to the north of Geraldton. The Minister for Energy, Hon Bill Johnston, is now also the Minister for Hydrogen Industry. Of course, State Development has sat with the former Deputy Premier, and now Premier of this state, yet he has completely failed on that major industrial centre.

Let us go back to what the government promised on this. I will go through a brief chronology of Labor's PR and spin on this—it really is spin because of the lack of progress. An expression of interest period began on 18 September 2020, so we are getting damn near to three years since then. Expressions of interest were sought internationally and domestically. A media release dated 21 January 2021 was headed "International interest in Mid-West renewable hydrogen potential", while one dated 14 May 2021 was headed "Initial results confirm Oakajee as ideal site for green hydrogen". Another media release dated 7 September 2021, headed "\$61.5 million boost for WA's renewable hydrogen industry", outlined that funding of \$7.5 million for an access road would kickstart the Oakajee hub. How long does the member for Vasse think it would take to build an access road? I think it would probably take a couple of years—less, actually. The government has the money there. A media release of 25 November 2021, headed "\$117.5 million to progress two renewable hydrogen hubs", referred to hubs in the Pilbara and the midwest. On 19 April 2022, a media release came out with the heading "McGowan Government's hydrogen projects endorsed", while on 18 October 2022, the heading was "Oakajee Strategic Industrial Area gains land allocation approval". It goes on and on. We can go through this list of media releases. What did we see again in the May 2023 state budget? We saw the funding for the access road! One would think that getting into the place would be the most basic thing to do. In answer to a question on notice that I had asked, I was told that the access road might be completed in another two years, so that will be 2025. That will be five years after it was originally announced that it would be done. Why is that important? As I said, I suspect this is the pre-eminent area in the world for projects such as this to be taking off. I was again told in an answer to a question on notice that proponents have been identified. Those proponents will not allocate significant capital expenditure and begin detailed planning for their projects until they have guaranteed access to land and other important infrastructure is available to them. I am going to go through that. It is just disappointing because of the potential, excitement and importance of those things for that community.

One of the challenges for this government that I mentioned yesterday, but I think is worth mentioning again, is something that I found interesting when travelling to India, a country that has megacities. India does not want to keep making cities bigger and bigger because problems just escalate. There is some sort of exponential relationship between the size of a city and its problems. Of course, we also have that problem in metropolitan Perth. People are coming to Perth because it is where the jobs, education and good health services are, but the city cannot cope. We see that. Rental availability is effectively zero. As soon as someone moves out, someone else moves in. This happens

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

in less than a day; that is what our rental availability equates to. We also have an issue with housing availability. The city is struggling to cope. The government does not want to develop more land, so why not put serious effort into developing our regional areas. We have a number of excellent regional areas, but Geraldton is particularly excellent. The Oakajee estate is key to that, because it will create the jobs that will enable and justify the development of even better health and educational facilities in that town. This sits at the feet of the now Premier.

[Interruption.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: See—even Siri does not agree!

Mr D.A. Templeman: Certainly not with you.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I think I heard him say “I’m upset about Oakajee, too”. Siri is probably non-gender specific.

The now Premier has completely failed in that task. The Minister for Hydrogen Industry likes to try to promote other projects that are occurring. Those projects have not occurred because of the state, as the state has been a passenger in them, if members like. But in the case of Oakajee, only government action can catalyse the development of these industries. The Minister for State and Industry Development, Jobs and Trade has failed. This is an extremely serious issue. We have no model for common-user infrastructure at Oakajee. As I have put to the Minister for Energy on a number of occasions, proponents have spoken with me and have said that they will not fund the powerline to that estate. Why? Because it would be an enormous capital expense on top of the capital required for their projects. The minister is now going through that process. I understand that discussions are occurring with different proponents about whether they will fund it, but as was indicated in the response to my question on notice, the projects of all proponents are at different stages of maturity. Someone who is going through a prefeasibility study is not going to go, “Oh, absolutely, minister; put me down for \$100 million, even though I have not even completed my prefeasibility, I do not have finance for the project and we have not made a final investment decision.” I think the original estimate for this was about \$500 million. It is absolutely pivotal. The state can do it. I heard excuses from the Minister for Energy that the state cannot do that because it cannot gold plate the system and put something in before it is required. That is completely untrue.

Ms M.J. Davies: They can absolutely make a decision to do that but they choose not to.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Absolutely. The government could make the decision to do that, because it could recover the money later. The government is allowed to do that. There is no barrier or impediment to doing that. That 330-kilovolt transmission line from Three Springs to Geraldton and through to Oakajee would not only provide additional stability for the unreliable power in Walkaway, Geraldton and surrounding areas, but also be one of the catalysts for the Oakajee industrial area to take off. As I have said, that is something we should do. Honestly, this is something that would not only catalyse the development of a major regional city in the north and help us get away from the concentration in the south west corner of the state, but also create the high-quality jobs that people want and provide the economic justification for the educational and health facilities that people want. That would take pressure off Perth. It would mean that families would say they want to go there because that is where the high-paying jobs are. It is something that the government has to focus on and, as I said, this Minister for State and Industry Development, Jobs and Trade, who is now also the Premier, needs to front up and recognise his failure and his lamentable performance in delivering that project and that industrial estate for our state.

Perhaps there is a ray of sunshine for Oakajee. We have the member for Balcatta, the new Minister for Ports. We heard Labor members in this place saying what a fine fellow the new minister is, and that he comes in with a whole new pedigree. Let us hope that he can get a port established there as well. Geraldton port is utterly constrained. The government has invested something like \$350 million, but the port is fundamentally constrained in terms of transport into it and physically constrained in terms of size. The issue with tidal surge has to be resolved. That money will be gobbled up, but it will not provide for the increased export opportunities that will come out of developing green industries in that area. I ask the new Minister for Ports—welcome to the new portfolio—to look at this with a new lens.

We have this ridiculous hyper-focus on the outer harbour, which I think is budgeted—numbers have been floated around—at about \$6 billion. Let us use the multiple of Metronet that was floated around at about \$3 billion. It has ended up over \$10 billion. That new port and all the associated infrastructure will be a more than \$10 billion investment of this government. Why government is doing it and not letting a public–private partnership take it over, I do not know. But in any case, that is the government’s philosophical bent. It wants to spend public money on this instead of getting the women’s and babies’ hospital and other things in earlier. Why do we not delay a port that we do not need because Fremantle harbour is only at one-third capacity? Why does the government not delay that and commit to a port at Oakajee? Again, Oakajee is a critical catalyst for the development of that port. The challenge to the minister is to talk to his colleagues about that.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

Dr D.J. HONEY: I was going through a lot of press releases but I did not have time to go through all of them. Talk is cheap. Press releases are cheap. It is action that counts. We have to develop Oakajee. If we are going to have real focus on renewables in this state, we have to develop them.

I want to come to the whole issue of the government's commitment to the removal of the Collie coal-fired power station. The Minister for Energy came in here and said that he has a transition plan. He said that the energy system is going to get by with renewables. The government has announced \$3 billion of funding. It will not scratch the surface. I will mention the challenge for the government. Over the past week—not the past day or the past hour—only 13.4 per cent of our electricity has been generated from renewables and 86 per cent of our energy has been generated from coal and gas. It is only 13.4 per cent. What have we heard the minister talk about? We have heard him talk about big batteries. I can tell members there is no battery in the world, and certainly not for the money the government is talking about spending, that could cover that gap. I heard the minister talk on 6PR about the fact that if we had a big battery, we could charge it up when we have the renewables running and then we could use it when we have that peak demand. We cannot do that over a week. There is not enough renewable energy. The amount of renewable energy capacity we would have to develop to cover that would be many, many multiples of the peak requirement. In fact, I have seen estimates of around 30 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity just to sustain four gigawatts over periods when it is a bit cloudy and there is no wind. As we have seen in the past week, that can be for extended periods of time. The transition plan is massively underfunded by this government.

A study was recently completed by a credible the University of Queensland, Melbourne University and a crowd called Nous Group, which I believe is a highly regarded consulting firm. The group estimated that for Australia to get to net zero in 2060, we would need an \$8 trillion investment. I am not going to go through all the arithmetic, but it is pretty straightforward. If we reduce that down for the state of Western Australia, just to get to a 43 per cent emissions reduction target, if we proportionally ratio it, that would be a \$360 billion investment in Western Australia. The government's share of that would be around a \$36 billion investment to get to the 43 per cent. We can compare that with the \$3 billion that the government stated, which shows that it is a completely underfunded proposal. The state government should stop championing the federal government's 43 per cent target with a carbon tax, which is utterly unachievable without a major shutdown of the heavy energy-using businesses in Western Australia, which I am terrified is going to happen under this government.

We do not have a properly funded energy transition plan. We have lots of aspirations. Everyone loves the aspiration. No-one is going to argue with that. We have great aspiration, but we do not see the rubber on the road. We do not see a proper commitment by this government in this space. I want to leave time for the excellent member for Central Wheatbelt to make a contribution as well. This government has had a lamentable performance. The government is blessed with a massive budget. We are told that it has a stellar cast of ministers, but we are not seeing performance in areas that are critical for the future of our state.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [5.46 pm]: I am happy to rise to speak to this motion. With the change of leadership, there was an opportunity for the government to refresh and come back with a different attitude, but all I have seen in the last two days is rinse and repeat. All I have seen are the same tired lines and the same arguments. If this Premier wants to make a mark in Western Australia as the new Premier, I expect to see more than the calls on the GST and finding a bogeyman that we have to fight to create angst so that the community knows the government is in there having a go. There are plenty of things the government could be dealing with that it has created, without having to look interstate or pick fights with other Premiers of other states or confecting and creating these arguments.

Mr D.A. Templeman: They pick fights with us.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is all right; you have probably got enough fight in the back bench and the party to have a conversation.

Mr D.A. Templeman: No, they pick fights.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We saw in this budget, minister, the creation of a GST fighting team within Treasury. I mean, there is not one person in Western Australia who disagrees that we should not keep the —

Ms L. Mettam: The fairness fighters.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes, the fairness fighters. That is right, member. Not one person in Western Australia disagrees and says that we should not get to keep our share of the GST. We cannot imagine that any federal government is going to peel off that bandaid when it is seeking to hold on to the next federal election or, for this government, the next state election. To my view it is an extraordinary use of taxpayers' dollars, and if the Premier says that we are not doing it, we are not doing it. We are having the fight. He has the voice. The Premier immediately preceding him used it when he chose to. The member for Roe quite rightly pointed out that the former Premier was very prepared to use his voice on some issues and not others, and we know that clearly speaks to the priorities of this government.

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

But on this side we support and have always advocated for our fair share of the GST. As the Leader of the Liberal Party pointed out, it was the Liberal–National government that delivered the GST share to Western Australia. It would have been nice if it had been done when we were in government. It would have been very helpful if our colleagues had come to the party on that front because it made our budget process very challenging.

I lament that we have seen a shadow of the former Premier sitting in the Premier’s seat this week. He is talking the same old lines instead of standing up and saying that the government recognises that Western Australia has challenges, including a housing crisis, a health crisis, a youth justice crisis, workforce shortages and cost blowouts for major projects. As the shadow of COVID fades, along with the protection it afforded the government and the Premier—I am not criticising the government’s management of COVID; I have no interest in re-prosecuting that argument—all those things rise to the top. They are the issues that impact people on a daily basis. They impact their ability to pay the mortgage, put food on the table, put petrol in their car and sustain their families and set up their kids for their future. That is all harder now. Contrast that with the government that is sitting on massive budget surpluses.

I think this Premier has an opportunity, but from what I have seen in the last two days, he is a new Premier with the old playbook. I think there also has been a fair bit of back-patting in this chamber in the last couple of days. I understand that we will get that during the transition, but I think it is time for the new cabinet to get down to business and deal with the challenges this state has. They are real, big and significant. It will take more than the re-announcement of policies that have already been made, repackaging budget announcements, making media statements and giving media doorstops because that will wear thin when the community cannot see the dial shifting on the issues that are impacting them in a real sense. We have spoken ad nauseam in this place about the issues that I have just raised. It is very difficult to balance the household budget at the moment and for people to keep a roof over their head. Homelessness has blown out and become an issue that we once saw restricted to the Perth metropolitan area, and maybe some of the bigger regional centres, to every corner of the state. I see it in my electorate in the central wheatbelt. It is confronting and distressing. These are the things that we expect a refreshed government to turn its mind to. But we have the same players in the same seats, mostly. I am not hopeful that we will see a significant departure from how those issues have been managed for the last six years.

I hope that the new Premier will deal with the issue of the Banksia Hill Detention Centre and our youth justice system in a far better way than the previous Premier did. I know that there are members sitting on the government benches who would articulate that if they were allowed to. It cannot have been comfortable for them to sit and listen to the Premier take a hard line. There are ministers, including the new minister who has been charged with the responsibility of changing the fortunes and course of how youth justice is managed in this state, who have stated on record stated that a punitive approach cannot be taken to dealing with these issues and that we must acknowledge that there are systemic and significant challenges that create a pathway for a young person to end up in Banksia Hill. Simply telling someone with a history of repeated trauma in their family or community and with difficult financial and cultural circumstances that they need to pull up their socks and do better, which is exactly what the Premier said previously, is inappropriate. I do not think anyone in the community accepts that that will solve the problem. I hope that the minister who is now responsible for looking after that organisation and the institution of Banksia Hill and also the interaction they have prior to going to Banksia Hill will improve the outcome because it is a blight on this state that we have people who are too scared to go to work. We have lost good people out of that system because they did not feel protected or supported by their employer. As a consequence, we have people who are not trained and are not supported and they are delivering the services at Banksia Hill in a way that will not result in a better outcome for those young people. The opposition has said again and again that people who break the law have to expect that there will be consequences. However, those consequences need to deliver a change in behaviour in a way that recognises the challenges those individuals have. Quite simply, I think the previous Premier was playing politics instead of doing the hard policy work. I am watching very closely to see what this new minister will come up with, because I hope that the Premier has given him riding instructions to remove that blight in a state as wealthy as Western Australia and to start doing better for the young people we see in those horrific circumstances.

Everyone is pretty keen to praise the legacy of the previous Premier, but he has overseen some very serious problems that have grown under his watch. He is no longer a member of this chamber. As Leader of the Opposition said earlier, I will not critique his legacy—that is something everyone else can do—but I can tell members that the feeling in the parts of the state I visit and represent, particularly in rural and regional communities where we generate a significant amount of the state’s wealth, is not favourably inclined towards the current government. I can think of a number of reasons why that is the case. We mention regularly the attacks we have seen in communities in the electorate of Warren–Blackwood, including the arbitrary shutting down of a sustainable industry that has left, for a second time, communities in that electorate feeling bereft, let down and under siege by the Labor government. Back in 2000, when the Labor government ended old-growth logging, it promised that it would be there for those communities in the future. Now, 20 years later, the Labor government has said that is it; there is nothing more for the people in that community. Again, that decision was made, as far as we can see, off the back of an ideological

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

bent in the Minister for Environment's office. A disgraceful survey was done without any real rigour behind it to deliver that outcome so that the minister and then Premier could say that the government would no longer log our native forests. As a result, communities, businesses and people along that entire supply chain have been left with no future. As much as the Premier and others have said that it will not happen for another couple of years, everyone knows that when the government makes a decision and signals there will no longer be an industry, people will not continue to invest in it. The people who are working in those businesses will seek employment elsewhere, which means that they will leave those communities or will be forced to take a lower paying job or be forced to forfeit the sunk investment in the infrastructure of their business. Businesses that have worked over many, many years to try to develop their supply chains and relationships with customers are left with a dwindling resource and feeling anxious because they cannot see any alternative. That is not a great outcome for that corner of the state. The decision was truly disappointing and so is the way the transition is being managed. It is not dissimilar to what we are seeing with the rollout of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill, but I will talk about that again further down the track.

Before I shift from the forestry issue, during the budget estimates, a line in the budget was revealed that clearly shows the amount of cash the government has been forced to inject into the Forest Products Commission just to keep the lights on. Its business, as we would expect, has been significantly impacted, yet it is still required to operate as the Forest Products Commission. I suggest that the future of that government entity as an organisation and the people it employs are under a significant shadow as a result of the government's decision. The government is providing \$20 million of taxpayers' dollars, which is not nearly enough, in addition to the transition packages that have been negotiated for those who will be impacted as a result of the government's decision just so that it could release a media statement telling everyone in the Perth metropolitan area that they would no longer see native forestry in our state. It is a disgrace.

I move now to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021 and the individuals being impacted by the way this government is managing this shambolic process—the prospectors and representatives of the exploration industry who have tried to engage in the process. These are literally the geese who lay the golden eggs. If we do not have prospectors and explorers in a state like Western Australia, we will not have future mines being developed or royalties flowing in so that the government can pay for blowouts on Metronet and other projects that ministers are so fond of standing in front of wearing hi-vis vests for a picture to go into the newspaper. They are significantly impacted by the way in which this government is rolling this process out. I am sure that the minister will say that they have been engaged. That may well be the case, but engagement does not equal an appropriate or preferred outcome for that sector.

I have said over and over again that no-one expects to get everything they are asking for. But in this case, I would say that more people are on the wrong side of the ledger who have come out of this process saying, "We don't agree and we can't make these regulations work. It will have a significant impact, so please, minister, can we have some more time to see how this is actually going to work?"

We have debated in this house the concerns raised with the opposition in relation to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act and the way it is being managed. A number of Aboriginal groups today critiqued the minister's management of this legislation. Again, I do not necessarily agree with everything that the Aboriginal groups have objected to, and I said that yesterday. This is a contested space for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike. However, there is agreement on both sides—whether it is industry, the people who will be impacted, the project proponents, or the groups who will be expected to develop these processes and be part of the approvals—that there has been a complete lack of management from the minister, and that flows right down to the pressure that is now being applied to the department to try to put this legislation in place. I think the minister and the government are being incredibly unfair. It is an unreasonable expectation to ask the department to do what it is now struggling to do. That is clear, because mistakes are continually being made, and it does not take much to scratch the surface and find them.

There was a perfect example of that today when both the Premier and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs had to stand at the end of question time and provide additional information and correct the record on matters that should not have been unknown or a surprise to either of them, because they had been well canvassed previously. They have also been well canvassed with me by particular stakeholders. If there is indeed consultation going on and these stakeholders have been asked these questions, as the minister stated in this house, but then they are meeting me as the shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, one would expect that the minister, the minister's office and the department would be aware of it.

This cannot be described as a success when people go to an education session in Esperance or Geraldton and the person delivering the education session can get through only five of 45 slides.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I reiterate that even when I gave the minister an out and said, “You’ve been given your riding orders by the Premier; why don’t you actually just buy yourself a little more time, take the heat out of the situation, and give people the opportunity to get their heads around what is expected of them?”, he emphatically said, “No, this is my deadline, and we will be delivering.” As a result, there is chaos, and there is more to come. We have canvassed that issue—same minister; same issue. There is an opportunity to actually put a new rule through that portfolio, but the Premier has decided that that will not be happening.

In my last 10 minutes I want to quickly touch on some other issues raised during the estimates hearings. There was a really interesting conversation around Infrastructure WA and the big talk at the beginning of the McGowan Labor government around transparency, accountability and having a pipeline of projects that everyone would be aware of. They were to be assessed independently and advice would be given on whether there was bang for the taxpayers’ dollar. Everyone, including industry and anyone else who wanted to ingratiate themselves with the new government, lined up and said, “That’s a great idea; get on board!” But as with anything, the devil is in the detail.

It is now six years later, and I do not know what Infrastructure WA did for the first four years, but it now appears to be just another layer of bureaucracy that is not being used by the government. During the estimates hearings we discovered that only nine projects had been assessed by Infrastructure WA, and Metronet is not one of them, despite the fact that this project has grown like Topsy since the government originally announced it. We now have a Treasurer who is also Minister for Transport. Separation is one of the accountability checks that governments are supposed to have when there are big-spending portfolios. Infrastructure WA is sitting out there somewhere, replicating work that a group within Treasury is doing, in addition to special projects groups within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. My goodness; it has turned into an episode of *Yes, Minister* or *Utopia*! When we had the conversation on Infrastructure WA, I felt like I had entered *The Twilight Zone*. I am actually going to send them the Western Australian estimates hearings *Hansard* and say, “Here’s your next episode!”

Mr D.R. Michael: Spoiler alert! I haven’t watched it yet!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have not, either, and I am looking forward to it, but the member might see some very familiar conversations ventilated in future episodes!

How utterly ridiculous to have all of those layers sitting within government. As far as I can tell, Infrastructure WA is now just a monument for the government to be able to point to and say, “Look what we did. We created the report delivered by Mr Langoulant that said we had to increase transparency and accountability. We did a lot of reports into a whole bunch of things, but it is a very long process for us to actually get these very big and important projects going; we just want to go out and announce them. They are very important projects that we want to do a media statement about, so we won’t refer the significant ones to Infrastructure WA.” Metronet? No. What about the women’s and babies’ hospital? No. One would think yes, but no. There has been a significant change to scope. In fact, one week the Minister for Health told us that the government was ploughing ahead with that hospital at one site, with all the challenges at QEII, and the very next week—I might have the time lines slightly skewiff, but it was within the next month—“No, we’re shifting it down the road. We didn’t have a conversation with any of the people in the department about it; we’ve done our own work on that. We’ve shocked a few people and a few eyebrows have shot off heads, but it’s okay. We’re ploughing ahead and we haven’t asked Infrastructure WA if it’s the right decision because we’ve just done it.”

The Langoulant report is clearly just being used as a doorstep now; it was in the last Premier’s office. I am not sure where it sits in the new Premier’s office. All that talk about transparency and accountability has gone out the door. This is a Premier and government that says, “We’re building things. We’re out there. We’ve got the biggest program you’ve ever seen, and we’re responsible about it. Don’t worry about the doorstep that Mr Langoulant and his colleagues spent four years on after we had the Star Chamber of an investigation into the previous government, which also used taxpayer dollars.”

The government will just plough on with these big announcements. It is farcical. This Premier has to do better. If the arrogance and hubris that was growing like a cloud around the previous Premier is the model that this new Premier is going to use, it will be a slippery slope to the next election. A whole raft of members in this chamber swept in on that red tide at the last election. If this Premier does not get it right, I am not so sure that some of them will still be there.

The other issue that I want to talk about is something that the Premier and the former Minister for Community Services like to talk about at length. The new minister has already used it as a mantle since taking over the portfolio, and that is the Target 120 program. The Leader of the Liberal Party asked a number of very telling questions during estimates around this program. Again, we have seen big statements, media announcements and engagement with all the people who make it look like the government is doing something, but we and the Leader of the Liberal Party discovered during estimates that although the project had been announced and been in place for some time, in a majority of the locations no children or families were engaged in the program. In some places, no-one was there

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

to deliver the program. It is that facade that it is doing something. Perhaps that will make a difference, but be honest about it. Actually tell people. It is incredibly frustrating. The media statements and the announcements that this is what the government is doing do not match the actual activity on the ground. That has become the calling card of this government in many areas.

The housing portfolio is another issue that we continually raise, with big announcements, big spending, but no improvement. There are opportunities that I have raised with the Minister for Housing. This is a very localised issue. The Avon Community Development Foundation has the potential to develop housing in the town of Northam for the benefit of its workers. It will use its money to do it, but all it needs is Housing to remove a caveat from the land from a project that was delivered when we were in government, and it will not do it. It is blocking the ability for that organisation to get capital from a bank to deliver housing to assist the government in relieving housing pressure. Why would the minister not be saying, “Thanks very much for the idea”, and running with it? The minister can open the next stage. I will invite him to Northam. They will have him there with a big shovel. I know that is what ministers like doing; I have done it myself. I opened the first tranche of Mortlock Gardens in Northam and I would be happy if the Minister for Housing wanted to do the same thing in the town of Northam when we get those houses on the ground, but all he has to do is get rid of the caveat. The foundation will get some money from the bank and it will be off and running. He cannot do that. It is more than making announcements. I truly hope that this Premier takes a different approach and takes the opportunity to instil in the ministers who are sitting in the government that they have to do more than make announcements. We need to see some change with those big issues that are impacting our communities.

There is no question that housing and workforce shortages are a problem, as are the issues that the member for Roe and the Leader of the Opposition raised on education, energy, and the issues that plague the member for Moore’s community. We have seen challenges with Western Power and not only the lack of capacity in the system for our communities to access reliable power, but also to increase accessibility and introduce different models of generating electricity and energy. Again, there are big announcements that the government is doing all these wonderful things with distributed systems and all the rest of it, but I cannot get the communities in my electorate—the ones that have intermittent power, blackouts and brownouts and who are far from emergency services and reliant on power so that their mobile phones work—in the sights of the minister, despite trying and despite asking him to come out to the electorate. He came out to the electorate and, again, true to form of this government and that minister in particular, he selected the day before the North West Central by-election, when he knew that I would not be in my electorate. He was nice as pie and sat there in Parliament and said, “I’ll be out there on this day; you can be there.” I said “Don’t worry about it; my electorate and my community know that I have asked you to do it.” They did not care. They just wanted him to turn up. I did not need to be there, but he knew that full well. That is the crass politics that has been on display continually in this house when it comes to issues that we raise.

There is too much focus on announcements, politics, performing for colleagues to get up the greasy pole, and too much trying to find jobs and keep the troops happy, because there are so many of them. I have never seen so many parliamentary secretary appointments in my life. How many does the government have and how many are the taxpayers paying for? It is a slow start for the new Premier; there is plenty for him to do. I truly hope that we will see the action that Western Australians deserve. This motion, that we are lamenting the failure of the Premier to put in place a refreshed cabinet in the recent reshuffle, should be a sign to every minister and the Premier that they need to do better. In the next 18 months, there will be an expectation from the community, as the shadow of COVID and the shadow of the McGowan factor fades, for everybody to pull their weight and shift the dial on some of those significant issues.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [6.16 pm]: It is good to respond, noting the lament that has oozed from those opposite. I want to take a moment to go through some of the comments from members opposite. The motion effectively laments about people who hold positions. Part of the opening remarks from the Leader of the Opposition, and I think the member for Roe, was about the some of the ministers and their intentions to continue. Let me remind members of a couple of things. The opposition launched this argument from a great deal of strength—from a very strong position.

Ms M.J. Davies: Yet we keep turning up.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: You do.

I was interested to hear the member for Cottesloe’s points of view because I assume that he will continue as the member for Cottesloe at the next election.

Dr D.J. Honey: Absolutely.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: He might think so, but I do not know whether his party will decide that. We already know that there has been much conjecture about his seat and that the seat of Cottesloe is normally held by a future

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

leader. He has had one go at that and he failed and has gone, so I do not know whether he might have aspirations, but I do not think they will be matched by his party. I can just imagine; he might suddenly become a teal! I can imagine the member for Cottesloe as a teal, dressed in teal, coming in here with his teal tie, his teal suit and his teal vest. I can just imagine it. I am not overly confident, I might say; in fact, I am lamenting for the member about whether he might be continuing as the member for Cottesloe.

Remember, it was the Leader of the Opposition's side that brought up all these issues about ministers and their intentions. The Leader of the Opposition then went and attacked probably the most prolific legislator in the history of Western Australia, the member for Butler, the Attorney General. Quite frankly, I think that has a slight stench of ageism. I send this message out there to people: I have not seen an Attorney General with capacity like that for a long time. We only need to look back at the Liberal–National government's Attorney General, who still resides in the other place and, as we know, still has some deal of influence on the Liberal Party in Western Australia. We look at the history of his legislative reforms compared with the legislative reforms implemented by Hon John Quigley.

Mr R.S. Love: I think you'll find he retired. I don't think he returned.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Sorry, that was Hon Michael Mischin. Yes, the Leader of the Opposition is right. I will stand corrected. We make mistakes. That member makes mistakes. He has made lots of mistakes.

Mr R.S. Love: Everyone makes mistakes.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: But we know that in the previous government there were numerous stories of the former Attorney General sitting on policy reforms and never doing anything to progress them. Since we came to power in 2017 and appointed Hon John Quigley, the member for Butler, as the Attorney General, we have seen a record number of pieces of legislation passed in this house and have seen genuine reform in a whole range of ways. I will go through some of them because I think we need to highlight them. The Attorney General's achievements include reforms in social justice. There is a long list of them. There is the no body, no parole law and laws to protect victims of family and domestic violence, and anti-consorting laws, which dismantle outlaw motorcycle gangs in WA. A whole range of measures have been introduced, through very good policy development, and passed by this Parliament, under the guidance of the Attorney General, yet members opposite attack him and say that he should resign or go. I am sorry, but he has a track record. The opposition's lament on his behalf is absolutely out the window.

Let us look at the member for Cottesloe. The member for Cottesloe was lamenting, during his lamentable contribution, about population challenges in Western Australia, yet the member for Cottesloe has on numerous occasions opposed density development in the city, particularly in his own electorate! He has no policy position at all. It is a desert. On one hand, the member for Cottesloe talks about how important it is that we build more houses and create more places —

Dr D.J. Honey: Go regional, minister. Get excited about regional.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No. I listened to what the member said; now I am going to pick it to pieces.

On the other hand, the member for Cottesloe, in this place, publicly and in his own electorate, has attacked the government when we have talked about planned density in appropriate places and transport hubs around job-creation clusters and all those sorts of things. That is why the member's comments are hypocritical because he attacks on one hand but then offers nothing else except opposition on the other. It is just lamentable because he does not offer anything new. I am sure that the member has a stack of cardigans in his wardrobe at home because he is still living in the 1950s and 1960s—actually, the 50s not the 60s, because if he were still living in the 60s, he would be bit more effervescent rather than lamentable.

I want to go through a couple of things. I listened to the member for Roe's comments because he and I share an interest in education, and I was listening with great interest to some of his comments. I actually lament that there are not enough men in teaching, for example, in Western Australia. When I was teaching primary school students at Three Springs, there were three male teachers in that school at the time, including the principal. In lots of primary schools now, it is very difficult to see a male teacher, and, if one does see a male, they might be the principal or the deputy, or they might be the sports specialist. This is not only a Western Australian challenge; this is a challenge across the nation, and I think it is actually a worldwide issue, too.

There are number of reasons why men are, sadly, not attracted to the teaching profession as they once were. In 1977, the average age of teachers was much younger. When comparing the cohort from the late 60s moving into the 70s and early 80s, the average age of teachers was not even 30 years, and the male to female ratio was around 50 to 50. I have not seen the latest statistics, but I think it is now a ratio of 20 to 80, and that is actually lamentable. We should all be doing whatever we can to encourage young men to choose the teaching profession. This is just my theory, but one of the things that I remember when I was going through teachers training college was that there was always an assumption—I am not saying that it was not a case of having no choice, because it was not—that if one did their

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

three years, then one would go country. That is what would happen. That was great for those young teachers, and it was great for those country towns. I have always found that country towns and big regional centres have been wonderfully embracing of young teachers.

I am not really saying this as criticism, but I think it is a factor: one of the challenges of the independent public school model, which was introduced by the previous government, is that—I have seen it and some of my schools down my way, which is not to the negative—a lot of teachers are, effectively, poached. That is because under the independent public school model, the principal has selection choice and he or she can quite often—I have seen it happen; I am sure it still happens—poach a couple of good teachers whom they know from another school and entice them over with a five-year contract. That does not help if we are trying to encourage young people and, in particular, young teachers to go into regional WA.

We should also look at how we can encourage mature-age students to take on teaching as a profession, because some of the best teachers that I have seen are those people who have had a career path that is not from the teaching background and they have chosen to train as a teacher. We should be making it easier for them, too, to train and we should be looking at a higher education contribution scheme fee incentive as one way of attracting a new cross-section of people. The reality is that for a lot of young people now who go into teaching, the numbers that fall off or leave the profession after five years, or before, is quite high. In some way, I think that is partly influenced by society. I think it is because of the way society has changed. Some young people have a view that they will not stick to a direct career path like perhaps their parents or even their grandparents did, and that a career teaching for 40 years is not something that they want to set their course on. We need to understand that that is something to consider. I have also always believed very strongly that we should look at how we can make sure that the regions are sold to teachers as a great opportunity, because they are. We want the best teachers—the enthusiastic ones and the ones who really want to make a difference—to go into the regions, whether they be rural and remote parts of the state or some of our rural towns. Some of the best years of a teacher's life can be had in a regional community. As Minister for Culture and the Arts, I went back to my old town of Three Springs about a month ago and opened a cultural silo project. I lamented that the school that I taught at in 1986, 1987 and 1988, which had 150 kids at the time, now has only about 49 or fewer. That is lamentable, because it also highlights the decline in population in that community. I think that is sad.

I can assure the member for Roe that the Minister for Education—I have known him for a long time—is absolutely committed to making sure that we address some of the challenges in the teaching profession and in the education system. I can assure the member of that. The minister and I talk about it all the time. We have conversations about it all the time.

Mr P.J. Rundle: We have to get him back out over the Darling scarp.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Do not worry; he knows regional WA very well. I can assure the member that the focus is there. We are already looking at a range of things to address some of these issues. I remember during question time earlier this week that someone had a go about untrained teachers going into classrooms. I think that was a comment made by one of the members opposite. Yes, it is now a four-year course for teachers. Some go on and do a fifth year, with a master's degree at the end of it. When I went into teaching, I was trained for three years and I did my Bachelor of Education after that. I have no problem with the current process whereby third and fourth-year teachers are already in schools. Quite frankly, I reckon that is a great concept and I do not think it should be criticised. If it was the member who criticised it, I lament that and I hope he checks that thinking. I know nurses—my mum was a nurse—who talk about the old days when they used to do on-the-job training. They would work on the wards and do their training and studies after. That happens quite a lot in nursing. I would encourage nurses to work in hospitals while they are still achieving their accreditation. In my view, that is the best way of learning. I reckon it is great if teachers who are finishing their third year or are halfway through their fourth year are out in Western Australian classrooms. They are highly valued. We have some fantastic principals. These teachers are very well mentored and supported by the principals and their senior education staff. I think it is a good thing. I was a bit disappointed when I heard the member say earlier this week—if it was him—that we have untrained teachers in classrooms. No, they are not untrained. They are in training. They have already accumulated years of experience and now they are supplementing that by working in classrooms. I think that is a great thing. I think the member needs to rethink his criticism of that aspect of education.

Let me look at education. I have been around for long enough that I can remember when members opposite were in government and they slashed the education budget and staffing. We had Aboriginal liaison staff working in schools with Aboriginal kids and families. Members opposite slashed the number of those staff. What did their government do when the population in our schools, which was mentioned by the member for Cottesloe, went up by some 500 000 during the period between 2012 and 2016? What did their government do in education? It slashed the number of Aboriginal liaison officers and education assistants. What did we do when we came to power? We returned Aboriginal liaison officers, EAs and psychologists to schools in the hundreds. As a government,

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

we recognise that teachers in the education system in Western Australia face some complex challenges with kids in the classroom. The member for Dawesville and I have spoken many a time about the increased number of diagnoses of those on the spectrum. What has this government done? In my electorate, there are a couple of new autism-focused programs at Coodanup College and North Mandurah Primary School, the primary school that I taught at in Mandurah. Great work is being done at Meadow Springs Primary School and Coastal Lakes College. In the last six years, the government has focused very much on making sure that these pressures, whether they be in student support or liaison with family and community, are resourced and addressed. When we get criticised by a party that did the opposite of that in government, it is on shaky ground.

Dr A.D. Buti: We had record investment in special needs in the last budget.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, absolutely. The last budget is a great example of the further resourcing of the education system. Do not get me wrong; I am very close to my schools in Mandurah. I am still on the board of a couple. Members here know that schools are doing great stuff. Some of my schools had a transient population of 50 per cent; in other words, 50 per cent of the kids moved in and out of the school over a year. Imagine the pressure that that puts on a teacher in programming. Let me tell members about class sizes. I taught classes that varied in size from 20 kids, which was the number in my first class at Three Springs, to 32. I remember that during my prac at Avonvale Primary School, I had 38 kids, and I can tell members that there was no room to swing a goose in that classroom! There was no room at all. What helps with issues is providing resources and making sure that teachers get support. Class size is always going to be an issue that is raised, but as the minister highlighted in question time today, at the moment we are in a good state in terms of average class size comparisons. As a former State School Teachers' Union shop steward—old Templeman, the shop steward!—I was always up with these things.

The other thing is training. Opposition members' side of politics will forever be condemned for what it did to the training system in this state during its tenure. When members opposite attack us on education and training and commitment and endeavour, they are on no ground because of what they did. I will open a new \$15 million TAFE expansion in Mandurah in the next week or so. When members opposite were in government and they increased TAFE fees, some by several hundred per cent, and started to make it unaffordable for young people and others to access a TAFE course, what did we see? The numbers plummeted. Members know this. The numbers for participation in and access to TAFE courses plummeted under their government, particularly when the former member for Scarborough was the Minister for Training and Workforce Development. That is a blight on their government because it contributed to the skills shortage. That is what it did. I can proudly highlight that on coming to power, our government not only froze TAFE fees, but also then reduced them and made many courses free.

Ms L. Mettam: There was a drop in training in your first three years of 17 per cent.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Sorry; it fell through the floor under you, member for Vasse.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It fell through the floor! During your time in government, some young people did not access a TAFE training centre because you made it unaffordable! That was a disgrace of the Liberal and National Parties.

Mr R.S. Love: Point of order.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: She has stoked me up, now.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I'm off and racing. Don't you worry; I'll be here for the next 20 minutes!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, there is a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: I point out that the member is not speaking in his place.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I feel constrained here!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am serious about this. It really peeves me. I like the member for Vasse and I do not take it personally, but it really makes me angry when she says things like that. Young kids came to me during that period and said that they could not afford to go to TAFE. Members opposite have to understand this: some of the courses they wanted to access had fees of \$2 000, \$3 000, \$4 000 or \$5 000. That was the regime that members opposite supported; it was undertaken by their government. That happened. We froze TAFE fees and then reduced

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

them. We then made many of the courses free. Many more young people now have access to those training institutions and have set a course on their career path. It angers me when people like the member for Vasse say those sorts of things. That is the reality; that is what the previous government did. Members opposite keep saying that we have refreshed. Thank goodness we have refreshed! Firstly, we do not even know who any alternative ministers might be from the other side. I am a bit scared when I think about the members who are in Parliament; it would be a bit scary if they became ministers!

Those are some of the things that members opposite have done. They also had a go at a couple of other things. Members opposite attacked the former and current Ministers for Health, as well as the Minister for Housing. Let me tell members about the Minister for Housing; Homelessness. Under the budgets of the McGowan and now Cook governments, we have provided \$2.6 billion to respond to housing and homelessness. No-one can be under any illusion about this; this is a major issue for all Australians. That is why I am very pleased with the federal government's commitment to social housing. There are a few strange people in the Senate, so I hope they do not knock over the proposed social housing commitment of the federal government. The last time there was a major investment in social housing by a federal government, there was a big increase in social housing infrastructure in Western Australia. Literally hundreds of units, apartments and houses were built in my electorate as part of that commitment of the then Rudd government, which provided not only economic stimulus, but also more social housing. The new Albanese government is also committed to doing that. I am sure that the Minister for Housing; Homelessness in Western Australia will work very closely with the federal government. In the case of my electorate, a huge number of people who were on the waiting list, including lots of seniors, moved into affordable social housing. They are enjoying that wonderful opportunity.

The minister continues to work hard. This fella now sits next to me. I am experiencing what it is like to sit next to the member for Perth! He is like a wound-up spring. But I tell members what: nobody would be more passionate than he is about doing something about the challenge that faces governments around Australia and the world. Member for Central Wheatbelt, some of the things that are happening in our communities are lamentable. There are places in the United States now that have streets of homeless people. It is just awful. We want to avoid that as much as we can in Australia. But it is going to take a collective effort, with state, federal and local governments, agencies and families working together. That is the only way we are going to address that problem. Every person has a right to a safe place to call home and a roof over their head. I can tell members that although they attack the member for Perth, the Minister for Housing, no-one is more passionate about doing something—he is doing a huge amount already—about that.

Members opposite had a go at the new Deputy Premier; Treasurer, highlighting the portfolios she now holds. Now that the former member for Rockingham has departed, I cannot think of anybody who has the skills and experience to take on the role of Treasurer other than the member for West Swan, Hon Rita Saffioti. Her analytical skills and integrity on Treasury and financial matters are exemplary. She will be an outstanding Treasurer of the state of Western Australia, yet members opposite had a go at her. Then they asked why she has taken on tourism. Tourism is a very important economic driver and so it fits within that area of work. Why has she taken on transport? It is because she has done a magnificent job with Metronet and she wants to see that through, despite the constant criticism of the Liberal and National Parties.

I cannot believe the hypocrisy from the other side on public transport. When we look at history, we find it is littered with the opposition's anti-public transport policy initiatives to close railways rather than open them. People forget. Mr Hastie gets upset about not being invited to the opening of the Lakelands train station, but his party opposed the railway to Mandurah in the first place. He forgets that. It opposed the railway. The member before the former member for Carine, Katie Hodson-Thomas, who was shadow transport spokesperson for the Liberal Party, was a lovely person, I must say, but she was being fed rhetoric from some influential people in Western Australia at the time when Alannah MacTiernan was putting through the Perth–Mandurah railway line. She would come into Parliament and say the same thing. She swallowed hook, line and sinker why that line was not needed. It is now one of the most successful lines of the Metronet program. We will be able to connect people from Mandurah right through to Two Rocks. If they want to go to Ellenbrook, they will be able to go to Ellenbrook. If they want to go to Byford, eventually they will be able to go to Byford by using the loop line through to Thornlie.

Those are things that the Minister for Transport and now Deputy Premier has done, and she will see it through. What does the government do? It gets the person who is experienced and skilled to do the work, so I do not know why members opposite have criticised her, but I note that they have been swamped by lament tonight.

Does the member for Balcatta want to have a say?

Mr D.R. Michael: No. You can go on.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Okay. I am very happy to go on.

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

In terms of health and mental health, as we know, COVID was a huge challenge for our health system. I get a little bit riled when members opposite use rhetoric about valuing our first responders, as the member for Vasse did earlier. That is pretty low. I think every person in this place, member for Vasse, understands the tremendous contribution of our first responders, be they nurses; doctors; ambulance drivers; police men and women; people in the emergency services who respond to storms, fires, cyclones and floods; or volunteers in the State Emergency Service. Let us not get in the gutter, because I think all of us have a great enduring appreciation for those people.

We recognise that our health system needs to continue to be supported strongly and that is why we again made record commitments in this budget. It is why we have been working hard, through both the former Minister for Health and the current Minister for Health, to ensure that we have employed additional nurses in the public system. We now have over 4 000. It is why we have continued to grow the health budget. It has grown by 31 per cent under this government, which not only matches population growth, but also is three times the population growth of this state. We recognise the need to continue to invest in health. Everyone knows that.

We will always appreciate those who work in that system. New campuses and upgrades to huge hospitals have occurred. I am so pleased that for the first time in over 25 years, we will bring our hospital at Peel back into public hands, as it always should have been before it was privatised back in 1996 by the Liberal government of the day. We are going to bring it back in-house and invest \$152 million. That was never looked at by those on the other side for so many years of that contract. At the last minute, in 2017, when the contract was up, what did the former Barnett government do for Peel Health Campus in its dying days? Do members know what the former government did? It signed it over again for another five years, putting on to the incoming government another five years of it being a privatised hospital.

I have no problem with Ramsay Health Care. I have a problem with some of the earlier contractors. I know that hospital inside and out because I have been there for nearly 35 years. But I have to tell members, I will remind the people of Mandurah all the time who privatised that hospital. It was the Liberal Party. Who then laboured us with a 25-year contract? Who in the dying days of the Barnett government went and signed on for another five years so that it continued to be a private hospital? What have we done? We have announced that we will bring it back in-house—and we are. We are also investing over \$152 million in it and looking at a range of services that do not exist and have never existed in Mandurah, but they will under a Labor government.

All we get is rhetoric from the member for Vasse and others who come down there and rile up people's anger about some of the things that have happened to them. It is not good. Some terrible things have happened; I agree. But they forget to tell them that they set up the system. The Liberal Party set up the system. They forget that. I will keep reminding them and telling the people of Mandurah that we will be the party that delivers a government-owned and operated hospital and expand it with a record spend to make sure it delivers. I will tell members something: we will get that message out, because all they get from the Liberal Party now, including from the federal member, is constant opposition harping and stirring up of angst. It is easy to do that in opposition, but it is a very interesting consideration when the history of that is not understood. We are now dealing with a transition of the contract that the Liberal-National government laboured us with for five more years. I always remember Kim Hames, who was the member for Dawesville and the Minister for Health at the time and could have changed this, did bugger-all. It is a blight on his record. I understand he said that one of his bigger regrets was not fixing Peel Health Campus. It is a big regret and I lament that, I can tell members now. We will keep investing in those hospitals. We are fully funding the construction of the new women's and babies' hospital, and there is a \$16.6 billion future health and research innovation fund. A range of other measures are happening in that.

This is over and above the way that we have managed the state's finances. Members opposite beautifully forget all these factors. When we came to government in 2017, the budget was in absolute disrepair. The trajectory for debt and deficits was for steep increases. We have reversed those. More people in Western Australia are working than ever before. More are participating in the workforce than ever before. That has not just been by luck. Members opposite like to say we got lucky. The member for Cottesloe keeps saying it is all luck—iron ore. I can tell members that one of the things we are also doing is diversifying the economy and making sure that we have a diverse array of economic levers to continue to deliver quality jobs and career pathways for young people coming through the system, and we will keep doing that.

Being in opposition is not an easy task. I think sometimes opposition members become so obsessed with opposing and being negative about everything that people start asking what they are offering. The opposition attacked us at the beginning of the debate by saying that the government has not been refreshed. I assure them that every single person who sits around the cabinet table—all 17 members—are absolutely committed to their portfolios and making a difference. They are making a difference and they are constantly out there. This lamenting that the regions have been forgotten is utter rubbish. We actually hold most of seats in regional Western Australia. There is an absolute vested interest in our regional members to do magnificent things, and they are, even in seats that we did not expect to win at the last election. I look at the members for Churchlands, Nedlands and South Perth. They are seats that

Mr Shane Love; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman;
Mr David Michael

traditionally we never thought we would win. We are getting feedback from people who would traditionally vote for members opposite without any question. They go to the forums organised by the member for Churchlands, and they go in big numbers, because for the first time in a long time, the local member is not taking them for granted. I remember very well the former member for Churchlands standing here in the lead-up to the election and pointing to a number of members and having go at them by saying, “You’ll be gone, you’ll be gone and you’ll be gone.” He went around the chamber pointing. What happened to him?

Mr M.J. Folkard: The last man standing.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No, he was not, because he has gone as well. I have been to a number of events in Nedlands. It is the same thing. We have never seen a member who is so engaged. The member for Hillarys took Peter Katsambanis’s seat. Why? It is because she worked hard and is continuing to work hard. We have members for Carine and Burns Beach, and the list goes on. Looking at the regions, we have members for Warren–Blackwood, Kalgoorlie and Geraldton. They do not take it for granted. They are working bloody hard, and that is a huge credit to them. We are blessed in the Labor Party in this Parliament because we have not only the first 17 cabinet members, but also we could easily have a second 17, and I reckon we could probably have a third 17, but my maths is not brilliant.

Mr P.J. Rundle: That is 51.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: There you go. I will not mention those who would miss out. One of them would have to be the Speaker. We are very proud of that. We are not hiding it; we are proud of it. The member for Kimberley is now a parliamentary secretary, as she deserves to be. She is a magnificent member of Parliament for the Kimberley. She is engaged, involved and participative, and she listens and leads. That could be the description of many members of the Labor Party in this chamber and in the other place. The lesson opposition members really need to learn, I think, is that if they just go to the next election and oppose everything and lament constantly, the people will not listen to them. They will say, “Wait a second. I have seen the local member for Hillarys at hundreds of things. I have listened to her and spoken to her and seen her at schools and community events.” That description of lamentation does not relate to her. That will be true for many other members who sit in this place because they work hard.

I am proud to be part of this team and to be a minister, and I am proud of the new Premier, the Deputy Premier and the leadership team. I can tell members this: they may lament all they like. Lament over there and stench the seats they sit in. They can do whatever they like. The fact of the matter is that we will keep doing the very best for Western Australians no matter where they live in Western Australia, no matter what their aspirations are and no matter what their circumstances. We will represent them and make sure that we work hard for them right up to the next election and beyond. Opposition members can lament in the final minutes and seconds as much as they like, but we will keep our eye on the ball, and we are heading that way, don’t you worry about that.

MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta — Minister for Ports) [6.59 pm]: Deputy Speaker, I had a very long speech prepared today to talk about my portfolios and the good work of the former ministers who remain in cabinet and the nasty, nasty motion brought forward today by the nasty opposition.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.