

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Presentation

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [1.16 pm]: I rise to inform the house of this WA Labor government's agenda for 2023. In doing so, I would first like to acknowledge the people of Western Australia. Each Western Australian has contributed to the strong position we find ourselves in today. It is a position that is the envy of the other states and territories—a position of strength, success and enhanced economic growth, activity and diversity. I thank the people and businesses of this state who have all been part of getting us to where we are at the start of 2023. These people are the very reason we are here in Parliament today. We are here to make life better and fairer for Western Australians and to ensure that the next generations inherit a state in which they can prosper and enjoy opportunities—get a quality job, have an affordable, decent home, and live in a state that has grasped economic opportunities while also preserving its natural environment and enhancing its service provision.

This year will be a different year from the last three, which were dominated by the ever-changing demands of the global pandemic, but our core vision remains the same—keeping our state safe and strong. The people of Western Australia have shown incredible resilience, generosity and patience in recent years. Right now, these attributes are being demonstrated in our state's north as the Kimberley recovers from a one-in-100-year flood event. This has been described as the worst flooding disaster in our state's history. The state government is fully committed to the long-term recovery of the Kimberley. The joint federal–state disaster recovery funding arrangements have been activated and financial support is available to affected residents. Rebuild and recovery following catastrophic events is a long process, something that will endure beyond 2023. As of last week, Great Northern Highway between Broome and Derby was reopened with a temporary single-lane gravel track. Convoys will be escorted along the track in a morning and evening slot until more permanent repairs start in the dry season. In Fitzroy Crossing, works continue to implement a temporary barge system. Planning continues on a temporary low-level crossing to provide a more permanent option while the new Fitzroy Crossing Bridge is constructed.

The year 2023 will mark a continued soft landing from the pandemic. Although we escaped the lockdowns, economic demise and high levels of illness and death that ravaged other states and countries, everyone in Western Australia has had to deal with some change. Everyone has had to exercise patience and many people had to ride out some tough times, be it contracting COVID-19, missing social occasions or travel, or experiencing economic hardship. The pathway out of the pandemic has not always been easy. In fact, we are still managing active cases and the economic ripples it created worldwide. However, we are now through the worst of it. We were as successful as we could have been, and that is especially noticeable after speaking with people in other jurisdictions in Australia and abroad. As a result of our response, we have remained open for business; we have sustained economic activity. Our exports continued unabated, propelling economic activity in Australia, not to mention the economies of other nations during COVID. We have prevailed as a state.

Madam Speaker, it has been almost one year since Western Australia's hard border was lifted. The latest tourism statistics are also a good news story for our state. Perth, in particular, is thriving as a destination. The most recent data highlighted the second highest domestic spend on record—up to \$492 million in November 2022. This is a 34 per cent lift compared with November 2019. Domestic visitors are also spending big in WA's regions. In November 2022, tourists spent \$456 million in regional areas, which is a 35 per cent jump since pre-COVID. We are also seeing a strong response to the Walking on a Dream campaign. Domestic overnight spend in WA leapt to \$1.2 billion, the highest monthly total ever recorded in WA and a 70 per cent increase compared with pre-COVID.

This all shows that there is strong demand for Western Australia, and with our new global brand we will build on this in 2023, particularly as the worst of the pandemic is behind us. We had our waves of COVID, but we had the nation's best vaccination rate when it hit. It is easy to forget how the east coast was completely paralysed as Omicron overwhelmed all its systems, not to mention the supply chain disruptions. There were exorbitant prices for RATs—if you could find them. It was terribly difficult for those on the east coast—waiting hours for a PCR test to then have to wait days and days for the result.

Here in Western Australia, we had the opportunity to learn from what they went through. We got the right policies in place. We got RAT kits into the state and delivered the most comprehensive free rollout of RATs. We did what we could to prepare. This meant our systems were not completely overwhelmed and our supply chains were not severed. When we reopened, WA had the highest third-dose vaccination rate of all the states. We therefore had fewer rates of COVID patients in intensive care and also had a far lower death rate than other states. Lives lost in WA during the Omicron wave, when borders were open, were the lowest of all states and territories in the nation. It is a testament to some very hard work and the overwhelmingly decent response of Western Australians.

As we move into 2023, we will again seek to ensure that Western Australia is a safe haven amid global uncertainty. At this snapshot in time, Western Australia's unemployment rate is amongst the lowest in the nation. During 2022, unemployment in Western Australia reached a 13-year low. We saw unemployment drop to 2.9 per cent. Just to highlight the significance of that figure, no state other than WA has ever achieved an unemployment rate below

three per cent since current records began in February 1978. Our participation rate of 69.4 per cent also leads the country by a long way. In November 2021, full-time employment in WA grew to over one million for the first time in history. The first calendar year in which it stayed above one million every month was 2022.

Notably, this government has added more than 206 000 jobs since coming to office in March 2017. To put it simply, anyone who wants a job can get a job in Western Australia. The strength of our local economy was highlighted in 2022. Our consistently strong financial performance was recognised by Standard and Poor's Global Ratings, which upgraded the state's credit rating to AAA in June last year. S&P Global assessed "Western Australia's financial management to be very strong" and said, "The current government has displayed a track record of robust cost control". Western Australia under the Liberals and Nationals was stripped of its AAA credit rating in 2013. It has taken a lot of work to repair the budget and secure that credit rating once more. The result vindicates the hard work of all my cabinet ministers in being fiscally responsible over the past six years.

In November last year, Moody's Investors Service also endorsed our strong and responsible financial management. Moody's lifted our credit rating outlook from Aa1 "stable" to "positive". In its update, Moody's made several observations. It outlined that despite significant stress emerging in the global economy, windfall gains, tight expenditure controls and improving revenue diversification had maintained WA's debt burden "at moderate levels, strengthening the state's capacity to respond to future shocks". The state's successful management of the pandemic was also recognised.

Our state continues to weather the economic shocks that are reverberating across the globe, such as energy shortages, geopolitical tensions and the rising costs of borrowing, to name a few. Our strategy to manage the pandemic and our budget put our state in the best possible position to brace for these events. It allowed our key industries, which drive both the state and national economies, to continue operation. We were, and are, a crucial supplier of the raw materials and energy that other nations have relied on to help keep their economies afloat. Our LNG sales helped to power the economies of our Asian partners: Japan, China, South Korea and others. Our minerals have become the vital ingredients of COVID recovery projects all over the world. Madam Speaker, we will continue to foster these valuable relationships that we have developed with international trading partners.

At home we have praised the foresight of the Carpenter Labor government that put in place our 15 per cent DomGas Alliance reservation policy. This ensured that WA households were insulated from the energy price hikes and shortages experienced in Europe and, indeed, interstate. However, as with any trading economy, Western Australia is exposed to international factors outside of our control—for example, inflationary pressures and foreign conflict. For this reason, we have focused heavily on budget management, training, diversifying and attracting new business to Western Australia.

Madam Speaker, even before I was Premier, my key focus was on creating long-term jobs across WA. This has remained the case every day that we have been in office. Our state has amongst the lowest unemployment rates in Australia. More than 206 000 jobs have been added since this Labor government came to office in March 2017. However, that is not a reason to stop and declare the job done. We need to look ahead to see what sorts of jobs and industries our state and the world will need in the future. Work is underway to drive new job opportunities in high-tech manufacturing, clean energy, agriculture, tourism and defence industries. A lot of energy has gone into strengthening our TAFE sector, ensuring that we have a workforce equipped with the skills and qualifications to take on emerging opportunities.

As I mentioned earlier in my brief ministerial statement, I recently returned from a trade mission to Japan and South Korea, where I discussed opportunities to build on our strong trading relationships. This year, I will also visit our state's largest trading partner, China, to build on the longstanding relationship between Western Australia and China. Missions like these are about strengthening our bonds, building on our successes and exploring new ideas, all of which are so vital to our mutual prosperity.

We allocated \$1.8 billion to diversification initiatives and infrastructure right across WA to put our state in the best possible position. This is going towards attracting new industries and businesses to WA, preparing industrial land to unlock private sector development, exploring new international trade opportunities, international education, tourism and our emerging space industry. Beneath the description of diversification lies a truly exciting future.

For example, Western Australia is becoming not only a global hub for space research and infrastructure, but also a leader in the space economy through our expertise and skills. Western Australia's vast tracts of pastoral land are being unlocked for other uses, like solar farms, wind farms or green hydrogen production. Western Australians not only are going to be able to catch a train to Ellenbrook, but also will be able to visit a world-class film and television studio on the way. Western Australia is becoming a place where more locally produced content can reach cinemas and streaming services worldwide.

Renewable energy projects and products will become powerful forces of the Western Australian economy. In fact, it is already happening, particularly in the area of hydrogen and hydrogen to power ammonia production. Construction

has now started on the Yuri project in the Pilbara region, which is led by Yara, Engie and Mitsui. This major project supports our initial steps to decarbonise ammonia production in Western Australia. We also plan to install Australia's largest electrolyser, at 10 megawatts, and be exporting renewable ammonia within 18 months. Yara's facility will be one of the first established operational facilities in the world to receive and use green hydrogen molecules to produce green ammonia.

These are just a few real examples of what is on the not-too-distant horizon for this state. I also look forward to seeing further outcomes of the \$285 million investment attraction fund expression of interest process later this year. This will reveal further exciting propositions for industry development in Western Australia.

Of course, attracting industry and diversifying our economy is about more than just direct incentives. Part of the process is the development of communities—the places we want businesses to establish and jobs to grow, where workers will live, raise families and form lifelong bonds. It is an exciting and liberating experience moving into your own home, one that I hope every Western Australian can enjoy at some stage in their life. To facilitate this aspiration, my government has introduced a range of measures to reduce the barriers to home ownership and renting. To those without secure housing, we are committed to expanding public and affordable housing.

Despite the challenges faced across the country in recent years—labour shortages, supply chain disruptions and pandemic-driven cost increases, to name a few—Western Australia remains much, much more affordable than other states, and not just for housing. Lower general living expenses and transport charges, combined with better wages, make WA significantly more affordable than its counterparts.

Recently, our government provided all WA households with a second electricity credit in just two years. This means that household fees and charges have decreased this year, providing households across WA with cost-of-living relief amid global pressures. When the government's two electricity credits are taken into account, in 2022–23, household fees and charges are a net four per cent lower than they were prior to the pandemic in 2019–20. It is because of these factors that thousands of Western Australians made the move to build a new home during the pandemic.

Irrespective of Western Australia's affordability, the first step into the housing market can seem insurmountable. For that reason, the WA government recently raised the property price limit for Keystart loans from a maximum of \$480 000 to a maximum of \$560 000. This threshold is above Perth's current \$540 000 median house price. The new price limits will give prospective home owners more choice of where and what type of property they can buy. Many Western Australians moved into their new homes last year. The year 2023 will be a year of delivery as supply chains recuperate and more skilled workers fill much-needed vacancies in the construction industry.

During 2021 and 2022, there were over 41 000 building approvals across Western Australia. That is about 8 000 more homes than in the previous two years, or an increase of nearly 25 per cent. Thousands of these homes will reach practical completion this year. Of course, home ownership is not compatible with everyone's circumstances. There are Western Australians doing it tough. For this reason, we are accelerating social housing delivery in the face of a heated construction market using innovative measures like the modular build program and timber frame construction.

We are tackling homelessness on several fronts. Boorloo Bidee Mia in the Perth CBD has been open for more than a year and is now operating at above 90 per cent occupancy. We purchased a former hotel on Murray Street, West Perth. This year, we will appoint a community housing organisation to provide supported accommodation services at the site. We have allocated more than \$70 million for two new Common Ground facilities in Perth and Mandurah, providing 162 apartments for rough sleepers. In Perth, Geraldton and Kununurra, we are delivering three new Aboriginal short-stay accommodation facilities. Our government has added 1 000 social homes since July 2021. A further 1 050 are currently under contract or construction all over the state. Along with the thousands of privately built homes under construction, renters will have some relief in 2023.

Although building approvals have slowed, as expected, we require more skilled workers to carry out the huge pipeline of work. We are taking a multifaceted approach to addressing this. Firstly, we are working with the construction industry to increase the capability of its workforce and produce more skilled workers to meet growing demand. Secondly, we are working with the federal government as it expedites the backlog of visa applications. We have also made changes to the state-nominated migration program to include additional construction occupations.

For the longer term, our free or subsidised TAFE courses are incentivising more people to enter the Western Australian construction sector. Statistics show that we are heading in the right direction. Strong employment has meant a record number of people in on-the-job training. There are now more than 45 000 apprentices and trainees in training across Western Australia. We introduced the Lower Fees, Local Skills program in 2020, reducing TAFE fees by up to 72 per cent. Between 2019 and 2021, enrolments increased by 27 per cent. In 2021, there were more than 150 000 full-year course enrolments at Western Australian TAFE. Preliminary data suggests that 2022 was another strong year for enrolments. Plans are afoot to continue to strengthen the TAFE sector this year.

We have a number of upgrades underway or in the pipeline for 2023, \$215.8 million worth, including the \$47.9 million upgrade of North Metropolitan TAFE's Balga campus, the \$43.2 million upgrades to North Regional TAFE's Pundulmurra campus, the \$39 million South Metropolitan TAFE Armadale campus and the \$22.2 million trades workshops at South Regional TAFE's Albany campus.

In November last year, we signed a landmark 12-month skills agreement with the Australian government. The agreement will inject more than \$112 million into the Western Australian skills and training sector. The funding supports our new Free in '23 initiative. The initiative covers course fees for 58 full TAFE qualifications, and course fees and resource fees for 57 skill sets. It is about reskilling and upskilling people to work in priority sectors. It is also about increasing job opportunities for priority groups. Whether it is youth, people with disabilities, unpaid carers or First Nations Australians, everyone should have access to education, everyone should have a pathway to a good job and no-one should be locked out of opportunity.

This ethos is also mirrored in our approach to early childhood, primary and secondary education. In 2023, we will continue to invest in schools to ensure that all students, regardless of where they live, have the best possible opportunities to learn. Students are being welcomed to four new primary schools and a new secondary school in 2023. These include the \$24.7 million Landsdale Gardens Primary School, the \$26.5 million Wellard Village Primary School, the \$25.8 million Madora Bay Primary School, the \$24.4 million Dayton Primary School and the \$58.5 million Piara Waters Senior High School.

We are also investing \$595 million in new and upgraded school facilities throughout Western Australia. The expansion and upgrade of public schools in growing Perth suburbs include \$51.5 million for the second stage of construction works at Alkimos College, \$45.9 million for upgrades to Brabham Primary School, \$25 million for Harrisdale Primary School, \$19.1 million for Anne Hamersley Primary School in Ellenbrook and \$13.1 million for Caversham Valley Primary School.

Some changes in 2023 include the expanded educational adjustment allocation. A total of \$31.9 million is being invested to help schools support more students with additional needs to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. An \$18.2 million investment in WA's in-demand specialist learning programs for students with autism spectrum disorder will enable their expansion to eight additional schools.

This year also sees the rollout of a new year 1 phonics initiative to assess and support the development of students' phonics skills. This will pick up issues early and allow schools to provide the necessary assistance a student needs to learn to read. Early intervention is vital. It can vastly improve a student's educational outlook later in their schooling journey. As we know, education is a key factor in reducing disadvantage, unemployment and even crime in our community.

This government strives to address disadvantage in everything it does; whether it is through education, training, housing, electricity credits, capped public transport fares or better infrastructure in our suburbs, all help to lower the barriers to success, and all contribute to a more harmonious society. We are doing the challenging but essential work when it comes to breaking the cycle of disadvantage that fuels crime. It is a whole-of-government approach. There are issues in this state that have been generations in the making. These issues will not be resolved overnight, but we are making constant inroads. We have proven our mettle in disrupting criminal activity through the policies that we have set. We have introduced a range of initiatives aimed at addressing young offending in our regional areas, and we are continuing to relentlessly recruit police officers to ensure that our hardworking Western Australia Police Force is adequately resourced.

Just as educational or developmental issues must be picked up early, so too must the causes of recidivism. That is why we are focused on creating safer home environments and programs that are directly aimed at reducing youth reoffending. Our Target 120 program is showing signs of success and will continue to be expanded in 2023. This program is an immediate response to addressing youth crime and getting to the cause of offending and antisocial behaviour. In 2023, we will invest \$11 million to expand the Target 120 program to Carnarvon, Karratha, Newman, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby, Ellenbrook, Mandurah and Broome. We will also pilot the Target 120 Plus program, which will provide intensive one-on-one support to targeted young people in the Kimberley who have already entered the criminal justice system. The Target 120 program is turning lives around. Around 40 per cent of children who have participated in the program since February 2019 have not had further police contact. The number of police contacts for young people currently engaged in the program has fallen by around 78 per cent in Kununurra and by 97.5 per cent in Broome.

Of course, the safety of the community is a priority. There are, unfortunately, serial offenders who are detained for the safety of themselves and the wider community. This is always a last resort. In order to ensure that the experience is rehabilitative, not punitive, \$87.9 million has been allocated towards improving outcomes at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. This includes several safety, security and rehabilitation projects that are at various stages of development, and a number that have been completed. Coinciding with this work is a comprehensive review of

the Young Offenders Act. Our aim is to not only optimise outcomes for young people involved in the justice system, and for the community, but also lessen the chances of them getting into the justice system in the first place.

Madam Speaker, there are some Western Australians for whom we are not interested in making life easy—namely, gangs, organised crime and dangerous criminals. They are a scourge that we are pursuing ruthlessly. Our anti-consorting laws have made it illegal for outlaw motorcycle gangs to display their insignia in public. We have introduced our tough new firearm prohibition orders that are giving our police yet another tool that they can use to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous criminals, in particular bikies and domestic violence offenders. This is just the beginning. We are conducting a total rewrite of Western Australia's outdated firearms laws that will put the safety of the community and of our police officers first and foremost. Before the end of this year, we will have introduced into the Western Australian Parliament the toughest gun laws in the country.

We are also building new police stations. Construction of our new Armadale police complex is close to completion, and later this year we will break ground on new police stations in Baldivis, Fremantle and Forrestfield. Our Western Australia Police Force is also scheduled to take delivery of a range of world-class assets that we will be providing. These include new helicopters, new jet boats and new armoured vehicles. These will help our police officers continue their good work of helping our Western Australian community when and where they are needed, including in our state's regions. Last year, 445 new officers graduated from the Western Australian Police Academy, and a further 700 officers who are currently living overseas have applied to join WA Police Force.

Late last year, tough new laws to keep perpetrators of antisocial behaviour out of our entertainment precincts came into effect. The protected entertainment precincts policy is named in honour of Giuseppe "Pep" Raco, the victim of an unprovoked one-punch attack in Northbridge in July 2020. This policy will help families as well as revellers enjoy a safe night out in Northbridge—Perth, Fremantle, Scarborough, Hillarys and Mandurah. We are also targeting problem drinkers in the regions with plans to strengthen the banned drinkers register in the Kimberley, Pilbara and goldfields. This will make it easier to place people on the register; make secondary supply an offence; and make it mandatory for retailers to participate.

Madam Speaker, 2023 will be another incredible year for the delivery of Metronet and new roads across Western Australia. Just as cranes are dotting the Perth city skyline, our major road and rail works are dotted throughout our suburbs and regions. Two thousand and twenty-two will be a hard year to follow, with the grand opening of the Forrestfield–Airport Link; bringing road maintenance back in-house at Main Roads; and testing our new locally built C-series trains. Public transport patronage is recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The introduction of our capped two-zone public transport fares is saving commuters up to \$3 000 a year. We have also continued to roll out more than \$800 million-worth of upgrades to regional roads. Our regional road safety program will ultimately upgrade 8 500 kilometres of regional roads with treatments like shoulder sealing and audible edge lines. These are proven to save lives.

I am pleased to say that 2023 will be just as exciting as last year when it comes to transport infrastructure. Works will begin on key Perth City Deal projects, including the new Causeway pedestrian and cycling bridges. The Victoria Park–Canning level crossing removal project will also commence construction. We expect the Yanchep rail extension to be completed this year, with operations to begin soon thereafter. This will provide people in our far northern suburbs with access to a train line for the first time. This will be complemented by extensive upgrades and the extension of the Mitchell Freeway. Construction will be completed on Lakelands station, which is expected to begin welcoming passengers by the middle of this year. Construction will also begin on the new Midland train station.

These are all much more than congestion-busting projects. They will create better, safer and more amenable neighbourhoods. They will give families flexibility and choice when it comes to getting around, such as perhaps not needing a second car; the flexibility to drop off a child at a day-care centre near a new Metronet station, saving precious time for busy parents; or the option of using our ever-expanding cycle network to get to work, school or a train station. This infrastructure can change lives. It can also help us keep healthy.

The health of Western Australians is our ultimate priority, Madam Speaker. Health systems around the world have been through a one-in-100-year shock. The health frontline has undoubtedly done an incredible job. Our continued and increased investment in our health sector will ensure that we continue to deliver a health system that meets the needs of all Western Australians and is fit-for-purpose for generations to come. Western Australia is spending more per capita on public hospital services than any other state, and 17 per cent more than the national average. Since 2017, WA's health expenditure has increased by an average of 6.2 per cent each year, from \$9 billion in 2017–18 to \$11.4 billion in 2021–22.

An incredible scale of work is happening. This includes new hospitals, better equipment, more beds and more staff, and modern legislation. This year, the biggest health worker recruitment drive in the state's history will continue. Since we have been in office, the number of nurses and midwives in our public system has increased by 30 per cent. In 2022, there was a 266 per cent increase in the number of healthcare professionals recruited compared

with 2017, comprising more than 4 300 nurses and midwives, almost 1 500 doctors and medical workers and 1 400 allied health workers.

In 2023, consultation will continue to provide vital input into planning for the new \$1.8 billion women's and babies' hospital. We have progressed procurement for the major upgrade of Geraldton Health Campus, and we have allocated over \$200 million for the transformation of Bunbury hospital. There are too many projects to list, some of which are in our most remote locations. We are investing in programs and infrastructure to address people's health at all stages of their lives.

The health of our natural environment is also of paramount importance. This year, the McGowan Labor government will legislate its goal of net zero emissions by 2050. Our legislation will also formalise our ambitious aim to reduce government emissions by 80 per cent below 2020 levels by 2030. Not only is this about decisive action on one of humanity's greatest challenges, but also it is an opportunity. The certainty this legislation will provide can encourage investment in clean energy infrastructure and technologies, which can ultimately reduce costs for businesses.

Here in Western Australia, we live among the most beautiful landscapes in the world, and they must be protected. For this reason, we made the recent decision to end the logging of south west native forests from 2024. The decision builds on the legacy of the Gallop Labor government's decision to end old-growth logging in 2001. It means an additional 400 000 hectares of karri, jarrah and wandoo forests will be protected into the future. That is around five New York Cities' worth of native forest, and it brings the total amount of protected forest to around two million hectares. This builds on our work to expand national parks and conservation areas by five million hectares, with over \$160 million invested to make it happen. The successful plan for plastics continues to progress, with the second phase coming into effect later this month.

In 2023, the McGowan Labor government will continue its record of delivery for our regions. We have retained and improved the royalties for regions program, delivering \$1 billion every year for programs that create quality employment and a greater quality of life.

Furthermore, we are investing in important regional projects, like planning and investing in the Kimberley's recovery from the floods. We will spend \$78.1 million to upgrade Lumsden Point at Port Hedland, supporting the future growth at our biggest export port; \$187.5 million for the Port Hedland Spoilbank Marina project, transforming Port Hedland's waterfront into an attractive and popular destination for locals and visitors alike; \$19.3 million to support preparations in Exmouth for the total solar eclipse in April; \$350 million to upgrade the Geraldton regional port, building capacity to grow exports from the midwest; and over \$125 million to progress the Pilbara and midwest hydrogen hubs.

Work will continue on stage 3 of transforming Bunbury's waterfront project, with \$78.1 million invested. Meanwhile, the Bunbury Outer Ring Road and the Albany ring-road will continue to sustain hundreds of construction jobs in 2023. In Kalgoorlie, the \$8 million spent on the Kalgoorlie city centre project will add vibrancy and refreshment to one of the state's most historic towns. The \$61.4 million three-stage redevelopment of Newman Hospital is also expected to reach completion this year.

Furthermore, we have made getting around our vast state cheaper for regional residents. The regional airfare zone cap scheme means people will not pay more than \$199 or \$299, depending on the distance from Perth. More than 28 000 capped airfares were flown between July and September alone, and we will be reviewing the scheme this year to look at what further improvements could be implemented. On top of that, we are helping those in our most remote areas to get a driver's licence. We know that, for regional people, being unable to get their licence can be a barrier to getting a job, receiving education, accessing health services and staying connected to the community. That is why we have expanded our successful driving access and equity program to the midwest, Gascoyne and goldfields-Esperance. This means that more organisations, beyond the Pilbara and Kimberley, can assist our most remote residents to traverse the state.

From a legislative perspective, 2023 will be a year of reform. We will reform the Equal Opportunity Act, bringing Western Australia in line with modern community expectations and ensuring that all Western Australians will be free from discrimination, harassment, vilification and victimisation. We will reform the Local Government Act to improve the transparency, accountability and efficiency of councils across WA.

We will reform the Firearms Act to create the toughest gun laws in the country and stop firearms getting into the wrong hands. We will pursue landmark privacy legislation, ensuring Western Australians will have more control over their personal data. We will also toughen casino laws to enhance accountability and transparency at WA's only casino. We are consulting on further liquor reforms to ensure that our state's world-class hospitality sector continues to flourish.

Abortion care is a critical component of health care for women, which is why we will modernise our abortion laws to make safety, privacy and dignity an absolute right. Abortion will be fully decriminalised, and the Criminal Code

offence will be repealed. Western Australian women should not have to face barriers to health care, which is why we will streamline care pathways and remove clinical barriers.

We will abolish the outdated Gender Reassignment Board, creating a new, streamlined administrative process for sex and gender recognition. We will overhaul and modernise workers' compensation legislation, ensuring that local workers are given a fair go. We will reform water resources legislation, replacing and consolidating six acts that are up to 110 years old.

Madam Speaker, these priorities build on the major legislation that is already before Parliament and was introduced at the end of 2022: laws delivering on our election commitment to reform WA's mentally impaired accused laws, laws that improve the transparency and governance of government trading enterprises, and laws for the diversification of the pastoral estate.

It is also the year that new laws to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage will fully come into effect. These laws will replace the outdated section 18 processes with a new framework that will put Aboriginal people at the heart of decisions that affect their heritage. It enshrines negotiation and informed consent in law. Under the new act, the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Council will be the state's peak strategic body for Aboriginal cultural heritage matters. The council will provide advice to government and set the standards to identify, protect and manage heritage. In short, these will be the most comprehensive Aboriginal heritage laws in the country, if not in the entire Commonwealth.

At a federal level, as Premier, I have pledged my support for the Voice to the federal Parliament, ahead of the planned referendum later this year.

This has been a busy government. As everyone can tell by now, 2023 will not be the year in which we slow down. Parliament will be at the heart of some major reforms this year. As members of Parliament, we are extremely privileged to represent our diverse communities and to offer our support in making laws that will benefit the lives of WA families, businesses and future generations.

I look forward to working with each member to take our state forward, just as we have in previous years.

[Applause.]

Consideration

The SPEAKER: The question is —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [1.56 pm]: I rise to contribute to the debate in response to the Premier's Statement that has just been handed down.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the member for Moore on his new role as Leader of the Opposition and the new Leader of the Nationals WA. I give many thanks to our outgoing leader, the member for Central Wheatbelt, for the fantastic job she has done and the legacy she created. I would also like to welcome the member for North West Central in her new role as Whip and offer my congratulations to the member for Vasse as the new Leader of the Liberal Party. I also congratulate Hon Dr Steve Thomas, MLC, the new Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party; and Hon Steve Martin, MLC, parliamentary secretary. I also acknowledge our new minister in the house and those ministers with new portfolios.

Before I start my reply on the Premier's shortfalls, I would like to —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the investment of an additional \$9.6 million into Ronald McDonald House Charities, which will double the accommodation services for regional families with sick children. This support for regional families in times of need is a very welcome announcement indeed. Many regional MPs have spent time there, and we very much appreciate its importance.

Last year, as is usual for the Premier of the day, the Premier highlighted the achievements of the government at that time. It is the opposition's job to point out where the government has let down the people of Western Australia and disappointed the community with rhetoric and platitudes from a Premier who has distanced himself from facing the real issues of normal Western Australians. It would be remiss of me not to point out the rising crime rates, especially up north; police shortages; the Banksia Hill Detention Centre disaster; a health system still in crisis; and an education system under pressure it has never seen before.

Firstly, it is no wonder that we are considered a police state, not only for the obvious reason, but also for the dwindling number of police to enforce the huge amount of legislation that has been passed in recent years.

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. Honey: Point of order, Madam Speaker! This side listened in complete silence to the Premier.

The SPEAKER: There is actually no need for the point of order because I am just about to interrupt the business of the house. Given the time, under standing order 61, I will interrupt the business of the house and adjourn this matter to a later stage of this day's sitting.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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