

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

*Third Reading*

**MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Treasurer)** [1.52 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe)** [1.53 pm]: Some members will know that I had COVID during budget reply week, so I could not reply, but the Clerk informs me that I have 15 minutes to respond during the third reading debate on the recurrent bill. Before I embark on my speech, I understand that tomorrow there will be a motion to thank the Premier for his service and there will be some defined speakers, but, for my part, I want to recognise the enormous public service of former Premier Hon Mark McGowan in this state. Members know what it means to be a member of Parliament for 27 years, but most people outside this place have no idea whatsoever. That is an enormous contribution to this state in the various roles that the former Premier held. Whatever policy differences I may have had with the Premier, I respect that service. I respect the impact that it has had on his family and what it has meant for them, and I wish him the best for his future endeavours.

In some ways, the 2023–24 budget was routine for the government. A large surplus was delivered, and we know that it was delivered by iron ore royalties and the federal Liberal–National government’s GST fix. That has fixed this budget.

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Let me take members through it. The budget revenue forecast for 2023–24 of \$43.218 billion is a massive 70.8 per cent increase over the 2016–17 budget. I hear discussions in this place about the performance of the former government, but to have a massive increase in such a short period of time would make any government look good. That is a 10 per cent increase in simple terms, not compound terms, every year, year on year. Most of us would love to see that sort of increase. We did not have that chance. By historical standards, normally revenue growth would be in the order of a few per cent. The government has had a once-in-a-lifetime situation from matters that are not within its control. Over the entire six years of this government, inflation has been just under 20 per cent. The increase in revenue is 50 per cent on top of inflation, which would probably be the largest real growth in government income in the history of the state and would have nothing whatsoever to do with the government. It has been driven by factors outside the government’s control. The first factor is that the iron ore price has consistently been budgeted at around \$US60, but it has consistently been over \$US100, which has delivered a massive amount of revenue for the government. The second critical factor was the GST fix made by the federal Liberal–National government, which has delivered multiple billions of dollars. That is what has delivered the budget surplus.

What we saw in this budget was the government throwing around buckets of money. That seems to be something of a feature—throwing around buckets of money with the illusion that it is doing something. As we have pointed out several times in this place, throwing around buckets of money means nothing if the government does not achieve anything, and we have seen that in a range of areas. It has made multiple announcements and talked about big bucks, but of course it has failed to deliver. Every time there is an issue or a political problem, it says that it is putting in dollars, but it actually has to do something. There is this mythology of prudent government control. Over that period, government expenditure has increased by 43.7 per cent, which reflects those dollops of money, but have we seen a 43.7 per cent increase in the performance of the government? Have we seen that with hospitals, schools or any of the critical services? That is a real growth rate above inflation of 24 per cent. Do we have 25 per cent more staff in schools? In fact, this government is staffing schools with only partially qualified teachers. Do we have a 25 per cent reduction in the ramping rate at hospitals? We do not. Under our disappointing Minister for Health, we see record ramping continuing apace to the great detriment of the people in Western Australia. The government can throw around all the buckets of money it likes, but if it does not achieve anything, that is a failure of government.

The government likes to do that, but we are seeing the list of failures grow as it stays in power. I suspect that under the government’s new leadership team, we will not see anything different. We saw the government enjoy enormous popularity, which, as we know, was due primarily to the response to COVID. That has helped the government hide for a significant period, but now that former Premier Hon Mark McGowan has left this place, it is going to expose this government for what it is. It can no longer hide behind COVID in terms of its performance. It is going to be held accountable for what it is delivering for the public of Western Australia. After six years, the government can have all the spin and the spin doctors that it wants but that does not hide its lack of performance.

We are not seeing adequate development of industries in this state. We are supposed to be undergoing a transition to renewables in the economy, but we are not seeing the substantial and important preparation required for that transition. We see lots of press releases and hear people making statements, but we have not seen enough tangible results from those changes.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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