

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Consideration of Tabled Papers

Resumed from 21 June on the following motion moved by Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Emergency Services) —

That pursuant to standing order 69(1), the Legislative Council take note of tabled papers 2203A–E (2023–24 budget papers) laid upon the table of the house on Thursday, 11 May 2023.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [12.41 pm]: I will start my presentation today with a general outline of a pet gripe of mine about the way the budget has been rolled out. Maybe it is because of the orthodoxy that I gained when I was a member of Treasury from 1997 through to 2008. I was seconded to other departments during that time but, in the main, I was at that department. Maybe it is a little bit of the old public servant in me showing through in this respect, so I ask people to bear with me.

I think there is something to be said about orthodoxy when we go forward and present the budget. I refer specifically to the approach that this government has taken on special purpose accounts. Our shadow Treasurer, Hon Dr Steve Thomas, has raised this matter on multiple occasions. I think we have gone too far. Last year, I said hypothetically that, as a rule of thumb, \$10 billion could have been directed to debt reduction. It has not been; I just asked a question. We can put it out there for the experts. We know that the differential between 1.2 per cent and 2.5 per cent is 130 basis points. That refers to the differential between the interest that is paid on debt and the interest that is gained from money that is put into the public bank account. I do not believe that my hypothetical question was properly answered.

If we put an extra \$10 billion towards debt reduction, we would potentially save \$130 million a year. Those who are watching can think of it like a mortgage. I assume that we all have a mortgage. One of good things about modern mortgages is that they can have a floating line of credit. Most people manage that and have a redraw facility. People who pay extra on their mortgage pay down the mortgage. If they put that extra money in the bank, they would probably get only 3.5 per cent, or whatever the going rate is, but if they paid down the mortgage, they would save six or seven per cent, or whatever the current rate is. One hundred basis points is one per cent. Paying down the mortgage, therefore, saves a number of basis points and helps pay off the mortgage early. That is a pretty simple way of thinking about it.

The government has had massive surpluses but the state debt has not moved very much. It has peaked under the Labor government. Government members always love to say that it was projected to go up. Goodness me! The projections are just projections. The reality is that under this government, debt has peaked and revenue has peaked during a boom time. One of the best Treasurers the Labor Party ever put up was Hon Eric Ripper, whom I worked for when I was a Treasury officer. I got on very well with him. I also had some very enjoyable meetings with Hon Alannah MacTiernan. I always found that amusing. Hon Eric Ripper's great legacy should always be held up. The now departed-at-stage-left Hon Mark McGowan had a different approach. He did not want to take the orthodox approach. He always wanted a few more shots in the locker, so to speak. He was watching the polls closely and never knew when he might want to use the revenue. That was the comment I made last year, and I am restating it because I understand that the special purpose accounts keep going up and that they have even more discretion.

Another pet gripe I have about the lax of orthodoxy is the way those special purpose accounts contribute to the extra \$3 000 that I think we in Parliament will all get as a cost-of-living bonus as part of the wages arrangement. That goes against the grain of orthodoxy about what I think is common sense. I believe in a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. Pay rise negotiations should be looked at over the long term. Inflation in Western Australia is running at seven, eight or nine per cent, or whatever it is, and heading up. We then see wage increases of three or four per cent or whatever and then a bit extra gets thrown in as a bonus just for a year, and that troubles me. Members will have to excuse me for my former public service orthodoxy. No public servant should have to get a special one-off reward from the government and wonder how they will get that reward the next time around. That goes against the grain of how reward for effort should work. I suggest that pay rises should be increased over the long term because inflation is cumulative. I have spoken to public servants who wonder whether they will get the one-off payment next year. That is the problem with how the government works. It strings people along. I am talking about principles generally. There seems to be a trend to the unorthodox approach of providing one-off payments. I am not suggesting that people do not deserve more. In fact, I am saying that it should be built into their baseline pay so that they do not have to come back to the government year after year, cap in hand, to ask for that one-off payment. Inflation does not go away. I am sorry, but I have to explain inflation in very simple terms for those who have not worked it out. If we have inflation of eight per cent this year and inflation of two or three per cent next year—we hope that inflation will head down, as the Reserve Bank struggles to get it under control given the rampant spending of the federal government—it does not mean that inflation has gone away. It is built in. It is a step process. We are walking up some stairs and not going backwards. It is that level of inflation plus the additional amount. I am sorry to have to

explain it in very simple terms, but, in a general sense, that is the orthodoxy that is always applied; however, it does not seem to be applied now.

Something that does not sit well with me is public servants having to go constantly to the government, cap in hand, and being forever grateful to their political overlords for the next bit of funding that they get. I know that public servants are watching the debate and that they feel a little frustrated. That is not how the public service should work. That is my gripe. I said I would start with a gripe, and that is my gripe for the day.

I know Hon Rita Saffioti, the new Treasurer. She worked in the government enterprises part of Treasury in 1997 when I was in the competition policy unit. We sat within dart-throwing distance across the room. We got on very well. In fact, I worked with Hon Rita Saffioti on a few projects over the years, including on the retail trading hours reform when she was head of policy under Hon Geoff Gallop. I understand Hon Rita Saffioti's pedigree. She was a level 4 policy officer in the government trading enterprises of Treasury before going off to bigger and better things. She worked for former Premier Geoff Gallop when he was the opposition leader, and later was the chief of staff of former Premier Alan Carpenter, who made that infamous early election call—we know what happened then. History shows that politics can move about in an unusual way.

It would be great if the Labor Party would go back to economic orthodoxy. I do not agree with everything that former Prime Minister Paul Keating says, but I think he did a great job as part of that reform. He certainly left a huge legacy, but it was one of economic orthodoxy. I think the Labor Party would be well placed to look back at that. I probably do have a few more gripes; I throw that in there for honourable members. What bothers me a little is the kind of slanging match that seems to be happening and the undermining of the integrity and role of the Governor of the Reserve Bank. That bothers me. I think that is creating some problems. The Hawke–Keating governments, followed by the Howard government, had a big part to play in that era of economic orthodoxy that led to a period of incredible economic stability and prosperity in this country, although it was not without its problems. We have to be careful that we do not undermine the independence of the Reserve Bank, because it is important that we maintain that independent process. I have to put on the record for younger members that I grew up during the Muldoon era. He was a conservative and I did not like his politics on economics. Robert Muldoon was a big spender. That happened at the same time that Australia had the Whitlam government. It was a period of big-spending governments, when we did not have the full set of rules and orthodoxies that have become the norm, such as independent and floating exchange rates and independent decisions on interest rates so that we can balance out the vagaries of government decisions. I think it is important that we retain that. I encourage students of Labor Party history to look at that. At the moment, the Labor Party controls the purse strings at both federal and state levels. I hope that we go back to those orthodoxies a little more and do not head off into either uncharted territory or old charted territory where we ended up with inflation up around 15 or 17 per cent, price controls and all sorts of crazy ideas that always ended in tears. That is my general comment. I think it is important, because we have a big-spending government.

The state government is not big on managing the debt; instead, it is putting the savings into special funds. There are some issues with that. I am not surprised about that because of some of the gold-standard projects that keep being rolled out. Massive cost overruns are part of the challenge. I am sure that Hon Tjorn Sibma covered at great length the incredible and ongoing cost blowouts with Metronet. I will comment about the funding that has been made available for headworks in and around the Metronet precincts. It seems to be on the back foot. I have spoken to people in the industry who know about the challenges of delivering high-density developments. It is vital that we do that in the Metronet precincts, but I do not think we are seeing a big focus on strategic planning in and around them. I think more could be done. I have had conversations with the Property Council of Australia. There are challenges in delivering housing, and particularly high-density housing. It is really hard to make that stack up in locations that do not have views across Cottesloe Beach or other high-value outcomes. That is why we have ended up unleashing those strategic planning frameworks and allowing for boutique-style developments that do not do a lot for density. All they do is service the top end of the market. They have big floor plates and a better return on investment. I understand the problems in WA with the current construction market, but there has been a long-term issue in building developments of four to eight storeys—maybe even higher—in and around suburbs in which the price that can be got for a unit may not be as high as the cost of delivering it. Interestingly, although we have an overheated rental market, people can still buy a small two-by-one apartment for around \$350 000 in the Perth CBD. That is a good thing. It is not like in Sydney, where people have to pay much more for something like that. We wonder why we are not seeing high-density developments going up in the City of Canning, for example.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Hon NEIL THOMSON: To very briefly recap, I was at the point of talking about the apartment market in Western Australia and the importance of dealing with these headworks. We are seeing some sort of fund established to help promote the rollout of infrastructure in those Metronet precincts. I think it would be good to see that process and the strategic planning around those precincts ramped up.

In the budget papers, we see that the service summary of the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage really has increased. The planning services funding seems to have gone up quite considerably. Obviously, that will be over the fullness of time, in the next 12 months. We continue to query and challenge the minister; through question time, we will be examining how that all works.

While I am on the subject of DPLH, we also see a big increase in funding for Aboriginal heritage management, which begs the question a little bit about some earlier funding. I think this is the thing: if there had been a little bit of earlier investment, we might have been able to avoid some of the anxieties and so forth that have occurred today.

As part of my assessment of my thoughts for today, I went through what I said last year in the reply to the budget. The issue about these big funding announcements, which seem somewhat reactive, is the inability of the government to deliver on all those outcomes. I think that, if anything, will be the theme that will be a signature of the McGowan and Cook governments.

There have always been the excuses of COVID and the challenges in the supply of materials et cetera, especially for the construction market, but we have seen that those overheated markets have resulted in significant cost blowouts. As outlined by my colleague Hon Dr Steve Thomas, for example, we have seen a 400 per cent cost blowout from the original estimates in the development of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road project. The same issue seems to be a hallmark of the Albany ring-road.

I want to speak briefly on the transport issue. In my last budget reply speech, I talked about the Morrison and McGowan governments' commitment to sealing Tanami Road. There was \$500 million to seal Tanami Road. I will read from *Hansard* —

That is an amazing outcome from a social justice point of view, as it will provide a sealed road for the communities of Balgo, Billiluna, Mulan and others in the area. Of course, there will also be huge opportunities from providing an alternative logistics supply chain to the Northern Territory. It will cut off 12 hours of driving time from Alice Springs to Fitzroy Crossing and it will be an alternative route from South Australia and the south-eastern states to the Pilbara. That will be fantastic.

I was being very complimentary at that point —

This is the type of nation-building project—that term has probably been given a bad name by some TV shows—that we need to see.

I mentioned that. In the same speech, I also said —

On the delivery of logistics into the state, we saw a woeful response from the minister when we had a crisis in the amount of stock on the shelves in Western Australia.

Actually, the crisis I was referring to was the train derailment in Victoria and the rainfall across the Nullarbor, which resulted in a similarly struggling supply chain. I also said —

I have heard, and I am happy for her to correct the record, that it took her office at least a week—this has come from people in the industry—to respond to the crisis and to get industry people together and say that the basics in life on the shelves were running out.

I never heard from the minister. I guess that the minister felt that my comments were not worthy of response, and that is fine. I made those comments a year ago. We subsequently saw how important those supply chains are and how important the Tanami Road project is.

I do not know to what extent the Albanese government liaised with the McGowan government, but, very sadly, the very first thing the Albanese government did when it came into office was re-cashflow. “Re-cashflow” is a lovely term that actually means kicking the can down the road a bit, pushing back the funding for that vital project in the Kimberley. We know that that project, even with the original cash flows, would not have been completed; it is a big project and would happen over time. If there had at least been a bit more haste and enthusiasm from the Albanese government, I am sure that there might have been an opportunity to have some more rapid deployment. I cannot understand why this government did not think of doing everything it could—maybe getting a few more teams of graders operating on the road or doing emergency works across some of the wet areas where the Sturt Creek crosses it—to ensure that there would have been an early reopening of the road and try to alleviate some of the pressure in the East Kimberley.

I state this again: I have said in this place, much to the outrage and concern of the other side, that I have felt that the minister did an appalling job in response to the Fitzroy River Bridge collapse. After she came back from Europe from that January holiday, we saw the minister get up there, as aware of it as she was, and make a commitment a couple of weeks later. This is the commitment she made. It was a commitment about what was going to happen to get that bridge back up and running. There was going to be a plan to put a barge system across the river. These are the words of Hon Rita Saffioti on 23 January 2023. We could say that it took nearly 20 days to get that response;

fair enough, plenty has been said about that. It was actually 20 days after the flooding started; the collapse was, I think, on 3 January or 4 January. On 23 January, Hon Rita Saffioti said —

The plan will involve the implementation of a barge system across the river, which will initially be operated by tugs ...

We never saw that —

with a cable system to be operationalised shortly after.

She went on. I do not have the full quote, but she did say —

Main Roads will work with industry to ensure transport operators are briefed on the operation of the barge system and is currently assessing options for breakdown areas for trucks on approach to Fitzroy Crossing.

I spoke to two people on the ground and it was very clear that the intent was that the punt system would be the first stage. It was very clear that there would be two more tranches of work rolled out with urgency to reconnect the highway while the water still flowed down the river. The minister went on to say that that system would allow for the water level to go up and down. I am paraphrasing, but she made some very clear comments about how the whole system would work. I am using my words, but the intent of what was said was that the interlocking barges would effectively be a pontoon bridge. None of that happened. Instead, someone in cabinet made a decision that the East Kimberley was not important enough to warrant resolving that transport problem. The first decision the Albanese government made when it came in was “We will kick the can down the road on the Tanami Road. It is not as important. We will save a bit of money so we can spend it on whatever else is a priority.” We did not see the McGowan government saying that the federal government should not do that because it had cashflowed its contribution and was determined to get on with it as it was important. It was all done very quietly. Shortly afterwards, there was this massive flood and the terrible destruction of the bridge. The minister said she would reconnect the road with a floating pontoon bridge, and, of course, none of that happened. Instead, there was something that looked more like a tinnie that someone would take out to go fishing with their friends. Then there was a lot made of the number of people—my goodness, how that was spun was laughable. Basically, it replaced the helicopter service for people working at the Fitzroy River Lodge and coming back. Obviously, there were some other opportunities for people from the community to cross the river on the barge. Even that took time. Then a low level crossing was put in place and opened on 3 April. Again, more Facebook posts came out saying how great it was. On 4 April, it was closed again, and by 5 April it was covered by almost a metre of water. This shows how this minister, who is now the Treasurer, has failed to deal with this state’s biggest transport crisis.

The minister, who is now the Treasurer, has blown out the budget of Metronet, going from whatever the original figure was—about \$3 billion—to well over \$10 billion. There has been a 400 per cent increase in the cost of the ring-road in Bunbury and a 300 per cent increase in the cost of the bypass at Albany. There have been delays and constant struggles in delivering all the other ongoing projects. Then there was a tacit agreement, at least, with the Albanese government to slam back the funding arrangement for Tanami Road, which is such a vital road, with the machinery mobilised. As I said, it may have provided a temporary solution. The sooner that road is sealed the better, both from a social justice point of view for those 1 000 or so people who live along the road and to ensure that we have a more robust logistics supply chain into our state. As the climate changes, storms and high-rainfall events are predicted. The data for the Kimberley shows that there has been something like an average of an additional 150 millimetres of rainfall on an annual basis since the 1970s. This is a trend in the data. That is important from the point of view of having a robust supply chain so at the last minute we do not have to cobble together barges. We know what happened in Kununurra with the flood on the Victoria Highway and we ended up in dire straits. I was in the community of Mulan and I was told that its store ran out of fresh food when those two links were closed and people had to make do; people are used to that. That is why the investment that this budget has is important.

It is very important for our ministers to be on the ball and to hold agencies to account for delivering. Most of all, it is important to make sure that when funding, plans and programs are put in place, the government keeps its eyes on the details so they can be delivered. I am pleased to see the first piles going in for the Fitzroy River Bridge, but I will ask more about it. Can we guarantee that heavy traffic will continue over the next wet season? In an advanced economy like Western Australia, it is unacceptable to end up with no transport for 105 days east–west across a major highway.

I presented evidence to the federal government’s committee on emergency response arrangements because I hoped that the federal Parliament’s Senate committee would put some pressure on this Minister of Transport. Frankly, I think the Minister of Transport is well placed to hand over that portfolio to one of the capable parliamentary secretaries—with, I must say, a few exceptions. Being Treasurer is a massive job, and it would be very good if there was a laser-like focus on that Treasury portfolio, because clearly there has been an unfortunate and woeful response. I predicted this problem in debate on the last budget and it has got worse, so I am concerned.

I will speak about another matter that I raised about the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. I will again quote myself, because this is what I said a year ago. The Premier is at least trying to rein in some of the outrageous comments that have been made, and I am pleased that is happening. I am pleased the Premier has taken some action, because the opposition has to be allowed to question things. I am saying this rhetorically. The government says, “How dare you question us?” We have to be allowed to question the rollout of something that is creating massive anxiety. When I spoke on this in my last budget contribution, I said —

A lot of money is certainly being spent on that process and I hope that it is being directed towards proper consultation with the people who will actually be impacted by this.

I can say that a lot more money is about to be spent on it, and a lot less money was predicted to be spent at the time—I think it was only about \$10 million or so. That has been amped right up because at the last minute there was a realisation that this was much bigger and a lot harder to implement. The government is not getting the response from the local Aboriginal cultural heritage services it thought it would get. The challenges are suddenly dawning on the government. I say this particularly for those who think this is just business as usual. I put this on the record. The big issue in my mind—I hope I am wrong—will be for those referral agencies and local government and government departments. When somebody comes to a department seeking some sort of development approval or application that involves ground disturbance, what will those departments be required to do? They will be required to say, “Where is your due diligence? Where is your permit? Where is your assessment, whether tier 1 or tier 3?” I can tell members that that will be the issue. If people think that this is going to somehow tighten up the process we have now, under which there are 59 section 18 applications a year, I can tell members that there will not be only 59 applications a year. There will not be 159. There will not be 15 000. There will be tens of thousands more applications that will need to be processed. The bureaucratic weight of that and the ability to service those applications will inevitably cause problems in wait times in our economy. I say that because I want it on *Hansard*.

Last year, we talked about the fragility of our logistic supply chains. I did not have the foresight of the floods in the Kimberley; I had no idea that would happen. But we saw the outcome of that and how fragile our logistic supply chains are. Then we saw the woeful response of the minister. We have taken the word of the former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs—he is no longer the minister—that the co-design process is going to iron out all these issues that we raised. I am not convinced. I read to members what I said a year ago —

What we did not see in this place was any real evidence that a serious discussion had been held about the impacts of that legislation on the average punter—the small contractor and the operator—who just want to do some work. We can see some funding in the budget for that. Whether the government can deliver those regulations in a sensible way and make what I think is an appalling piece of legislation into something that is moderately workable ...

People keep saying that we did not raise any concerns. Do not misrepresent—our side did not oppose that legislation. Anyone who tries to say otherwise is being completely disingenuous. The convention in this place is if someone does not oppose something, they do the right thing and stand with the government on a division. That is what we did. We made it very clear, folks, that we were not comfortable. In my reply to the budget speech on 19 May 2022, I said that it was an appalling piece of legislation. That is what I believe it was. That was my view. I continued —

... something that is moderately workable, remains to be seen.

We have all the assurances from the government, “Neil, your issues and thoughts on this are wrong, we can sort it out through the regulations”, but clearly that is not the case. Do members know what? Whatever I say does not matter. Whatever the government says does not matter. What matters is whatever happens in the next 12 or 24 months in the lead-up to the 2025 election. I put them on notice yesterday—those members in the seats of West Swan, Kalamunda and Murray–Wellington that the cover of COVID has gone. The Mark McGowan magic has gone. People are feeling angry about this because the government did not level with them about their obligations.

I said further —

With its abolition of the department of Aboriginal affairs, this government seems to have a propensity to outsource everything and to leave it to run on its own and let people somehow survive —

This is the outsourcing of this regulatory function to these local Aboriginal cultural heritage services, as if they will somehow be able to rise to this massive burden of applications and deal with them. I continued —

but I can tell members that that will come back to bite it when the people of Western Australia finally realise the impact it has on them.

I did not realise that I was Nostradamus, because it had not yet fully come back to bite, but I made that prediction back then, 12 months ago. I can tell members my prediction now, and I will put on the mantle of Nostradamus for just a moment if people will so allow me.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I would be a bit cautious, because Nostradamus got most of his predictions wrong.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: That is probably true. I take the counsel of the Leader of the Opposition. One thing about Nostradamus is he did not have the discipline of the able members of Hansard to write down exactly what he said, and then we would be able to check, because I think there was a bit of misrepresentation. I will take that back. I will just say that I have an amazing crystal ball to be able to see and make this prediction. There will be a huge level of regulatory burden placed on the small punter, the tradie, the small landowner, the vigneron, the hobby farmer, the farmer, the pastoralist, the civil contractor—all those small operators out there. We heard the concerns of the Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation about having to comply with this regulatory burden when it has only half an FTE heritage officer. There will be a huge regulatory burden on all those Aboriginal groups to be able to manage this creation of the state government. This is a creation, folks. This is an architectural design by bureaucrats in a state government under the leadership of a minister. This is a creation of the state government. I quote myself again. I said —

I am talking about the small end of town. The big end of town certainly has some major concerns, as articulated and discussed at length in this place.

That is what I said. I am augmenting what I said, and I am making sure that people know, for the record, that this is the conversation I will be having.

I will now make a contribution about something else.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Stephen Pratt): Order, members!

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Thank you, Acting President. I refer to another matter that I have raised at length in this place. It relates to what is called the market-led proposal process. In principle, I actually support the market-led proposal process. I think it has a role in situations in which there is a genuine new idea from a private provider that maybe has not been thought through. This market-led proposal process can work from time to time because sometimes a lot of research or intellectual property has to go into the development of an idea. A business can come to the government and present its idea to do a certain development—a complex piece of development no-one has thought of on some so-called “lazy land” or something. The idea would be considered, and then the government would put some serious framework over it with assessments and evaluations to make sure that it gets value for money and the right outcome for the state and the taxpayers of Western Australia.

That is what market-led proposal processes are all about. But what we saw, yet again under the cover of COVID, was what I would say is one of the most outrageous sales of a building—the sale of the Landgate building in Midland. By the way, this was a little subtext back in the 1990s when there was a review into the Brian Burke dealings. From recollection, I think it was mentioned that the focus there was on the abattoir and saleyards in Midland. The dodgy transactions that occurred there were at the heart of the WA Inc process. This was a bizarre situation. We leased a privately owned building for a very long period of time. I believe we paid something in the order of \$180 million in rent over a 30-year period for the Landgate building. That original deal had a very questionable genesis. Roughly \$180 million, I believe, was paid for the lease. At the end of the lease, we had effectively ended up paying for the building.

The building was then sold with obscene haste in the middle of the worst time in the market for commercial property. I will say in this place that I think this is a serious issue needing further investigation. I have asked many questions about this building but never got to the bottom of the situation. There was an evaluation undertaken on the basis of what might loosely be called a fire sale; it was not based on a future of guaranteed tenancy from the best tenant in the land—the state government. I do not know the timing of when Georgiou Capital came to have a discussion with the state to present this so-called complex market-led administrative proposal process. I think there was an eventual backpedalling of that process. However, the process was definitely not openly raised as “Let’s put it out, send it to a real estate agent and try our best to get the best value”. Whose idea was it?

There are some big questions on this whole process that, as a member of the opposition, I am not in a position to actually get to the bottom of. I think it has to be looked at by others who have the powers to do a proper investigation into who knew what, who spoke to whom and how we came up with these numbers. It was sold for \$17.3 million and allegedly valued at \$17.99 million, because there was an idea that the footings needed to be tidied up and some work needed to be done. The government was guaranteed about \$85 million in rent over the following 15 years. It does my mind in thinking about this issue and how much money was spent. Why would the government sell that asset so quickly? I do not believe there has been enough proper scrutiny on this and I think there needs to be. That historical asset in Midland has a unique level of floor space and it is going to be vulnerable because it is, yet again, back in the hands of a private owner. For what purpose? We have to ask about the purpose of the deals on the 3 800 square metres of land offered.

As I said, I do not have the capacity to investigate. As members of the opposition, we have the freedom and privilege to be able to raise this, so I put it as a question in this arena. I think the Auditor General needs to go beyond just

looking at the processes and mechanics of the financial transactions to intervene much more deeply. Whether that is the right role for the Auditor General or another agency is a question for that other agency to consider. I do not have the capacity to look at those emails and who said what, who met whom and who made several donations to whom—I am not saying that happened. It is only through the position of raising this matter that we can examine this, at least on the surface, crazy transaction. The state has been left out of pocket from renting that building over 30 years of its life, as well as in the additional years that we owned it and then rented it again. We are spending \$300 million more on the building when we could have owned it and maybe done a bit of renovation. Where is the business case that could be tabled in this place to make the clear comparison of what is going on? I want to raise that matter because I think it deserves a much bigger further investigation.

I am coming to the point of closing. I want to reference a couple of issues in my region in the remaining minutes I have. We are seeing yet another matter. I am going to use my crystal ball to refer to a year ago. I was overly generous with the things I said in my last speech. After watching the performance of the Labor Party over time, I have got more cynical because it keeps disappointing. I recant what I said: “I will start with a bouquet of sorts”. My goodness! I have changed. I have been here too long, Hon Dr Steve Thomas. I am starting to understand that disappointment is a feature of the Labor Party. I stated —

I will start with a bouquet of sorts to the government for finally recognising that in the Kimberley—I will start in the north and move my way down—there is a lawlessness crisis and a family crisis and something needs to happen. There is funding of \$40-odd million for the Kimberley youth and community justice response package and \$15 million for delivery of an on-country residential facility to provide an alternative to detention.

That was a year ago! Where are we now? “The floods came. We could not get on the job. We do not know what has happened”. Hon Alannah MacTiernan had an incredible passion for that and was finally convinced. One thing I know about Hon Alannah MacTiernan is that it takes her a while to be convinced to do something, but once she gets on to it, she is on to it. Now we have Hon Don Punch and I do not know what he is up to. He is certainly not punching above his weight now. We have the situation of a juvenile justice facility effectively being on hold, as far as I can tell. In the questions that I have asked in this place, nobody will tell me a time or deadline. I advise the government to hold itself accountable with deadlines and timings on things, because we need to get those facilities operational.

Over the intervening time, we had crisis after crisis at Banksia Hill Detention Centre and a situation wherein the former Premier came out and called those juveniles terrorists and did all sorts of name-calling. Again, using that crystal ball, I take that bouquet back, because the Labor Party does not deserve it and the flowers have certainly wilted.

Twelve months later, we have had no further progress.

As I go around the regions, I observe the same anticipation at election time then the same feeling of disappointment at the slowness in getting things moving. Finally, we got a bit of progress on Laverton Hospital. When I go to Meekatharra, I hear people say that they wish things would move on. All these promises were made. Those opposite have two years to get on with the things that they promised to deliver at the last election, such as the boat ramp in Broome. During the election campaign, I heard people say, “I’m voting for the boat ramp. I’m voting for Mark McGowan.” I am not sure that they will be saying the same thing in a couple of years. The government still has two years. It can get on with fulfilling these promises. I use this speech as an encouragement. I will not give out any bouquets. I am giving out a warning. That warning does not come from me. People in Western Australian seats such as Kalamunda, West Swan and Murray–Wellington feel like some things have been dumped on them without any consultation. Promises were made to the people in the Kimberley, and the government is yet to deliver. Making those promises will come back to bite the government because it does not have the cover of Mark McGowan. It has a Premier who is half cooked at the moment and does not know which way to go. He does not know which way is up. We probably have a Treasurer and a Minister for Health waiting to take on those jobs. Let us see what happens. I am looking forward to challenging the budget over the next 12 months. I put government members on notice that there will be no hiding from the things they say because it is all written down. They have to be accountable.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Peter Foster**.