

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) RECURRENT 2013–14 BILL 2013
APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) CAPITAL 2013–14 BILL 2013

Second Reading — Cognate Debate

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [2.50 pm]: I will firstly refer to the significant work completed in July 2013 by the cross-party Standing Committee on Social Issues of the New South Wales Legislative Council titled “Same-sex marriage law in New South Wales”. The executive summary of that report states —

The Committee reached the conclusion that the New South Wales Parliament has the power to legislate on the topic of marriage, including same-sex marriage.

Under section 51 of the Australian Constitution, marriage is one of several issues for which the state and federal governments are able to legislate concurrently according to their jurisdictions. Section 51 of the Australian Constitution declares that the federal Parliament has the power to make laws for marriage, divorce, parental rights, the guardianship of infants et cetera.

The SPEAKER: Members! There are about six different meetings going on in the chamber. Member for Murray-Wellington and Minister for Sport and Recreation, will you please take your meetings outside? Thank you.

Ms L.L. BAKER: It is important to note that this section of the Constitution does not categorise such power as exclusively under the federal government’s control; this in itself places the cause for marriage equality well within the legislative power of the state. Further to the findings of the New South Wales report, a matter of inconsistency between state and commonwealth laws with respect to marriage is a decision for the Australian High Court, and according to advice submitted by Professor George Williams, AO, at the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales, there is no inconsistency between the federal Marriage Act and a carefully drafted state same-sex marriage law. The Marriage Act 1835 was one of the first bills that the newly formed Western Australian Parliament passed under the governorship of Captain James Stirling. That act, in its amended form, is still in currency today. Our power to legislate on issues concerning marriage does not get more fundamental than that. Other states have quite recently passed legislation, or are debating legislation, on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex couples so they benefit equally under the law. The Tasmanian upper house has passed same-sex adoption legislation, which was supported by an overwhelming majority. South Australia introduced the Marriage Equality Bill. The Australian Capital Territory Parliament aims to create legislation this spring to form a territory same-sex marriage act. The New South Wales Parliament intends to follow the advice of this year’s report by introducing the Same-Sex Marriage Bill 2013 in its next sitting. These are more indications of the support mounting behind marriage equality and also the states’ rights to work towards introducing such legislation. I recognise my colleague from the upper house Hon Lyn MacLaren who last year introduced the Marriage Equality Bill 2012. Although that bill has lapsed, it gives us some idea of what we might work towards achieving.

I have identified the power of this house to move towards marriage equality. I want to inform members that there is a clear reason for the Parliament to enact legislation allowing marriage equality. Without the conventions of marriage, LGBTI couples are not able to achieve the full social recognition and legitimacy of their relationships. I emphasise that the issue is about choice. Just as it is the case with heterosexual couples, not all LGBTI couples will choose to marry. Marriage is a personal decision.

When in government, WA Labor passed legislation to achieve significant rights and benefits for LGBTI people, including in the area of economic and property rights, family and social rights, and worker rights. Marriage law is undoubtedly the next field of inequality that must be addressed if LGBTI couples in WA are to be considered full and equal members of society. How is categorising one couple’s relationship as separate by law, but with supposedly equal benefits, any different from inherent racism or sexism? How is treating one group of people differently from another under the law not a form of prejudice or segregation? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “prejudice” as a preconceived opinion not based on reason or actual experience. It describes it as unreasoned dislike, hostility, or antagonism towards or discrimination against a race, sex, or other class of people. Our current laws on marriage represent prejudice in its purest form. Marriage equality should be guided by the principle of opportunity. LGBTI people should have the opportunity to celebrate matrimony in the presence of their family and friends.

Many LGBTI couples in Western Australia who are already raising children recognise the importance of marriage in the context of raising their children within a family unit. Jude and Joey, a multicultural couple who have been together in a committed relationship for four years, are mothers to a beautiful six-month old baby girl and live in Maylands. Together they have triumphed over challenges of acceptance amongst their families. They

have also jumped through rigorous administrative hoops to put both of their names as parents on their daughter's Australian birth certificate, to register for state and federal benefits afforded to all families, and to navigate international immigration and citizenship laws for their daughter with respect to her being born to two loving same-sex parents. Jude and Joey acknowledge that each of these processes would have been easier if they were allowed to get married in WA. They do not see why they are not able to have the option to marry, just like any heterosexual couple. All anyone has to do is to look at them to know that they are a family and that they love and care for each other in the same way that any other family does. No law should make their relationship any less legitimate.

Brian and Adrian have been in a committed relationship for 14 years and live together in Caversham where they raise their nine-month old son. Looking at their child, one can tell immediately that he is a happy, inquisitive baby boy. He looks to both of his fathers for attention, care and eventually the life lessons that all parents impart to their children. This smiling child loves his two fathers, which confirms to me that prejudice is something that is taught and not something we are born with. Brian shares that being able to be legally married in WA would have allowed their family more security in the process of international surrogacy and adoption that they had to go through in order to be recognised as the legitimate parents of their son.

Personally, my partner and I met in 1982 and have been together for 24 years. On some levels, we are an average couple. We have very different talents and likes, and we share a drive for achievement and to be the best that we can be. We love our families passionately, just as you do. What makes us different from the majority of married couples is that we have no children. Part of our reason for not having children was our concern about past attitudes at the time to gay couples raising children. However, we are just as committed as any married couple can be, and yet we are denied the opportunity to seal that commitment through marriage.

There are many similar stories of other such families in WA and I thank the people who have shared their stories with me and my staff for the purpose of this speech. There were far too many to mention today. These stories demonstrate that the values of love and commitment belong to all Australians. These values are not heterosexual or gay; they are values that belong to all of us. That is the whole point of my speech. LGBTI people have fought long and hard to be considered as equals under the law, and this is the next step.

Let me now inform the house of some of the statistics on public support for marriage equality. Last year a Galaxy Research poll found that 64 per cent of Australians and 67 per cent of Western Australians agreed that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry. This means that if we in Parliament were to accurately represent our constituents by voting on a bill for same-sex marriage, it would easily pass. It is important to note that a related Galaxy poll found that over 50 per cent of Christians in Australia support marriage equality. It is a common misconception that religion alone is blocking same-sex marriage. This is simply untrue, and I will add to this point later in my speech. Eighty-one per cent of young people between 18 and 24 years of age support same-sex marriage. This is not only an indication that this issue will not go away, but also demonstrates the importance of the progress we must make for the sake of future generations.

Bec Zajac, a writer and radio broadcaster based in Brunswick, in an opinion piece in *The Age* newspaper said —

Marriage law ... excludes same sex couples.

She goes on —

I've realised that just as the legal rights that come along with marriage are important, so too is the right to use the word marriage if you so choose.

The iconic Sir Michael Kirby, AC, CMG, and the first openly gay man to be appointed into a highly esteemed leadership role as a justice of the High Court of Australia, said the following on the Australian Marriage Equality website —

It's still a shocking thing really to me that as a person who has served on the highest court and served the country and been a good citizen, had a stable family life, family values, that I'm still a second class citizen in my own country.

We should pass a bill that allows same-sex marriage in WA. Let me clearly state my full support for a bill in which the same laws would be initiated for a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex marriage as are already prescribed in current state marriage conventions. This would mean that the provision of legal aid would be the same; marriage would be void if specific requirements including age and consent were not sufficient; and relationships would still be prohibited between ancestors and descendants, between whole or half siblings and between adopted children and adoptive parents. In addition, the same bigamy laws that apply to current marriage conventions would apply to an LGBTI marriage. Not much would change as far as other legalities are concerned, other than that a consenting adult could marry another consenting adult of any sexual orientation or sexual

identity, be they lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex. De facto relationships currently exist for LGBTI couples, and so this move would simply be a further step in eliminating discrimination.

I acknowledge that each law is the instrument of justice. Marriage equality laws in Western Australia should be bound by reason and solidified with order and social responsibility. We would not have to reinvent the wheel, as the states I mentioned before—South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia—have all produced different types of bills to guide this work. The notion that an LGBTI relationship is not equal to a heterosexual relationship no longer makes sense in modern Western Australia. The law—the instrument of justice—currently creates a second class of people and incites division, not unity. I share the view of 67 per cent of Australia's population that the current conventions regarding marriage have passed their use-by date and do not reflect the reality of human relationships in the twenty-first century. Discussion on marriage equality needs to be active and formal within the Western Australian community, including discussion in our Parliament. I doubt in our democratic, secular society that religious leaders and ministers would be required to conduct same-sex marriage services. Governing bodies and officials of Australia's religious institutions would have the right to come to their own decisions. However, let us not forget the rising voices in many religious institutions that have spoken openly in support of same-sex marriage.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L.L. BAKER: In early July 2013, Australian Marriage Equality welcomed in an open letter the signatures of 77 leading clergy members across the nation who support marriage equality. This is a revolutionary document. The people behind the 77 signatures are all clergy members from a number of different faiths, including the Anglican Church of Australia, the Uniting Church in Australia, Australian Baptist Ministries and some branches of Australian Judaism and Buddhism. The letter, according to my notes, reads as follows —

As clergy from various different faiths and denominations in Australia, we believe marriage is a fundamental institution in our society. It fosters greater commitment between partners, provides children with a sense of security and stability, and strengthens ties with families and communities. Marriage is a blessing to be shared, so we encourage people of faith who support marriage equality to voice their support ...

This comment is justified by recent research. The latest Australian Social Trends report issued by the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that same-sex couples are more likely to raise highly educated children, share important domestic roles in the household and engage in high labour force participation gaining high incomes for their households as well as being able to manage them effectively.

Reverend Dr Rowland Croucher from John Mark Ministries in Victoria, according to my notes, said —

How can I, a heterosexual who's been very happily married for 50 years, tell anyone else they don't have the right to form a loving, committed, lifelong union and enjoy the fruits of marriage as I have done?

This year, a leading Australian Catholic academic, Father Frank Brennan, backed the rights of LGBTI couples to marry as long as religious institutions were not forced to conduct ceremonies for those they refused to marry. This is an example of a religious leader supporting marriage equality on the condition that secular obligations are met. As I have specified, New South Wales has just completed an investigation that shows that state has the power to legislate on marriage equality. We in Western Australia should move immediately to investigate our capacity to legislate on this issue. Our responsibility in this respect is to consult, create and in some cases reform laws. If our power in this issue were to be well and truly established, it would then be a question of what we would do and how we would do it through the parliamentary process.

Let me be clear: marriage equality is so important that it requires cross-party support and cross-party action. I invite anyone guided by reason and conscience in this house to consider the issue and to show their support for establishing a cross-party committee to investigate the possibilities and the practicalities of achieving marriage equality. Misinformation incubated by prejudice is no longer a valid excuse for taking a position against having this discussion. Marriage equality is now a major issue, the resolution of which will help define who we want to be as citizens of this great state. Marriage equality is about respecting families, neighbours and colleagues in all their diversity. The task that members of this Parliament are entrusted with by the people who voted for them is to serve the people, not to serve the self.

I strongly advise members to guide any concern or criticism they have by conscience and reason. This is our opportunity to once again lead Australia and to demonstrate that the rights of the individual living in his or her collective community must be equal. LGBTI people and their families should not have to continue to endure prejudice and inequality. We can step up and change this fundamental injustice. I appeal to every member of this place and of the other place to join me in calling for a cross-party working group to investigate WA's potential to develop a marriage equality bill, with the broadest possible support in the Parliament so that together we can deliver marriage equality in the state of Western Australia.

I finish by saying that this important work must be completed by a Parliament rather than by a party.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [3.07 pm]: It is with not much joy that I stand to speak today on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2013-14 Bill 2013 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2013-14 Bill 2013, because I am speaking about one of the worst budgets I have seen and heard of in my memory of politics. I can certainly see what will happen in the future, despite all the advertisements in my electorate at the election. Our leader earlier showed this document I am holding up for members to see. It is a copy of the stamp that appeared on the government ads and reads “Fully Funded: Fully Costed”. The projects in my electorate might have been fully costed but they have not been fully funded—and I even have concerns about whether they have been fully costed.

When I read the budget with great expectations about the very few promises from the government for the Collie–Preston electorate, I was absolutely shocked to see that projects that had been promised by the Liberal Party had not been done. The Labor Party was responsible at the election for not promising to build a bridge in the Millbridge–Treendale area at a cost of \$18 million. I had gone into bat for it but was told that the state could not afford it. The Liberal Party therefore promised that bridge at the election. It was very obvious that the promise played a major part in the voting result at the polling booths in the Eaton area because of the percentage swing against me. What happened when the budget and the forward estimates came out? There was not a thing in there. To me that was a deception of the community. It was an absolute lie by the Liberal and National Parties. They cannot run around and promise the world and then not deliver, despite the Premier saying on the record that not everyone listens to promises. Believe me, they do, because they come up with half a dozen of their own, saying, “I would like, I would like.” So people do listen to the promises that are made. The government will be marked off at the end of its four years to see whether it has honoured all those commitments. Certainly I have made note of the commitments made in the south west and Collie–Preston region. But I also made my own commitments when we were in government, and I can stand here in all truthfulness and say that they were delivered to everyone who was promised. In saying that, there were many arguments with the Treasurer of the time, Hon Eric Ripper—many; in fact, there was some tightening of his tie one time. We must as politicians honour what we say we are going to do. We wonder why we rate lower than car salesmen; it is because of things such as the Liberal-National Party government has done since the election.

I was very concerned that we also had advertisements in the newspaper. I have one with Jaimee Motion standing in front of the high school with the headmaster, making a promise of around \$7 million for the high school. If we look in the budget, it is not there; it is also not in the forward estimates. The budget contains \$500 000 for the high school, which is a carryover from royalties for regions from the previous year—not new money. I can tell members that people who stood on the National Party polling booths and handed out how-to-vote cards are very angry because they thought the government had some integrity. They have been proven wrong. This government has shown that it does not have any integrity, and it is hurting the people who stood out and batted for them. Yes, we are in opposition, we can grizzle and groan, but I am hearing people who have been long-time supporters of the government of today saying, “I’m appalled and shocked, and I don’t know how I’m going to support them into the future, either financially or standing on one of their booths.” They do not know how to take this government because of its deception and the lies it told before the election. It must have had some inkling of where the whole budgetary process was going, but I think the Liberal Party just went out there and pulled the blind down and said, “Let’s go for it; we’ll deal with it when we get there.”

There was a greater rush than I have ever seen into my office—unless there is a concession for pensioners; they seem to come in pretty quick then—of people coming in about the solar rebate problem. I can understand why the government backtracked on that, because I think it would have been strung up if it did not. I have never seen a greater shock on telly in my political life than the Treasurer going in and saying, “It’s not going to change! It’s not going to change!” He had his cheeks puffed up and his chest poked out. When he came out he looked like he was 10 stones lighter! He came out with his head down and he was rocking back on his heels. I have it on tape, and it is just a great one that I will play to the many people who will follow me. The Leader of the Opposition is having a smile.

Mr M. McGowan: Christmas party!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: It was just classic *Yes Minister* stuff! It was top of the range! I am sure it will be used for many, many years to come—“It won’t change, it won’t change—No, no, no”; and when he came out, “Well, well, well.” If he could have got under a thruppence, he would have. But unfortunately the budget deficit is about the same size as his belly; it is poking out that far.

I always remember the photographs and cartoons about former Treasurer Eric Ripper. I remember very clearly that he was always depicted as touting a bag of money over his shoulder with dollar notes falling out everywhere, because he was very tight with his money. He was portrayed in that light, and it carried on through his political career. I hope the deception of the people of Western Australia by this Treasurer is portrayed as

strongly. Eric Ripper had to live with it; I hope the member for Vasse has to live with what he is going to do to people over the next couple of years, because it will not be nice.

It is very tight now out there, and I see people really, really struggling. People come into my office on a regular basis, because we have quite a high number of social housing tenants, asking how they are going to pay their bills and whether I can support them with a bottle of gas so they can have hot water. When we look at the bills that will be coming up in the future, we see a 13 per cent increase in motor vehicle licensing fees; a 4.1 per cent increase in compulsory third party insurance premiums; and a five per cent increase in driver's licence fees. On that subject, some of these people who come into my office will not be able to afford that, and they will drop the driver's licence and think, "I'll get away with it." The next thing, they will be up before the beak getting a fine, which will compound the issue and down and down they will go. It is the same thing as when they lose their jobs.

There will be a four per cent increase in electricity costs, but they will rise by 22 per cent by 2016. Further to that, I have a press release from my leader about how the increases will be passed on to the cost of streetlights, which has just been exposed. The government should have put some money into the streetlight issue and said, "Why not have a program of putting LED lights up?" They use far less power and last many, many hours longer. There should have been a changeover; they are greener, cleaner and brighter. Certainly in my area people have been asking for them; the Dardanup shire would love a trial of this type of light. In Sydney they spent \$5 million upgrading the lighting and saved \$700 000 a year; but, no, here the costs are passed on, so that the revenue can come back to the government indirectly. That is what that is about. That means that the shires then go out and increase their rates to cover streetlights, or turn them off and create social problems. So why not look at how we invest in the future? Why not take up some of these challenges and be proactive, not reactive, in budgeting?

There will be another five per cent increase in public transport fares, although that will not affect my area badly because we do not have a great deal of public transport. We are at the end of the queue all the time, and I have to write letters on a regular basis to try to get public transport. I have a problem now in that the special needs children who need to go to Bunbury cannot get on a bus. They need to go to Bunbury for schooling, and the parents of two kids have made a very big decision to take them down to Bunbury to the special needs school, but there is no transport. They get an allowance to drive their kids up and down, and it is 60 kilometres each way and they have to come home for the six hours in the middle of the day. They get an allowance of 20c a kilometre. What a shameful exhibition from this government to people very much in need. They have done the right thing for their children, but they have been let down by this government. Why not get some proper public transport out there? Why not provide some rebate so that it is worthwhile for people to travel in their cars? Those people do not have the best car, so now they are looking at how they are going to manage. Their kids are improving on a daily basis, but they have been let down by a miserable government.

There is no doubt that people are experiencing hip-pocket pain, and will be for some time. I am very concerned about the \$5 million saving from cuts to electoral office staffing, as shown in the budget papers. The electorate of Collie-Preston is spread over many areas. The cuts will probably not hurt the smaller, thumbnail-size electorates, but mine spreads from Capel to Eaton to Collie. We do all sorts of jobs in the Collie region. We do not have government support services there. We do not have a Water Corporation office; we do that job. We do the Homeswest work; we are a de facto office for Homeswest. It is great politically, and I make no bones about that, but we are the go-to office. Now, if someone is off with the flu I will have to shut that office because we get some unsavoury characters in there. Last week was a classic example. We got a phone call from the hospital and we were told that a certain gentleman who has a major drug problem was upset and headed our way. In that situation, I am not going to leave one staffer there. I am going to shut the front door and put a sign on it that says, "Shut due to cuts by the Barnett government." I am not going to put my staff at risk. One time when the same person was headed our way, the police came down and mentioned it to the staff and said "Be careful; he's a bit out of control." I can tell members that he did come in and he was quite well mannered. But imagine what would have happened and the problems that would have faced that one staffer had I been out on the road somewhere. It is ludicrous that we have gone backwards. When I started as the member for Collie, there were 12 500 people in my electorate. There are now 23 000 people in my electorate, and the government says we are going to have a reduction in the number of staff. That does not sit well with me. I hope that the Community and Public Sector Union will take this matter right through to the end through the arbitration system, on a safety issue as well as a service issue. I think it is a breach of trust to the people who work in those offices. We all know that the full moon scenario happens, and we know what that does to people. This may appear to be a small thing, but it is about delivering services and keeping faith with the public, because if there is no faith with the public, what is the point of us being here? We need to spend money to provide these services.

There is other hip-pocket pain in the budget. There is a \$36 increase in the cost of private vehicle licensing. There is a \$12 increase in third party insurance charges. There is a \$4 increase in the cost of a driver's licence.

We have already spoken about the \$60, on average, increase in electricity charges. There is an \$80 increase in water charges. Not a great deal has been said about that. There is a \$15 increase in the emergency services levy. That is without getting to land tax. That may be okay in some cases for people with investment properties. But they will pass it on to the people who are renters—the people who can least afford it. So we have this whirlpool that is taking people down the drain.

At the same time, the number of jobs is shrinking at a remarkable rate. I am sure everyone in this room would know that over the past six months, the job market has dried up considerably. That is probably more the case in the south west, because major projects have now finished, and people are moving on. That has created a surplus of rental properties. But people will need to try to get their money back somehow.

The other thing that I have heard in the last week is that the welfare and social service agencies are concerned about where the money will come from to enable them to continue to provide the services that they are providing. I do not know where that money will come from. When we ask those agencies to tighten their belts, we find out that the people in those agencies are already one of the lowest-paid groups. The agencies cannot reduce wages or drop off staff, because most of the staff work only two or three days a week, and they are doing a great job in keeping some balance within our community. When that drops off, we will have huge problems.

Another problem is that the incidence of antisocial behaviour will go through the roof. Putting on extra police officers will be a waste of time, because they will not be able to keep up. The other point is that if we do put on extra police, where will we put them? We do not have a promise of a new police station in Capel. Just this week, as a member of a parliamentary committee, I went to Katanning Police Station. I have never seen such an appalling police station. It is clean and tidy, but it is a rabbit warren. It needs to have a bulldozer put through it and start again. It causes its own problems because of the way it is set up. They have moved a wall and they have moved this and moved that. We need that sort of infrastructure. We need the basic infrastructure that we have paid for through our taxes. We do not need the dreams of Colin Barnett. We do not need the dreams of grandeur. We do not need an Elizabeth Quay. We do not need Colin Barnett to say, “I am going to open it.” I am sure his idea was that he would bring in the Queen for the opening. I do not think the Queen will still be alive when he wants to open it. He might bring in the new King. That is because he wants the historic value of having his name up in lights. I think that is a wrong priority and he is going the wrong way.

Several members interjected.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I hear some laughter in the background! I ask each and every member on the back bench—I know they will not be able to speak—“Do you support the budget wholeheartedly?” There is deafening silence! One of them is running out! I think the answer is found in the silence that has come from the back bench. Not one person supported the budget!

Mr J.M. Francis: I do!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: No; the minister cannot have a second bite just because he realises that members opposite are in *Hansard* as saying nothing.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Why did I ask that question? My notes have reminded me. I have sat in here and been berated by the Premier about the mining tax and the carbon tax, and I have stood up and have said that I agree with both of them—and I come from a mining town. I have stood up and put my position. I would like to see the backbench of the Liberal Party and the members of the National Party stand up and put their position strongly about where they stand with this budget. I would like them to go through the line items and say, “I support the 12 per cent there; I support the five per cent there.” Are they going to do that, or are they going to sit there and be mute and have “Col Pot” over there tell them what to do? I want to hear them, when they make their speeches, say why they support all these increases in the budget. They need to stand up and be counted.

I turn now to education. We all know that Collie has really dipped out, because the promise of the \$7 million has not come forward. What concerns me is why all the school principals have been called in to attend a budget briefing on Friday. Will they be told to shut up and cop what they are not getting, or will they be told to wait four years and they might get something? It is not in the forward estimates. Why are they being called in? I would like to be a fly on the wall for that meeting. That will include my high school principal, who stood out the front of the school and said, “We’re getting \$7 million”. He was very happy about that. He is not too happy this week; quite the opposite. He is a very dark-skinned gentleman, and I think his hair has gone a bit whiter. He is not to be seen. Funny about that. He was also in the Jaimee Motion advertisement. There is a picture of him standing out the front of the school. That was the Jaimee Motion—or was it the “Lack of Motion” or the “No Motion”—that is happening in the Collie electorate. Jaimee Motion disappeared immediately after the election. She must have known that something like this was coming up and that it would hurt her future if she wants to be in the political arena in the Collie area. Her promises are being trashed. It is quite sad to think that a candidate such as Jaimee

has been taken to the cleaners by the Liberal Party. She has been chopped up and spat out. That is what has happened. They have not honoured her promises.

One of my favourite topics, and one that has been brought up in this place for quite some years, is Coalfields highway. The Treasurer went out there bumping his gums and saying there is \$11 million for Coalfields highway. No, there is not. There is \$500 000 of new money. The \$10 million is old money that had not been spent from previous budgets. Is that due to the incompetence of Main Roads? I will ask the Treasurer that question. Is Main Roads not capable of working on those roads; or is the Treasurer saying to Main Roads, “Hang onto that money; we need it to balance our budget for next year”, at a cost to the people who use that road? The Treasurer himself has approved an extra number of trucks to go along that road to cart wheat. We know that six deaths have occurred on that road in a short period. There will now be more wheat trucks on that road. At the same time, if Bunbury port goes ahead with the export of coal, there will be more coal trucks on that road. But, no, the majority of the money that will be spent on that road will be spent in four years’ time. We have seen what happened in the hills recently with the car crash and with people being knocked over. In the interim, will there be any roadworks on that road? There will be very little in the way of roadworks because there is not much money for that. It is in the Premier’s forward estimates—which he does not believe in! So how can we have faith that that money really will be there in the future? I do not think it will be. That money is now going into the National Party’s area and into the seat of Wagin, because people will be carting grain from Wagin and Narrogin and onto that road. A lot of the member for Wagin’s constituents travel along that road. It is an appalling road on which to put more road trains. The reason that road trains will be going along that road is because Main Roads underestimated the fact that the other two roads, which it thought would be feeder roads, are not up to the standard to take road trains. So all those road trains will be travelling on that one road.

There are up to 80 grain truck movements on one day, and to put the coal trucks on top of that means there will be over 100 road trains a day on that highway from Collie to Roelands. The 80 grain trucks will be from Collie to Arthur River Road. It is a dangerous situation. We have been there before; I sympathise with the families of the people who lost their lives in the hills area, and we do not want to see that happen again. People think I bang on and harp on about this, but I have seen the pain and I know the split that it causes in families when the blame game comes into play. I ask again: Is it incompetence on the part of Main Roads? Why has the work not started when \$10 million was in the budget for it last year? Why has the bill to excise land out of the national parks not been brought in, when over two years ago the Treasurer had a crack at me saying, “I hope there is support for the bill when it comes in”? I will support it wholeheartedly when the damn bill is brought in here! The bill has not been introduced because it is another way to hold back money—to use excuses. I was asked who complained about it. I understand that only one person had a problem with his property being bought, but this is not a state problem; the government can go around it or pay compensation. It needs to be sorted out and sorted out very quickly.

Mr M. McGowan: Mick, how much new money is in the budget?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: The budget item has \$10.5 million but of that only \$500 000 is new—\$10 million has been carried over. It is very similar to what happened with the bike paths hitting a spending hump because the money was carried over. The government did not spend the money last year to try to balance the budget for this year. It is easy: if the government does not spend money in its last year running into an election, people lose focus on the ball and say yes to things, and suddenly the government has money for next year. The government does not have more money. It has not spent the money in the previous year, so the government is a year behind. The government can do that over four years and get away with it. I think it is about time the Premier took a bit more control of the budget because he has sat there and copped a fair bit of flak about it for the Treasurer, but the man is incompetent—he is hopeless. The Treasurer is holding money back and holding the state back. He then helped the Premier out with wrong priorities. We have to work at doing things that people want—things such as roads and hospitals, not Elizabeth Quay.

I am very surprised by the number of people who said to me that maybe we should not build the new football stadium. I know that both sides of politics committed to one. The people of Collie and the south west generally are mad on football, but some of my feedback is that maybe the stadium be put on hold so that we can get basic services such as health and education, which sadly are going missing.

Also, the dollar has plunged quite dramatically over the last few months—it always happens when I go on holiday! The Australian dollar was as low as US88c the other day. This will mean that local holidays will be on the increase. People will say, “I have lost 15 per cent of my spending money if I go overseas.” Why then has money been withdrawn from the tourism budget?

Mr C.J. Barnett: We haven’t at all. We have increased it.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I heard the question and answer today, but the industry is saying there are problems. The south west, as we know, is a very much liked tourist destination. Sometimes it is a little expensive, but with the exchange rate falling, more people will start to look towards home for a holiday instead of going to Bali or Thailand. We should encourage people. We should put a lot of work in to get people to the south west. There are no major infrastructure projects taking place down there. There are no Worsley alumina refinery or Bluewaters power station construction projects; they have finished. We need something to stimulate the economy in the south west, and I believe that putting extra money into tourism to encourage people to the south west is one way to do this. The north west is an tourist alternative and it works out very well because we are in opposite seasons; that is, it is great to be up north now when it is warm, but it is too hot in the north over the Christmas period and people come down south. Why not spend money to encourage people to book their holidays now to ensure they have accommodation to encourage people to stay onshore to spend their money? I think that is a job of government, and this government is not doing it. I cannot see why anyone would not put their hand up if they are not getting support from the government. The tourism industry over the last five or six years has taken a couple of big hits, including a reduction in the size of offices and reduced money for local tourist centres with funds being put into central command. The trouble with centralisation is that a big stash of money is located in one place, and someone says that \$10 million or \$20 million is in that place, so we had better take some out and use it for something else. That is exactly what has happened in this budget. Local tourist centres have been funded out of a central fund. This no longer happens. Support is needed. The government cannot expect ratepayers of those small towns to pick up the tourism advertising budget because the cost of advertising makes this impossible.

I make few final points on some lines in the budget. I give the Minister for Police a pat on the back. I am happy about the money for remote police stations as I think this is well deserved and well earned. Police officers become dogsbodies in country towns; they are never off duty, and what they do and the places where they work are often not very nice.

Another point is the budget blowout on Muja A and B. It is very difficult for me to stand up here and say the project should be canned, because many people in my electorate work there. The disgraceful situation is that the Premier said this project will cost the taxpayer nothing, and now it will cost \$330 million, which is the same amount as the surplus of the state budget. It is blown! I refer to the deception that went with that process, where the government had private companies, \$2 shelf companies, blown. I have some good news on that matter: the guys who are still working on that refurbishment have the second section going, which means that three turbines will be going. They told me they ran it last weekend and it went very well. Therefore, there will be some money back from the plant, and that might help pay for the solar system debacle. I am not really sure, but I would like to think that there might be a few dollars back.

This would have to be the worst budget I have seen in my political career.

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka) [3:38 pm]: I, too, rise to speak on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2013–14 Bill 2013 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2013–14 Bill 2013. This cognate debate is really the post-budget speech—a budget that came down some months after it was due and would normally have been handed down. This budget has caused massive embarrassment, with the solar panels issue and the undermining of the fiscal action plan. The government’s financial management is being questioned by not only those on the opposition benches, but also those on the government benches, and that must be cause for some considerable concern to many members who sit on the backbench, if not in cabinet. Certainly, it seems quite coincidental, bizarre or machinated that the budget has come down in the context of a federal campaign. The federal Liberal opposition has complained loudly and solidly about the federal Labor government’s level of debt. The federal Labor government has pointed out that that situation is due to the global financial crisis. There is always an excuse, but the difference is that the federal Labor government has worked towards fiscal responsibility by trying to bring the budget back into surplus.

Mr S.K. L’Estrange interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: If we are talking about fiscal responsibility, which I am about to go into, and if we think about the debate that we are having at this point, the member for Churchlands needs to question why his Premier said during last year’s budget debate that the state government’s debt would not go beyond \$20 billion. The Premier thought that that was the level that the previous Treasurer said it would peak at. I do not know whether the member for Churchlands was in the chamber when the member for Victoria Park quoted him as saying that net debt would peak in 2014–15.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Frankly, I am not interested in talking to the member ever, and we know that.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: No, member!

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I have my contribution to make; I do not need you to interject! You have no right to interject! I will continue with my contribution, thank you very much. I would ask for protection from this particular member, whom I have no interest in engaging with.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): It does not really matter which member it is, member for Mirrabooka. Member for North West Central, I ask that the member be heard in silence.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Mr Acting Speaker, I am happy to take interjections from many people in this chamber, but he is not one of them.

The Premier has said previously that he would not rack up debt beyond \$20 billion, yet in managing the economy, it looks as though the debt will increase to \$28 billion, which is \$8 billion beyond the benchmark that the Premier set, leaving our children to carry a \$47 billion debt in 10 years. Members on this side of the house, as well as those on the government side, have demonstrated that this government is simply spending beyond its means and significantly more than it earns. The Liberal member for Hillarys succinctly showed this, but I disagree with his assessment—this is what I was putting to the member for Churchlands—that the federal Labor government is acting in the same reckless manner as the state Liberal government. At least the federal Labor government is managing its budget towards a surplus. A surplus continues to be one of the principal priorities and foundations of its budget management. This government has none of that. This government's spending is simply out of control. That is a significant concern, but what really concerns me is that even though the government will go into debt, it is still not delivering on some of its major commitments.

One of the Liberal Party's major commitments in the seat of Mirrabooka was the Metro Area Express light rail. People would know, had they heard some of my speeches, that I have argued loudly for more effective and efficient public transport in Mirrabooka. Certainly, in the last term of government I did a comprehensive survey of the community and worked to raise the issue of the necessity for effective and efficient public transport in the eastern suburbs corridor, which includes Mirrabooka and Alexander Heights. The house is also aware that I believe that heavy rail would better serve the people of Mirrabooka, particularly heavy rail along Reid Highway, which was the Labor Party's undertaking. Many people in that community want to travel from east to west, not just directly into the city. I am concerned that the fully funded, fully costed MAX rail is not the truth of the matter. I think the member for Victoria Park said that it was a dog of a budget. I am a bit worried that the MAX rail might be a pup of a transport system. I am concerned that, despite the government racking up massive debt, only 22 per cent of the \$1.9 billion for the MAX light rail has been allocated.

The Minister for Health, who has just come into the chamber, would well know that when the previous government committed to Fiona Stanley Hospital, it set aside funds for it. We may argue that the funds were not sufficient, but it was an extraordinarily substantial amount to ensure that Fiona Stanley Hospital would go ahead and would be financially underpinned because the Labor government at the time put away the money that it thought was needed for it. Given that only 22 per cent of the \$1.9 billion is being funded, I am very concerned that the MAX rail will not be delivered in the way it was promised to the people of Mirrabooka. Only \$432 million has been allocated across the budget. Given that the language has changed and the government is now saying that the light rail will be to the northern suburbs, my concern is that the people of Mirrabooka are about to be betrayed and the light rail will not be extended to Mirrabooka by the revised 2020 start date; in fact, it probably will not be delivered in that year by the government because it did not sway the people of Mirrabooka to have a Liberal member of Parliament. That is my concern. Given the government's change in language, I will certainly pursue with the Minister for Transport that the light rail will go to Mirrabooka, not just to the northern suburbs. Further, I am concerned that there are indications that it will look at privatising the MAX light rail. That would see the people of Mirrabooka effectively subsidising the rest of the public transport system, because it would have to pay for the capital costs of the light rail system. That causes me great concern.

My other concern with the budget is that, despite the announcement of a review of the Equal Opportunity Commission, which has not yet been undertaken, the commission has received yet another cut to its budget, which will result in a decrease of about six staff. I understand that that decrease is likely to be in the substantive equity unit of the Equal Opportunity Commission. This unit was set up in 2005. The policy framework for the substantive equity unit seeks very much to ensure that government departments review their services and deliver a fair and equitable service. We know that the WA public service should provide government services that are accessible to all citizens and it should deliver those services for their wellbeing and to their benefit. If the government is committed to things such as Closing the Gap for Aboriginal people in terms of health, housing, education and other issues, then abolishing the substantive equity unit of the Equal Opportunity Commission is

not an indication of that commitment. In fact, it is miserly and mean. It means that the diverse community of Mirrabooka that I represent, and the diverse communities of Western Australia more generally, will be undermined. We will continue to have a public service that does not look at its outcomes or at what it is doing in the delivery of services to people and ensuring that everyone experiences that equality that we in this place so often talk about. This 13 per cent cut in the 2014–15 budget is of great concern; it is subsequent to a review being announced, but without the outcomes of that review. It is not clear that that review will be a widely consulted review. Let us remember that this is a proud piece of legislation that was introduced in 1984 and has served our community well to ensure that we have a modern-day community that understands the importance of equitable access and outcomes. It is very concerning to me that there will not be wide consultation and that without awaiting the outcomes of the review, the government has seen fit to slash funding for the Equal Opportunity Commission after its budget already had been significantly cut in 2012–13. I think it cut around \$150 000 from this agency, which although it is very small, is of great benefit to our community.

It is not enough for the government to rely on online training programs, like the one released recently by the Office of Multicultural Interests, Diverse WA. Although that is commendable, it is not a way of delivering equitable outcomes to those people who access services. All that is about is broadening workers' understanding of diversity and the perspective of different cultural backgrounds. It certainly does not show one of the issues that is regularly raised with me by the African community, which is that the outcomes of the education system are substantively unfair for many of its young people, so that they become disillusioned. They leave the system and then become part of the community of disadvantage that gets involved with the law through the justice system and we end up with quite frightful articles like that which we have seen recently in *The West Australian*, which do not reflect the benefit and good being done by many newly arrived Australians, particularly from the African community. But what it reflects is a number of failings in our government departments to be able to ensure that it delivers equitable outcomes to all those in our community, and that is of grave concern, if that is now being diminished even further by this government.

The Minister for Health will also be aware that a vital perinatal and postnatal mental health visiting service by the Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre has been cut. Although we can see in the Treasurer's speech that a fiscal action plan gives us some big-ticket items, and now there is one item it could not actually deliver on. It seems to me that although this budget is increasing debt at quite an unsustainable rate, it is also cutting at the edges instead of looking at the substantive ways that this government manages the budget. It is small services that seem to be disadvantaged, and it is small services that then cannot deliver to the community because of cuts. The perinatal and postnatal visiting service is one of those small services that ensure that women from multicultural and diverse backgrounds, particularly refugee women who are new to Australia, can visit and assist women if they have perinatal or postnatal mental health issues. This goes to the heart of an experience that I had to deal with recently, when one of the young women in our community had been admitted into King Edward Memorial Hospital because of her mental health issues. Unfortunately, she subsequently took her own life, only 10 days after the birth of her child. There is a great need to identify such mental health issues and to visit these women so they are not left to fend for themselves. It is of great concern that the mental health budget has not made any provision for what is a very small amount of funding to ensure that this vital service continues in the Mirrabooka area.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I am also a bit concerned about the integrated service centre, which I understood the Department of Health had committed to look at in Koondoola and Parkwood. I understood that the health department was going to enter into an agreement for four years; obviously that detail is not in the budget, and these are the things I will ask the Minister for Health about during the estimates hearings. There has been one year of funding, but the four-year contract is yet to be signed, and there is a great deal of uncertainty about its ongoing funding. The commitment was made by the Minister for Health last year that that funding would continue and that it would be —

Dr K.D. Hames: What was this for?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The integrated service centre at Koondoola and Parkwood. I put on notice that I am interested in knowing about that. The Minister for Health committed to a four-year funding contract; one year has passed, and it now does not know what the continuation of its contract will be. As the minister can understand, that has grave impacts for the staff and the workers and also for the school —

Mr W.J. Johnston: And the clients.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: —and the clients; it cannot take on new clients. There are health nurses and counsellors there, and new clients cannot be taken on because of the uncertainty. It seems to me really petty that something that was committed to over a four-year period may be part of this nitpicking in this budget of these small

services, which the government committed to and professed to agree to. But because the government cannot manage it as a strategic issue and cannot manage the big budget, it is all the little services that will end up paying for the government's inability to manage the big-ticket items.

Dr K.D. Hames: We don't get involved much in things like that. There's a department within Health with people who work managing those contracts.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: That would be fine; I would not want the minister to get involved in that necessarily, but he has had to in the past and he committed to the four years. One would think that the minister could rely on the management of his department to be able to do a four-year contract, but he cannot even rely on his department to do a contract for IT over at Fiona Stanley Hospital, and he cannot tell us in the budget how much that is going to cost. That is why I have to bring really small issues to him, as the minister.

Dr K.D. Hames: It doesn't matter. That's what you're supposed to do.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: It is a bit like housing —

Dr K.D. Hames: That's what you're supposed to do, and that's what I respond to. It's fine.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I understand that that is what I am supposed to do, but it is a bit like what is happening in housing. The member for Collie–Preston raised this matter. Everyone in this place will know that we are currently, from our offices—maybe not the member for Churchlands; he probably does not have the same sort of housing problem that I have—managing housing problems. It is poor management of the department when we have people coming into our offices to try to access a service that is clearly deficient. I keep thinking, “What about the people?”

Dr K.D. Hames: I've been doing that for 17 years.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: It did change; I was there when it changed.

Dr K.D. Hames: No way.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: It did change, minister, because I was there when Jim McGinty put better services on the front counter so that people would feel that they were being listened to and that their needs were being dealt with. Do not tell me it did not change. That was probably 20-odd years ago, so I will allow the minister 17 years. To me, these two issues are a demonstration of how the incapacity to globally manage a budget is impacting on a daily basis on the small issues in our communities.

In finishing, I am looking at the proposed housing supply package and wondering whether the 500 new homes to be built within three years will be public housing or will be sold privately to private organisations. If that is the case, it will, in effect, diminish stock. If big blocks containing houses are to be reduced, that will diminish the amount of land available. I wonder also whether the land being looked at is Mirrabooka land at Chesterfield Road.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.