

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.06 pm]: Apologies to the Leader of the Opposition; I was unaware he was seeking the call.

Isn't it great to be back? It is great to be back in the people's house that is the Western Australian Parliament doing what we do best—making the lives of Western Australians better. It is really good to be here. Before I begin my contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate, I acknowledge the contribution of Hon Ken Baston and his fine speech earlier. He has been a very sound member of the Legislative Council for 16 years. I have had the great pleasure of serving on committees with Hon Ken Baston for the last two terms. We have worked very well together. We see the world very, very differently politically but we have a lot in common. I think both of us are happy to get the suit off and get back into some real working clothes. I wish the honourable member and his family all the best in the future. Thank you very much for your service to the Western Australian Parliament and Western Australian people.

The opening of Parliament the other day was fantastic. It was not lost on me that, for the first time in history, at the opening of the Western Australian Parliament on this beautiful piece of land that has been inhabited for thousands of years by our First Australians, we had an official welcome to country in the Parliament. Dr Richard Walley, one of our most highly respected Noongar men, was here to welcome us all to Parliament. It was very touching to sit here only metres from Dr Walley. I found it quite a spine-tingling experience to hear the sounds of the didgeridoo in the chamber and the Whadjuk language spoken by Dr Walley, just as it would have been on this site for thousands of years. I think that was a great initiative by the Parliament and I presume Madam President, and I am sure it will continue. We have an amazing cultural story and an amazing local Noongar history here in Western Australia. Sometimes I do not think we realise the value of that. Later in my contribution today, I will talk about this a little bit more.

It was great to see some funding for cultural tourism announced yesterday. I am really looking forward to how we can better send out the message of our Whadjuk people and Noongar people more broadly. I encourage anybody who travels to Northam to look at the Bilya Koort Boodja Centre for Nyoongar Culture and Environmental Knowledge. People should allow several hours because it is a truly remarkable place that beautifully captures our local Ballardong history.

We had an election, and what a great day that was for those in the community who need a Labor government. We were resoundingly re-elected and gained a further 13 seats in the Legislative Assembly in an unprecedented election result. I am very, very proud to be a part of that. The result in the regions was extraordinary also, and I will talk a little more about that in a while as well.

We now have a situation in which WA Labor has 53 of the 59 Legislative Assembly seats and in a couple of weeks will have 22 of the 36 Legislative Council seats. That is a total of 75 out of a possible 95 seats—extraordinary support from the people of Western Australia and an extraordinary endorsement of the hard work the McGowan government has done, not only in keeping Western Australians safe from COVID-19, which has been an extraordinarily successful mission, but also in repairing the state's finances. I am sure members will remember the debt, deficit and chaos we inherited when we came to government. Under the previous government there was mounting debt and a \$4 billion deficit that popped up each year for someone else to pay in the future. We have turned that around and we are now running surplus budgets again. I think that is to the great credit of the Premier and Hon Ben Wyatt, the former Treasurer. I think the people of Western Australia judged us equally on that.

There is now employment, infrastructure being built and services being provided in places where they were not before. We are getting on with things that had been talked about and talked about, but not acted on. They are now becoming a reality under the McGowan Labor government. I think that is what people saw as our greatest achievement. Yes, they were also happy with the way we managed the COVID-19 pandemic and how the Premier stood up to Clive Palmer, who was supported by the Liberal Party. The Premier stood up to him—he took him on and won—and Western Australians quite rightly then endorsed the McGowan Labor government after the four very successful years we have had since 2017.

The people of regional Western Australia have also spoken and endorsed our government. The Labor Party had the largest number of regional members in the last Parliament, but we will have most of the regional MPs in the forty-first Parliament. I would like to run members through the tally board of regional MPs. There are 34 regional MPs across both houses—18 in this place and 16 in the Legislative Assembly. Of those 34, there is one from the Daylight Saving Party—I am sure there will be a lot more said about that over the coming months and years—and one from Legalise Cannabis WA. The Liberal Party holds four regional seats and the Nationals WA hold seven, but in first place, with the gold medal for regional seats and the biggest endorsement from the regions, is WA Labor, with 21 of the 34 regional seats. That is an astounding endorsement from regional Western Australia.

WA Labor is now the party of the bush again, and I think that is fantastic. We can have a progressive government with a progressive agenda that is driving forward regional Western Australia—the powerhouse of our economy. We are once again the party of the bush. The Labor Party was formed in rural Queensland and we are now back out of town, so to speak. I am very proud of that.

There are also a record 43 women among the 95 members in this Parliament. That is an outstanding achievement, especially for those in the Labor Party who, 25 or 30 years ago, fought for and won affirmative action rules, which have completely changed the face of our party for the better. Now that we have this strong cohort of women in both houses of our Parliament, we wonder why we did not get on and do it years ago! Some of the female members in the early days—Cheryl Davenport and others—fought for and won affirmative action to have equal numbers of women and men in Parliament, and that has now come to reality. What a great day for our Parliament and for Western Australia.

Thirteen of our 22 Labor members in the Legislative Council are women—more than half. That is going to completely change the make-up of this place for the better. We have great diversity in our Parliament. There are members of Indian descent and Chinese descent. Now, for the first time, we will have a member of African descent, when Ayor Makur Chuot comes into this house in the coming weeks. She had some even bigger news than that in her life recently, with the arrival of her baby! We look forward to Ayor taking her seat here—the first MP of African descent to be elected to the Western Australian Parliament and, indeed, I believe, any Australian Parliament.

We are all looking forward to working with the new MLCs as they enter Parliament, and we are all looking forward to listening to the contributions from those who are leaving. To all those who are leaving the Parliament, whether by their own choice or by the choice of voters, I wish them well in their future endeavours. It is an interesting job that we do, members. Sometimes we have to go back out into unfamiliar situations for employment when we leave here, and I feel for those who wanted to stay but were unable to get the support they needed. I wish them well and also those who are retiring of their own accord, and I look forward to hearing their contributions, as we heard from Hon Ken Baston today.

The Labor Party had a remarkable result in the Agricultural Region. Our primary vote was 45.8 per cent. If someone had told me eight years ago that that was possible for a Labor government in the most conservative region in Western Australia, I would not have believed them, but it has happened. The voters of the Agricultural Region have turned to us in a way that they never have before. I thank every single one of them, whether they have voted Labor all their lives and are true believers who have stuck with us through thick and thin, whether they are voters who have voted Labor in the past and have come back to Labor, or whether they are one of those voters—and there are many—who have trusted us with their valuable vote for the first time. I thank you all equally and say to you that we will not let you down. We will work closely with you all to deliver what you hope we will deliver. We will deliver everything we promised you and we will live up to your expectations, because if we do not, there will be an opportunity in four years for you to change your vote. We want you to stay with us.

Hon Laurie Graham is retiring on our side and will be replaced by two new incoming Labor members, Shelley Payne from Esperance and Sandra Carr from Geraldton. I really look forward to having those women in this place representing the Agricultural Region; it is going to be a great forty-first Parliament with them here.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank our candidates. I took charge of the three more rural electorates for this campaign. I helped campaign with candidates in Moore, Central Wheatbelt and Roe. I thank Barni Norton for once again running in Moore. She got to within about eight per cent for Labor in that seat, so I think we can have another run at that one in the next election. I thank Michelle Nelson, a Njaki Njaki woman originally from Merredin, who did an outstanding job in difficult circumstances in the large electorate of Central Wheatbelt, running against the Leader of the Nationals WA in that party's heartland. She won about a 12 per cent swing to Labor also, and is a prospect for the future. I also thank Brad Willis, who once again ran for Labor in Roe and was also extremely successful in gaining a 12 per cent swing to Labor, including winning the primary vote in all Esperance booths. That was an outstanding result for Brad, who also won the booths in Narrogin.

The voters liked what they saw with our candidates, and I thank them all very much, because running for a particularly challenging seat in the Agricultural Region can be a very difficult job. They all campaigned with aplomb and we could not have asked any more of any of them. They were all outstanding candidates, which led to the support we got in both houses, and especially in the upper house, with a third MLC elected in that region. I thank them.

I also want to thank everyone who stood at a polling booth, letterboxed leaflets, came to a branch meeting or helped us in any way; there were hundreds of them across the Agricultural Region. People came out to help and support what we were about. People liked what they saw and wanted to be involved. I thank every one of them. I will catch up with them all over the coming months.

I am very humbled by the result in the Agricultural Region and by the result statewide. As we all know when we face the people, we are never quite sure what they are thinking and whether they will support us. I know one thing

for sure: they never get it wrong. When voters cast their valuable vote, they cast it for a reason. I am very pleased that so many of them cast their vote our way.

We have been out to the electorate over the last four years. A lot of our communities had not received the support that they had hoped for from former governments. They had been very loyal supporters of conservative governments. We continued to find a backlog of projects. Over the past four years, we worked with the communities and identified areas of need. We probably have around 200 communities in the Agricultural Region. We have 61 local governments. We have an extraordinary array of communities. Larger ones have up to 40 000 people, such as Geraldton. Smaller communities have only a handful of inhabitants. They all have areas of need and things that they want to achieve. I was really proud to work with hundreds of groups and individuals across the Agricultural Region to find out what they needed and to make a commitment to them, come election time, about how we might be able to help them. Often in our small communities, the same six people are on the footy club committee, the tennis club committee and the school board. Sometimes it is just good to get around to those people, show them some support and show them that the government does appreciate and care about what they are doing and wants to help in a small way. It takes an awful lot of fundraising to build a new facility in a small community. Ultimately, the community has to pay. We were delighted to be able to support many of our regional communities with the projects that were most important to them. When I went to a community, I would ask, “What’s the most important area of need? What’s the thing that you really want in your community that would help make it better for you?” They were very open about what it was. Often it was something that had been talked about for 20 years and had not happened.

I will run through a few of those community groups today because I want to acknowledge all their work in the community. We were unable to fund some projects. We will work with them over the next four years and look at how we can help them. Today I want to take the opportunity to talk about some of these amazing individuals in our regional communities. These community groups do so much work. So many volunteer hours go into all these organisations.

I will start with the seat of Roe. We want to fund a lighting upgrade of the hockey grounds. As many members would know, Narrogin is a hockey centre. International games between the Australian hockey team and the Dutch hockey team have been played down there. Bevan George and some other very impressive hockey players come from Narrogin. The hockey grounds have had turf down for a while. Some lighting was installed around the grounds. With the upgrade and changes that have occurred in lighting technology, we were delighted to be able to pledge \$165 000, which is about 50 per cent of the funding, to make that new lighting project a reality, and hopefully attract some more international games to Narrogin. The Upper Great Southern Hockey Association has a tremendous committee and it does some great work. There is a great participation rate in the upper great southern area. I was really happy to be able to help it.

As members would know, there is a lot of volunteer labour in our speedway clubs—they make it work. The Katanning Speedway Club has been running a generator for its lighting. We were able to fund the \$35 000 upgrade to its electrical systems so it can now hook on to mains power and save a lot of the hassle that goes with running a generator. We will also fund the upgrade of some of its amenities. It was delighted that someone came along and asked what it wanted and delivered on that commitment.

The Pink Lake Country Club in Esperance uses quite a lot of electricity. We are going to provide some solar panels for the roof, which will save a lot of money, and be good for the environment as well.

The iconic Esperance community train has fallen into disrepair. We are going to help the community refurbish that train mechanically and get it back running again, so that the next generation of kids in Esperance can ride on the train at local events.

The Karinya aged-care hostel in Narrogin is an outstanding facility that services the upper great southern well. It has a bit of a problem when the wind blows the front door open. We will arrange for an airlock to be installed so that it is more secure in windy weather. Also, in the current environment in which we find ourselves, we thought it was a good idea to keep the air inside.

We are also going to fund a lighting project at the Ports Football Club in Esperance. Its lighting is pretty 1980s looking, so it is time that we upgraded it. The main ground in Esperance is run by the shire. Night football games will be able to be played there. The upgrade will be done in such a way that some more lights can be added in the future, and even night cricket will be able to be played down in Esperance. It is a very sports-oriented community. Well done to the Ports Footy Club for working with us.

Hope Community Services needs some office upgrades after a flood that it experienced. We can help out with that. We are going to help Esperance Speedway with its safety fence so it can upgrade to the next tier of track. Esperance Bowling Club has turned one of its rinks into a beach volleyball rink. That works really well. It is a lot more sheltered than playing beach volleyball on the beach. The rink is no longer used for bowls. We will fund the lighting so that beach volleyball can be played in the evenings during the summer, which is a great initiative.

We are also going to help the Esperance Kart Club with its lighting and the Esperance Mountain Bike Association with signage through the mountain bike track that runs through some bush just out of town. It probably has the best view of Esperance. Esperance Bay Yacht Club has a program that enables young sailors, usually of late primary school and early high school age, whose parents do not have a yacht to come down and use the local club's sailing boats. Some very successful sailors have come out of that program over the years. The boats need upgrading as they are getting a bit old. We will help out with that, and provide everyone in Esperance with the opportunity to learn to sail. That will be great. The Esperance Table Tennis Club needs new tables. We are going to help that club. The Esperance Motor Cycle Club needs to upgrade its facilities. We are going to help with those upgrades. We are also going to work with the Narrogin RSL to upgrade the memorial park by installing an all-weather honour board. Stainless steel boards will be installed outside, alongside the statues, which will help to give visitors a more poignant experience as they remember those who fell in their service to our country.

We are going to help the Shire of Narrogin. We have a very good relationship with Leigh Ballard, the shire president, and Dale Stewart, the CEO. A lot of projects in Narrogin need funding. We are going to help build a very important patient transfer station out at the airstrip so that patients can get to the Royal Flying Doctor Service more quickly. I am really looking forward to that. We also built the helipad at the hospital for when the emergency helicopter is needed. That is a great improvement in safety for those who need assistance.

We will also help fund a major upgrade of the facilities at the Katanning Country Club. The place is a little tired and rundown, so we will provide some funding to that club. We will help refurbish a room at Waratah Lodge and do some general maintenance around the lodge. It is a great facility in Wagin that provides really good service for the elderly in the community. As members would know, 30 per cent of people in a lot of our regional towns are 70 years and older. We have an aged population. We want them to be able to stay in their communities during their senior years. Upgraded facilities such as Waratah Lodge and Karinya certainly help us do that.

The Friends of Piesse Park want to build an eco-cafe in the park, so when people go to Katanning, they can sit around the new Piesse Park and enjoy a coffee and the amenity down there. I am looking forward to seeing the work of that very active group in Katanning.

I would like to mention Graham Cooper and his team at the Esperance and Districts Agricultural Society. We are going down to the Esperance show this year. I have become a sponsor of the show. Last year's show was cancelled due to COVID-19. I am really looking forward to the show returning. The society needs a new forklift, so we will help fund that. The society needs it pretty soon; it is keen to get that new forklift to get ready for this year's show.

Tourists have to pull into a very small, poky and quite unsafe visitors parking area when they come to look at the attractions in Ravensthorpe. We are going to fix that and make it a better experience for them.

Anyone who has been to Wagin will know that the Wagin Historical Village is an amazing little village, and I encourage members to go have a look for themselves. The government is going to help Max Bell and his team at the Wagin Historical Village upgrade some security and put in some cameras and display areas because the museum is outgrowing its building, so we are going to have to help with that.

We are going to help with new much needed audiovisual equipment at the Kojonup sports complex for the Kojonup Sports Alliance. Kojonup is a growing town. It is a really strong community with a very strong sports focus, and we all know that the great Stephen Michael is from Kojonup as is Peter Bell, so some terrific footballers have come from that part of the world.

Hope FM community radio needs some upgrades to its broadcasting equipment.

The Esperance Ocean Safety and Support Group wants to do some high-resolution satellite mapping of the seabed off Esperance to help us try to understand why some areas of that coast are more dangerous than others when it comes to attacks from great white sharks. We will work with it to help facilitate that and to see whether we can find some patterns in the tragic attacks in Esperance.

The Wheatbelt Cycling Collective encourages cycling in the upper great southern area, and we are going to work with it to put in some trails and signage to help people enjoy that beautiful part of the world down throughout the Dryandra area. That is what we are able to deliver in the electorate of Roe. There are a significant number of projects there. A lot of community groups have benefited from what we have been able to deliver in the electorate of Roe and I thank all of them for their cooperation over the last four years. Some community groups were getting a little bit tired of waiting for us, but we came through in the end, and we will deliver for them. I am sure the communities will be better for it.

We also worked with a lot of groups and the Central Wheatbelt electorate and were able to help fund a lot of projects and community groups and organisations there. Hyden has had an off-road racing culture down there since the 1980s, and we want to capture that in a museum and look at some of the older cars and the way that they were built over the years. Anyone who goes to Hyden can go to Wave Rock, and they will also be able to go to the lace

museum and the toy soldier museum, and they will also be able to see an off-road HQ at the Hyden off-road racing vehicle display facility.

The Merredin Men's Shed was after a forklift, and we helped it with that. We were also looking at an arts centre in York and how we can support the community to help make that a reality. We have a tremendous arts population in York. A lot of people have moved from the city to that beautiful town to have a quieter lifestyle and to, I presume, find the inspiration to take their creativity to the next level. I thank Jenny Garroun and everyone involved in the arts community in York.

The boards in the Link Theatre Northam have been tread by none other than Hon David Templeman, the singing politician, who has performed there. We were able to help the Link theatre with some refurbishments out the back of its kitchen and bar area, upgrades to other facilities and increased disability access to the theatre, which we think is very important. Everyone should be able to enjoy the wonderful shows that are being put on at the Link Theatre Northam. There is an upcoming show called *Princess Whatshername*, so I encourage everyone to get along and book some tickets for that and see the great work that Wendy Byfield and those do at the Link theatre.

The Labor Party has a very strong railway history and railway culture, so we are going to put some money towards the preservation of the old Northam railway station. There is an old wood shed there that was built before the station. Anyone who has seen the old railway station in Northam will know that it is a magnificent building. It captures the architecture of that era, the importance of rail to the wheatbelt and the Northam community and the jobs that came with that, and now the industrial history we have in Northam.

For the Bilya Koort Boodja Centre for Nyoongar Culture and Environmental Knowledge, we are going to up the ante with some 3D displays that will be more interactive and will increase the Nyoongar Ballardong experience. We are looking forward to that one.

At Wyalkatchem, the Wyalkatchem CBH Agricultural Museum needs a bigger shed because so many people are donating some of their old farm equipment. It is great to have that equipment restored by the museum and be put on display for people of my son's generation and beyond to be able to see just how tough it was sitting out there in the middle of the night on an old tractor with no cab. The museum actually has a John Deere Waterloo Boy, which is very rare and one of John Deere's early tractors. It is housed at Wyalkatchem, and I encourage everyone to go have a look at that. Robert Holdsworth and the crew have done a great job there, and I am really happy to be able to work with their shire to expand their museum.

Also in York, we have the York environmental discovery centre. This came out of a conversation on Australia Day last year. There is a disused tennis club on the banks of the Avon River, and the York environmental discovery centre was born from a discussion with the River Conservation Society in York. It is going to move into that old clubroom, which is right on the riverbank, and run an awful lot of river restoration projects. We could look at running a range of programs out of there. It is a really good outcome for a disused building that was looking pretty awful, with a magnificent grapevine out the front that we can trim and get back into shape. Therefore, I really look forward to working with the River Conservation Society and making the York environmental discovery centre an interpretive centre for the Avon River, and hearing the great stories that come along the Avon River with our Ballardong past. I look forward to that becoming a reality.

Similarly, regarding the Wundowie labour heritage project, I have been wanting to progress it for many years. Neil Byrne was a magnificent labour person who had tried to capture the Wundowie history, and it is a remarkable history. Wundowie is the birthplace of the Western Australian iron ore industry, which had low-grade coal and iron ore. It was decided that after the war we had to produce our own steel and iron ore, and that foundry operated up till the late 1980s. In the end, the iron ore came in from Koolyanobbing on the railway line. But it has a terrific labour history of the people, mainly migrants, who came out to work at that foundry after the Second World War. The design of Wundowie is unique and the great community is working there to help preserve that labour history. We certainly want to get around that project.

Beverly Offroad Motorsports Association wanted to upgrade its facilities.

The Northam Returned and Services League of Australia is doing a Vietnam Memorial, and we were able to help contribute to that. We always like to get around the RSL. It is a great organisation and the Northam sub-branches do some fantastic work in the Northam community, and we are really happy to be able to help with that.

The Goomalling Football Club's oval is dead, because the dam is dry. We were able to help the footy club put in some tanks so that we can fill those with scheme water when we have to. I am very pleased to say that some of the recent rains have replenished some of the dams, but we need a plan B for when the dams run out and with climate change they are running out more regularly. Our oval was once the envy of the Mortlock Football League, and it now needs a plan to keep it watered and green all year round for all the sports that are played on it.

The Wundowie Men's Shed is going to get solar panels, so we are going to help them with that to save a bit of money on electricity bills.

We are working with the Shire of Pingelly in repairing the flooring in the town hall to create an art space in the middle of town. Pingelly is a very proactive community. I have worked quite closely with one of the leaders in that community over the last couple of years and that is none other than Hon Helen Morton, a former member of this place. She has done a very clever thing and retired up to the Agricultural Region, to Pingelly. I am looking forward to working with the Shire of Pingelly and making that project a reality.

The Brookton railway station project—we are looking at how we can get that one back to its former glory. It is a beautiful old building in the middle of Brookton that needs some attention.

One of the projects that I am particularly proud of is the Merredin water tank. Anyone who has driven to Kalgoorlie will have seen the big old water tank on the side of the road at Merredin. It was going to be pulled down as the Public Transport Authority decided that it did not need it anymore and the tank was in pretty rough shape. But it is going to be restored and refurbished as a tourism icon in Merredin, so on your way out to Kalgoorlie, check that out. Spend some time in Merredin.

The good community of Popanyinning is going to get a shelter at its community ground. There is a very small, common community space. Popanyinning is very small community but very proactive. It just loves a get-together and a barbecue and a few drinks from time to time, so we are going to make a nice little shelter there so they do not have to sit out in the rain.

The second edition of *humans of the wheatbelt* is out. Anyone sitting in the chamber who has a spare minute might like to google “humans of the wheatbelt”. It is a take-off of the Humans of New York website and has the most amazing stories of people who live in our part of the world. I encourage everyone to get online and look at the website or to get a copy of the book.

Stryka Fight Team in Northam is run by the very committed Guy Mead, who, for no benefit to himself, teaches boxing, mixed martial arts and other forms of fighting to a lot of our young community members, especially those who might be challenged to make the right choices all the time. They have to work their way onto the team by doing community service, such as chopping wood. They have to be part of what the Stryka Fight Team is doing in order to make it onto the team. There are 11 members of the team, who are representing the town particularly well in competitions. The team needs a portable octagonal cage so they can fight the MMA style of fighting rather than fighting, unsafely, in a boxing ring. We are going to help fund a cage and a trailer to transport it to all the bouts and events the team goes to. It will make a tremendous difference because I think that more kids will want to get involved in the Stryka Fight Team if they can pick up the MMA style of fighting. It will help kids make better choices. I have already seen some positive benefits, such as kids attending school, because that is a criterion for being on the team, less youth crime in Northam and fewer kids hanging around. That is all because they have a goal to aim for. I am delighted to be able to help guide the team to make that a reality.

I will move on to the electorate of Moore, which runs all the way from Northampton to Bindoon, across to Dowerin and up to Dalwallinu. The Chapman Valley Historical Society Heritage Centre is in Nanson. As a young boy, I spent some time in Nanson. We used to play tennis there. I would walk across the old railway bridge, which seemed a lot bigger when I was a little fella than it does now. Pam Batten and her team do a tremendous job keeping the Nanson heritage centre up to scratch. Again, if members are in Geraldton or the midwest, they should go and check it out. Some of the machinery and equipment in the centre is quite remarkable. It has been restored so that it all runs.

The Jurien Bay Sport and Recreation Centre wants a portable stage. Its space could be better utilised if the stage could be packed up and taken away. The Denison Bowling Club was successful in obtaining a community sporting and recreation facilities fund grant to change its grass bowling greens to synthetic turf. The government has also been able to help out the club with funding for lighting; some new shades and shelters, because the old ones will look a bit daggy when the flash new turf is laid; and some seating around the bowling club. The club was particularly happy with that funding.

Moora Speedway is looking to upgrade its track. The club needs to increase the height of the concrete safety barrier. It is quite an extensive job. It requires taking out sections of the old barrier one by one and repouring new concrete. I am particularly pleased the government is able to help the Moora Speedway with a significant funding allocation to undertake that work. Once that is done, the club will be able to host national and international events. Moora is somewhat the speedway capital of regional WA. I think it is Moora and Collie. I apologise to all the other towns that could probably make that claim as well! The Moora community speedway club is very driven—pardon the expression. We have been able to help the club, and I am delighted about that.

The Goomalling Farmers Club premises needs a new roof, and the government is going to put some money towards that. The Bindoon Hall will get some lighting and sound upgrades, because quite a lot of musical and theatrical events are held there. The Toodyay community has established a group called Home of Culture and the Arts and is looking to set up an arts centre in the old St Aloysius Catholic precinct buildings, which are no longer used for that purpose, so that it can bring together creative people to pursue the arts. If we can get that project off the ground, I think it will be great. I am delighted the government was able to provide some money and work with the Toodyay

community. The Toodyay RSLWA has not had clubrooms for 100 years. It has a lease on the old shire depot, which is basically a shed, and the government is going to provide funds to help refurbish it to make it a more appropriate building. Peter Brennan, the outgoing president, has done a fantastic job turning the club around. I am really happy the government is able to provide funding to help the Toodyay RSL establish a home of its own after, I believe, 101 years.

The government is going to help the Chittering Junior Cricket Club by providing funding to build a new sports pavilion in Muchea. There are 500 kids who train there each week and it has two change rooms; it is not enough, especially with the advent of girls playing the sport. The government is going to fund the building of a new clubhouse facility at Muchea; a growing community at the end of the NorthLink. The community will only grow more, so I am happy it will be able to get on with that project.

The government is going to help fund some upgrades to the Bejoording Community Centre. The government is going to work with Morangup Progress Association. I am very pleased the government is going to support the Jurien Bay Country Golf Club with funding so that it can water the golf course. The club has done a lot of work to get the water, but the government contribution will help to make that project a reality. I think it will be a game changer for Jurien, because a lot of people who go up there in the summer want to play golf. I am a terrible golfer. I do not get what the fuss is when it comes to golf, but a lot of people like to play the game. The government funding is going to help the club so that it can water its fairways and have a playable golf course all year round. I think that level of amenity is warranted in a community that is growing like Jurien is. I look forward to the government funding helping to make that project a reality. The club has been fighting for and working towards this for years. People were delighted when we announced that the government would fund the project.

The government is going to help fund a hall for the Ocean Farms Community and Recreation Association. We have also helped out Pollinators Inc. The government has also helped fund equipment for a couple of other organisations. I know Hon Martin Aldridge would be particularly interested in the Granville Park weir upgrade in Gingin. That precinct is a bit tired and dated, and the government is going to provide a contribution to help upgrade it. It is being pulled together as a community project.

After the Wooroloo fires, a very small but important funding pledge was made to the Marsupial Mammals and Pappas Wildlife Care team, which needs more of the little nets that are fired out of a gun to catch injured wildlife. There was a great demand for more of those nets after the fires. The government will help the team fund more nets in the future, because it does an amazing job caring for injured wildlife after storms and fire events across the state. It is a deeply committed group of people whom I really look forward to working with into the future.

There you have it, members. It is an extensive list. Every one of those projects has a committee and a community working to make them happen. When the government has the opportunity to work with communities, I find that is one of the most fulfilling parts of my role as a member of state Parliament. The communities' "yes we can" attitude has been met with the government asking, "How do we make this happen? What do we need to do to help you make your project a reality?" Those projects were extraordinarily well received across the Agricultural Region and have perhaps reinstituted people's faith in government and politicians, because in a challenging year, we have been able to get around to these communities and work with them to help them achieve their goals. Isn't that a great ambition? To help someone achieve their goals.

The Governor gave an amazing speech on the opening day of Parliament. I thought he gave a fantastic speech, and that should be expected. Our Governor is a class act. He is certainly an amazing human being and has made such a great contribution to Western Australia and to Australia. I want to touch on a few of the subjects he raised in his address to us all. He talked about the natural disasters that we have had this year. There was the bushfire at Wooroloo that caused devastation and damage. Homes were lost, but miraculously no lives were lost and there were no serious injuries. We also had cyclone Seroja in recent weeks. Again, there was total devastation in the communities of Kalbarri and Northampton, and there was a lot of damage to farming sheds, buildings and houses further inland in Morawa and places like that. The clean-up in the aftermath saw communities come together to work to help manage the situation and the recovery. That was mostly volunteer labour by people who put up their hand and were happy to help in the middle of the night by holding a hose and making sure that others were safe. These people did those often dangerous actions for the benefit of others. I have to say that I was particularly disappointed earlier today as we were going to discuss the great work of our volunteers and first responders. We have a motion on the notice paper to talk about the volunteers and first responders to these natural events. Those people put their lives on the line and did all that they could to help others, from fighting fires to fixing generators, and supplying fuel and driving trucks. Members of the Australian Defence Force and the WA Police Force, and everybody else who went into those situations, helped those communities, and now that motion has been fobbed off for a couple of weeks. We do not now have time to debate it in this configuration of the forty-first Parliament of Western Australia. It has been fobbed off for a couple of weeks because of an opposition stunt. Members opposite should be ashamed of themselves for what they have just done, because I think that the people who stood up to help should have been recognised in this house tomorrow. We will have to wait at least three weeks, until the new membership of the

forty-first Parliament is here, to debate this motion, unless there is another opposition stunt between now and when we can debate it. I am sorry, members, but I feel very passionately about this. Good people who have given up their time now have to wait to be given recognition by the Legislative Council just because Hon Nick Goiran wanted to pull some smart-alec stunt to do something—God knows what it is. I will be telling them what members opposite all voted for.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Member, I trust you will reacquaint yourself with standing order 41, which states —

A Member shall not reflect upon any vote of the Council except for the purpose of moving that such vote be rescinded.

You can present actions of anybody or any party in whichever form you wish in general terms, but if a decision of the house has been made, that should not be reflected upon in general debate. I am sure you will skirt around that in phrasing your terms accordingly, Hon Darren West.

Hon DARREN WEST: Thank you, Mr Deputy President; I take your advice. I thank you for that timely reminder. I intend to pursue that matter no further. I do appreciate your knowledge of the standing orders. It has been a little while, so mine is a little bit blurry. Thank you.

I want to again acknowledge everyone who was involved in the clean-up after the Wooroloo bushfire and tropical cyclone Seroja, which were massive events in roughly our part of the world. The Wooroloo fires were just in the metro area, just over the border, but certainly cyclone Seroja impacted a lot of areas in the Agricultural Region. Recovery from those events is a priority for us.

I am really pleased to be part of a government that has a jobs plan that will deliver a way forward for those who are seeking good paying jobs. When we came to government, there was a lot of unemployment and uncertainty. The TAFE system was in a shambles and we had to fix that. We had to get back the confidence of those who wanted to seek better training to make themselves more suited to their roles. We have been able to do that through the Minister for Education and Training and the great reforms that we have made to the TAFE system.

We knew that Western Australian workers could do anything. We knew that the Matagarup Bridge could be built here in Western Australia. Western Australian workers built the Matagarup Bridge and it is magnificent. Anyone who has not walked on it should go and do that soon. We knew that Western Australian workers would step up and do what was required. When the COVID-19 pandemic became a reality, our own workforce stepped up and went above and beyond during that time when we had limited access to workers from interstate or, indeed, from overseas. We knew that the harvest in the Agricultural Region could be challenging without the usual flow of backpackers that come through and are able to help out with that seasonal work, but I am very proud of our agricultural industry. One day during the harvest late last year, CBH Group, which is the grain growers' cooperative, had a record receival tonnage. Despite not having those backpacker workers, our local Western Australian workers were able to deliver more grain than had ever been delivered before in one day. That was an amazing achievement. To all the workers in the agricultural sector who stepped up, thank you very much for your efforts. We needed that. We did not want grain to spoil because it was not harvested, delivered and exported in time. Your efforts made a big difference to our state and enabled us to export more grain, bringing more dollars and jobs into Western Australia.

We are going to build railcars here in Western Australia. That has been well received, even in areas that are not affected by it. It will probably not make a big difference to people in the eastern wheatbelt where the railcars are built, but they want us to do that. They think it is important that we should have faith in our manufacturing industries and those who work in them, and we will do that. We are going to have a WA jobs task force to continue this work in helping Western Australians to get the best jobs and be the best workers that they can be.

We will build a lot of strategic projects and a lot of roads. Today, we have announced some funding for rail projects in the regions, which I am very excited about. There is a record amount of roadworks. People are complaining to my office that it takes them an extra half an hour to get to where they want to go because of all the roadworks. I wear that as a bit of a badge of honour. I am sorry for the inconvenience that it causes people and I encourage everyone to be safe and slow down and respect our workers when they travel through the roadworks, but this is a good thing. We are getting better roads built right across regional Western Australia, because we had an enormous backlog left to us by the previous government.

I am absolutely delighted to be once again sworn in as parliamentary secretary to Minister MacTiernan. I think she has now just popped her nose in front as the best agricultural minister that Western Australia has ever had. I say that with no disrespect to Hon Kim Chance, who, in my view, held that title before. The minister has rebuilt the department and got on with things that have been talked about for years, like vermin-proof fences and working out ways to keep wild dogs away from our sheep. She has brought the oat breeding program to Western Australia and is talking about alternative and new ways of farming, rather than just the monoculture and one-size-fits-all approach, which is not going to suit everybody. I think it is important that we have these discussions and work to get more carbon into our soils. That is a great win for us. Soils with higher levels of carbon hold more moisture, and that is paramount

in a dry climate. I think that farmers who embrace regenerative technology and carbon farming are going to see benefits well into the future from not only the carbon credits from which we will eventually profit when we get a price on carbon in this country, but also the increased carbon capacity and water-holding capacity of our soils, which will increase productivity yet again.

As part of our plan, we are committed to the green jobs of the future policy, and last year we announced a climate policy. We will seize new job-creating opportunities in renewable energies and hydrogen. I am really looking forward to the great opportunities that are presenting themselves in that space, whereby we can use renewable energy to generate hydrogen, which, when converted into electricity, produces only water, so we can have a zero-emission industry that can power a lot of our mining equipment, trains and big trucks. All those things can eventually be powered by hydrogen. Western Australia is particularly well-placed. I read a tongue-in-cheek story about Geraldton and how hot and windy it is, but that is actually perfect for someone who wants to generate renewable energy and set up a hydrogen industry in their part of the world. There are tremendous opportunities ahead in the hydrogen sector for those of us in the midwest, the Oakajee industrial estate and further north, and I am really looking forward to getting my teeth into that portfolio with Minister MacTiernan. We made a good start during the last term of government, but we now have a dedicated portfolio of hydrogen industries, and that is going to be a tremendous opportunity for us moving forward.

I refer to Metronet. It is probably not something that people might think a regional member of Parliament would talk about, but all of us know or are related to someone who lives in the metro area. Perth is a world-class city and it needs a world-class transport system. We are going to build the railcars here, which makes it even better, so it is a very big investment in passenger rail services in the metro area. I was really pleased to see that those who cannot afford to live close to the city will now pay a much more moderate fare to catch the train. We are going from nine zones to two, and that will make a tremendous difference. This could not only save families who live in the outlying suburbs thousands of dollars a year, but also encourage people to get out of their cars and onto the train. Cars are expensive to run and park, and the cost of fuel is going up again, so I think this will encourage more and more passengers onto our public transport network. That is a win for the environment and for the future planning of our city, so well done to Minister Saffioti on that.

We are going to build a port down at Kwinana and we are going to end the Beeliar wetlands debate forever. We are going to build that port and the associated transport infrastructure that will bring our freight-handling capacities into the twenty-first century. I know it is contentious but I think it needs to be done, because at some point Fremantle is not going to be big enough for the job. There are perhaps other things that we can do with that amazing port that has served us well for so long and is the legacy of C.Y. O'Connor himself.

The state's finances are in good shape. We are still carrying a bit of debt, but we have managed the COVID crisis particularly well. I think the Premier and the former Treasurer's handling of the finances will be their greatest legacies to the people of Western Australia. I am really looking forward to chipping away at that debt over time. It needs to be addressed. I do not think it is fair and reasonable to expect subsequent generations to clean up our mess, and I think we need to chisel away at that. Let us see where the pandemic goes. If we can get that behind us in the near future, get everyone vaccinated and move forward, I think that we can get our finances into even better shape. I appreciate the great support that we have received from the federal government both in terms of the GST reform, which was way overdue and needed—we were able to get that agreement—and the massive investment that the federal government has been putting into the state, in partnership with the McGowan government, to build a lot of this regional infrastructure.

Sitting suspended from 6.01 to 7.30 pm

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Robin Chapple): Members, we are dealing with the Address-in-Reply, and I give the call to Hon Darren West for his continuing remarks. I remind Hon Darren West that he has about five minutes to go.

Hon DARREN WEST: Thank you, Mr Acting President. I will start to wrap up my remarks today, because I know that other members want to speak.

There is a lot more I could talk about. There is such a good story to tell that WA Labor has across regional Western Australia and across the state more generally. The government has done some great stuff in health. We have increased funding for the patient assisted travel scheme. We have announced a lot of hospital projects, including the upgrades to Geraldton Regional Hospital, which has been talked about for a long time. We are doing some great work across the state in education, community safety and law reform. We can be rightly proud of what we have done during our time in government. We can talk more about those things over the next few years. Our job is to take the state forward. We will do that over the next four years. We have a mandate from the people of Western Australia. We will use that mandate in a responsible way to make Western Australia even better than it is now, if that is possible.

Before I close, I want to acknowledge some people who do not get enough acknowledgement. That is the families and people closest to us as members of Parliament. This job is difficult on family life. It is particularly difficult at election time. We call on our families to help us in this job. We can do this job only with the support of those closest to us. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge all those people. We all know the people whom we are talking about. We all know the people who are there at every election and want to see us be the best that we can be as parliamentarians. I thank every single one of those people.

I want to finish by acknowledging my colleague and very good friend Hon Laurie Graham. He will love this. Laurie Graham stepped up just before the 2017 election to help us out, believing that he would not be elected to the fortieth Parliament. He was duly elected to the fortieth Parliament, and he has made an outstanding contribution in his time in this place.

We are going to miss you, mate. It has been great working with you. I am really proud to have you as a colleague and a friend. We have done some amazing stuff in the Agricultural Region, and we will continue to do that after you have gone. You have left a great legacy, Laurie. I am really proud of you, mate. I look forward to your contribution next week, because I know it will be insightful and good.

That is all I have to say. Bring on the forty-first Parliament. It will be a great four years. We will make Western Australia stronger than it is at the moment.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [7.34 pm]: It is a great pleasure to be back here after the election. The election was fairly tough, and not everyone had the opportunity to be re-elected. It is good tonight to follow the speeches of a couple of members. I have come to enjoy Hon Kyle McGinn's contributions a lot. He makes a great speech these days. When he came here four years ago, he started well, but a bit tentatively. He has really blossomed as a member of Parliament. I enjoy listening to his speeches. I have also listened to the speeches of Hon Darren West. Let me say that he is at least consistent.

Hon Kyle McGinn made a number of good points tonight. I thought that was a good speech. I was interested in a couple of things that he said. In particular, he was somewhat concerned about some conversations or statements by some of the opposing parties about whether a gold tax would be revisited by a Labor government. I take that on board. I did not make any of those comments myself. Hon Kyle McGinn said that he had been sitting next to the Treasurer of the time, Ben Wyatt, and was told that the government would not be reintroducing a gold tax. I am interested in the words that he used. Did he use the words, "A gold tax is not on the government's agenda at the moment"? Is that what he said? We can understand why some members of the opposition might have concerns. The Premier was asked a number of times in the lead-up to the election whether electoral reform would happen under a re-elected Labor government. The Premier said more times than I can remember that electoral reform of the upper house is not on the agenda of the government. I will be interested to hear how some of the members opposite will deal with the reform process in the upper house. I presume that Hon Kyle West will be keeping his office in Kalgoorlie.

Hon Kyle McGinn: It is Kyle McGinn.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Sorry, Hon Kyle McGinn. I have merged you both! That is a bit disturbing! I know that Hon Darren West is wearing a black mask, but he is not necessarily Hon Kyle McGinn's father. That is a whole other story. I presume that Hon Kyle McGinn will be keeping his office in Kalgoorlie.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I will come to you, Hon Alannah MacTiernan. Your time is coming. Do not worry. So will Hon Kyle McGinn still have his office in Kalgoorlie?

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am just trying to find out.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members! Order, please. We have been doing fairly well with this so far. I think we should really calm it down a little.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you, Mr Acting President.

The Premier has said on multiple occasions that electoral reform of the upper house is not on the agenda of the Labor Party. At the same time, Hon Kyle McGinn—for whom I have enormous respect and who has blossomed as a member of Parliament—is telling us that he will maintain a presence in Kalgoorlie, rather than that his office will remain in Kalgoorlie. I will be very interested to see the wording. We can already see from the performance of the Labor Party that the weasel words are slowly creeping in. I am sorry to hear that from Hon Kyle McGinn, because I have enormous respect for his prowess in this place.

Hon Darren West raised during his contribution a significant and I believe sincere concern about the debt levels in Western Australia. That was a very interesting place to go. I wonder whether he can tell us what the debt level was when the Labor Party came to government in 2017 and what it is now.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is absolutely my speech. I am just responding to some of the comments of the Labor Party. Is there an answer?

Hon Darren West: Would you like me to come and sit next to you?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No. There are certain standards.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members, I believe Hansard is having trouble sorting the chaff from the wheat.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Government members say “Reform of the upper house was not on our agenda”, “I will maintain a presence in Kalgoorlie” and “Debt is important, but not if I am asked about it”. Obviously, one of the problems that the opposition will have over the next four years is the accountability of the McGowan Labor government.

It was a difficult election and obviously the Labor Party enjoyed the response that most governments have had from the COVID crisis, and a little bit beyond that as well. Well done! The government has an absolute majority at the moment. The majority in the upper house will be interesting to watch over the next few days. This government has taken advantage and been the lucky recipient of a number of circumstances that have benefited it in a way that almost no other government in the world has benefited. I note the comments around the world that Western Australia may well be in the best financial position of any subnational jurisdiction in the world. I think that is absolutely the case. But I take members back to a question that I asked in February 2019. I asked the question through the very good deputy leader of the Labor Party to the Treasurer, which was, “Has the government considered what happens if the iron ore price stays above \$US90 a tonne?” I asked that question in early February 2019 because, in fact, it had hit \$US90 a tonne and most analysts were saying that it was going to stay at a relatively good level going forward. The answer I got back was that no modelling had been done because the prospect of the iron ore price staying above \$US90 was, and I quote, “highly unrealistic”. Last week, I asked the Leader of the House representing the Treasurer, “What is the iron ore price today?” I am sure that members are taking very close note of the iron ore price. The previous Treasurer used to receive it, as we know from the newspapers, in a daily email or phone call from Treasury. He knew exactly how much money the Labor Party would have to spend. But as of last Thursday, according to the government the price was \$US192 a tonne. Not only is the price above \$US90 a tonne, and it has not quite been universally above that price in the intervening two years, it is currently at \$US192 a tonne, which is the equivalent of the highest iron ore price the state has seen. At what point do government members sitting on the benches opposite call this a boom? At what point do they say, “Yes, we have had an incredible amount of revenue, more revenue than a state government has ever seen, and the fiscal economy is doing so well because of COVID-19 and the iron ore price”? It is interesting because when we look at this and break it down, why is the iron ore price so high? There are probably two significant factors. The first is major stimulus from countries around the world. Members might say China, but it is not just China. There is stimulus going on in construction across the world. Construction is going on in Western Australia, Australia and across Europe and the United States, but it is particularly going on in China. That is driving up the iron ore price. The COVID crisis is driving up the iron ore price.

Another thing that has happened is that our major competitors have suffered far more from the COVID crisis than we have. The COVID outbreaks in Brazil in particular have been far more significant than they have been in Australia and its lack of production has driven up the price of iron ore. On a twofold measure, COVID has driven up the price of iron ore to the point at which the additional revenue that this government receives above the budget each year, year in, year out, is now paying for its entire COVID response. Bear in mind, the state government initially put in a \$5.5 billion COVID response. In 2018–19 and 2019–20, revenue above expectation was \$4 billion, and that is before the iron ore price hit \$US192 a tonne. This government was the beneficiary of massive increases in revenue. I am pleased that Hon Darren West said, “We’re worried about debt and deficit. Debt and deficit is a problem. I’m worried about the deficit and I’m worried about the debt.” When this government came to power, debt was approximately \$33 billion. It is currently \$39 billion, approximately, and is heading towards approximately \$42 billion. Hon Darren West is concerned about debt at a time when his government had two years of very average iron ore prices, admittedly—which was very similar to the average iron ore price the previous government had to deal with between 2015 and 2017—and it also had the advantage of a massive boom in the iron ore price, which gave it enormous opportunity above and beyond the impact of COVID-19. This is the only jurisdiction that has had that absolute benefit. This is the only jurisdiction that is effectively making money because of the response to COVID-19 and at levels that we will probably never see again. In that circumstance, Hon Darren West is right to be concerned about debt and the fact that it has gone up \$6 billion under those circumstances and is heading towards increasing by another \$3 billion over the next four years. It is absolutely the case that he should be incredibly concerned.

According to the budget, the net debt expectation for 2020–21 was \$39.26 billion and it was heading towards \$41.72 billion in the next financial year and \$42.9 billion in the financial year after that and finally the expectation was a decrease of \$0.1 billion in 2023–24. The member’s concerns about debt are real, but debt is going up under the Labor government and it will continue to go up. I also note that as this government has generally done, it quite reasonably set a very low expectation of the iron ore price going forward. It managed to shift its expectation of the

iron ore price. In the budget of October last year, the government set an iron ore price of \$US96.6 a tonne. The midyear review increased that and it went over \$US100 a tonne. The *Pre-election financial projections statement* took it back to \$US65 a tonne in the next financial year and \$US64 in the following two financial years. This government has been extremely clever in that it has set its price very low and anything that it receives on top of that it has to spend effectively as free money. That is good accounting up to the point that the government is in effect acknowledging that it has an enormous amount of money available to spend. The question is whether this government is spending that money in an appropriate manner and looking after the interests of Western Australia or whether it is focused on looking after the interests of the Labor Party in Western Australia. I will come back to that in more detail.

We already know from questions in Parliament that the government exceeded its 2018–19 budget expectation by \$1.72 billion and that it exceeded its 2019–20 budget expectation by \$2.2 billion. I notice that the expectation for this year was originally a \$1 billion surplus. By the time we got close to Christmas last year, it had jumped to a \$3 billion surplus and it is now looking like a \$4 billion surplus, and that is before the iron ore price stays at \$US192 a tonne, potentially, over the next two months. That shifts that \$3 billion surplus to between \$4 billion and \$5 billion. The Labor Party had a \$5.5 billion COVID spend but it is now saying that the entire cost of COVID is over \$7 billion. It loves to say that because it makes it look as though it is spending more money in the process, but it has that much money in unbudgeted funds. It made that money out of the iron ore industry, but it is still crying poor. The Labor Party does not want to acknowledge that the iron ore price is the thing that is currently driving it to the financial position that it is in. The government should be thankful. It should be standing up and saying, “Yes, thanks to iron ore, we’re in a fantastic financial position.” It was not actually a strategy of the government. It did not strategise a COVID response from China and its economic stimulus spending or the impact of COVID on Brazil so that our competitors could not pick up the market share and keep the price at a reasonable level. The government is determined to tell us this is some sort of Labor Party strategy, but it is not. The problem we have is that the strategy that the Labor Party has is not a financial strategy; it is one that is riding on the coat-tails of COVID luck. That is not a strategy to take the state of Western Australia forward.

I have heard some comments tonight about the fact that now the Labor Party is interested in diversifying the economy. The Labor Party is interested in looking at a jobs strategy to diversify the economy. I thought that was quite interesting in the speech from the Governor that we listened to. The Governor said, and I quote —

The Government took a new WA Jobs Plan to the election, based around reducing interstate FIFO, more training through TAFEs and schools, and diversifying the State’s economy.

The re-elected Government has identified several sectors that represent burgeoning opportunities for the state, namely; hydrogen, tourism, battery industries, Aboriginal employment, agriculture and aquaculture, renewable energy, a new film industry and of course local manufacturing.

A few things leap to mind, of course, because we have to remember that the state government has significant dollars in its kitty going forward. The questions are: why was the government not doing these things before the election; why is it suddenly election strategy; where was the diversification process before the election; and where was this focus before the election? I am particularly interested in the burgeoning opportunities in agriculture and aquaculture, but particularly agriculture. Let us talk about the job opportunities in agriculture, because this is a debate that we have had a few times in Parliament over the last year or so, well before the election. It was obviously the case that COVID changed the labour opportunities around agriculture. The backpackers stopped coming because of COVID. I remember quite distinctly in the middle of last year the Premier, and I suspect the Minister for Agriculture and Food based on the instruction of the Premier, telling us that we would have to find workers within the domestic market because there would be nobody coming from overseas. I am sure that everybody remembers those comments. How has that worked, Minister for Agriculture and Food? That was something of an own goal.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: It wasn’t an own goal. It was absolutely the case at the time. Since that time we have been able to, working with the commonwealth, identify the resumption of the seasonal worker program. The federal government had cancelled the seasonal worker program so there was no prospect at that time of bringing in workers from the South Pacific. As soon as it changed that, we changed our rules and we have been doing very, very well in bringing in seasonal workers.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Does the minister mean that at the time that the Northern Territory, for example, was negotiating deals to bring in workers, the federal government had stopped the program and nobody could bring in seasonal workers? Because the Northern Territory was already organizing those deals.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: At the time you’re talking about, yes.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The federal government was out in the public saying, “We would like to work with the states to bring in labour from the Pacific Islands and from COVID-safe environments”, and this government was saying, “You will have to find domestic workers somehow.”

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: It was August last year.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I can tell you, minister, that this was absolutely the time frame it happened in.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: We had actually started getting the flights coming in in December. It takes months to organise that.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The backflips have been fantastic. I have enjoyed the backflips.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Robin Chapple): Members, this is not a cross-chamber debate; it is the contribution from Hon Dr Steve Thomas.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you, Mr Acting President.

I have enjoyed the backflips from the government; this is one of many that have come along. I think that it has been immensely positive. We have actually seen a number of workers coming into the agricultural sector, but it was over this government's kicking and screaming that these people were brought into place. I actually think the Minister for Agriculture and Food was on our side for a fair bit of that. I want to give her some credit. I think she understood the need for it, but I think she was bogged down in the politics of the Labor Party's re-election strategy, which was all about focusing on local jobs. I am sure that Hon Kyle McGinn, with his union background, would like that, and we would all love to see Australian workers in there if we could—that is absolutely the case—but in the case of agriculture, it obviously proved impossible to deliver, and so it was a very welcome backflip.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: It was not a backflip.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It was absolutely a backflip.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It was a very welcome backflip. I thought it was great. I commend the minister for it. I thought it was good.

I will come back to some of the comments that members of the Labor Party made earlier. In particular, I want to come to the topic that was raised in the Governor's speech right towards the end, just before the conclusion, when he said —

In addition, the Government intends to address reform of the Western Australian electoral system, to ensure that Western Australian elections are conducted fairly, the results reflect the intent of the public, and are protected from outsize and overseas influence.

I presume, given the statements made by various members, and particularly by the new Minister for Electoral Affairs, that that means electoral reform of the upper house. I would be interested to know whether someone can tell me precisely what that means. There are two components to the reform of the upper house. There is the voting process where we might discuss whether we do six above the line, for example, as a valid vote, and whether we discuss how voting occurs in terms of microparties. That is one part of the process. But given the statements of the new Minister for Electoral Affairs, particularly in his opinion piece this week, we can assume only that the Labor Party is intent on another round of electoral reform and particularly proportional representation. I have had the joy of having been elected to the other place—the place that shall not be named—in 2005. I was the first-ever member elected for the seat that was created called Capel. The first piece of legislation that we debated was initiated by Hon Jim McGinty, who was the Minister for Electoral Affairs at the time, to instigate one vote, one value in the Legislative Assembly with, of course, the exception of the regions for which the Labor Party held the majority of seats, which was up in the Mining and Pastoral Region in particular, where the Mining and Pastoral Region would have ghost voters. There were only a certain number of voters, and because there was a very broad election, ghost voters would be put in place to bring the total number up to something that would be deemed to be reasonable. I always thought that was an odd process to put in ghost voters, but members have to remember that at that point, the majority of the Mining and Pastoral Region seats were held by the Labor Party. That was obviously an intent to make sure that the government maximised its electoral advantage. It is interesting that in 2008, at the next election, the Labor Party did not quite get across the line, but that was probably more related to then Premier Alan Carpenter calling an early election than it was due to any other part. We are once again faced with electoral reform proposed by the Labor Party. It is interesting that the current system that we have in the Legislative Assembly—six regions of six members—was the result of the bill put forward by Hon Jim McGinty back in 2005. It was through negotiations, particularly with the Greens in the upper house, that we ended up with this six-by-six roster. I remember that in the old days seven members in the upper house were from the south west and that the regions varied to some degree based on population. But that was removed. In 2005, to get its legislative agenda in place, the Labor Party reversed proportional representation by a small degree by taking that back and acquiescing to the Greens' six-by-six model. It is obvious from the comments of the Minister for Electoral Affairs that we are now going through the same process. I will be very interested to see how regional members of the Labor Party in particular respond to this. I would like to know what its agenda is.

I have come up with some figures on this, but they are slightly out of date because they are based on the September 2020 Western Australian Electoral Commission voting numbers. I worked out what a quota approximately would be and how many seats would exist in the various parts of the state. It looks a little like this. The South West Region would suffer a little and go from six to 5.2 seats. I assume that would be five.

Hon Darren West: Who is the 0.2? Are you the 0.2?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Currently, I am number 2, so if it is 5.2 seats, the member can work it out.

The Agricultural Region would have 2.2 seats and the Mining and Pastoral Region would have 1.5 seats. There would be somewhere between eight and nine seats for all regional areas. If those seats were shifted, the North Metropolitan Region would have nine seats, the East Metropolitan Region would have 9.2 seats and the South Metropolitan Region would have 9.6 seats. We can assume that there would be roughly eight to nine regional seats and somewhere between 27 and 28 metropolitan seats. I would be very interested to see how members of the Labor Party respond to that. If there are only two Agricultural Region seats, Hon Darren West will have to work pretty hard to maintain one of them and he will have to explain to the other two members who are coming in here why their seats are disappearing. What precisely is Hon Darren West's position on this? Does he support proportional representation in the upper house?

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: We will not get an answer. Hon Kyle McGinn, I am interested in what the Minister for Agriculture and Food's position is on this given that she has gone from the North Metropolitan Region, which will have nine seats, to the south west, which will go from six to five seats.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: It's complete supposition.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Tell us what the agenda is.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Robin Chapple): Members, I am noting that Hansard is having trouble keeping up with the banter.

Hon Sue Ellery: Perhaps he could make a speech and not ask a series of questions.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I think that it is reasonable to ask what the Labor Party intends to do with this chamber.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Hang on a minute!

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You're a member of the Liberal Party. Why don't you tell us what you stand for?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am responding to the Governor's speech. The Governor's speech is about what the government intends to do in the next four years.

Hon Sue Ellery: What is your position on it?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: What is my position? My position is the status quo. I cannot believe I am about to say this, but my position supports the legislation put forward by Hon Jim McGinty. I am astounded that I support Hon Jim McGinty's position. My position is that we should retain the status quo. We are responding, Mr Acting President, to the Governor's speech.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Was that your position in 2005?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: My position in 2005 was to support the current position, not the removal of eight seats from the south west to go into the metropolitan region. Of course, it was. Why would I support the disenfranchisement of regional members, minister?

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: What I am saying is, in 2005 did you support the McGinty bill?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No. We supported the position at the time, which was the existing position.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: The Alexander Pope of the Legislative Council!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Nobody on the conservative side of politics —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members, I do not mind a little bit of interaction, but this is getting into a shouting match.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Sorry, Mr Acting President.

Hon Sue Ellery: He is just asking questions.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: I know, but there is no need to be over exuberant.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I will, Mr Acting President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: You do that by taking that on board and addressing your comments to me.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I will. As usual, we cannot get a straight answer from the government. As usual, the Labor Party is keeping its powder dry. It said one thing before the election and is doing something completely different after the election: “The electoral reform of the upper house is not on our agenda”.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The government said that upper house reform was not on its agenda. Six weeks later, it is saying upper house reform is obviously a prime issue for this government.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Hon Dr Steve Thomas.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you, Mr Acting President.

It will be very interesting to see whether the Labor Party moves away from its original position to a position that will advantage the Labor Party—it thinks—even more. It will be very interesting to see how the newly elected regional members of the Labor Party, including the Minister for Agriculture and Food, who is a newly minted regional upper house member, responds.

I had this great line going during the campaign. For the upper house, the Labor Party had Hon Dr Sally Talbot and Hon Alannah MacTiernan in the South West Region. The third candidate was going to be Hannah Beazley, who took over the seat Hon Ben Wyatt retired from—that is, Victoria Park. Obviously, the criteria for a Labor Party regional member was that they should have a holiday house somewhere in the south west. We were hoping that Hannah Beazley would buy one in our patch, but the Labor Party beat us on that one, because when Hannah Beazley received the nomination for Victoria Park, the Labor Party put in a local—Jackie Jarvis. I actually think Jackie Jarvis will do a good job in the south west. She is a solid local in the Cowaramup–Margaret River region. I was a bit disappointed that the Labor Party took away one of my attack points, because we had made some months of good publicity talking about the holiday home preselection requirement of the Labor Party. It is pleasing to see that it did finally go local with its nomination, but it was disappointing. I have a lot of respect for Jackie Jarvis. I think she will be a good member of the Legislative Council when she gets here and will make a good contribution.

If we could turn to the topic of the year—that is, COVID-19. It is absolutely the case that if we wanted to be anywhere in the world during the COVID-19 pandemic, we would want to be in Australia or New Zealand. It is a fair bet also that we would want to be in Western Australia before any other region. The response has been good. I am happy to give credit to the state government and say that its border protection and response to COVID-19 has been good. As the vaccination program rolls out, it will be interesting to see how effective that is and at what point we will start to open up our borders. I think that a vaccination rate of somewhere between 60 and 80 per cent will have a significant impact on the capacity of COVID-19 to spread. At some point I would love to hear somebody in the government outline the future plan for how we manage outbreaks of COVID-19 and how the vaccination program impacts that. That is something the public today would like to hear. It is something we need to get out into the public so we can start to make longer term plans. It is very difficult for business, particularly if they are in travel or tourism, to plan their futures if they do not know what the government’s plans are likely to be. That has been one of the issues around these sharp lockdowns. I think we all accept the need for sharp lockdowns on occasions, we need to be able to stamp on a small outbreak when it comes along, but the government has to get better about how it sells the message on this and it has to get that messaging in early. We had a lockdown on the Friday before Anzac Day, and the messaging changed within 24 hours. That made it extremely difficult for businesses to adapt. I had left Perth, I think, a couple of days before, but on Friday the message was that if someone had been in Perth from 23 April and they had moved from Perth to another region, they were expected to wear a mask, but otherwise they could participate in community activities. That seemed to change on the Saturday, so about 24 to 30 hours later. I understand that at about nine o’clock on Saturday night, the night before Anzac Day, the email went out. That is when the change of rules came into my inbox to say that if someone had been in Perth from 23 April and they were going out to a region, they needed to apply the lockdown rules to them; it was not sufficient to wear a mask out in public. Most of us who are out in the regions do not necessarily look at our inboxes at nine o’clock at night, particularly when we are going to be up for a dawn service at four o’clock the next morning. Confusion reigned in that messaging. That is not to say that every government gets it perfect, and every government deserves a bit of

slack, but confusion reigned in that messaging. We did not know. I did not know until I got back to my inbox after two Anzac Day services. The good thing was that in both cases I wore a mask for the entirety of travel to and from services and during them, but in theory I should have been in isolation. We did not know that until we looked at the communications that said that is what we should be doing, and when that was different from the message we got 24 hours earlier, we had an issue we have to deal with, and regional areas had to deal with that.

The other thing in those regional areas was that as everybody got confused and businesses were impacted. I was intrigued this afternoon when I asked my question without notice to be told that regional businesses cannot apply for the \$2 000 compensation grants available to businesses in Perth and the metropolitan region. If the government changed those rules on Saturday, even if it was Saturday night, and people picked it up, did it not have an impact on businesses in regional areas? Did it not have an impact on all those people who jumped in their cars and drove from Perth and Peel down to the south west or Albany? Anzac Day in Albany is generally a massive event. It was a long weekend, and a lot of people were streaming out of Perth to go down south. If they were suddenly told on Saturday evening, should they have read their emails, or Sunday if they picked them up then, that they were supposed to be isolating, it has to have had an impact, but it would appear that it has been written out. Regional businesses may not apply for the compensation package available for businesses in Peel and Perth. I think regional businesses will be very interested to know that they have been excluded. It may not matter, because there may be not many members of Parliament left in regional areas. Next time businesses go to complain, there might be five members to complain to somewhere, but if they are out in the region of Hon Colin de Grussa there might be only him and one other member.

Hon Darren West: Me!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Probably not Hon Darren West! It might be Hon Colin de Grussa and one other member out there. Maybe the Labor Party thinks it does not matter that regional businesses cannot apply for this support fund, but I for one will be very interested in making sure that regional businesses know that this is one more level of contempt that the Labor Party is happy to inflict upon them.

I will go back to the comments of the Governor. An issue was raised by Hon Darren West in particular, and that is the Westport project. The Governor's speech states —

Government also continues to pursue the once-in -a-century WESTPORT project.

Now that a location for the new container port has been selected at Kwinana, detailed design work continues, along with assessing and mitigating environmental impacts ...

I suspect that we are very long way from the construction of a port in Kwinana, because I think the government has significantly underestimated the environmental impacts that it will have. If the government was going to construct a port in Kwinana, which I suggest would be a multibillion-dollar investment, I wonder why it would not allow the private sector, which showed great interest in doing precisely that some years ago, to go ahead and do so at its own risk. When BGC and Len Buckeridge suggested that it would construct a container terminal in Kwinana at entirely their own risk —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Completely dodgy!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Was it completely dodgy?

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Thirty-five per cent of the selection criteria was based on your preparedness to enter into direct employee–employer relationships. The whole project was designed, and at the end of the day they only had one tenderer, because it was only Len Buckeridge who was prepared to put his hand up and say, “We are going to deliver workplace agreements in the stevedoring sector”, and as soon as he got the contract he abandoned it anyhow.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That is not entirely true. He did not actually abandon it. It is interesting that the issue at hand —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members! This is a contribution of Hon Dr Steve Thomas, Leader of the Opposition.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is interesting that the issue at the heart of whether a port could be constructed at Kwinana is industrial relations. That is what we have just been told. This was an industrial relations issue. This was an issue about whether there would be contracted labour or non-contracted labour.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Do you reckon that is right, that 35 per cent of the selection criteria would be based on that?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The minister is telling us that it is an industrial relations question, and in her view it is not an issue of environment. It is industrial relations. The Labor government will come along and build an equivalent port.

If we look at how Metronet is going—I will accept that it is going; construction is occurring—I will be very interested to see precisely how the re-use of the Forrestfield–Airport Link soil is going and whether the PFAS issues have been dealt with or not, but that is a question for another day. I will wait to see. I will be asking that one of the transport minister at some point—that is, whether that is a waste product or a re-usable product. But we do know that the government is progressing on Metronet. It might not be on time, it might not be on budget, but it is progressing. I will give the government that. There is some history here about the Labor Party delivering projects, but we probably should not go into too much detail, because I know some of the ministers are a bit sensitive about that. We remember how some of these projects went.

It is absolutely the case that the proposed Westport project is going to be very difficult to deliver. I suspect that we will get some final costings and we will watch them blow out. I remember going to several meetings about Westport. The Westport CEO came down and presented in the Bunbury region to the Bunbury CEO, because at that point there were still discussions about whether there might be some activity in the port of Bunbury—for example, it might take some of the overflow out. Every time some discussion or a slide came up on the port of Bunbury, it said “not economically viable”. Nothing in the port of Bunbury was economically viable. There are difficulties around the port of Bunbury, but this is obviously one of those things that the government is very good at, which is predetermining the outcome. This government went through the Westport process and effectively said to the people examining it, “You may not reinvest in the port of Fremantle and you may not recommend investment down in Bunbury to take overflow. The outcome that we expect from you is a new port in Kwinana in the sound.” Guess what happened? The recommendation said, “We require a port in the sound”, without any proper consideration to the environmental impacts that are going to go on there.

Mr Acting President (Hon Robin Chapple), you and I are crusty old environmentalists, if I could say that. I think this is going to be an incredibly interesting project to watch fall out. In 2019, I said, “What happens if the iron ore price stays up above \$US90 a tonne?” Guess what, guys? It has. Here is a prediction going forward. The government is going to have a very difficult time convincing everybody that it is going to construct a port in Kwinana. It has gone through the process now; it has done the initial consultation process and it will be in a holding pattern for the next four years. I suspect that at the 2025 election we will see this government having a conversation with the community saying, “We are still committed to a port in Kwinana; nothing has proceeded. We are still going through the environmental impact process, because it is an immensely complex process.” Mr Acting President, I think we did some very good work during the debate around the Environmental Protection Amendment Bill 2020. Your contribution was excellent, and I thought that the Minister for Environment conducted himself in an exemplary manner. That was a debate in which all members around the chamber were attempting to get the best outcome they could for the environment of Western Australia. One of the things we introduced was a cumulative impact study. I suggest that a cumulative impact study on Cockburn Sound is going to be one of the most interesting documents that you and I will probably read in the next few years, because it is no longer a pristine environment, and the impacts there are significant. This government is proposing major change and construction to an already damaged ecosystem. It is saying that it will do this because it is government policy. When it adds on a very difficult environmental process, which may well stymie the project itself, it will put on top the additional cost required to manage it.

Mr Acting President, I wonder whether you and I will live to see an additional port process in Cockburn Sound. With all the optimism in the world, this is going to be very difficult. I know that the government is focused on this because obviously it is a political outcome and it cannot afford for the debate to be too much around whether Roe 8 or 9 into the existing port of Fremantle is a better option than trying to completely rebuild the process in Kwinana. At some point I suspect that the worm will turn on this one and governments in the future will have to decide whether the political outcome is more important than the practical one of being able to get product into a port at a reasonable price with reasonable efficiency. This will be a backflip like imported farm labour. In my view, without doubt this is another backflip in the waiting. Time will tell.

In the Governor’s speech, the government said that it will reintroduce with its mandate—I love that word. If you win an election you have a mandate. Nobody generally refers to it when they lose an election. The speech states —

In addition, the Government will reintroduce, with its mandate, the Beeliar Wetlands Bill, to remove Roe 8 from the MRS, to ensure the sensitive wetland is protected into the future.

It is almost at that point anyway, because the government reclassified much of the Beeliar wetlands last year, so it would require control of both houses of Parliament to remedy that. I would suggest to the government that if we had control of both houses of Parliament, we could probably remove this ultimate level of protection if required as well. It will be interesting to see.

I do not intend to go on ad nauseam, but I will address some of the issues that were presented during the election campaign. I know that Hon Kyle McGinn mentioned some of the election commitments around Kalgoorlie. I thought that the Liberal Party came up with a couple of good ones out there. We committed \$6 million to the water bank investment. I think the expansion of the water bank project in Kalgoorlie is a fairly important project. I would recommend that Hon Kyle McGinn has another look at that project, whether or not his office is out there. That was probably the best of the projects the Liberal Party looked at out there.

Hon Kyle McGinn: You committed to all our projects in the last week as well.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: We committed to a couple of them, but the water bank project and the lighting project were two of mine. I think the water bank project is a worthy project. The other one that we put significant dollars into was lighting for safety—that is, I think, 25 per cent of the streetlights in Kalgoorlie are non-functional, and that is something the member might also take a look at. The best politics is when we take somebody else's stuff and steal it—always has been, always will be. Those are a couple of projects that I think are worth looking at; they were quite reasonable ones.

Another project that I think the government should look at is the biosecurity levy, which is a problematic issue. Mr Acting President, I know that you and I are both passionate about biosecurity and that we would like to see a stronger focus on keeping problematic weeds and invasive species, if not out, at least somewhat under control. That has not been the case. If honourable members do not know, prior to the mid-2000s there was a thing called the Agricultural Protection Board and its job was to enforce the biosecurity rules and act to engage in biosecurity control. During that period, somewhere around 2006 or 2007—I forget the exact year—it was replaced under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act. That act empowered local groups to be set up as recognised biosecurity groups, which would allow the government to then impose a regional levy. That levy would go towards biological control. There are a couple of key outcomes. Firstly, even though the levy is matched equally dollar for dollar by the state government, it is woefully inadequate for genuine biosecurity. Those recognised biosecurity groups try their very best to deliver biosecurity outcomes. They actually try to control invasive species, but there is no way that any of them can be successful given the level of funding that they have. At the same time that the government went through the BAM act change and instituted recognised biosecurity groups, it also abandoned ship on biosecurity itself.

When the legislation was debated in the lower house, where I was, government departments that had failed to do their job would be acknowledged in the annual report of the lead agency, which was the Department of Agriculture and Food. That was removed in the upper house and so there is no reflection of the government's performance in action in biosecurity. Instead, we simply transfer that action across to the scapegoats who are the recognised biosecurity groups. They try their absolute best. They really do. They attempt to control invasive species, but they are not resourced to do so. They cannot manage that process. Government's support and attempts to assist them are woefully inadequate. During the election campaign, the Liberal Party said that it would take one significant step. If someone has land in a regional area to which a biosecurity levy applies and they do the biosecurity that is required of them on their own land—it costs a significant amount of money or time, or both, to do so—they are then charged a fee so that a group of volunteers can go out and do that work on the land of people who cannot be bothered doing it for themselves. The worst perpetrators—the worst group who will not do that work themselves—are government departments, because the Agriculture Protection Board is no longer on their back requiring them to do that job. Therefore, people pay twice. They pay to do biosecurity on their land and they pay a fee for biosecurity to be done on the land of somebody else who does not do the job.

A couple of things need to happen. The Liberal Party said in the first instance we would pay both the levy of the landholder and the matching dollar-for-dollar fund from the state. It is only \$12 million across four years. It is \$3 million a year. That is how much the matching levy is in Western Australia put forward by the state government. Do members know what that means? It means that in a lot of areas the entire biosecurity approach by government, and through the BAM act sector, is allocated \$6 million a year. It is woefully inadequate. It is absolutely inadequate to do the job. We cannot get the job done.

I had a conversation with the Minister for Agriculture and Food about a couple of my pet topics, including arum lilies. I am pleased to see that the Minister for Agriculture and Food was keen to see how we might deal with arum lilies better, and I thought that was a really positive approach. We do not just niggle each other. On occasions we try to achieve a reasonable outcome. The system absolutely needs to be reviewed because we cannot simply handball all the responsibility to an inadequately funded group of volunteers, effectively, and say that it is their job. That is precisely what has happened under the biosecurity system in Western Australia. It is not adequate. It cannot be adequate. It will not work in the long term and it will, in the long term, simply alienate both landowners and the people trying to do the job. It either needs to be resourced properly so that those volunteer groups have adequate resources to do the job that needs to be done or an entirely new system needs to be put in place. We cannot go on simply abandoning ship on biosecurity, and that is exactly what has happened.

Another thing that we as an opposition did going into the election was talk about water security in regional areas. Other members have raised that matter tonight and I think it is a critical issue. There will need to be greater investment in water security in whatever form that takes.

I want to make a few comments about the functioning of Parliament and some of the members as we go forward. A number of members who will be leaving this place have made an enormous contribution to Parliament. I am concerned, as many people are concerned, that democracy is not well served by having the kind of electoral result that we had a couple of months ago. I sat on polling booths for three and a half weeks or whatever it was. It felt like three and a half months! When the Liberal Party was in the position it was in, it was not the most pleasant experience in the world, particularly for me when I spent most of that time in Collie. It was an interesting experience. I have to say that from sitting down with the people who were handing out how-to-vote cards for the Labor Party and the Greens and the Nationals WA, I learned that they were almost universally of the view that democracy is not well served by having the kind of landslide that occurred on 13 March. Labor Party people quite readily said that it is not good for accountability.

We have already seen that in what we have done today and the beginning of Parliament; the opposition's focus has been on accountability. It may not be well received, but accountability will be critical going forward. It will be very hard. The lower house has four Nationals and two Liberals. It is a very difficult process down there. But in the upper house, the official opposition has 10 members. We are yet to see what the new crossbench will be like. We appreciated working with the crossbench that we have had. The federal Liberal Party complains ad nauseam about the crossbench that it has to deal with in the Senate, but sometimes the outcomes are better than if it had its own way all the time. The crossbench that we have had over the last four years has not always agreed with us. Heaven knows we have not always agreed with ourselves. The Liberal Party and the National Party have disagreed and we have not always voted the same way, but, in my view, everybody has done what they thought was the best for the state of Western Australia. It will come to a point at which doing our best for the state of Western Australia becomes meaningless if we are not careful. Although the government will have enormous power in a few weeks, we will continue to do our best to hold the government to account. I think that will occur in the upper house to an extent, but we will have to step up to the mark. Maybe the opposition will have to be more focused and better than it has ever been before, just because the numbers look like what they look like.

I personally will miss the President, assuming she is not put back into that same position. Hon Kate Doust has, in my view, been incredibly even-handed, respectful and polite. That is not to say that I always got my way, because I did not. I thought there were plenty of times when I should have received the call and I did not. But I commend to the house the work of Hon Kate Doust. I thought that she maintained a dignity and a presence that I will remember going forward. Her contribution has been, in my view, nothing short of magnificent. She has done a great job. She has earned the respect of all sides of Parliament and I will be sad if she is no longer sitting in that seat going forward, because I think that she has been as good a President or a Speaker as we could have—and I have seen both. I am happy to say that I thought Hon Peter Watson was a pretty reasonable Speaker. I know my colleagues in the lower house will probably take me out and beat me for that! Hon Kate Doust has been a cut above and her contribution needs to be recognised by everybody.

I will miss the interaction with the crossbench. Again, we did not necessarily agree on everything. We often had to negotiate fairly hard, but the members of Pauline Hanson's One Nation and Hon Rick Mazza and Hon Aaron Stonehouse have made a great contribution. I still think Hon Aaron Stonehouse should have tried to jump ship to the Liberal Party, but as it turns out, in South Metro, the second seat probably was not that good anyway, so it would not have helped him.

I commend the Greens for their work over the last four years. To be honest, I think people underestimate the contribution that the Greens make.

Hon Darren West interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is all right, Hon Darren West—nobody underestimates or overestimates the contribution that you make!

Hon Sue Ellery: So nasty!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am just responding.

The Greens have been fantastic. It is good that the Greens think about their vote. We sometimes make the assumption that the Greens are an offshoot of the Labor Party, but the Greens have demonstrated in the past four years that they are fiercely independent. This chamber will be the poorer for them departing.

Hon Sue Ellery: You know that they have a member coming in?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, they have one member coming in. I am talking about the four members who currently sit in this place and will no longer be here. The Greens will go from four members to one. That is a shame. It is simply a reflection of the fact that the Greens generally get around half a quota and rely on Labor preferences to get them the rest of the way, and this time around Labor was a bit higher up. The result in the South West Region

was interesting. I think Labor had 3.96 quotas. It got close to getting four members up. To be honest, it was astounding that there was not a fourth Labor member in the South West Region.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Even Hannah would have got elected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That is right; she would have been, but she is now in the seat of Victoria Park.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Again.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, again. It is a cycle.

Madam Acting President (Hon Adele Farina), I will miss your contribution, particularly in the south west. I know it is not politic to engage with the chair, so I will speak about you, not to you. I travel very much around the south west. With the possible exception of Hon Colin Tincknell, who seems to follow me all over the place, the person whom I have seen most often everywhere else has been Hon Adele Farina. Her politics are obviously quite different from mine, but I have to acknowledge the amount of work that she has put into the South West Region. I do not understand the politics of the Labor Party in removing her from that position. Her contribution to the South West Region has been formidable. This Parliament will be the poorer for her not being here in the future and making a contribution. I am sure she will be back in the south west to make herself known. I have spent as much time with Hon Adele Farina as I have with Hon Colin Tincknell. I do not know how many Australia Day events we have gone to together to welcome new Australian residents. In an era in which the Labor Party is keen to have effectively fly-in fly-out members in the South West Region—with the exception of Jackie Jarvis, who will be coming in—we will miss the contribution of Hon Adele Farina. I look forward to her contribution at some point. I hope she understands that she is highly respected by her opponents on this side of the house.

With those few words, it will be a very interesting four years. I am very thankful to the Liberal Party for giving me the opportunity to be here. I am very thankful to the people of the South West Region, who only dropped the Liberal Party in the upper house from 1.6 to 1.3 quotas, which means I get to stay.

I look forward to working with the National Party to hold the government to account. As has been demonstrated tonight by the behaviour of government members, the Labor Party is not all that keen on being held accountable. If we have no other focus for the next four years, it will be to hold the Premier to account. The Labor Party got the vote that it did on the popularity of the Premier. Some arrogance and hubris is already creeping in. We will be able to take advantage of those opportunities if we are smart enough and work hard enough. During the election campaign the Labor Party ignored regional areas and denied that it had an agenda on electoral reform in the upper house, yet six weeks later it is proclaiming it from the treetops, with trumpets. We are now seeing this government and this Premier in their true light for the first time. I look forward to the opportunity to put a spotlight on the Premier.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [8.44 pm]: I will continue in the same vein as Hon Dr Steve Thomas. Towards the end of his address, he acknowledged those members who will be leaving us in a couple of weeks, in fact after 13 May. I look forward to welcoming the new members to this place. However, of course it is a great shame to lose so many members from both sides of the chamber. Those members have all made a fantastic contribution over the past four years. It has been very interesting from my perspective, as a new member in the last term, to learn how to work with all those members on various committees and in the other jobs that we do as members of Parliament. A number of members of this chamber from all sides, and also from the other place, participated in the parliamentary leadership program early in the piece. I found that program particularly interesting, because it demonstrated the goodwill, I guess, between members regardless of the politics that they bring to this place, and their willingness to work together and desire to serve their communities and the public of Western Australia.

We heard today from Hon Ken Baston in his address, and we will hear from other members over the coming sitting days. I look toward to their reflections on their achievements and to hearing some of the things that they have witnessed as members of this place, particularly considering that some of those members have spent considerably more time in this place than others. I look forward to hearing from them. I acknowledge the work they have done in serving this state, and thank them for that.

I would also like to acknowledge the comments of Hon Dr Steve Thomas. It was a very tough election for our side of the political landscape. It was certainly evident early on that a big change was coming; I do not think anyone can deny that. It was very clear from the early polling that the support for the McGowan government was very high. It was very difficult to give away how-to-vote cards of certain colours. That was interesting. It was a lesson for us for a number of different reasons. What we can take away from that is that, overwhelmingly, Western Australians feel that the McGowan government has done a good job with COVID. Of course other factors also played into the result. We put up a good fight—the best fight that we could. It was an extraordinary result that the National Party ended up with more members in the other place than our colleagues in the blue team did. That is certainly not something that we predicted or desired. That has led to us having to find a path forward as an alliance opposition. That is an eminently sensible decision.

As Hon Dr Steve Thomas said, the next four years will be absolutely about accountability and making sure that the unfettered power that the McGowan government now has is not misused at the expense of Western Australians across the state, regardless of whether they live in the metropolitan area or the regions. It is very important that, as the opposition, we do our utmost to hold the government to account. I look forward to working with the new members of the crossbench when they come in. It will be a very interesting mix. The fortieth Parliament was also a very interesting mix. I really enjoyed working with the members of the crossbench, regardless of whether their views necessarily aligned with my views or those of my colleagues in the National Party. It has been a very interesting and enjoyable process learning to work with all of you.

Obviously, the election result has meant that we have had to divide the portfolios among opposition members and take on shadow portfolio roles, which has not been usual or common for members of the National Party, certainly in this state, for many years because we have not been in a formal coalition. That will keep us very busy as we hold the government to account and keep an eye on the various things that are happening in our various portfolio areas as we go forward. Gold-standard accountability was the number one promise made by the Labor Party when it was campaigning during the 2017 election. We are yet to see that happen. I look forward to debating tomorrow the important motion to establish a select committee to look into that. It will certainly be very interesting.

I turn to the Governor's speech. Before I make some comments about it, I acknowledge that I hold the Governor in the highest esteem and have the greatest respect for him. I have respected him for many, many years as a very good Western Australian because he absolutely represents the interests of his state. He certainly did so when he was a federal member of Parliament and he has been doing the same in his role as Governor of Western Australia. I absolutely have the greatest of respect for him. The Governor's address outlined a number of different things that the government has prioritised in the coming term, particularly its legislative agenda. He referred to a number of pieces of legislation that the government wants to progress over the coming term. It is interesting that much of that legislative agenda is not new; it is, in fact, legislation that was already before the fortieth Parliament. In fact, much of that legislation was read into this house but it never saw the light of day again for debate, so I find it interesting that the government is essentially rehashing its previous legislative agenda. The government did not progress much of the legislation. I am unsure why. Even though some of it was identified as priority legislation, it was never brought back on for debate. We never had an opportunity to progress the legislation that is now apparently of the utmost importance to the Western Australian government in the forty-first Parliament. It is very interesting that the Governor referred to so much legislation that was not debated. We did not have that opportunity in the former Parliament. Are we going to see a rehash of the same old agenda? Are we going to see an agenda full of bills that we will not debate, meaning that in four years we will end up having not achieved very much? We shall see.

I want to focus on one particular area of the Governor's address, which is health, particularly mental health. I will take members on a personal journey by referring to an experience that I have had over the past eight or nine months that has focused my attention on just how appallingly bad the mental health system is in this state. It is unacceptable. Even though my family's experience of mental health services in this state was bad, that is not at all a reflection on the people who work in those services. There are simply not enough of them. The people in the system with whom we dealt—as I go through, I will talk about that—were absolutely excellent and first-rate, but the system itself and the availability of staff is largely the problem.

In July last year, I was at an appointment in Esperance with my youngest daughter. My phone rang but, of course, because I was at an appointment I ignored it. It rang another two times and eventually I stepped out of the appointment and took the call. My fiancée, who is in Perth, had been called by my eldest daughter's school and asked to pick her up. During the call she did not say just how serious the issue was. When she went to the school to pick up my daughter, she found her in a wheelchair. She could not stand and for all intents and purposes the school thought she was having an epileptic fit—she was not—so they put her in a wheelchair. One of the teachers helped to get her in the car and she was taken straight to the emergency department at Fiona Stanley Hospital. The year coordinator followed my fiancée to the hospital. The staff at Fiona Stanley Hospital did not really do much. They could not really offer a solution. They gave my daughter some temporary medication and suggested that she get a referral to the child and adolescent mental health service, which we subsequently followed up. It took weeks and weeks to get a referral. In the meantime, we saw her GP but we were unable to get into any other services. Eventually, we got an appointment with the child and adolescent mental health service, which lasted about an hour or so. At the end of the appointment they said, "We think it's this. We'll give you this prescription but we don't want to see you because you're not serious enough. Your case is not serious enough for us." I asked what that meant and they said that they see the people who are at the very end—those who are at crisis point and want to take their own life. That is the message I got very clearly from those people. That is not a reflection on them; it is a reflection on the fact that that service simply cannot cope with the number of young people in our community who are suffering from serious mental problems. We left that appointment with no resolution and no ongoing follow-up. We had no-one to talk to about the issues that my daughter was going through. At the end of the day, we decided that the only choice we had was to seek private help. I guess I am lucky because I am in a position in which we have the wherewithal to afford a private psychiatrist or psychologist. We worked hard to find a private psychologist. That was not so difficult; it took us about four or five weeks.

My daughter had already been seeing the wonderful people at Youth Focus, which is an absolutely brilliant service. Unfortunately, the practitioner my daughter had been dealing with left to go to a new job and, of course, that meant my daughter had to go back on the waiting list, so it was another eight weeks before we could get in again, which is not ideal when the circumstances were as serious as they were. Private psychology was not such an issue. On the other hand, private psychiatry was absolutely impossible. The incident with my daughter happened in July, but it was not until late February that we had our first appointment with a private psychiatrist, but not for lack of trying. We rang every single psychiatrist in the city. Many of them would say, “She’s too young. We don’t see people under the age of 18.” Many of the youth-focused psychiatrists said, “She’s too old. We don’t see anyone over the age of 16.” The cohort of children between the ages of 16 and 18, is one of the most vulnerable cohorts because of the stressors they have in years 11 and 12 with ATAR and because they are young adults and that sort of thing. We know that, but it is also one of the cohorts that is least able to access services, and that has to fundamentally change. Eventually, as I said, we were lucky enough to find a psychiatrist, but it took us from July last year to February this year to find that service. We have a hell of a long way to go yet, but we are very lucky that we were able to find that service and pay for that service because it is not cheap—not at all—but I was not going to quibble about paying for whatever service was needed for my child’s mental health. I do want to say, though: what happens to those people who cannot afford that and do not have the financial wherewithal to pay for those private services? How do they get the help they need? There is a crisis in our mental health system. Yes, extra beds sound good, but it is also about the people. Our child and adolescent mental health service needs significantly more resourcing than it has, including more people. All that will take time—I acknowledge that—but it seems to me that that is something that is not getting better; it is a problem that is getting far worse in our community. There is significantly more demand. My daughter is lucky because she got into a gifted and talented education program at John Curtin College of the Arts. I have to give a big shout-out to the wonderful teachers, staff, medical staff and student services at John Curtin College; I cannot speak highly enough of that school. The way that it has dealt with my daughter and others I know in that school who have gone through similar things is exemplary. I do want to acknowledge those people who have done such a brilliant job to engage, to be helpful, to understand and to deal with the issues that we faced and continue to face. They are saying that they are seeing more and more of this. They have never before seen the numbers that they are seeing of people with the sorts of issues and experiences that my daughter and other people with similar experiences have had. Their demand for mental health services from school psychologists and other services around the school is much higher than it ever has been, and that is a real worry. It really does point to a need to spend significant money on mental health services to ensure that we adequately fund our government services in mental health and also ensure that there are places for training at university and so on to make sure that we have the psychologists and psychiatrists coming online and that we have the resources in our schools to keep a really big eye on the mental health problems that we seem to be having with our youth, which we obviously need to try to do all we can to avoid. It is critical.

I have to say that I am pleased to see Hon Stephen Dawson named the Minister for Mental Health. I have enjoyed working with Hon Stephen Dawson over the past four years. I think he certainly is someone who is prepared to listen and do what he can to understand those issues, and I am sure that he will. I think that this issue is one that we cannot wait around on. It is a critical problem and it is a fundamental problem with our mental health system. We know that there are problems with our health system. We are seeing record levels of ambulance ramping and other things as well. There are problems in our health system that we need to address, and our mental health services in this state are fundamentally important right across the state. Whether in metropolitan or regional areas, we all need to recognise that a great deal needs to be done to address the problems that we have there, including the lack of professional people, professional services and the availability of those services to all Western Australians. That needs to be addressed. Our hospital system also needs to be improved to enable those people who need that care to go into care in the hospital system.

I will not talk much more about my own experience. Certainly, I will not go into any great details; it is pretty challenging to talk about at the best of times. I will talk, again, about the whole experience of that age between 16 and 18. At Perth Children’s Hospital, it does not matter if someone is over the age of 16 by two days—they are too old. At the adult hospitals such as Fiona Stanley Hospital, they say they cannot do much for people under the age of 18. There is really a critical gap there. There certainly is an issue that we need to address. I can only imagine what it must be like for those families out there who do not have the financial wherewithal to be able to pay for private services. It must be terribly, terribly difficult for them trying to help their loved ones through one of the most difficult times of their lives. I look forward to the government’s commitment to mental health, given that the Governor has addressed that in his contribution as being one of the most important things on the McGowan government’s agenda in the forty-first Parliament. I very much look forward to seeing how that progresses.

I will not continue for too much longer, members. I think there are plenty of other people who want to give their Address-in-Reply to the Governor’s speech and also talk about what we can expect from the McGowan government in the forty-first Parliament and how we on this side of the chamber need to focus our attention on holding the government to account. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Nationals WA–Liberal alliance, as it

is called, to hold the government to account as best we can. It certainly will be interesting. It is not a position that we expected to be in. Nonetheless, we will do our utmost. We take the job of holding this government to account very seriously. We take our job as representatives of our communities and the people of Western Australia very seriously and we will absolutely call out the government when we see things being done that are to the detriment of the people of Western Australia, be they regional, metropolitan or otherwise. I look forward to the contribution of other members in their Addresses-in-Reply. I thank those members who I have had the pleasure of working with over the past four years. It has been a great privilege to have met those who are leaving and those who are staying. I am sure that I will look forward to working with them over the coming four years.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Pierre Yang**.