

APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2020–21) BILL 2020
APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2020–21) BILL 2020

Second Reading — Cognate Debate

Resumed from 14 October.

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [11.07 am]: I rise to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2020–21) Bill 2020 and the Appropriation (Capital 2020–21) Bill 2020.

It is time to change. It is time to change the hard border to a smart border. Has the hard border worked? Yes, it has. Did I support the hard border? Yes, I did. But now we need to be smart; now we need to move ahead of the curve to ensure that we can operate and function as a society and that we can capture the wonderful outcome we have, particularly in regional Western Australia, of people wandering out yonder. We need to move forward. We need to change the hard border to a smart border. Here are the reasons why. Western Australians have enjoyed freedoms that no other state has enjoyed. We have enjoyed the freedoms that are the envy of the world—people being able to go to cafes, watering holes, pubs and sport, and kids being allowed to play sport and go to school. All these things have been the benefit of having a hard border. I agree with the Premier that the hard border has also kept our economy going, but now it is time to move forward. We need to remove the hard border and have a smart border for these reasons.

We often hear about when the vaccine will come into place. Let us pretend that we do have a vaccine for COVID-19. Say that is in the middle of next year, which is 2021. The budget papers refer to opening borders in April next year and potentially having a vaccine, but let us say that we did have a vaccine for COVID-19. No government would allow that vaccine to be rolled out unless there was some rigorous testing and enough time to ensure that it was safe to be administered to the general public. That could take 12 months, which would take us to 2022. We would then have to purchase—the federal government has done so—a vaccine when it is developed. Then we would have to manufacture the vaccine, and that would take us up to 2023. Then the vaccine would have to be rolled out so that the public of Australia could be vaccinated. Who knows how long that would take. Who knows what regimes would be put in place to allow people to have the vaccine. At best, if there is a vaccine, we will be looking at some time in 2023 when the freedoms that Western Australia has to offer at the moment can be rolled out all over the country and, potentially, the world. We cannot continue to have a hard border until 2023 because people need to see their families, as has been highlighted in this house before, whether it is for weddings or funerals or for visiting loved ones who are ill or visiting aged parents. We need to allow for that traffic to occur from Western Australia to the east coast and from the east coast to Western Australia.

We need workers. Although I have been very supportive and called for Western Australians, particularly in Perth, to take a gap year in regional WA to fill some of the desperately needed roles in hospitality, small businesses, the agricultural sector and the horticultural and pastoral sectors in my electorate, we need to change the mindset of Western Australians so that they will go out and work in regional WA. It is a great opportunity but it is not the answer. The pressures that businesses are under in regional Western Australia are huge. My electorate goes from Kalbarri in the south all the way to Exmouth, Onslow, taking in the Pilbara—the engine room of the Western Australian economy—and the outback, as well as a lot of smaller regional towns, such as Cue, Meekatharra and Mt Magnet. They are all experiencing the pressures of not having workers. They need cleaners. A lot of businesses try to find someone and a lot of people on the east coast want to work in Western Australia, but they are rejected when they apply for a G2G PASS. Sometimes it may be that residents are seeking a simple way of coming back to Western Australia but it may take them five or six goes to get back home, and that is not realistic. It is not being smart.

This is where the government needs to be tested to make sure it is ahead by allowing for the hard border to be changed to a smart border to allow movement from the east to the west and the west to the east for business reasons. The Kimberley region is suffering at the moment, and it is more connected to the Northern Territory. We need to allow Kimberley businesses in Kununurra and those in the pastoral and agricultural industries and health services—you name it—to go across the border. How can the government be smart about it? This is where the government needs to invest in ensuring that the policies and procedures are strict, because a hard border has kept out COVID-19. We need to continue to keep out COVID-19, because we are seeing a COVID-19 spike appearing around the world. We do not want that spike that is appearing all over the world to happen here in Western Australia because it will hurt not only the health of Western Australians, but also our economy in general. However, we cannot continue to prevent people from moving around Australia. Let them move for reasons such as family reasons, visiting loved ones, attending weddings or funerals or seeing people who do not have much time left in this world. As I said, if everything goes well, it could be 2023 before we have a vaccine, if a vaccine is actually established. When we talk to a lot of health professionals, they question whether there will be a vaccine. We have not seen vaccines for SARS, AIDS or many other viruses. What will happen if we do not find a vaccine for this virus? We cannot continue to operate in this way. That is why we need smart borders.

My proposal for a smart border is that if people who live in Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia or the Northern Territory—wherever in Australia—want to take up a job in Western Australia or want to visit their family or there is some other need, governments should allow them to be tested before they jump on a plane to come to Western Australia. Quarantine requirements can stay in place, but when the twelfth day rolls around, they can be tested again. Let us increase our testing regime with a smart border to allow traffic to occur between Western Australia and the east coast. It is absolutely critical to enable our agricultural sector here in Western Australia to get specialised workers, to add to the government's push for people from Perth to work in regional WA, albeit that is only a small take-up. We need people from the east to come to Western Australia to work in our agricultural sector. Do not forget our hospitality and our tourism sectors—our small businesses that are crying out for workers, such as chefs, bakers and people to clean rooms. Cleaners are much needed to ensure that businesses can capitalise on people who are travelling around regional WA. Due to the pressure on our businesses, they are closing their doors to get a break.

I know the Minister for Tourism has recently been to Exmouth, Carnarvon and Kalbarri. He will have seen the same thing. Businesses are having to close because they do not have the workers. They are not capitalising on the number of people travelling in regional Western Australia. Those people have nowhere else to go, so they are venturing out. We need to support those businesses and to do that, we need to make sure they can source employees from the east coast.

Mr P. Papalia: They can.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister says that they can, but the problem is that it is taking months and months.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have plenty of examples of when it has taken five or six goes for a chef from the east coast or the Northern Territory to come over —

Mr P. Papalia: I also know of instances, but I have more recently asked the department to make it more rapid than that. I have intervened to ensure that chefs, for example, are seen as a legitimate exemption.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is good to hear, but we need to make it easier for those businesses to be open, and that is why I propose a smart border.

Mr P. Papalia: It is a policy already. Perhaps the rapidity with which those applications are dealt should be enhanced, should be faster, but there is no impediment policy-wise, particularly for key hospitality workers such as chefs and those with front-of-house specialist skill sets. There is no reason why they cannot get exemptions now.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The issue with exemptions is that they are still taking too long, if they are granted. The pressures on small businesses are huge. Mental health issues are increasing.

Mr P. Papalia: I would rather have that problem than Victoria's problem right now.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is a good point, minister. I accept that we are very fortunate.

Mr P. Papalia: You know there is benefit going on out there now.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: There is huge benefit, but the true test now is how we deal with the pressure points that are there. In this place we often ask what the solutions to problems are. I am trying to provide a solution for moving forward as a state, and that is to change hard borders to smart borders to allow in workers who have the ability to get a job here in Western Australia. Our businesses need those people to come over, whether they are agricultural, hospitality or general small businesses. They need roles filled to alleviate the pressures that will lead to product damage to our tourism industry if tourists cannot, for example, get a meal or check in to a hotel. There is a lot of evidence to show that people are ringing up for accommodation and are being told that places are fully booked. Hotels have had to reduce the number of rooms available because there are no cleaners, so they cannot cater for the guests they already have. Hotels are taking restaurant bookings only from guests. They cannot cater for greater numbers because they do not have the staff. Some hotels are being forced to shut for a day here and there during peak periods. That obviously creates issues for tourists who go to places like Exmouth or Kalbarri, which are two extremely large tourism centres in Western Australia; they are not getting the product they expect to get when they are paying top dollar to visit regional Western Australia.

It is all about smart borders and making sure we have that traffic flow, particularly if there is no vaccine. Where do we go? We have to be smart and supportive, and we have to protect Western Australians. We have to remove the political hard border impediment because there are politics at play. We need to be able to move on from politics to having smart borders.

Mr P. Papalia: Even if you were magically able to attract cleaners to lift themselves out of whatever state on the eastern seaboard and come to WA for work, which may happen, the challenge is the backpackers and working holidaymakers, many thousands of whom were told to go home by the Prime Minister. The international border

has been shut. That is a difficult thing to replace, and I don't think it is as easy as just allowing people to come from the eastern states.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I agree. About 10 things need to occur to fulfil even a portion of what we need; I agree with that. We need to get people out from Perth to the regions to assist. I know a lot of my kids' friends, who are 16, are now getting in groups to go and pick melons and cut bananas in Carnarvon over the school holidays because they are good cash jobs—not cash jobs, but good jobs for those 16-year-olds. I will take that back!

Mr P. Papalia: There's no such thing!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Legitimate cash jobs!

Ms R. Saffioti: Properly declared!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Properly declared cash jobs!

That is working, but it is only a small proportion of what is actually needed, which is why the visa system needs to be changed to allow the backpackers who are still in this country, perhaps over east, to come to Western Australia to fill the roles that our businesses rely upon them to fill. There is high unemployment on the east coast; how do we get some of those people to come over and fill specialty roles and bar or cleaning jobs? We need to source those workers. There is no single magical silver bullet that will provide that workforce, because we rely a lot on international backpackers for that and they are no longer there. The hard border is creating a massive gap and agriculture is suffering as a result.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Agriculture is suffering and produce is being ploughed back into the ground. Growers are concerned that they will not be able to pick their full crops of bananas, melons or whatever else. In addition, we need truck drivers because we are about 500 short. The cost of transport is increasing. If we cannot pick the produce we need to fulfil our markets, the price of produce will go up. That means that the cost of living will increase if we do not find a solution for the workers we need. We have heard about the labour shortages in agriculture—7 000 workers—and I note that the Minister for Agriculture and Food made an announcement that the government will allow Pacific Island labourers to come into Western Australia. The government formerly opposed those workers coming in —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is absolutely what we need. I believe they are in the Northern Territory, picking —

Mr P. Papalia: It will be interesting to see what numbers are interested in coming. I harbour concerns that people from the Pacific Islands are just as concerned about COVID as people are anywhere else. Whether they are willing to leave their homes and go to a foreign country for that reason —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: This is where, as I said, there is no single silver bullet. Several key components are necessary if there is a gap of 20 000 workers. How do we get to 15 000?

Mr P. Papalia: Every jurisdiction wants these people; that is the other thing. The challenge with respect to pickers or —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have limited time, but the minister is right. There are challenges, but we need to keep moving on the challenges that present themselves. This is a true test of the government. It is all very well having slogans —

Mr P. Papalia: It is a test of the federal government. They closed the international borders and told the —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does the minister want the international borders to open?

Mr P. Papalia: No, I'm saying that we're in a pandemic. It may be that you cannot completely replace a lot of these workers, particularly the agricultural workers.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I do not disagree. We need to put in place policies and procedures that reflect the situation in Western Australia and Australia. On the international side, I think there are 30 000 people who want to come back home, and that causes other pressures. We can only control what we can control. My plea to the government today is to change the hard border stance to a smart border. It is not just a case of, "I've got a job and I'm coming over"; we still need to protect our state with the testing regime and quarantine procedures that are already in place, because a new outbreak would cause massive damage and we do not want that to occur. We need to be smart and realistic, and we need to work out how to invest in a smart border. We need that investment because what if there is no vaccine for COVID-19? Even if a vaccine is developed, it could be three years before everyone gets a jab. But what if there is no vaccine? We potentially will need to live with COVID-19, so we need to be able to act in the knowledge that there may be no end in sight. We need to be smart about how we can operate as a state and a society, acknowledging the pressures on our businesses, our agricultural sector and our regions, such as the Kimberley. They are all reliant on places like the Northern Territory, as is the resources sector. We need to be smart.

In the resources sector, yes, we want to get rid of fly in, fly out workers, but a lot of contractors have been unable to go back home over east because they need to keep their jobs. They have not seen their families, in some cases, for 50-plus days. The mental health situation in the resource sector is huge. Members can talk to anyone in Paraburdoo or Tom Price about it. A massive problem is developing and the government needs to invest in it. It is all about being smart and putting the policies and procedures in place to allow that traffic flow to occur.

As I said, if we do not find a solution and we do not move from a hard border to a smart border, food prices will go up, produce will be ploughed in, and the tourism product will be damaged. The resource sector needs workers and needs for them to see their families and return. We need to protect the mental health and wellbeing of people who are suffering under the hard border closure. Family members need to see family members. Do not forget that. People need to be able to see their relatives for the various reasons that I have outlined.

We are very fortunate, but how we move forward will be a true test of government. We cannot just rely on political slogans because the polls say that people want a hard border. We cannot say that we rely on medical advice. Like everyone else at the moment, I am confused about the medical advice. One day, we do not want to open up the border because —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Hang on a second, minister. You got a chance to speak.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: On the one hand the government says that it does not want Western Australians to flee over east because we will lose the economic advantage that we have. There are some mixed messages out there.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But we can all agree that we need to move forward and deal with the pressure points that this state is experiencing. We are in a very fortunate position, but let us not put our heads in the sand and not deal with those pressure points. It is great to see so many people travelling around regional WA, but it is applying a huge amount of pressure. Businesses are not able to find workers, and if they can find workers, there is no accommodation for those workers. The government needs to step into that space. The people who are travelling around and the increase in visitors is putting pressure on our police and volunteer health ambulance services.

We do not have the needed health infrastructure in the Pilbara, which is the engine room of our economy, with towns such as Tom Price, Paraburdoo and Pannawonica. However, it missed out on a desperately needed hospital in Tom Price. The hospital is basically falling apart because of a lack of investment by this government. Yet again, Meekatharra Hospital was left out. Each of those communities provides a huge amount of wealth to the state. The Shire of Ashburton creates 38 per cent of the gross regional product of the Pilbara region—that is \$15.94 billion, which is twice as much as the City of Karratha, and three times as much as Port Hedland—yet there has been zero investment by this government. Those towns in the Shire of Ashburton are keeping our state and country afloat through iron ore riches, yet they get zero investment. I will read what the shire president said about that zero investment. A medial release states —

Shire President Kerry White said that she is extremely disappointed that once again the Shire of Ashburton has been overlooked.

“Throughout the WA recovery and stimulus projects announced by the State Government to lessen the negative economic effects of COVID-19, the Shire of Ashburton received close to nothing in comparison to our neighbouring local government areas.

...

“The role of the Shire of Ashburton in supporting the growth and wealth of the Western Australian economy continues to be disregarded and go unnoticed.

That is how people in the north west of Western Australia feel about the lack of investment. The Pilbara is keeping our state afloat, and when I say the Pilbara, I mean the inland towns where the iron ore comes from.

Places such as Exmouth also have pressure points. It needs a new boat ramp to cater for the growth in the number of people using that boat ramp, but there is also a commercial aspect to it. The pressures that exist because so many people are travelling to regional WA have to be dealt with. The pressure it is putting on power, water, sewerage and telecommunications is a problem. The government needs to invest in towns such as Exmouth, Coral Bay, Kalbarri and Shark Bay where those services have pressure points. That is where the government will be tested.

As a huge number of road upgrades are needed to cater for the travelling public. The Minister for Transport often talks about investment in regional roads, but a lot of roads in the north west need to be continually upgraded. It is

funny to say Yardie Creek because “yardie” means “creek”, but Yardie Creek Road in Exmouth will not receive any money for an upgrade. The federal government has put in \$14 million and the state government has put in \$6 million to upgrade the Minilya Exmouth Road, but Yardie Creek Road is dangerous and needs to be upgraded to cater for all the people travelling to the west side of Exmouth.

We need to move to a smart border and be sensible. We need to take an approach that allows Western Australians to continue to operate in a sensible and safe manner. We are not saying we should open up the borders; we are saying that we need to be smart. We need policies and procedures in place to ensure that people’s lives are protected and our economy, businesses, and our tourism and agricultural sectors can survive, and towns like Kununurra, which is close to the Northern Territory, can operate. We need investment to occur in regional WA, particularly in the north west, where this government has failed to acknowledge the investment needed to cater for the visitation and those people who are keeping our economy afloat in the Shire of Ashburton.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The government needs to reflect what is happening in regional WA. The \$5 billion recovery plan is absent in the north west.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The government need to ensure that we can have that investment.

MR Y. MUBARAKAI (Jandakot) [11.37 am]: I rise to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2020–21) Bill 2020 and Appropriation (Capital 2020–21) Bill 2020. We are a lucky state, but luck can only take us so far. As soon as a government starts taking that luck for granted, it shall endure lack of vision, no prosperity and a backward trend towards the future. We know that firsthand from the eight and a half years of the Liberal–National government. Western Australia was in a unique position during the global financial crisis and was experiencing global dominance. In those years that the government took that lucky streak with a “she’ll be right” attitude, which put WA into a shocking state of financial affairs. This state lost its AAA rating and the government overspent with no plans for the future and no vision. It was a catastrophe for businesses facing bust. WA families and individuals experienced personal job losses, which had a ripple effect on every household as families were destroyed by that lack of good governance. It was an absolute mess.

It was a huge contrast to the McGowan Labor government’s first term in the fortieth Parliament of Western Australia. We saw a Premier take a strong collaborative approach with his cabinet and the business sector of Western Australia and began working on a coordinated vision to repair and reinstate the WA economy from a state of bankruptcy in 2017. In the three and a half years since, we have seen that collaborative approach from the McGowan government and the business sector—never to repeat the “she’ll be right” mentality.

As I have said in this place many times, we have an outstanding Treasurer. The members of his team have knuckled down, with their sleeves rolled to their elbows and a sharp eye for prudence to fix the financial mess left by the previous Liberal–National government. The journey began in 2017 and continues to this day. The fourth budget exemplifies what coordinated leadership from government can do for the people and families of this beautiful state of Western Australia: a budget surplus; business and consumer confidence back on top; job creation in all sectors; investment in infrastructure, schools, hospitals and roads; training for the youth; and helping WA enterprise in manufacturing. I could carry on and on about how the Treasurer has been critical in bringing Western Australia from the brink of collapse to a place that is now the envy of the nation and the world. Hon Ben Wyatt, in my eyes, has put the people of Western Australia before his own family by returning to serve his state when Western Australia needed him the most during the time when the world faced the COVID-19 pandemic. Ben, I say thank you on behalf of my family and the families in the electorate of Jandakot. Your prudence and fiscal management has showcased a world-class economic recovery, and I considered that was an impossible task. Since 2017, as Treasurer, Ben Wyatt has been served a banana split from hell, given the record historic deficit, the lowest business confidence, a decimated economic climate and record job losses amongst uncertainty and fear in our community. To top it off, as though that were not enough for any Treasurer, he was given COVID-19 as the cherry on top! This budget places WA as a frontrunner amidst all that the global pandemic is doing. It not only futureproofs Western Australia’s economy, but also provides resilience and confidence for businesses and families that we are okay. Yes, she’ll be right under the WA recovery plan. That is a vast difference from the previous Liberal–National government. Front and centre, day in, day out, by staying together we are stronger. This state should be proud for believing in the McGowan government for the past three and a half years. The public’s trust has been paid off in this budget. Treasurer, please convey our many thanks to your team that faced all measures of doubt and the impossibility of the task, and to every government department that has worked harder to make our community safe and provide a strong future for all Western Australians.

That brings me back to my people in my community of Jandakot and their resilience and confidence in the McGowan Labor government. I have been with them over the past eight months in constant contact over the phone, at their doors and in our community, and they say thank you—I say thank you. We are now a proud state for the world to recognise as being the safest place for families to live in and to work and build a prosperous future for generations to come. It is not all luck. I believe it is about the McGowan Labor government putting WA lives first, WA businesses first, WA jobs first and WA families first.

I think this is one of the most important budgets since the Second World War. I turn now to speak to the Appropriation (Recurrent 2020–21) Bill 2020 and the Appropriation (Capital 2020–21) Bill 2020. This budget shows my community that Mark McGowan and the WA Labor team have a plan for economic growth and recovery when economies all over the world are either contracting or are in recession. The Western Australian economy is expected to grow by 1.25 per cent in 2020–21. I would like to give members an example of how this budget and the WA recovery plan have helped create economic growth and WA jobs in my seat of Jandakot. As many present know, Jandakot is one of the fastest growing electorates in the state and, arguably, in the country. It is home to good schools such as Harrisdale Senior High School, which is under the fantastic leadership of principal Leila Bothams, whom many might know from her former days at Rossmoyne Senior High School. Jandakot is also home to some of Perth's newest schools. I note that this budget allocates funds for North Harrisdale and Treeby primary schools, which will open in 2021 and 2022. It is a great place to raise a family and is an affordable area for homes, with many new housing developments. The construction boom started by the \$20 000 building bonus has seen several new houses built in our community. Land sales are through the roof. It also means that some of the 65 000 workers, whose jobs the building bonus protected, are in Jandakot buying morning tea at the Harrisdale Bakers Delight, having a pint after work at the C.Y. O'Connor Village Pub or fuelling up their vehicles at the Shell service station in Leeming. Every additional job saved in construction saved another job in our service industries. We feel that this is the case down in Jandakot. Jobs are the number one priority for this government. They have been from day one and it will remain our number one priority moving forward.

The Western Australian workforce has consistently grown under this government. Although it took a hit due to COVID-19, as of August 2020, more than 70 per cent of the jobs lost between February and May 2020 have been recovered. There can be no mistake about how this has happened. The Premier's hard borders ensured that the lockdown could end earlier and people could go back to work. Economist Paul Krugman said that substantial economic recovery can occur only in an environment in which the impact is subdued. That is the environment in which people are living and working in Western Australia. How lucky are we? Yesterday it was reported in *The West Australian* that the International Monetary Fund said that the hard borders mitigate the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 if done early and if they are sufficiently stringent. Do not take the word of the IMF for it; we only have to look at the numbers. Western Australia's economic performance for the June quarter was better than that in the rest of the country on average and substantially better than the hard-hit countries with relaxed lockdowns like the United States and the European Union.

But economic growth and good budgets are not all about numbers; they are about people. I would like to take my remaining time to talk about what this budget means to my community on a personal level. I would like to tell the story of a group of community campaigners whom I worked with in Leeming to secure funding for a noise abatement wall. When construction commenced on the widening of Karel Avenue as part of the Thornlie–Cockburn Link project, Jennifer Barton, a Leeming resident whose house backs on to Karel Avenue, collected signatures for a noise abatement wall. Earlier this year, I joined her in taking up this fight. We doorknocked every house surrounding the road project and asked whether the residents would support the construction of a noise abatement wall. Of all those we spoke to, only one was opposed. I met with Hon Rita Saffioti, the Minister for Transport, and pleaded the residents' case and received funding for that as part of the \$16 million allocated in this government's budget to build noise abatement and amenity walls. This will mean jobs during its initial construction and a greater standard of living for local residents. It will also mean safety for residents like Liam Vance, Kimberley Birchenough and her newborn baby, whose house sits right on Karel Avenue. Constructing this noise abatement wall will mean extra protection for them should a car veer off the road.

This budget is about keeping the people of Western Australia safe and strong. When I was doorknocking in Canning Vale, I spoke to Elaine about the \$600 electricity credit to her billing account. She is on a fixed income and lives frugally. She told me that the extra money means that she can now afford to buy something nice for her grandkids for Christmas. Elaine is one of the thousands of Jandakot residents who will be spending that money locally and stimulating our economy. If the Liberals and Nationals had sold Western Power, as they had planned, unfortunately, we would not be able to do this. Western Power, Synergy and Horizon Energy are proudly owned by the people of Western Australia. This budget is about investing in people as much as it is about stimulating our economy and an amazing recovery plan.

I came to Western Australia in 1997 as an international student to reap the benefits of Australia's world-class education system. Every day I meet new Australians who have shared the same journey. They tell me that they stayed

because they want their kids to have the same, if not better, opportunities in life. I am incredibly supportive of this budget's \$456 million investment in Western Australia's public school system. But I know that those young families in Jandakot are more excited than I am. They know that we have allocated \$60 million for stage 1 of a new secondary school in Piara Waters. That means there will be state-of-the-art teaching facilities for 750 students and 50 students who require additional support. Their kids will benefit from our government building a better future for WA kids.

As mentioned earlier, two new primary schools for my electorate are funded in the budget. North Harrisdale Primary School opens next year. I congratulate new principal Jacqui O'Donnell and wish her all the very best. The school will take pressure off surrounding primary schools, allowing for better teacher-to-student ratios. That is a huge win for high quality public education. Treeby Primary School will open in 2022, and the 5 000 or so residents living in the beautiful new suburb of Calleya will have to travel less than a kilometre to drop their kids at school and have more time as a family. This budget creates jobs, stimulates our economy, improves educational options for Jandakot kids and saves my community time, which, as a father of two, is something that I know is incredibly valuable.

This budget saves my community time not only by building new schools, but also by improving our roads. Ranford Road Bridge is currently four lanes. The road on either side of the bridge has six lanes. The merge points cause chaos for drivers. It means there are delays and potentially hazardous road conditions for commuters. I am glad that Minister Saffioti is in the chamber listening to my comments. I appreciate the minister's support. Thank you so much. Continued funding in the budget for the Thornlie-Cockburn Link means that we can bring forward the widening of the bridge to eight lanes to save us from having to do it in the future. Smart thinking, I say! Widening Ranford Road Bridge means that jobs will be created during construction and commuters will save time on the road. The time people save not being stuck in traffic can be spent on family time or doing things that they enjoy.

No member of this place is immune from the issue of crime. Although my electorate is home to some of the suburbs with the lowest crime rates in WA, people are still concerned. I have been working with Neighbourhood Watch member and Leeming resident Bob Taddeo on community safety initiatives. Bob agrees that policing and community safety is complicated. Although we both welcome this government's announcement of 800 new police officers, we know that it is just one part of the bigger picture of increasing community safety. The budget allocates \$9 million to help support and protect survivors of family and domestic violence. It also invests \$2.4 million into a mental health unit at Bandyup Women's Prison because we know that strong support services can break the cycle of crime and incarceration. The budget invests in protecting survivors of crime and ending the cycle of criminality, whilst also improving our ability to arrest and discourage criminal behaviour. This budget keeps Western Australia safe and strong.

In closing, I commend the bill and again thank the outstanding Treasurer for his incredible commitment to Western Australia's future. Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

MR K.M. O'DONNELL (Kalgoorlie) [11.54 am]: Greetings, Acting Speaker. I speak to the Appropriation (Recurrent 2020–21) Bill 2020 and the Appropriation (Capital 2020–21) Bill 2020. I am extremely honoured to represent an electorate of go-getting councils. I am sure that the majority of councils across the state are proactive, but they would be no match for my local ones. Goldfields councils have been successively left out of state funding and had to fend for themselves, and it has become second nature. Our local councils are all trying to diversify from being solely reliant on mining, even though we are all confident in the mining industry, to ensure the financial viability of every sector in the region for a better future. Water, energy and waste are a few of the new industries councils aim to tap into. It is good that our local councils are taking care of their own futures, but they still need help from the state government. They are constantly left behind other regions in the state budget. For the past three years, the electorate of Kalgoorlie, including the goldfields, has come last or second last in budget allocation. For a region celebrated amongst the mining community, which is one of the industries that held our economy together whilst our country was hit by COVID-19, we are being short-changed—by a lot! The government is happy to collect taxes from people who are fortunate to be employed in our region, but gives close to nothing back compared with other regions.

The state government tried to introduce the gold tax twice. I am worried that there could be a third attempt, because the issue was raised in the media. I read on the weekend that the Treasurer said that it was not going to be ruled out. However, the media report stated that Minister Johnston said in Kalgoorlie–Boulder that the government will not be doing it.

If we were in normal times, it would be well and good for the state government to announce a budget surplus, but we are not in normal times. Due to COVID, many small businesses and households are suffering, and to have such a huge surplus is questionable. There were hints this week before the budget announcement that the government would declare a surplus. I was hoping that if that was the case, there would be many new announcements specifically catered to the current jobs crisis. I congratulate the government for budgeting for 800 new police officers over the next four years. However, I was astounded how many of the announcements were just previous ones rehashed. Even the budget snapshot this year is just a four-year summary of what the government has done. On coming to Parliament, I would get the snapshots of each year's budget. For example, I printed out the 2019–20 budget funding for the Kimberley, Pilbara, Peel and goldfields. They are a fairly straightforward read. The information sheets are

divided into sections such as creating jobs and supporting the economy, delivering better health and community services and projects underway or completed in the different regions. I would print off the budget snapshots for all the regions to find out how much had been allocated to each. This year, the government revamped the information sheet with the heading “4 Years of Delivering for the Goldfields–Esperance Region”.

When I read the sheet, I thought, “Yes, there is some money coming to the region.” There is \$7 million to expand the Joe Lord Core Library, \$2 million over the next four years for a national park at the Helena Aurora Range and \$600 000 for a battery energy system in Menzies. On the next page, still under the heading “Creating Jobs and Supporting the Economy”, it lists various projects that were funded in last year’s budget and have been completed. For example, there is \$1 million for a new road train assembly area in Coolgardie. That has been and gone; it has been completed. For example, there is \$1.9 million towards upgrading and expanding the Norseman airfield, \$1.3 million to upgrade the Great Beyond Visitor Centre in Laverton and \$1.6 million for the new Woodlands Visitor Centre in Norseman. Those projects have been done. There is also \$5.1 million for construction of the Bandy Creek weir, but next to that it states “now complete”. Another one is \$24.8 million for the upgrade of the Great Eastern Highway duplication between Anzac Drive and Gatacre Drive in Kalgoorlie. That has also been put as now complete.

I query why projects that have been done have been mixed in with projects that are in this year’s state budget. I could understand it if the government put out a press release to say it has done this and that. However, I disagree when we have three pages for the goldfields that contain a lot of stuff that has been done. I think I am the same as every other normal, everyday person without an accounting degree. If I had not been in Parliament and had printed this off, I would be saying, “How good is this government! Look at all these things it is doing!” The government is just rehashing a lot of the other stuff. I commended the government for its first three budgets. They were easy to read. I liked the way things were set out. However, I strongly disagree with this. I hope that going forward, the government will not do this again. I certainly hope that any government, Liberal or whatever, will not do this. It just muddies the water, as we say.

The 2019–20 budget had \$14 million for the upgrade of the Great Eastern Highway duplication. However, the 2020–21 budget has an allocation of \$24.8 million, and states that that is now complete. That is a \$10.8 million difference. It did not cost \$24.8 million. I was on the council when that came through. I think it was originally around \$12 million, but, by the time it was done, it had increased to \$14 million. The 2019–20 budget allocated \$60 million for sealing the priority sections of Outback Way. In this budget, the allocation is \$164.1 million. I am curious to know whether that \$60 million is included in the \$164 million for this year or is on top of that to make it \$224 million. It would be good to know that.

Other allocations that were in the previous budget and have been replicated in this budget are \$6.9 million for the upgrade of shed 4 at Esperance port; \$6 million for the extension of the state barrier fence to Esperance; and \$12.5 million for the step up, step down facility. Hopefully going forward, the government will stick to the formula that it used in the first three years, when it printed out these things, and then listed at the end, completely and utterly segregated, the projects that have been completed. That would be a better way to go.

Last weekend, the Premier was in Kalgoorlie–Boulder in the lead-up to Diggers and Dealers. I had hoped when the Premier arrived that he would do more when he was there. I honestly believed he would make a major announcement, as did a lot of other people. When the Premier went to Girrawheen on 6 October, he announced that a Vietnamese cultural centre would be built. When he went to Ocean Reef on 24 September, he announced that there would be a new performing arts centre at Ocean Reef Senior High School. However, nothing was announced in Kalgoorlie.

Mr P. Papalia: He might be saving it! He might be waiting until he needs your help!

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I know! I know they are coming after me! I am aware of that.

The City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder has repeatedly asked for support for its water bank project. I have made it clear previously that I am strongly advocating for that on its behalf. It is a very good plan. However, the plan needs government support. Water costs for industry in regional areas range from \$9 a kilolitre to \$22 a kilolitre, much higher than in the metropolitan area. These higher prices are impeding business and are a great hindrance to moving projects ahead. Due to the hard work of the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder and its staff, big industrial projects have been attracted to that area. One of those is Lynas Corporation. A major drawcard for attracting Lynas was that the city would provide water for that plant. That was the sole reason that deal went through. I spoke with the general manager of Lynas, and he confirmed that was the be-all and end-all for building that plant in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. We do not need a calculator to see the figures for how many jobs will be created. The City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder’s water bank project is world-class best practice. It sets an example for regions to follow. It was great to see the opening of the water treatment plant in Bunbury back in September. The Glen Iris plant has supported more than 200 jobs for local contractors over the past few years. Other regions are being funded for their water projects. However, once again, we have been overlooked.

The Shire of Coolgardie has proposed to build a beneficiation plant to incorporate a waste-to-energy process to support fit-for-purpose energy solutions for the mining industry. Simply speaking, it aims to recycle tyres and

plastics and turn them into energy, which will then be supplied to mines close by, mining operators, the Shire of Coolgardie and the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, and perhaps even exported as gas through the port of Esperance. I am pleased to hear that has progressed to the next stage of funding.

The Kalgoorlie–Boulder Basketball Stadium is antiquated and does not meet modern-day expectations. A redevelopment would mean securing a venue capable of attracting state and national sport events or tournaments on its show court. It will also facilitate growth in the summer and winter basketball programs, and allow for shared use with other sports such as the Goldfields Giants State Basketball League and the Eastern Goldfields Netball Association. There is also the potential for broader use of the facility by roller derby, indoor sports, cheerleading, schools, and events. I have had a tour of that basketball stadium. I believe the Premier has also been given a tour. It is in terrible condition. It is very embarrassing when one of the state basketball teams comes to Kalgoorlie–Boulder. The change rooms are just a little square box, with a wooden bench to sit on, and no lockers. It is woeful. I hope that going forward, the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Basketball Association will get an expanded stadium.

The City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder has another lot of land—lot 350—for which it is trying to negotiate with the state government to get a lease. Through the hard work of the city staff, that block of land is already oversubscribed by different industry players who are taking the opportunity to make things happen. One of the industries that is planned to locate to that lot is the intermodal freight hub. That will require the realignment of the current railway line. The approval for the lease is with Minister Johnston. I hope he will agree and sign that form. A project of this scale will benefit the government, as an increase in industry means the creation of wealth from taxes and payroll tax.

The intermodal freight hub is very important. All freight that comes into the state from over east needs to pass through the goldfields, unless it goes through the Northern Territory. This project will capitalise Kalgoorlie–Boulder's strategic location at the intersection of four major rail routes that provide vital access to the east and west coasts, and the goldfields region. The freight hub will allow freight to be unloaded in Kalgoorlie–Boulder and then sent to where it needs to go, either the northern goldfields, the Pilbara or the Kimberley, or down to Esperance, instead of being delivered to Perth and then having to travel backwards.

On Sunday, the Premier attended a sundowner hosted by KCGM, at which I was also present. KCGM announced that it is expanding into the Fimiston site. This will absolutely require moving the railway line. It is imperative that the railway line realignment goes ahead. The intermodal freight hub needs to be funded and is pivotal to diversifying the economy of the goldfields.

The Coolgardie Bayley Street upgrade is another important project. Freight trucks that come from the east have to go through Bayley Street in Coolgardie. The increased mining activity in the area has placed increased pressure on the shire's local road network, with mining companies transporting larger quantities of raw minerals than ever before. The aim of the street upgrade is to reduce the speed of 75 per cent of the vehicles on Bayley Street that travel over the posted speed limit, in order to provide a safe road network for all road users, and to increase visitor movements anticipated through the re-establishment of tourism assets.

Last weekend, the cost of a flight from Perth to Kalgoorlie was \$1 500 one way. On the Sunday, there were no flights from Perth to Kalgoorlie for under \$700 one way, even though there were five flights from Perth. I understand that Diggers and Dealers was on that week. However, what does this mean for local residents who have to travel to Perth for emergency reasons? Last weekend, one of my staffers had to pay \$3 000 for her two sons to fly to Kalgoorlie for a funeral. The return ticket for each cost \$1 500. The boys could not drive as they had work and study commitments. However, again and again we see flights subsidised, especially for tourism in the northern corridor. I am not against that—I agree with it—however, why does the goldfields continually miss out and why are we not on the radar? If the Premier flew commercial last weekend, he would have seen how busy the flights were. I call on the state government to join me and advocate with the airlines to bring in a better pricing structure and possibly subsidise flights. I hope the government can put aside, say, \$200 000 and give a rebate of \$50 a flight to the locals.

Last but not least, I call on the state government to bring forward the Laverton Hospital upgrade. The funding from the federal government is already there. All the state government needs to do is bring forward the works. The residents of Laverton and its surrounding communities have been very patient on this, but it needs to be delivered now rather than later.

I thank the frontline health workers and police in the goldfields for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have done a fantastic job. Our health staff were led admirably by Peter Tredinnick, while Superintendent Brad Jackson led police in the goldfields. Our mining industry too has helped to keep our economy afloat and I thank those involved in it. I thank all the schoolteachers for their efforts in delivering a high standard of education for our youth in these troubled times. I would also like to mention the Norseman airport, which needs help from the state government. There is a hard border at Eucla, yet the airport there cannot be used if there is any indication of moisture on the airstrip. It is the only shire in Western Australia that has to organise and support two airports. It would be beneficial if the state

government could come up with \$4 million to get it up to speed in all weather, and to ensure that all planes, especially Royal Flying Doctor Service aircraft, have protection from the weather when unloading.

I think it is time for the Legislative Assembly to revisit its numbers in the chamber. I visit many places and the inconsistency in social distancing amazes me.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I catch the red CAT bus to Parliament in the mornings and passengers sit shoulder to shoulder. I have been on the train and seen the same thing—shoulder to shoulder. In the Assembly, we are divided.

Several members interjected.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes, I was just raising it —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Thank you.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I think the member got a nod there. The member for Kalgoorlie has 13 minutes.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I hope we can rectify this matter. I love coming to Parliament. I think it is a fantastic job. I love seeing everybody again, especially as I am not in Perth a lot. I reckon I feel the same as the Labor backbenchers. We do not feel part of it when we are sitting in our office or outside watching. It is okay at times, but consistently and regularly not being able to come in here and be part of it does not sit well with me. I agree that originally it was done for the right reasons, but I think that now it is time to come back.

To conclude, I would like to see more money spent in the regions. I will probably contact the Treasurer's office to see whether it can help with this: I would like to know where the goldfields came in budget allocation. I dare say it would be good to see the allocation for the regions. If the government really wants to take the seat of Kalgoorlie back from me, it has to do better than to place the goldfields second last or last in budget allocation. Third last does not cut it. It needs to be in the top 10 to 15 per cent; then the people might listen to the government. That is all from me, thank you.

MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth) [12.15 pm]: After nearly 16 years, this will be my last budget reply speech, and I feel very sad that I will not be here next year. Following on from the suspension of standing orders today, I would like to give my view on how the state has handled COVID-19. In my electorate, people are not really talking about the budget. The Treasurer is probably happy about that. People in my electorate are very happy with the \$600 electricity bill credit as a result of the Bell Group settlement, but when I talk to my constituents, they talk about COVID-19. I ask them the questions. We can put out all sorts of surveys asking whether people want this or that, but people just say yes or no and do not really discuss it. One cannot explain what asking for that might result in. For example: "We want a new swimming pool, but do you know that your rates could go up?" I like to talk to people, and I have been talking to them about COVID-19. Most of my electorate want to be kept safe. They are happy that the closed borders remain in place so that the people of Western Australia can be kept safe.

I was at a sports presentation last Saturday with nearly 200 people. I will not mention the body. The president of the organisation opened the address by saying, "How lucky are we to be living in the most isolated capital city in the world?" That sums up what people think. People on the east coast have mocked us for a long time for being an outpost, but now it is in our favour that we have largely been able to isolate ourselves. People are very supportive of the current arrangement because they see what is happening in other places and they appreciate the freedoms under which we are living. We need only reflect on what we can do. We can go to sporting events and to restaurants and pubs. We can do our shopping. We can basically live our lives in normal circumstances, with some exceptions, such as large live events. Obviously restrictions apply in those cases. A case in point is that if one of the AFL preliminary finals were to be held at Optus Stadium this weekend, the crowd would be 35 000. I heard the other day that on Saturday the Australian Turf Club will host the richest horserace on turf in the world at Randwick. It announced last weekend that the government had allowed it to have 11 600 patrons. In a big city like Sydney, a massive racecourse like that is allowed to have only 11 600 people.

New South Wales has restrictions that we do not have to have here. I have a son and a daughter living on the east coast and two grandchildren in Sydney who my wife and I have not seen since last Christmas. One is 11 and one is nine. We will miss a whole year of their life and development. That is a bit tough, but we have had to accept it because we understand that these are very unusual and difficult circumstances. However, I am hopeful that the health advice will soon be such that travel restrictions will be eased. The member for North West Central summed it up when he said that we should look at a smart border. A smart border is obviously what the Minister for Health and the Chief Health Officer would have to look at to make sure that if we open up, we will be safe. That is the biggest "if" because there are many other things to consider, such as the border security that those states have been able to put in place. We do have border hopping. Victorians go across the border into South Australia all the time, so we cannot afford someone from Victoria going to South Australia and then catching a plane to Perth. There can be

ways to prevent that happening by checking drivers' licences and things like that, but still a fair bit of work would have to be put in place. The other thing that the public does not understand—I think the government should release these sorts of figures—is that 2 000 people are in hotel quarantine at the moment. Every day, 2 000 people who have come from overseas or interstate are in hotel quarantine, and there are also 4 000 people in home quarantine. If people want to go away, they can, but when they come back, they have to be prepared to do the quarantine if they are going to an area that might be a bit suspect. I was encouraged to hear the other day that contact tracing has been upgraded, and maybe more people will be able to quarantine at home. I mean Western Australian citizens coming back to their own homes. That could come into place in the future. I would certainly like to see something in place maybe for the holiday season heading in towards Christmas.

Getting back to my own electorate, I want to raise a couple of issues, and one regards a suburb called Karawara. I am told that Karawara is the Aboriginal word meaning “green”. I gather that name might have come from the fact that Karawara was originally an old pine plantation, and it was a green site. The pine plantation was cut down. The name was approved in 1973, and that was under the Labor government of the day of John Tonkin. It decided to build this new suburb. It was designed under what was called the Radburn design principle, which is an English principle based around the presence of public open space for reserves for community use, with the reserves located at the rear of dwellings and connected to the road network by pedestrian access ways. Anyone who has been to Karawara knows there are a lot of pedestrian access ways so that people can get to these public open spaces and parks, and now people use them to get to the big shopping centre.

It was a controversial development back then. There was much argy-bargy between the South Perth council and the state government over planning issues and road designs, but obviously the government eventually won the day. It is interesting to see how it was set up, because the government sold 30 broad acres to the director of Defence Service Homes for war service homes. Apparently, there must have been a department under the director of Defence Service Homes that allocated funds to build houses for people who had served in the military or had been to war. Part of the development was for the war service homes. There were going to be 18 single detached houses and 96 apartments for rental, including pensioner accommodation. I gather that to fund all this the government decided it would take a portion of this big section of land at Karawara—it might have been about 100 hectares; I am not sure—and sell it to developers to develop private housing. Developers were going to build 88 town houses. At the time, people were told that it would be a great place to live. I have spoken to people who bought into Karawara around that time. The buildings would still have been being built in 1973. The government changed hands in 1974, but the growth of Karawara continued, and a lot of really nice houses were built in Karawara.

It is a nice place, but antisocial behaviour is causing a lot of problems for some of the locals. I have met some of those people, and they said, “We don't want to have to leave this place. We like this place. We like Karawara because it's got a lot going for it, but we need people to behave better.” On 1 June 2020, there was an attack on a home in Lowan Loop in Karawara. A couple of local residents attacked the resident in the house. On 7 June, a street meeting was organised by my office, and more than 100 people came along. With only three days' notice, 100 people turned up. As a result of that meeting, the Karawara action group was formed, and it has become quite an active group. To their credit, the Kensington police arrived and they were very good. They listened to the concerns of the residents. The Karawara action group wanted to know where Karawara sat in terms of the percentage of social housing. I am not against social housing. I grew up in a state housing house. I started in Willagee and then we upgraded to Hamilton Hill, so it was like going to Toorak coming from Willagee! That was my background. I understand that we have to have social housing. People have to be given somewhere to live. It was a little bit different back then, because a state housing house was often the first house for a young couple when they got married, and then they would either buy that property or buy another one. The action group asked the Department of Communities, through a freedom of information application, for the percentage of social housing in their suburb. According to my notes, their application says —

Karawara has been left for 20 years to carry the City of South Perth's Department of Communities numbers.

The group could not get the information, so it came back to me and I put a question on notice to the Minister for Housing. This week we received a response from the minister—only on Tuesday—and the most recent statistics available, the 2016 census, showed that Karawara was well on top of the charts, with almost 24 per cent of the suburb being social housing. Neighbouring Manning, which is also in my electorate, is in the top 10. I lived in Belmont for 20 years and raised two children, and I thought that one of the Belmont suburbs would have been on that list. Here is the list: Karawara, 23.9 per cent; Willagee, 21.3 per cent; Ashfield, 19.2 per cent; Midvale, 17.9 per cent; Brentwood, 16 per cent; Mirrabooka, 15.2 per cent; Bentley, 14.6 per cent; Manning, also in my electorate, 14.4 per cent; Hilton, 13.9 per cent; and St James, which is sort of in South Perth, and it might be in Victoria Park now, was 12.9 per cent. In the response from the minister we were told —

... There are no current targeted plans to reduce the public housing presence in Karawara. The Department of Communities attempts to ensure a diverse mix of housing is provided that meets community need.

We understand that —

As properties become vacant, the Department of Communities considers whether the site should be retained for further use or sold.

... The vast majority of public housing tenants have no reports of disruptive behaviour made during their tenancies. While disruptive behaviour can and does occur in public housing properties, it also occurs in private rentals and owner-occupied properties.

We understand that too. That can be the case —

The Department of Communities has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Western Australian Police Force that provides for the provision of information sharing during the course of a disruptive behaviour investigation against a public housing tenancy.

Might I point out that I have a very good relationship with the department of housing, and the perpetrators of that attack that I mentioned before on the resident in Lowan Loop were moved to somewhere else. They agreed to move because they understood that they were causing some grief in the street. I would like the government and the minister to look at Karawara. I understand that the minister has a plan to build another 2 500, I think, social housing properties in the next four years. I would like him to look at Karawara because I think something can be done. We can still keep social housing in the area, but something can be done. A couple of old buildings are there that could be demolished and new dwellings could be built for social housing tenants. I think it would lift the look and the standard of the area. It would be really appreciated by the people who have paid to live in Karawara and raise their families there. They can all get on well and enjoy living in what should be a very good suburb.

Next I want to talk about one much my favourite subjects, namely a South Perth train station. I have a brochure prepared by the City of South Perth, headed “South Perth Train Station”, which states —

South Perth is growing strongly, with a planning framework that supports high density mixed-use development. A new station in the heart of South Perth would provide a fast and efficient public transport service within walking distance from a range of popular destinations.

I have had discussions with the Minister for Transport; Planning, Hon Rita Saffioti, a number of times on this. I am so encouraged that this minister supports a station in South Perth. The former Premier, the former member for Cottesloe, said to me just before the 2017 wipe-out, “John, I think South Perth should have a train station.” I was happy to hear that. However, in all the time I have been in Parliament, I have been fighting for this train station, so it has been nearly 15 years of battle. Finally, the current minister has said, “I agree with you; I think you should have a station.” I do not know how we will get the station. The minister is prepared to look at a public-private partnership, but there will obviously be more discussion about that. This is why the City of South Perth and I believe that the time is right for a station. The freeway was modified under Hon Alannah MacTiernan during, I think, the Gallop government to allow for a station, so the footprint is there. All that is required now is to plonk a station in.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr J.E. McGRATH: The minister has arrived back. Very timely, minister. We are talking about a South Perth train station. I have praised the minister for at least supporting the concept. I am not saying how it will be delivered or what plans the minister has, because I do not know what they are. However, I think the time is right now. In 2005 when I was first elected I would drive Hon Alannah MacTiernan, the former Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, insane over a station. I said, “You’re building a train line to Mandurah and the first stop is at Canning Bridge; why can’t you just drop one in at South Perth on the way?” She finally agreed to alter the freeway a bit and widen the area so there is a footprint for a station.

I was just showing the house the document the City of South Perth has produced explaining the benefits, some of which are as follows. It is predicted that there will be 2 300 more dwellings just on the peninsula in South Perth by 2041. There are 500 apartments ready to be built. In Civic Heart South Perth, which is a project the minister has brought on, there will be 309. There will be 91 Lumiere South Perth apartments and 98 apartments at 28 Lyall Street. I believe the area identified between Richardson Park and the on-ramp to the freeway at the end of Mill Point and Labouchere Roads will one day be like West Perth. It will contain commercial and residential places and there will be buildings of various heights. For 50 years people have been working out of old houses that they have bought. The office of a tax accountant I once used was in one of those houses. Those old houses will be replaced by other buildings. People will be working and living in that precinct.

The advantages of a train station include efficiently moving the additional 4 700 people expected to live in that part of the South Perth peninsula by 2041, which I have already mentioned. The number of people expected to be employed in this area in the same 20-year period is forecast to double from 2 300 to 4 600 people. Tourists and visitors from other suburbs will go to the Perth Zoo. Six hundred and fifty-eight thousand three hundred and twenty-five people visited Perth Zoo last year. Not a lot of them were tourists; most of them were local residents. It is another option for them. During the school holiday week, last week, I saw people in cars coming in and parking in the car parks and on the streets. A lot of people like to travel by car, because it is probably more convenient

with the kids in the back and prams and things. They could jump on the train and walk to the Zoo. There is also an opportunity for the private sector to develop a new railway station. The minister knows my thoughts on it. I look forward to seeing whatever might eventuate with a train station.

The other brochure that also involves the Minister for Transport is the Mends Street jetty. I believe the Public Transport Authority is seeking funding to extend the current Mends Street jetty so that it will comply better with disability requirements. I have heard complaints over many years, but some work has been done. A constituent in a wheelchair had problems, but it was sorted out to some extent. There is talk of extending the jetty to a pontoon-style floating jetty that the ferry would go to. I believe that will cost about \$10 million. At the same time, the City of South Perth is keen for a little bit more because since construction of Elizabeth Quay, ferry traffic has increased by 94 per cent. I think that is an amazing story—great for Mends Street. The council has a wish list, or a vision that is in tandem with what the PTA wants to do on the existing jetty—that is, to spend about \$25 million. This idea is supported by the Mends Street businesses. That vision includes allowing for the expansion of the jetty now to the floating pontoon and enabling compliance with disability standards. It wants to create a covered walkway and a more attractive and safe jetty for the thousands of visitors. At present if it is raining when people get there, they have to stand there and wait, and run to the jetty and get rained on. The City of South Perth has a plan for a covered walkway, which is in this brochure, minister. The minister has probably been sent a copy.

The city wants to build a second jetty, which has been mooted for a while, and a boardwalk to link the two jetties. This would complement what the council has already done with what I think is called Mindeerup, at \$7.5 million, at the entrance to the Mends Street precinct. It would also like to provide berthing facilities for short-stay recreational boaters so that people who can afford a boat—I cannot afford a boat—probably from Nedlands, Dalkeith and Cottesloe, will go up the river, park at the jetty and go to a restaurant or cafe. They can look at the numbat on the way in.

Ms R. Saffioti: The frill-necked.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Yes, the frill-necked lizard and the numbat. They are fantastic. People did not like it. When it was first put there, people said, “What’s this? They’re ruining our foreshore.” People love it.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Yes, but I think the kids would love it. It is sort of linked to going to the Zoo. The City of South Perth did not do it on its own; it went to the Zoo and said, “What can we put there that would link people coming from South Perth going to the Zoo?” The Zoo said, “What about a numbat and a frill-necked lizard?” A second jetty would provide greater commercial opportunities. The owner of Mister Walker, the cafe restaurant on the first jetty, are not unhappy about having a second restaurant. They say, “Why not?” It is competition, but it will bring more people to the area.

Mr P. Papalia: Mister Walker is doing very well.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Yes, Mister Walker is going very well.

The Mends Street precinct would be buzzing.

Ms R. Saffioti: It’s pretty busy already.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: It is pretty busy, but imagine a second jetty. The Minister for Tourism is here; he should be delighted with something like that.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: I saw the camels; I was not rapt that he brought camels to our foreshore!

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Yes, a lot of people did not like the white, sandy beaches.

Ms R. Saffioti: One thing, the first thing my daughter said to me this morning was, “Is John McGrath famous?” I said, “Yeah, he is. There’s a pavilion named after him.”

Mr J.E. McGRATH: I do not think I am famous for that!

Ms R. Saffioti: That’s what she said to me this morning.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Oh, she is a smart girl.

Finally, I want to talk about a school: Como Secondary College. Como Secondary College is 61 years old. It is one of those schools that was built during the period when the kids of the baby boomer generation were growing up and suddenly the schools were filling up and they had to build new schools quickly. In my experience, the older schools were better built, because they were double-brick; we would never knock down those schools. This school, after 61 years, is falling down a bit. On 25 June I wrote a letter to Hon Sue Ellery, the Minister for Education and Training, to point out that the school was in serious need of some facility upgrades and increased classroom capacity.

I have been to the school, and I understand that. It has a gym area with a basketball court, but if the kids want to go and have a shower after using it, they have to walk 500 metres.

The school's wish list was \$12.5 million for a new performing arts centre; \$4.5 million for a new administration block; and \$9 million for a completely new classroom block. The school got \$1 million out of this budget, not \$26 million. Despite that, the school's P&C president, Jesvin Karimi, was reported in the *Southern Gazette* of 13 August as saying —

“This is a good start towards addressing the great need for the modernisation of many of the buildings at Como Secondary College,” ...

I think she was being a bit diplomatic because the school has been around for a long time, it has 900 students, and I think it needs a bit more. Back in the 1990s my predecessor, Hon Phil Pandal, called for a rebuild of the school. I know the Treasurer also flagged a couple of years ago the possibility of amalgamating Kent Street Senior High School and Como Secondary College. I sort of did not mind that idea, but the moment I ran it past the people at Como, they said no: “No amalgamation. We're Como; they're Kent Street.” That happens.

Ms R. Saffioti: Something equivalent to a Bob Hawke College?

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Yes, I think the member for Victoria Park—the Treasurer—felt that it could have been built on the Curtin University campus, because Kent Street is in his electorate, and that would link it.

Ms R. Saffioti: Land in Kensington.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Yes, land near there, in Kensington. There would be plenty of room. Governments of both persuasions have really not done much for Como Secondary College; it has been a bit on the drip system. It gets by, but maybe the time is right for a new-look school. I do not know what the answer is, but I know more could be done. It is a high-achieving school with some great programs, both academic and sporting, and kids from quite a few different areas attend there. The Manning ramp has helped there, because if students live further south and want to attend Como Secondary College, it is much easier to get home down that ramp.

That is the conclusion of my last-ever response to the budget speech. With that I will depart—I will leave the building!

MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta) [12.44 pm]: I speak to the Appropriation (Recurrent 2020–21) Bill 2020 and the Appropriation (Capital 2020–21) Bill 2020. Noting that we have a few minutes before 90-second statements, I thought I would start a small contribution. I am very pleased to respond today to the Treasurer's budget speech. This is a great budget that creates jobs while delivering a surplus. It is obviously an understatement to say that 2020 has been a year the like of which no-one in this chamber or this state has ever seen. I spent my fortieth birthday at Pirate Bar in Mt Hawthorn on 25 January. Not only is that day my birthday, it is also the day that the first Australian COVID-19 case was reported in the media. I remember being driven to Pirate Bar and thinking, “Well, I'm glad my birthday's early in the year!” By then we had seen what was happening in China and elsewhere in the world. It has been an odd year.

Under normal circumstances, the budget response speeches this week and the estimates hearings next week would have taken place in May. We had the year's sitting dates early in the year, and this would all have been done by now, but in March and April we went into lockdown in Western Australia. Like most Western Australians, I tuned into the live streams on the Nine Network and the ABC to see what the Premier was saying, normally an hour or so after the Prime Minister went on. It is probably one of the only times that I have listened to the Prime Minister, but during that period we were all in this together, and we were listening to what was happening nationally.

Before I start my speech, I want to say a thankyou to my electorate staff Magenta Wilders and Andrew O'Donnell. We also had some relief at that time from James Aylward and Abby Williams. In my capacity as government Whip, I also thank Ben Coates, who made sure we worked out who was going to come to the chamber and how the chamber would operate, and helped me sort that out. I thank them all. Like most members in this place, during that period we had a lot of calls and inquiries about what was going on. I also thank the Premier's office and our local federal member, who is not of my political persuasion, but his office is across the road and we have a good relationship with him. I thank him and his office for their collaboration, especially during that period.

We called 3 000 elderly people in my electorate over that time. Steve Ibbotson from the Yokine–Joondanna RSL also popped into the office and called elderly people to make sure that they were getting groceries. The people I spoke to, whether from their own experience or from family experience that was handed down to them from World War I or World War II, spoke about just getting on with it, following directions and saying, “If we all do what we're told, we'll get through this.” I have had some meetings in recent weeks with people who have interesting ideas about the ways of the world; they have probably read a few too many social media posts and conspiracy theories. I only wish some of them could talk to some of these people, who as children lived through World War II and rationing, to understand that outlook of getting together, doing what we are told, and getting through this.

I thank our frontline workers for their work during that early period, including health workers and police. They continue to do a magnificent job. I thank the truck drivers who made sure that there was food coming across the

border and onto our shelves, and who dealt with all the issues and confusion around that, especially in the early days. I also thank our retail workers at Woolworths, Coles and IGA. There were no plexiglass barriers in the first few weeks, but they were still serving people and putting themselves at risk. I thank all the frontline workers and everyone in public-facing roles at that time, who had no choice but to do their job to make sure people had food, and who faced the wrath of people who could buy only a couple of tins of whatever they wanted or only a couple of loo rolls. They did an outstanding job and continue to do so. I will get back to the budget. During that period, the member for Dawesville and I looked at a YouTube page that showed coronavirus data from Johns Hopkins University. I remember one night here the member asked me what it was. There was a big dashboard with 80 000 cases worldwide. I had a look today and it is almost up to 40 million cases. The world has changed a lot even in that time.

I continue to receive an outpouring of support expressed to me in my office for the government's role. It is a tribute to the strong leadership of our Premier, Mark McGowan, the cabinet and the public service. Over the last few weeks, I have attended numerous community events, such as coffee meet-ups and community morning teas, and the message from the community has been a resounding one of thanks to fellow members of the community and the Premier for his strong leadership through these difficult times.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 6981.]