

## **ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE**

### *Consideration of Tabled Papers*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West)** [5.07 pm]: I want to continue my discussion of this budget, because it is so important to the people of Western Australia. We can see now that we have turned the corner. As I mentioned before, I congratulate the government on many parts of its budget, but I am always going to lay into it when I think other areas can be improved. In many cases, apprenticeships come under the regime of the federal government, but we need the state government to work closely with the federal Parliament. It does not matter which party is in control. Just recently, a couple of One Nation senators were able to get 1 300 or 1 400 apprenticeships created, mainly in regional areas across Australia. Unfortunately, only 160 of those jobs went to Western Australia. I know that our local senator was a bit upset that he could not get more, but at least they worked together to achieve that for the young people of Australia. Apprenticeships are very dear to our hearts. Hon Robin Scott is a tradesperson, and I am an ex-tradesperson, and we have both done apprenticeships, in the old-fashioned way of doing longer than a year or two. We had to earn our stripes, but it set us up for a fantastic life. We learnt a lot, and we received some tough love along the way. It was a very good time for me from the learning aspect, and also I bought my first home when I was a second-year apprentice printer.

It is very hard now for people to do that. Firstly, the apprenticeships are not there and, secondly, have members ever looked at a second-year apprentice's wages? They are not that great, and house prices have gone up quite a bit. Pauline Hanson's One Nation will always push apprenticeships. How do we do that? The best way is to get back to science, technology, engineering and mathematics in education. I will give an example of that education piece and how we can promote STEM subjects. STEM subjects are about the jobs of tomorrow. We could provide a zone allowance or something of that sort that could create greater incentives for young people, especially those living up north in Port Hedland, Karratha or Newman, to learn STEM subjects either free or at a reduced amount—some sort of allowance for people in regional areas. We could also provide greater support for teachers in their role as educators. I did not do that well at school, but I learnt a lot at tech school when I was doing my apprenticeship. I have always found it quite difficult to understand why we send our least experienced teachers to the toughest schools in regional Western Australia and expect them to thrive. It has always amazed me. I would have thought we would pay our best teachers a little extra to finish their careers in regional schools such as Carnarvon—you name it. They are pretty difficult jobs for brand-new teachers at 18, 19, 20 years or whatever age they are when they head up there. It has always amazed me and it is something we need to look at.

I want to touch on something now that also involves federal politics. I am not keen on importing workers. I think we need to train people for the jobs of tomorrow. This is why STEM and other subjects are so important. A good example is what my local member Hon Robin Scott has suggested in previous speeches—that is, businesses with over 30, 40 or 50 employees be required to have a quota of 90 per cent domestic employees. This is something we should be looking at. We have heard about the one and a half million jobs the federal government will deliver and the 150 000 jobs the Premier said he is going to deliver in this state. When I look at the number of immigrants coming into Western Australia and Australia, generally, I cannot see how unskilled people who are on the dole can get a job. Many of those jobs will go to those immigrants. That is great; we want our immigrants to have jobs. However, I cannot see that we are doing enough. We have put in a lot of incentives for immigrants to be trained and to get jobs, and we have allowed big businesses to employ overseas workforces. That is something we really need to look into and get control of. I am all about people working, especially immigrants when they come to this country, so they do not get into ghettos and bad areas because that is not good for our society. However, there are not enough incentives for the local population. I could say “Australians first”, but that is more a cry from my federal leader. I am talking more about Western Australians first when it comes to the jobs that will come. We know they will come, and a lot will be in mining. Not enough is being done to make it easier for those people to compete against the immigrants who will pick up a lot of the jobs. If we are talking about one and a half million, I do not know what the time frame is for the federal figure but from what I have seen, those one and a half million jobs will be picked up mainly by immigrants, and uneducated kids in Perth, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane will miss out because we have not put incentives in place to favour them, if you like. It is a tough issue but it is something we need to look at.

We have many discussions on the fly in, fly out workforce. It is a shame that a certain honourable member of the Labor Party is not here right now to hear what I have to say about FIFO. I know he and Hon Robin Scott have had discussions in the past. Both are right; FIFO can be dangerous for people who have no support, do not have the appropriate skills and have learnt the bad habits of FIFO workers. FIFO can be very damaging to those people, especially when they do not have a great family supporting them and they have mental health problems. We know the story. That has been put very well by one side. We have heard on the other side how FIFO work has transformed

the lives of many Western Australians and people who have come from the eastern states and overseas to work here. It has transformed their lives for the better and the lives of their families, as well as the local communities, the state and the country. FIFO has many great benefits. However, we believe FIFO is overdone in the big towns—Port Hedland, Karratha and Newman. We see it even in other towns such as Kalgoorlie. We would like to see more of the local population be incentivised to pick up jobs before companies look at bringing in FIFO workers. We know that in many cases the skills and knowledge are in the local towns. I lived in Port Hedland for a period so I know how many talented young people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, could have taken the job I walked into, but I was a FIFO worker and the company's employment program was set around fly in, fly out. It did not dream about drive in, drive out at that stage. That is changing. We will move a motion later in this term of Parliament to get the house to debate that important issue, and it needs a good debate. The answer usually lies somewhere in between FIFO being canned and being the only answer.

I have had many discussions with companies about the Busselton–Margaret River Regional Airport and why it is so important to them. We know that Rio Tinto was flying quite a lot of workers from Busselton airport and it was one of the reasons Busselton airport was being improved and extended. Fortescue Metals Group wants to do the same but Busselton airport does not have the capacity for that?

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** Are you saying they cannot take more people at Busselton airport?

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** Apparently so. That is the story I have heard, and that is why Fortescue Metals Group is not going ahead with it at this stage. I hope it does in the future, minister. As I mentioned, this is not about only tourism, but also the workforce, small business and medium-to-large businesses in the area.

I want to also touch on education. My remarks have been slipping in between business and education because the best people to be involved in education are those in private enterprise. We need their sponsorship dollars, their encouragement and their skills and expertise to help our educators get the kids of tomorrow working for those big companies in the future. It is horrible when we hear that schools in our own backyard do not teach history; it is not on their agenda. It is hard to move forward when you do not know the past. What do we learn about the past? We learn about all the mistakes we have made and how we can be better in the future. We learn many things. I cannot believe that schools say that they do not have enough budget to include history as one of their subjects. I do not know what else they will drop; is maths or English next? It is just crazy. It is important to know who we are as people so that we can learn and be better in the future. Sometimes we find ourselves in this state of hyper-political correctness because too many people do not know their history and judge those of the past by the standards of today. We see that happening a lot due to a lack of education.

I will talk about children and youth. Youth unemployment is a problem in areas such as Mandurah, Bunbury, Busselton to a degree, the bigger centres, such as Albany, and now we know, Collie. If I am just talking about my area, it is a major problem. Unemployment is up around 15 to 20 per cent in these towns. Apprenticeships, cadetships and traineeships are really where it is at. I know everyone wants to be a doctor or a lawyer. God forbid if they ever want to be a politician! The answer in this state is once again with the trades. That is where most people are employed and most of the good wages are—the trade areas. We really need to look at that. I encouraged my kids to go to uni. My three kids have degrees. I never had the opportunity, but I encouraged them to go the next step. However, I still think for this state, apprenticeships, cadetships, traineeships are where it is at. I think that TAFE needs to be cheaper and more accessible. It is good, but the costs have skyrocketed. My possibly future daughter-in-law, my youngest son's girlfriend, has a part-time job because she is underemployed. She is one of those in the underemployed category, which is growing in Western Australia right now. She cannot afford TAFE. Mum and dad have to pay for half of it because her wages do not cover the TAFE fees. She is trying to better herself, but it has become very expensive. I do not know what the answer is, but we need to find the answer. In this place, we debate the answers and, hopefully, we will find the answer and make it better. Not all the answers lie with any one party or any one side.

I refer to youth suicide. I will give members an example. I really want to thank the current Indigenous minister, Hon Ben Wyatt. On my first day, I gave Mr Wyatt a call. I rang and said that I have been in Aboriginal affairs for the past 21 years and I would like to have a chat with him. I said that I had an Indigenous person on staff; we had been talking about a lot of things that we had worked on and lived for the last 21 years. I told him that I would like to sit down with him and have a discussion. We had a couple of urgent issues that needed to be addressed right there and then, but we also talked about the future and how hard it is to be an Indigenous minister in any state or any Parliament. Can I say “Mr Wyatt”?

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Steve Thomas):** You can say the Treasurer, the minister or the honourable.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs listened to what we had to say and added to the conversation. We were together for about an hour and half. We never talked about Treasury because we probably would have argued. However, we had a lot in common in Indigenous affairs, and we had one urgent situation. I had just finished working with local Indigenous people for a company in the goldfields. Most of the people whom

I worked with lived in Laverton, Leonora and Wiluna. About a year before I started in Parliament, I noticed that the mental health worker at Leonora had been taken away and put into Laverton, because Laverton was going through some tough times. However, in that year when that person left and went to Laverton and there was no mental health worker in Leonora, there were 13 suicide attempts in Leonora. The mental health worker was an Aboriginal woman who was very good at her job; she lived in Leonora and had to travel to Laverton every day to perform her duties. I asked the minister whether he could get an extra person to do that mental health job in Leonora because of what had happened. Of those 13 attempts, unfortunately, three people were successful in killing themselves. These were mostly young women between the age of about 10 and 22 years.

As I said, before, when that mental health worker was working at Leonora, there were very few attempts. During that year she was working at Laverton, there were 13. To his credit, the minister made some phone calls and within about three months, there was a mental health worker back at Leonora. Leonora still has issues today; obviously, there are not a lot of jobs for the local population. However, suicide is now not as rampant as it was. I want to say well done. When a minister has the support of other ministers in his government, he can make a difference from day one. Sometimes it is just a simple message. I know that it gave a lot of encouragement to the Aboriginal people of Leonora. The minister acted upon many other things too, some of which I will discuss today. They include managements of trust, native title groups and prescribed bodies corporate. Quite honestly, I often get swamped by those groups. Aboriginal trusts and native title groups, not so much, but I am swamped by bundles of prescribed bodies corporate ringing my office and asking for help. They are desperate for help.

The stereotype is that a lot of money goes to Aboriginal affairs through those groups. Millions and billions of dollars go to those groups. The stereotype is that it has been wasted and blown and it is not achieving much for the Aboriginal people. There are a few problems along the way. I have been able to talk to the Attorney General about this and got great support as well, and the Indigenous minister, and we have been to be able find some answers for some of these people. Some of it lies with federal Parliament. There are a few loopholes in the way prescribed bodies corporate and trusts are constructed, and I think we can get rid of those loopholes. That will then stop both Indigenous and non-Indigenous commen getting involved in Aboriginal trusts and spending that money in very unwise and dishonest ways. I want to say thank you to both those ministers for their support in that. In Western Australia, Indigenous affairs could achieve a lot in the coming years. We have the two Mr Wyatts in federal and state Parliament. Both are now ministers and that is great to see. Both are Western Australians. It is a great time for Aboriginal affairs. It is very hard because an Aboriginal man as minister is held to a different account than a non-Indigenous person holding that portfolio. The pressure on the minister is immense, but those gentlemen are very talented and I am sure that they will achieve some great outcomes. They certainly need to do that.

We still have record incarceration rates in our prisons, especially up north. We have seen breakouts in prisons recently. Mainly Aboriginal people are getting locked away for fines because they do not have the ability to pay, and I know the government is working on that. I commend it and ask it to keep working on it. Initiatives to reduce Aboriginal incarceration rates, such as increased bail support, are valuable. We have to remember, these Indigenous people do not have the supports that we have in our networks, families and groups. They need greater access to legal representation. I have tried to get Legal Aid for a few Indigenous people who have fallen foul of the law; it has been nearly impossible because Legal Aid is under-resourced. There are not enough people working in that area. The other day I met a group that does pro bono work for Aboriginal people. It was great to hear that. I will try to access that as much as I can, besides Legal Aid. We also need to look at how we can improve flexibility in sentencing for people in the regions to take into account local conditions. I am sure that good magistrates who have been around for a long time take that into consideration. However, they need flexibility within the law to enable them to do that. We also need to look at increasing access to parole, where it is safe to do so. That is a tough one. I do not know a lot about those issues. However, when I talk to the experts in the field, they say they are the things that could be improved to help keep Aboriginal people out of jail and lower the incarceration rate.

The answer to all these problems lies with good leadership from the government and the leader of the government. It also needs to come from the Leader of the Opposition and leaders of the minor parties. We need to be as united as we can, and not look at the issues on which we argue, but try to find common ground and answers to these problems. It has been a long time since we have had great leadership at the highest level in this country. I hope that comes back, because we need to find answers to these very difficult problems.

I have touched on suicide, so I will not get involved in more of that. We have people in this chamber such as Hon Alison Xamon, who does a lot of great work and brings on many debates in this area. I commend the work that she does. Since I have been in this house, I have learnt about the context of Aboriginal suicide, and I am also learning about the non-Aboriginal context. I have mentioned that we need to take a bipartisan approach. My experience in this area tells me that Aboriginal people want that from us, too. They do not want us to argue about this. They know that they do not have all the answers, and they know that we do not have all the answers. They know that the only way in which we can improve is if we work together. If someone is Aboriginal, they do not have all the answers to Aboriginal problems, because I do not have all the answers to whitefella problems, and

I am a whitefella. I certainly do not have all the answers to the Aboriginal problems. We need to work together. We now have two incredible ministers—the two Wyatts—who can benefit Western Australia in this area. It has been a problem for a long time, and I hope that gradually changes.

I now want to get back to resource management in this state. I believe that when it comes to the North West Shelf, companies need to use it or lose it. The North West Shelf produces billions of dollars for this state and country. This state should put pressure on the federal government to ensure that companies that are given access to the North West Shelf have a time limit within which to use that resource. The gas on the North West Shelf is needed not just by Western Australia but around Australia. Gas prices on the east coast are prohibitive. Western Australian companies want to get access to gas and oil and pump that out to the rest of Australia. I do not want them to sit on that for the next 20 years.

The existing rail lines are in disrepair in most cases. They need to be repaired, reopened and retained. If this state is to grow to 4.4 million people in the next 20 years, we will need rail and road—the whole lot. We cannot be restricted in our thinking. Once we pull up our rail lines, it will be very hard to rebuild them. The Labor government has a bit of a liking for rail. It has a good history of building rail lines. I hope it continues to work in that area and repairs, reopens and retains some of those lines. I am talking particularly about regional Western Australia. I have talked about how the wheatbelt roads are the most dangerous roads in Australia. Our last discussion in Parliament about that backs that up. We need to get some of those massive trucks off the roads and back onto rail if we can. I understand the difficulty in doing that. However, if this state is to have millions of people in the future, we need to seriously look at that.

I will not touch on water management—I will leave that for another time. However, a lot of work needs to be done in this area. We know that we live in one of the driest places in the world. Yes, building a new desalination plant in the northern suburbs may be a good idea. However, it does not answer the problem for the long term. There are other answers. We need to have a tough discussion about water and irrigation, and work and jobs in the Kimberley. That discussion needs to continue in this place and the other place.

I now want to touch on men's health, and domestic violence. Domestic violence is a major issue in our society. The government is trying really hard to do something about this issue. This state has its own family law system. I think the whole system, both state and federal, is a bit wrong. Not enough support is provided to men. Men are the main perpetrators of domestic violence. We are helping women who are victims of domestic violence, and we need to help them more. However, it would be great if we could reduce the amount of domestic violence by providing men with more support. Unfortunately, many men do not know any other way than to strike out and commit domestic violence on the person they love the most, their partner. Domestic violence is an absolute scourge on our society. I do not know anyone in this place or the other place who would ever pick sides. We all want to end this scourge. However, I believe men need more support. I have been through this myself. I have been divorced and have gone through the frustration of trying to see my kids. Many members in this house have gone through that. I did not know where to go. This was a long time ago. However, I can see that after 35 years, it has not improved much. The family law system needs an absolute overhaul. We need to get the lawyers out of it—sorry to the lawyers in this house. It needs to be about what is best for society and for families. We need to support men and give them avenues to talk to people. A lot of men, particularly if they are from the trades or from farming, or whatever background, have difficulty speaking about their problems. We need to work out how we can get them to do that better. Many departments and organisations support women, and that is great. However, we do not do enough for men. We need to cut it off at the start. We need to let men know that there is another option. We can imagine how a father would feel when he thinks he will not see his kids again. However, that is no reason for domestic violence, or violence of any sort, on anyone. We have heard about the murder-suicides in our society. A lot of great people make mistakes. We need to get to them before they do that. We need to find more avenues to get to those men before they commit domestic violence. It starts with the family law system.

I now want to talk about mental health and health in general. This country has one of the best health systems in the world. I am very lucky that I can afford to have private health cover. I have a heart condition. If I were living 30 years ago, I might not be alive today. That is an oxymoron; sorry about that. I might not be alive today if we did not have the medicines, the doctors and the expertise that we have today. My mother had the same condition, and she did not last as long as I have. The doctors reckon that if I take my medicine and look after myself, I will be here for another 30 years, so my sons and daughters will have to put up with me.

We have one of the best hospital systems in the world but sometimes it fails us. When I worked up north I worked for one gentleman who got a lot of mining companies to put money together for a dialysis machine for Jigalong. About 30 families were spending nearly all their time in Perth because there was no dialysis facility in the north west. He fought and fought with the Department of Health to get staff in from the Department of Health to run that facility, but in the end had to bring in an outside workforce. The health department would not work with him because it had other priorities, and that is fair enough. There are millions of priorities in health. It is a massive portfolio and it makes up about a third of the budget—or is it more? I saw the inflexibility of the health department

when private enterprise was paying for everything but the department was refusing to provide the expertise. I think that they could have sat down and worked out a way through that. It was a fantastic initiative. It went ahead anyway, but it was run by a private concern. It is not operating today because, as members know, economic conditions are not as good as they were and some of the sponsors have pulled out. Now the people of Jigalong have to come back down to Perth for dialysis. That is a real shame. It was not just the people of Jigalong who were using that facility; there are 11 communities in the Western Desert region and they were all able to go to that facility and not spend months and months, sometimes years, away from their families. Members who have lived in a remote community would know what it is like to be away from their family. Perth is a scary place for someone who belongs in a remote community. There could have been some more flexibility. I have seen that also in palliative care. We have a lot of work to do in this area. I have talked about that before and I will be talking about it in the future.

I now turn to law and order—what a giant discussion! I have not mentioned this portfolio before but it is very important. I will be brief. It is quite simple: we need more police. Police numbers have gone down even though more police have been put on. There have been a lot of redundancies and people are moving on. It is good that there have been changes to assist police officers retiring due to the effects of the job. More needs to be done in this area. It must be very frustrating for police dealing with activists and people who have no care for law and order in our society. More needs to be done in the area of proceeds of crime and criminal conspiracy. I know that legislation is coming through this Parliament and, hopefully, more will be coming through in the future.

Prison populations continue to increase and prison facilities continue to be put under pressure. Incarceration rates continue to rise. The prison population is bigger and over the years has kept growing, so we need to build more prisons. It is not something that we want to do, but that is the reality when immigration rates continue to increase. We need to invest in new prisons in the future, but we also need to treat prisons as places of rehabilitation. I think that riots, strikes and carry-ons happen in prisons because prisoners are just sitting on their butts, not doing enough. Prisoners need to be busy, otherwise we all will pay a high price.

I want to talk about a few things we could be doing in law and order that could help—in fact, there are more than a few. I ask government ministers to please listen to this part of my speech if they have not been listening to what I have been saying so far. The Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act needs to be amended to give courts more options, to include community-based orders such as limitations on periods of custody orders and to empower the Mentally Impaired Accused Review Board to make decisions about leave and release. Legislative changes are needed in the family violence area that will address the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission so that family violence is reported and perpetrators are held accountable. Anti-consorting legislation should include the management of high-risk offenders by the board. A criminal injuries compensation scheme is needed in Western Australia, with a view to simplifying and streamlining the process applicants must follow to seek awards in criminal injuries compensation. The Legislation Bill 2018 will provide a modern process for parliamentary counsel to publish more accessible legislation, making it efficient and cost-effective. They are just a few of the reforms that will make the job of police easier and it will hopefully help to empty some of our jails and give us better justice than we have now. Justice should be there for everyone, but often it takes a lot of time and money, and people do not always get justice in the end. That is the flaw in our system

I have talked about a lot of things. We need to address domestic violence. We need to offer alternatives to violence. We need better representation for men. It is not about being fair to men; it is about preventing violence in the first place. By the time it takes a person to acknowledge that they have a problem, it is twice as hard to solve it. We need to start by offering men more support, a place to go and other options.

In conclusion, it is great that the government is getting the economy back into the black and is starting to pay down state debt. That is fantastic. That is very important for this state. But we cannot do it by scavenging for coins under the couch cushions of Western Australians. It is best done by stimulating the economy. I am on the conservative side of politics and the government is on the Labor side, so we seek to achieve that in slightly different ways, but, once again, the answer will be found somewhere in between. In short, we need people to have more money to spend. The higher the cost of living, the less discretionary spending people do. The government says the economy is picking up, but it is picking up in only some areas. It will take time before we see the benefit of that. House prices jumped dramatically over the years of the boom and they were way too high, but they have not slipped back as much as they could have. I am saying that we need that correction to continue, otherwise there will be more pain in the community. We cannot expect all industries that benefited during the boom to maintain a level of business that they experienced during that period. I know the government works with industry, but it needs to work closely with industry to minimise adjustments and to help soften the economic downturn. The recent closures of many hospitality and retail businesses is proof that the economy is not doing as well as we would like. It is in rough shape at the moment. We are uncertain about the future and about when or where the decline will end.

The one thing I can say on behalf of my colleague is that the silent majority will always have a voice in this Parliament. For those people who are not part of a minority group or a special interest group, my colleague and

I will stand up for you and raise these issues in Parliament every chance we get. Whether something is popular or unpopular, that is not for us to decide; it is for the people to decide. I thank you, Mr Acting President.

Question put and passed.