

Hon Dr Steve Thomas; Hon Sandra Carr; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Steve Martin; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Wilson Tucker; Hon Kate Doust

PREMIER — PERFORMANCE

Motion

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [10.10 am] — without notice: It is with great pride and delight on the final Thursday of the year that I move —

That this house notes the arrogance that the Premier has been displaying to the people of Western Australia, including his contempt for valid questions and his dismissal of genuine issues of concern to the community, and calls on the Premier to —

- (a) desist from his arrogant and contemptuous treatment of the Western Australian community;
- (b) address the real and relevant issues Western Australians raise, with an appropriate level of consideration; and
- (c) provide the “gold standard transparency” he promised before the 2017 state election.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Those on the government benches do not like Thursday mornings! They do not like being held to account.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: They do not like it, President. On the final Thursday of the year, it is more than appropriate that we discuss the motion before the house today. I might remind members that it was not that long ago that this house debated the performance of the Minister for Agriculture and Food; Regional Development. That was a great debate.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That debate was not far in front of the announcement of the resignation of the Minister for Regional Development. I am not suggesting for an instant that the debate before the house stimulated the resignation of the Minister for Regional Development; I suspect it was always part of her plan. However, we then had a further debate about the other cabinet ministers who are underperforming on behalf of the McGowan government. Interestingly, that was a couple of weeks later. We launched a political attack on the Minister for Regional Development, which might seem unfair, but that is the normal process of the house. I thought it was very unfair because, as I said at the time, the Minister for Regional Development is not even the worst minister in the government. She may well be considered one of the better ministers. I am not sure that that is the case, but certainly, from my perspective, I have enormous respect for the Minister for Regional Development. She is not the worst minister in the government by a long way.

Interestingly, as the house rises —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Can we just bring it down a pitch, please.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you for your protection, President. I am not sure it is necessarily required, but it is in the standing orders.

It was not long after that that we debated the ministers who are absolutely, in my view, worse performers than the Minister for Regional Development. Although I disagreed with some of her policies, the Minister for Regional Development has been far from the worst performer in the government. Interestingly, there is a reshuffle on the cards. What are we hearing? We are hearing that some of those ministers whom we talked about are potentially on their way out. I have frequently mentioned the Minister for Forestry. When that minister was Minister for Fisheries, he tried to nationalise the crayfish industry. The same person, as Minister for Forestry, has destroyed the timber industry. This minister is potentially minister for destroying the portfolio to which he has been appointed. That minister is potentially on his way out; let us see. There will be a reshuffle coming soon. Good luck to those who aspire towards advancement on the other side, whether they be in this house or the house that shall not be named. We are looking forward to how that proceeds. It is time to assess the performance of the person who leads the government in this state, the Premier, Hon Mark McGowan.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is interesting—despite the peanut gallery—that it is not just the opposition and it is not just me who is raising this issue. Some might think that there is some coordination between the media —

Withdrawal of Remark

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Hon SANDRA CARR: The member used unparliamentary language by referring to other members as “the peanut gallery”. I think it should have been “Honourable members across the floor”.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, honourable member. I understand your concern about being referred to in that manner. However, there is some allowance within the scope of unparliamentary language that is generally referred to as the rough and tumble of the chamber. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you, President. I understand the sensitivity of members who are in the corner on that side, so I will attempt to refrain from too graphic a description.

As I was saying, some might think that the media was coordinating with the opposition on this. Lo and behold, I got up this morning and read an opinion piece in *The West Australian* by journalist Peter Law. He is leaving *The West Australian* for, perhaps, more affluent fields further away. We wish him good luck. His headline on the snowplough Premier was “Consensus-builder McGowan transforms to hard-nosed leader”. It is not just the opposition that senses a change in the Premier of the state. The change has been recognised across the board. It is certainly being recognised in the media. When I have watched the Premier’s media conferences lately, I have absolutely seen that a degree of arrogance has crept into the Premier’s presentation style. Funnily enough, this is the snow-plough Premier. They are not my words; they are the words of the journalist who wrote the opinion piece.

The article says that the Premier was much more constructive in his rhetoric in years gone by. Whether he is being hard-nosed or perhaps tin-eared or some other description, there is absolutely no doubt that the Premier has stopped listening. He has contempt for people who dare to criticise him, whether in discussions around Banksia Hill Detention Centre, which I am sure other members will bring up, the government’s wage negotiations or other discussions—whatever it is. Bear in mind that I have made some supportive comments about the wage negotiations conducted by the government. I am here to help you guys. I am here to make it better.

Hon Samantha Rowe: Oh, thank God!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am trying to tone the government down a bit. We are here to help! The opposition is trying to help. The Premier is being not only unconstructive, but also deconstructive. His arrogant dismissal of people who dare to hold a different opinion is surely an embarrassment to the government. He might get away with it for the time being, but there will come a time when the worm will turn—if that expression is allowed, President. People will get absolutely and heartily sick of the arrogance that is on display.

There are plenty of examples of it. Let us call him the “previous Premier” and the “current Premier”. Let us talk about open and transparent government, because that is part (c) of the motion.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: They do not like it, President! They do not like being held to account. Let us see what Hon Mark McGowan said on Tuesday, 14 June 2016. This is in the *Hansard*. When Hon Mark McGowan was Leader of the Opposition, what did he say about open and transparent government? I will read in a direct quote —

During my budget reply I talked about a commission inquiry into some of the financial decisions that were made and about ensuring that there is transparency and accountability in public spending. It rolls on. We still do not know the exact cost of the stadium deal. On Sunday it was announced that there will be a Socceroos game in Perth.

The Socceroos have done very well just recently, President; we congratulate them. The quote continues —

The government would not reveal what the cost of that is. It rolls on and on and on. The taxpayers, who provide the money for the government to spend, do not know how much the government is spending on various deals. Every single day the government has these commercial-in-confidence arrangements. Not revealing the cost of the Socceroos playing in Western Australia: I mean, honestly. The culture of this government and its addiction to secrecy is extraordinary. The default position for the government is that it just does not tell; it does not tell anything. That has to change. If we are elected, we will reveal the cost of these deals, because taxpayers have a right to know. Transparency and accountability mean something. Taxpayers will find out if Labor is elected.

They were great words from old Premier, the pre-Premier. What has happened? I asked a question on notice two weeks ago: how much money was paid for the performer Björk to come to Perth? Do members know what the answer was? The answer was that that information is commercial-in-confidence. What this Premier said before he was elected and what he has said since his election are two completely different things. This Premier talked about gold-standard transparency, when what he has shown is lead-standard transparency.

Hon Dan Caddy: You know all about lead. It was found in the pipes of the hospital!

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Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: We are going to come to lead, so the member should not worry. The Premier has shown lead-standard transparency—even Superman cannot see through it. What this government said about transparency before it was elected and since its election are very different. Not only has this Premier shifted on whether he is accountable or not, but he has also shifted from being accountable, civil and polite, to being unaccountable and arrogant to those people who dare to question him, especially the media. We have only to look at the dismissive way in which he conducts his press conferences at the moment. He might be the emperor of the Labor Party. At his own whim, he might be able to decide on a portfolio. It will be interesting to see now whether he decides on who is in cabinet and who is out. That used to be decided through negotiation with the unions. It will be interesting to see how that works out. I will be interested to see whether Hon Dave Kelly will be saved by the union that backs him. The Premier has displayed dismissive arrogance to everybody—to the media, to us and to his backbenchers. I suspect that a bunch of backbenchers who are very interested in a promotion and have suggested to the Premier that they have performed particularly well, are likely to miss out because he is now the emperor of the Labor Party.

What does this Premier think about the expenditure of money in Western Australia? I am particularly pleased that the Minister for Regional Development will be responding to this motion because I will be referencing comments that the Premier made to which she was a witness. In fact, I will be asking some questions about it as the day rolls on, President. I am looking forward to this particular Thursday. We have had the biggest boom in this state's history. The government is rich from iron ore royalties. The Premier likes rolling in his money bin, like Scrooge McDuck, but what does he think about money? The regions have a number of independent newspapers that are very good at picking up the truth that is said when people think that nobody is listening. That has caught a couple of ministers in the past.

A member interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I think they might be, member. I have today's version of a very good newspaper called the *Collie River Valley Bulletin*. It is a fairly new newspaper; in fact, I like it very much. It is that good that I advertise in it. It serves the people of Collie and we have very good discussions about what is happening with Griffin Coal Mining Company. The Premier and the Minister for Regional Development were in Collie last week to front a forum to talk about the \$300 million invested in the state government's Just Transition Plan and announce the \$200 million Collie industrial transition fund. The article in the bulletin states —

“Everyone loves free money,” Mr McGowan told the audience.

That is probably very true. I think it is right that everybody loves free money, but imagine telling a community that. He was very popular. He likes to put the money out. The only thing is, is it genuinely free? When we get to question time today, that will be the line of questioning: Is this money free or does the Premier think that it is his money? Is the money free or does it belong to the taxpayers of Western Australia? This is the Premier talking about his money bin. He cannot fit any more money into it and so he is happy to go to Collie and talk about free money. If the Premier has free money, what is he doing to support police officers in the state of Western Australia? What is he doing to fix Banksia Hill Detention Centre? If he has free money for Collie, why is he not giving the equivalent amount of free money to the timber industry? They are all really important questions. The Premier thinks that everyone loves free money. I think he is right; everyone does love free money, but holy mackerel! What a thing to be telling the people of Western Australia as he glows in his praise of his own wealth.

Here is a prediction. I like making predictions. My first prediction was: what happens if the price of iron ore stays at over \$US90 a tonne? I was told by the government of the day in February 2019 that that was incredibly unrealistic, but it stayed at over \$US90 a tonne. Interestingly, the *Quarterly financial results report* came out this week and the average price of iron ore in the first quarter of this year was \$US103.5 a tonne, but the budget set it at \$US77.5. That is another half a billion dollars that has jumped in on top of revenues above budget expectation this year already. Perhaps that is what the Premier means by free money. Perhaps he thinks that this is additional free money, in which case, I do not know why he argues so much when I point out that he has had a \$6 billion surplus year in, year out. Is this what the Premier thinks is free money?

I will tell members what is going to happen. Over the next few years, the correction will be established in which iron ore will go back to its long-term run, and the free money that the Premier is so fond of will disappear. What is going to happen? We will go back to normal budget cycles. The Premier has been talking about this in recent weeks and we can see what he is trying to do. He is trying to prepare everybody for the return to normal budget expectation; the sort of budgets that he started with. Bearing in mind that in the McGowan government's first two budgets debt was expected to rise from \$32 billion to \$43 billion. It is in the government's first and second set of budget papers. The Labor government has not been a massive manager of the economy. When the 2019 boom kicked in, the Labor government managed to change the outcome. It tripped over the biggest boom we have ever had—probably did not see it coming. But the correction will occur. The Premier is preparing everybody for the correction—not a crash or a collapse, but the correction. He is saying that suddenly there will not be enough money out there, despite the fact

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that during his terms of government we have had the biggest boom the state has ever seen. He has squirrelled away billions of dollars into special purpose accounts for him to use into the future. He has not paid down debt in any significant way during the biggest boom that we have ever seen. Sure, he has knocked off a couple of billion dollars. He has run \$6 billion through the debt reduction account and he has knocked a couple of billion dollars off the debt that he started with. It is absolutely unbelievable, but he has squirrelled this money away. He also has money tied up to his infrastructure expenditure list that he cannot deliver. He delivered \$7 billion last financial year—that is great. He has \$9.5 billion in there for the next couple of years. He has all those billions of dollars out there that he is going to sit on. He will end up saying to the people of Western Australia that the correction has come, so the government has to manage the budget really hard. We can already hear that in the rhetoric that is coming out. His dismissal of the wage debate is far more about the Premier holding the cash for his personal use. He wants to cut some ribbons in the lead-up to the 2025 election. He wants to hold some money over for the election after that. He has squirrelled away this money while the cries and the claims will become louder, and the arrogance of and the contempt for this Premier will be more on display. When the correction comes, billions of dollars will still be hidden away ready for this Premier and this government to use for their personal political gain. As people get angrier, as the cost of living stays high, as relatively stable wages slowly start to move and as interest rates climb, this Premier is starting to protect his money bin from the expenditure that would be to the greatest benefit of the people of Western Australia. When discussions are held, the Premier will get angrier and more dismissive. That is what we can look forward to over the next few years. The dismissiveness of this Premier needs to be addressed.

I will continue to mount the argument that the biggest boom in the history of this state—of any state in this nation—should have set this state up and looked after its people. It could only do so if the focus of the money was on the welfare of the people of Western Australia instead of the longevity of the McGowan Labor government. The focus is shifting.

For those members who will be coming to the McGowan outer cabinet soon, we wish them all luck. There are some very good parliamentary secretaries in this house whom we are happy to endorse. I suspect my endorsement might mean they will not get there. I am not sure that necessarily helps. We have seen some excellent performances from parliamentary secretaries. We will talk about that more later in the day.

Members do not necessarily want to be part of a government that has suddenly started to appear arrogant. It is up to government members to talk to their Premier and say, “Let’s have a little bit of humility in your presentation style because the people of Western Australia are getting sick of the arrogance.” We have seen a shift that is a big risk to the Premier. Yes, we are a small group and we have a lot of work to do, but suddenly the risk to Labor members as a result of the Premier’s presentation style is surely obvious to the most blindly loyal Labor members. I suggest that they start thinking about changing the agenda of the Premier to the state and the people of Western Australia.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan) [10.31 am]: I support the motion. This week we witnessed the unedifying spectacle of the Premier of Western Australia labelling one of the most respected women in Australia, Professor Fiona Stanley, as an activist. He called Professor Stanley an activist because she had the audacity to disagree with his views on Banksia Hill Detention Centre. That is a disgraceful spectacle from anyone, let alone the Premier of the state. Professor Stanley is a woman of great stature.

The Premier needs to do some soul-searching on this issue. The fact that someone has a different view from the Premier on a very sensitive issue like this is not a reason for him to start name calling. This Premier has form in that area. I was shadow Minister for Education and Training in 2006, 2007 and 2008. The Premier took over as Minister for Education and Training after we had the debacle of outcome-based management, mass teacher shortages and the lowest paid teachers in the nation. He took over at a time when the curriculum was an absolute dog’s breakfast. It was an education ideological experiment that failed dismally. Every single group in Western Australia opposed the implementation of OBE, apart from the Premier. He put his hands on his hips, tipped his nose out and said, “No way are we going ahead; it’s our way or the highway!” The rest is history, of course, because that government and OBE were dead in the water, and we put some integrity back into the curriculum. Having said that, I got called every name under the sun. I was never invited to anything—not once.

Hon Kyle McGinn: Oh!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Oh, look. That is a protocol of government. Nothing has changed in that area. We still do not get invited anywhere. I get no notice of when a minister is about to visit my electorate. I get invited nowhere. We have written to the Premier about that, but I am sure it will have no bearing on him whatsoever.

This is the same Premier who labelled members on this side of the chamber, and some on his own side, as terrorists and corrupt because we had the audacity to defend the integrity of the Legislative Council in the last term of government. Terrorists, if you don’t mind! Then he went out and called Fiona Stanley an activist because she dared to have a view that was different from his.

Banksia Hill is an issue that must be addressed. It has taken a multitude of questions from Hon Dr Brad Pettitt, me, Aboriginal groups, eminent Western Australians and the media throughout Western Australia to elevate this situation

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to the status it so richly deserves. We now have a situation in which the resolution to issues at Banksia Hill was apparently to shunt a group of juveniles off to Casuarina Prison. Then it gained even more of a profile. Did we have a group of right-wing Tories call out and say how terrible it was? Did we have a group of radical activists who said how terrible it was? No. We had a former Australian of the Year, a former Labor Premier of Western Australia, the Inspector of Custodial Services, a former Inspector of Custodial Services, the President of the Children's Court and the Commissioner for Children and Young People say how terrible it was. What a terrible rabble they are to say how terrible it was! What did the Premier do? He basically gave all of us a single-finger salute. That is what he did. I will say yet again that if we are going to resolve this issue, we have to change the culture of Banksia Hill. That can only change when we have a change from the top. We have someone at the top flippantly passing off and labelling those who have an opposition view to his as activists. That is a case of arrogance in the extreme.

Let us not forget the statistics: 351 juveniles tried to self-harm in Banksia Hill last year. Over 120 juveniles have done it this year. What about those juveniles who have gone to Casuarina? I have already mentioned the figures. Of the 33, 18 have attempted self-harm. Seven have attempted suicide. Is it not terrible that these activists are raising these issues? If we do not raise them, the Premier is going to sit down and do his best John Wayne impersonation and say, "It's my way or the highway." That is what he says about everything.

In addition, the figures that came out this week are even more compelling. If everything is working so well and the situation in Banksia Hill is so peachy, why have one in five inmates in our adult jails previously been to Banksia Hill? Those rehabilitation services worked really well, did they not? In Acacia, it is one in four. For Albany Regional Prison, it is 24 per cent; for Casuarina, it is 24 per cent; and for Hakea Prison, it is 23 per cent. One in every five adult prisoners in our adult prisons has been to Banksia Hill. The rehabilitation services are not working. The Premier should not shoot the messenger. He should do something. He should not do his usual thing of name-calling; he should do something about it.

I will tell members what the Premier did when it became evident that the issue was getting some traction. He called a summit. I said right at the start that it was a talkfest; it was nothing more than a talkfest. Right up until two days before the summit, when he called all the so-called players together—mind you, they were the critics—not one Aboriginal person was invited. It was only because he got so much traction in the criticism that he invited some Aboriginal people to attend. The Premier emerged victorious from the summit, saying it was great, everything was peachy, an inquiry was not needed and everyone thinks we are on track. That was garbage. I was gobsmacked because it did not remotely reflect what I had been told. It all came crashing down two days later when a number of the attendees refuted the Premier's version of events. He dismissed them. This is when he came up with the famous "activists", saying they were just a bunch of activists. "Just ignore them; they're a bunch of activists."

The former Australian of the Year, the extraordinarily respected Professor Fiona Stanley, the same Fiona Stanley who the former Labor government named a hospital after, wrote an opinion piece. I will read part of that opinion piece. It states —

I feel sad and disappointed that I am writing this today. Initially, I made a conscious decision not to talk to the media. Instead, I wanted to work alongside Government to fix things. I would have loved to write saying how pleased I was that the Aboriginal leaders and organisations had been listened to and that we had had a genuine dialogue with Government.

However, now I feel as if I don't have a choice. I feel the only way I can attempt to prevent children dying in custody, is to write the story of these past five frustrating months.

...

I could not understand how, with all the evidence, the Premier and his ministers were not willing to act—even if not humanely then at least cost-effectively. All I spoke with agreed about the data, and the approaches that were detailed in the Social Reinvestment Blueprint, but none were prepared to speak out.

It seemed to me that they were all too scared to follow their instinct to protect these children. That is not how a healthy democracy should work.

Undeterred, I requested a meeting with the Premier directly to discuss these matters. However, instead of a personal response, I was left to read that I had been invited to a "summit" via *The West Australian*.

I was alarmed the relevant Aboriginal leaders had been excluded—those who had been working on solutions for years. I stated clearly that I would boycott the meeting unless this was rectified. The afternoon before the summit, Daniel Morrison, co-chair of Social Reinvestment WA, and Gail Beck, co-chair of the Government's own Aboriginal Advisory Council were invited.

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On Saturday night, we each received a letter outlining proposed solutions. There was no recognition of what had been discussed. There was no commitment to change. All we received was a press release in a letter that was also sent simultaneously to the media.

These were not the solutions that were discussed at the meeting. I have been inspired by Social Reinvestment WA, which spent two years collecting data, consulting, and has developed a sophisticated piece of policy work in their document titled *Blueprint for a Better Future: Paving the way for Youth Justice Reform in WA*.

Sadly, WA's reputation is becoming badly damaged by this situation, locally, nationally and internationally including from the United Nations.

What more can we do? What is the block? Where is the Premier who led us through COVID, with all the data and evidence informing his actions?

Where is the care for the lives of Aboriginal children?

I could not have said it better myself. I am not speaking as a Liberal or as a member of Parliament; I am speaking as a person who grew up with Aboriginal people and as a former Minister for Education and Minister for Indigenous Affairs. We have to do something about Banksia Hill or we are going to have the deaths of those youths on our hands. The Premier's arrogance by flippantly disregarding any other views and labelling those with an alternative view to his as activists is, quite frankly, absolutely insulting, but it does not remotely surprise me because the Premier has form in this area. He is an arrogant Premier.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.41 am]: I, too, rise to contribute to this excellent motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. In particular, I would like to focus my remarks around the management of the public sector by the Minister for Public Sector Management, the Premier of Western Australia. First, I want to reflect on some of the comments Hon Peter Collier made about Banksia Hill Detention Centre and the extraordinary urgency with which we need to deal with the issues that have arisen from what is happening at Banksia Hill and, more generally, in our communities across the state. I was at a meeting last week with a number of Aboriginal elders and I can tell members that the feeling of anger in that room at the way they have been treated by this government was palpable. I agree that something needs to be done, and it needs to be done urgently. We need to listen to people like Professor Fiona Stanley, who has expertise and knowledge.

Moving right along to the issue of public sector management, when this government was elected in 2017, it immediately began what have been called the machinery-of-government changes. We have discussed the machinery-of-government changes a number of times in this place. I want to reflect on a few things that are continually raised by government members. They claim that the crises we are seeing in our public sector, whether they be in health, education, police, emergency services, or whichever public sector agency we want to talk about, are a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic really just highlighted the failings of this government and the Minister for Public Sector Management's reorganisation of those departments under the government's brutal machinery-of-government changes. The government is reaping what it has sown during its first four years in government. Our healthcare workers, police officers, emergency service workers, teachers or any other public sector employees will tell members a remarkably similar story. We have been constantly updated in this place, by the answers to questions from Hon Peter Collier and others, about the number of police officers who have left the police force. Those who have not already left are seriously contemplating their future and whether they want to stay in the service of the community, as is the will of those who do good work in our public sector.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: Sorry, minister, but I will not take interjections.

Public sector workers have endured the stark brutality of a government that has not listened to them whatsoever, which has significantly impacted the delivery of public services in this state. Members can see the issues that are playing out in our community at the moment, including the nurses dispute and the deal they are trying to strike. The government, through the Industrial Relations Commission, even wants to get rid of the Australian Nursing Federation. It is extraordinary that they would move to deregister that union. The reason that this is playing out is that those public sector workers have completely lost trust and faith in this government and the way it negotiates and because of the brutal changes the government has made over many years to the public sector. There is no goodwill in the negotiations. The Premier, as the minister responsible for public sector management, treats those workers with arrogance and disdain. The government is reaping the fruits of the seeds it sowed some years ago with the machinery-of-government changes.

Back in 2016, the Labor Party said that it would respond to changes in the Western Australian economy and population by recruiting, retaining and supporting our public sector employees. What did it do the very minute it was elected? It introduced the machinery-of-government changes and said, "Sorry. We're going to cut the public sector." The Labor Party said it would cut the public sector by something like 20 per cent but then decided to cut it by

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40 per cent once it was elected. How are public sector workers supposed to have confidence that the government values the commitments it made despite the rhetoric we heard during COVID about how important our healthcare workers and emergency services workers are because of the wonderful work they did on the frontline when facing the pandemic and the impacts on their health that were largely unknown? They were on the frontline doing that work, but how did the government reward them? It has treated them with arrogance and disdain and moved to deregister the union.

Several members interjected.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: It is absolutely disgraceful behaviour. Members in this place who stood up and said how important those nurses are —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: It is absolutely disgraceful that those members who sought to ingratiate themselves with our healthcare workers, who have done a such a wonderful job during that period, will not negotiate with them in good faith and will not hear their concerns.

Point of Order

Hon KYLE MCGINN: I believe that the member may be misleading the house on who is leading the deregistration of the Australian Nursing Federation. The member has referred to the government. I strongly suggest that he correct the record, as I believe it is the Industrial Relations Commission, not the government.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: My understanding of points of order is that they are not to be used to debate the issue. I am interested in which particular point of order the member is raising. The government has a history of using points of order to make points.

The PRESIDENT: This is a wideranging debate and members can put forward points of view. I would consider that members' points of view are well grounded in fact, but there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: Thank you, President.

As I was saying, those on the other side are seeking to ingratiate themselves with the work that was done by our healthcare workers during the COVID period. They did amazing work. If the honourable member wants to argue that point, please do. Our healthcare workers were on the frontline in dealing with what at that time was a largely unknown threat that put them in harm's way. The burnt-out and overworked healthcare workers who are still working in the public sector in this state now want a reasonable reward or deal on pay and conditions, but the government does not want to listen to them. I find it extraordinary that we would put those workers in that situation after everything they have done.

Members of the WA Police Force are in a similar situation. Officers are leaving the police force every day. It is extraordinary that when we talk about some of the law and order issues that we face in this state, we are not doing more to address the loss of critical workers in services such as the police, and also the nurses and workers in other public agencies. I have to say that the government is reaping what it has sown with the machinery-of-government changes that it made. During that period, various entities did numerous surveys on how public sector employees viewed those changes and their job security. The ultimate result was that people did not know what was happening. It was chaotic, dysfunctional, and poorly managed and executed. It was done to weaponise the public service for the benefit of this government, not to provide a decent structure going forward. It will take decades to repair the damage that has done to the public sector by this arrogant Premier and Minister for Public Sector Management.

When it comes to where we go from here, it is clear that the Premier is becoming more and more arrogant as the days go by. He is not listening to the people of Western Australia on issues like Banksia Hill Detention Centre. He is flippantly dismissing genuine questions asked by not just members on this side of the chamber but also the media and others. He is displaying that he is completely out of touch with the Western Australian community. That will be a real problem for Western Australians as we move forward in our recovery from the pandemic and as our public sector is working hard to keep delivering the services that Western Australians will need in the future.

I urge the Premier, as my colleague the Leader of the Opposition has done, to undertake a bit of self-reflection and start listening to the people in the community who have solutions to some of the problems that we face, such as Banksia Hill. He should start delivering real solutions instead of arrogantly dismissing the concerns raised by the people of Western Australia.

HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural) [10.53 am]: I rise to make a contribution to the excellent motion moved by my colleague the Leader of the Opposition. I will start by reflecting on some of the remarks made by Hon Peter Collier

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around the Premier's obvious arrogance in his response to former Australian of the Year Professor Fiona Stanley. If members opposite have any doubts about the merits of paragraph (a) of the motion, which refers to the Premier's arrogant and contemptuous treatment of the Western Australian community, they only need look at the Premier's response to the serious concerns raised by this very eminent Western Australian and Australian, Professor Fiona Stanley. An activist? Seriously? The Premier's response to the summit was that people were not listening. Somebody was not listening, and I am fairly certain it was not Fiona Stanley.

I would like to concentrate on paragraph (c) of the motion, which refers to the gold-standard transparency that the Premier promised before the 2017 state election, as it relates to the forestry industry. That was a good promise, and it has been repeated often. During the 2021 election campaign, when I assume the Premier was still operating under that gold-standard promise, the Premier certainly misled or hid from the Western Australian public his intentions for the forestry sector. I am guessing that when the Premier was campaigning in the electorate of Warren–Blackwood, he did not mention his plan for the forestry industry. I wonder whether he whispered that in the ear of the candidate for Warren–Blackwood or whether he also kept her in the dark about his plan for the forestry sector. When the Premier was campaigning in Manjimup, Pemberton and Nannup, where was the gold-standard transparency?

A few short months after the 2021 election, the Premier went to the hills of Perth and made the announcement about shutting down the hardwood sector. Six months previously, there was no mention of that. There was no transparency to the voting public. There was certainly no transparency to the timber industry. The Premier and a couple of his ministers made the short drive up to the Perth hills to make the announcement that they would be shutting down the timber sector. Interestingly, they did not travel to Manjimup. They did not have the courage to make the announcement to the communities that would be hit hardest by that announcement. It was a gold standard by Zoom meeting. They made the announcement in the Perth hills, wearing hard hats, planting a lovely pine tree, and saying that they are saving the planet. That was clearly contemptuous to the timber industry in those communities.

Post that announcement, we have had the transition consultation process. Talk about contempt for the locals; the press release was written before the meeting had commenced! The Minister for Forestry and the Premier were well aware of what would be announced after the transition meetings had taken place, and lo and behold they made that announcement. The Premier treated those communities with contempt before he made that announcement, and he has certainly done the same in the year and a bit since that time. The Premier has also shown contempt for the experts in the forestry industry, many of whom have worked in that sector for decades, and ignored the science and the evidence that they presented. When the Premier made that announcement, he made the comment —

“Protecting this vital asset —

Meaning the forest —

is critical in the fight against climate change.”

Really? Okay. We will get to the science shortly. He went on to say —

“What that will mean is these wonderful forests, the trees, the creatures that live within them, the ecosystems will be saved

Apparently, that was the Premier's view.

Here is some of the science. More recently, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions gave evidence at a hearing of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. Dr Fran Stanley spoke to the committee about Forestcheck and explained what that is. She said —

Forestcheck is a long-term monitoring program that has been conducted in the jarrah forests of the south west for around the last 20 years. Overall, the results show us that the timber harvesting activities that have been occurring in those forests are not having a significant impact on biodiversity values.

Yet, somehow, we have to shut down that industry, which has been going for decades and decades, because we need to save the forests!

Also on the science, Gavin Butcher, a long-time forester who has been on the Forest Products Commission and knows this stuff —

Hon Jackie Jarvis: He is an employee of the FPC. He is not on the FPC.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: This is the view of Gavin Butcher, someone who knows what he is talking about when it comes to the forests —

There is no better demonstration of sustainability than the 150 years of harvesting in WA's forests. Unlike elsewhere around the State, not one species has become extinct from those forests. A recent review of the 63 most endangered species in Australia did not contain one species from our southwest forests.

Not one.

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Then there is the carbon story that gets a bit of a mention from the Premier, who ignored the science. This again is by Gavin Butcher —

Clearly using wood releases some CO₂ however it is only one part of the carbon story ...

Healthy regrowth forests growing quickly easily compensate for any harvest emissions. This doesn't take into account the storage of wood in products, or the carbon or environmental cost of the substitutes, like aluminium.

The Premier again ignored the science and the experts, and he made the contemptuous decision to shut down those jobs and industries. He showed contempt for those businesses and communities.

On a slightly more flippant note, there is another victim of the Premier's lack of transparency in this industry—namely, Minister for Forestry, Dave Kelly. Clearly, as far as the forestry minister knew, until very recently, the forestry sector had a very, very bright future. How else could we take his behaviour into account? There is a lovely picture of the forestry minister in the Forest Products Commission annual report standing next to the Parkside Timber mill owner proclaiming the strong and bright future of the sector. Clearly, the forestry minister was kept in the dark by the Premier. I guess that some time around the first week of September last year, the phone rang in Dave's office and the staff rushed in and said, "It's the boss; it's the Premier." Minister Kelly probably thought that the Premier was giving him back Fisheries; it would be good news. The staff would have said, "It's probably not Fisheries, minister, but you need to talk to the boss." He rushed up to the Premier's office and the Premier said, "Dave, we're shutting down the hardwood sector." Members can imagine the conversation: "I am confused, Premier. Am I the Minister for Forestry or the minister against forestry? Am I keeping it going or am I shutting it down?" Minister Dave Kelly was another victim of the Premier's lack of transparency in the last couple of years.

I want to use my last minute or so to discuss another topic in which transparency has not been a strong suit of this Premier. His arrogance was on full display during the 2021 campaign when he said over and over again—seven times in one interview—that changes to the upper house voting system in this state were not on his agenda. There was a smirk on his face when he said it; we all saw it, but nobody expected that within days of the election and the change to the upper house in May it would suddenly be at the top of his agenda. That arrogance and contempt, especially for regional voters, was on full display during that campaign. Those changes were rushed through Parliament despite being told repeatedly during the campaign that it was not on the Premier's agenda. We have seen arrogance and contempt over and over again from this Premier, particularly towards regional voters. We have seen it in forestry and in the way the upper house was formed, and it is not a very proud record. Thank you.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development) [11.03 am]: Here we have the old play back! I really think that the problem is that our friends on the other side deeply resent the Premier because he actually is in touch with and understands the public. We have a team in Labor that is truly in touch with people from Albany all the way through to Wyndham. We have representation from right across the state.

Several members interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: We are actually able to field candidates who represent their community.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: What do we see? In a moment, I will get into your problem; I will get into the systemic problems.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I will get into the problem that you are just a pair of tanned shoes hanging out the backside of the powerbrokers in the party! You haven't got the guts to stand up and do something about the dire state of your party! What you have done to undermine democracy in this state—your sheer gutlessness and talentlessness—is actually a massive threat to democracy. Thank God we have had some electoral reform because we might get some new people coming into this place who are able to do a much better job than you are in terms of representing the community!

Several members interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: It is so known! Just look at your composition. Look at your composition in this place. You've got one woman! Do you know what? You've got one woman! Over 50 per cent of the population are women. What is going on here? Does that not say something to you? When you talk about being out of touch, does that not say: "Oh my God; how come it is that over 50 per cent of the population are women but we have only one-tenth of our representation as women in this place?" You are massively out of touch!

I wish there was some coherence to some of the arguments that have been put forward. We know the normal things that the Leader of the Opposition gets agitated about. He claims to have walked away from the Barnett inability to manage the budget, but here he is attacking the Premier and the Minister for Health for entering into wage negotiations and not just lying down and saying, "Come and walk over me." There were agreements. There have been very robust

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and respectful discussions with the nurse's union. Two weeks ago, there was a deal agreed to by the union. The union agreed to the very, very considerable wage increase and improvements and changes to the patient-staff ratios. That was agreed to by the union, but the union, in the way that it communicated this to its members, have quite clearly sought to undermine that agreement. The Premier went out to defend and explain it; that is what he did. He called upon the union to honour its agreement. What is arrogant about that? That is just good government.

This matter goes to the Industrial Relations Commission. We are very proud that this country, via the Labor Party, has pioneered an industrial relations system that enables these disputes to be resolved. This body is independent of government. It is not the government that is moving to deregister the union. This is part of the architecture of our industrial relations system. If the union determines that it wants to not obey the express directions of the Industrial Relations Commission, there are consequences for that. Those consequences are not determined by government. We want to see this nurses dispute settled. The Premier is simply asking the union to honour the agreement that it entered into with the government. If it chooses not to, it must face the consequences. That is being very open and transparent with the people about what is going on.

We again had the extraordinary, confused messaging that we get from the Leader of the Opposition about the management of the budget. He has been really angry for years; he has said that we have been underestimating iron revenues. As they do at a federal level, we always take a conservative view because it is volatile. We are seeing changes going on in China that could possibly bring this price down quite considerably. A construction depression is looming in China, and of course that is going to have real consequences on demand for our iron ore, so we are being prudent. The Premier is determined to ensure that we do not just take the Barnett approach and spend all our money, but instead pay down debt and hold money in reserve, because we understand there is great potential for a significant worldwide recession next year. We are taking a prudent approach that has been admired by all the ratings agencies. What is not transparent about that? We are talking to the people about exactly what we are doing; we recognise that we are in vulnerable economic times, and we need to prepare for that.

I find it extraordinary that when the Premier explains and defends his record, it is considered arrogant. It is not. The Liberals tried this playbook against Dan Andrews in Victoria, and it does not work. People are actually making their own judgements. They want someone who understands them and who comes from a mainstream perspective on society.

Juvenile justice is an amazingly difficult and complex area. When Hon Peter Collier was in government, I think around 70 children were sent to Hakea Prison, and not just as a temporary measure. No-one is arguing that juvenile justice is not complex. The Premier and, indeed, our entire team has deep respect for Fiona Stanley, but we differ from the opposition in that we do not regard the term "activist" to be an insult; we all consider ourselves activists, and we think that is what we need in the community: people who are activists. To suggest that that is somehow or other a term of derision is incorrect.

We know that juvenile justice is a challenging issue, but we also know that the general public has immense concerns about it and about community safety. People out there understand the issue. They see, on a daily basis in our electorates, the consequences of juvenile crime. As the Premier has said, there have to be consequences for juvenile crime. We have to understand that the community wants a measure of protection. It is also not good culturally for the young people involved to believe there are no consequences for their actions. That will take us backwards. We understand that these issues are not easy.

When the Premier met with those groups, he was really surprised at how little they knew about the juvenile justice initiatives that the government has invested in. As the Premier has said, he does not blame them for that, but it is a fact that there has been a complete lack of interest from the media in reporting the successful measures that we are undertaking, such as Target 120, which is aimed at working with at-risk children aged 10 to 14 years and their families in a very intensive way to keep them out of the criminal justice system. The day before that forum was held, we announced the Marlamanu on-country diversionary program. We will work with Aboriginal communities to set up an on-country diversionary centre in the Kimberley. We are also funding a number of other Aboriginal organisations to develop business cases for more facilities in Kununurra and Derby.

There is no sense in which we are being disrespectful. The Premier has also announced an additional \$61 million for a whole suite of improvements at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. This is a challenging area, but the opposition is not in touch with the concerns of the community on this issue. It is hard, and we have more work to do, but we are doing that work. In addition to the \$61 million, we are investing \$40 million to improve juvenile justice facilities in northern WA.

Members opposite talked a lot about what the media is saying about our government. I would like to refer to a very interesting opinion piece by Gareth Parker that appeared in *WAtoday* on 2 November, titled "Where are the WA Liberals? Fighting their battles but ignoring the war", which referred to the Liberal Party's loss of the last election. He observed that it appears there is no ability for Liberal members of Parliament to actually understand how

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dire their situation is and how completely and utterly out of touch they are with the community. That is the ultimate form of arrogance. The article states —

Yet too many Liberals delude themselves that the problem is cyclical, or that they were unlucky due to the dynamics of the pandemic.

At the state level, the party's problems have been obvious since the moment they were tipped into opposition by Mark McGowan in 2017.

The MPs who survived seemed shell-shocked by defeat, and most never adapted to the demands of opposition, with diminished resources and no departmental back-up, unwilling or unable to do the sleeves-up work necessary to hold a government to account.

Yet still the penny has not entirely dropped that without all shoulders to the wheel, this is an existential moment.

He goes on to say —

This has been true for years but no one should expect his —

That is, state Liberal Party president Richard Wilson —

warning to be heeded.

The political pygmies who love rolling around in the muck are simply too far gone.

That is what we have seen today—absurd contributions. Hon Colin de Grussa argued that the machinery-of-government changes have been awful. We sought to modernise and reduce 42 departments to 25; yes, there were challenges in getting that done, but it is now done, and it had nothing whatsoever to do with nurses and police; they were not affected by the machinery-of-government changes, yet Hon Colin de Grussa claimed that we have not been able to negotiate with nurses and police because of it. This is the opposition's problem: it does not do the work it needs to do to be an effective opposition. It does not go about things in a disciplined way. Members opposite come in here with these incredibly broad, rambling motions instead of actually getting the facts across, understanding how government works, and understanding what the community wants. They are out of touch, and it is extraordinary.

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [11.18 am]: Before I begin, I would just like to acknowledge the parliamentary masterclass we just witnessed, and state for the record that I will miss the Minister for Regional Development's contributions in the future. I know that other members wish to speak, but in the time I have allocated, I would like to focus on the arrogance that the Premier has directed at me and other crossbench members.

I would like to say, for the record, that the Premier is not running rent-free in my head; I do not take this personally. I signed on for this role and I know what it entails. I am trying to advocate for a single issue that is very polarising in the community, and that comes with a level of caution, so I can block out that noise. I can only assume that the arrogance on display to me from the Premier is coming from, let us say, the rather exceptional circumstances of my election, which some would label undemocratic. I am not here to defend group voting tickets by any stretch of the imagination, but I think the Premier should be thankful for my presence here because he could have done a lot worse, as I have said previously, than a member who just wants a little more sunshine or a little more recreational time in the afternoon. He could have got somebody who was elected to this place on the back of GVTs who had questionable morals and who would have used this as a platform to spout all sorts of information. I care about Parliament. I care about our democratic institutions. I take seriously the oath that I gave at the start of my term. I care about regional Western Australia and certainly the Mining and Pastoral Region. Also, in the last two years, the Premier has basically overhauled the entire upper house system.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Despite saying it was not on his agenda.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Yes, but he is not Nostradamus; he could not foresee the results of the election.

This overhaul will help Labor, and I am the scapegoat, the whipping boy. I would have thought, all said and done, that we are on equal terms. He has fired shots. I am here. We are all happy people. Instead, every time I try to engage the Premier in the media, every time I try to move the needle and progress an issue, all I get from the Premier is vitriol and arrogance. I ask members to cast their minds back to June 2021 when we were talking about social housing, which was one of the hot topics at the time. This was before the government's investment in the space. I was calling for more social housing, as were most crossbench members and, I believe, the opposition as well. In a media appearance, the Premier was asked about my comments. The Premier's comments were —

Wilson Tuckee? Wilson Tucker? I have no knowledge of what wilson tucker is up to and what he's doing."

Hon Darren West: You should be happy about that.

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Hon WILSON TUCKER: There is a bit of confusion there, member. I encourage members to look at that video and see the vitriol and the smugness of the Premier then. It does not translate well in *Hansard*, but it is clearly evident in that video. Another more recent example occurred following a motion I moved calling for a windfall royalties regime in Western Australia. I am not anti-mining, but I think mining companies should be paying more back to the people of Western Australia. We then saw a fund set up. The Premier went and spoke to his mining mates and now we have a \$750 million fund that is expected to increase to a billion dollars. I made a post on Twitter that was picked up by *The West Australian*. I posted that this fund was a “drop in the pool” of the wealth earned by resource companies that should be returned to WA, and “a once off payment is tokenistic and an attempt to suck the oxygen out of any calls for reform of royalties for WA resources.” What do members think the response was from our Premier? The response from Mr McGowan was, “I would not take much notice of Mr Tucker.” That was it. He did not engage in the debate. He did not move the needle or try to engage at all. He basically tried to undermine who I am.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Outrageous!

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Thank you. It is outrageous.

A more recent example was yesterday when I asked a question in relation to Banksia Hill Detention Centre, which reads —

It has been reported in the media that the Premier told the Commissioner for Children and Young People ... that he had taken 21 pages of notes from his meeting with youth corrective services stakeholders during the Banksia Hill summit last week. Will the Premier please table those notes?

Do members know what the answer was? It was no. That was it —

The answer is no.

I understand the Premier trying to control the narrative, as do most governments, but I am asking the Premier to maybe reflect on his actions over the Christmas break—hopefully, the Premier is listening; I am sure he is not, but maybe his advisers are—and just think about his approach to the crossbench, to me, because I think we all have the best intentions at heart. We want what is best for Western Australia and the people of Western Australia. To come up with these arrogant responses and to sidestep the debate and try to undermine me and other members of the crossbench is counterproductive. I agree that the Premier is arrogant. I ask that the Premier, hopefully, reflects on his actions for the second part of this term.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot): I did notice Hon Peter Collier’s phone was ringing, despite the fact that he thinks it is silent.

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan) [11.26 am]: Acting President, in the past, we would have removed phones from people for that. Things have obviously changed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: I think COVID protocols are in play.

Hon KATE DOUST: Thank you.

In my limited time, I want to say a few words. I normally do not participate in Thursday morning therapy sessions, but I think we have had something like an hour and 20 minutes of therapy in which opposition members have rolled out yet again another failed effort to have a go at this government. No-one is listening to them. No-one is upstairs. I do not know why they keep rolling out these things. I think I might have put forward a motion like this when I was in opposition—just insert “Barnett” and change the date! You have rolled out the same thing.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: So you think it’s a good motion.

Hon KATE DOUST: Ours was so much better, thank you!

You did have an arrogant Premier—an arrogant Premier who would not even tell his own ministers what he was doing. They would get doorstopped about what he had done; in fact, there is a former minister sitting across from me who used to have to deal with that.

Members opposite could be putting forward things in this chamber that would actually get them some media time and would have the community thinking they are doing their job and taking them seriously. Let us have the debate about homelessness. Let us have the debate about education or health. Let us have the debate about jobs for the future. Let us talk about information and communications technology. Let us talk about the things that are important to people in the community. That is what this government is doing. It has listened. It is delivering. All you guys you can do is look internally and focus on the negative. Members opposite are not talking about the things that are important to the community. Even when they do get up and talk about it, they do not get their facts right.

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I pick up on what the Minister for Regional Development had to say. Hon Colin de Grussa needs to go back and do industrial relations 100. If he wants to talk about what is happening in that arena, he should go back and learn how the system operates. It is not the government causing the Australian Nursing Federation grief in the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission with the discussion around deregistration. The commission has made the decision that it will consider that because the union has not followed the rules that we all have to abide by in the industrial arena. The union knows what it is required to do and it has breached that. The commissioner has hauled it up, not the government. The Industrial Relations Commission is the independent umpire and if you do not follow the rules, you cop the punishment. That has to be resolved. Do not go putting out misinformation. If members opposite are going to talk about this stuff, they should at least do their research. I know it is really difficult for members on the other side to get their head around industrial relations and workers' rights because that is such a foreign concept to them, so I encourage them to go back and have a really good look at that.

I think we owe it to our community to actually raise issues of significance that our community can relate to on a Thursday morning. We should put things on the agenda that we can discuss and come up with solutions for our community. Surely we should be doing more of that than banging something else on the desk on a Thursday morning that has no relevance to the community. If members opposite want to have a go at the Premier, take it up during other debates. Do it with facts and justify it. Nothing in this debate is going to have any impact.

I say to Hon Wilson Tucker that this is a tough game. He should grow a thicker skin. So what if somebody sends some barbs at him. If he wants to survive the distance—big deal! Grow that thicker skin.

We need a decent opposition; we do not have it. The only opposition we have now is *The West Australian*, which prides itself on doing the job of the opposition while members opposite drag their feet. *The West Australian* raises the issues; the opposition follows them up. Members opposite are not capable of being an opposition, and until they get their act together, the people of the state will continue to keep them on that side of the chamber.

I acknowledge the contribution of Hon Alannah MacTiernan and thank her for her service to this chamber and to the state.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.