

## ABORIGINAL PROCUREMENT POLICY

### *Motion*

**HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan)** [11.30 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house acknowledges the McGowan Labor government's delivery of the Aboriginal procurement policy, which complements its ongoing commitment to facilitate increased employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal communities.

I tried to make the motion fairly broad and, hopefully, it is a motion that members across the chamber can support. The focus of my contribution will be on the government's Aboriginal procurement policy, but there are other things that are equally as important that the government can do with regard to employment and business opportunities. While preparing this motion I talked to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Dr Tony Buti, a very good friend of mine and a person I have a lot of respect for. It was in consultation with him that I thought a motion such as this would be a great way to highlight and celebrate some real goals that have been scored in this area. When I was talking with the minister, I was reminded of an old saying—if you give a person a fish, you feed them for a day, but if you teach them how to fish, you feed them for life. I have a slightly different take on that. If we gift people a fish, we create a dependence, whereas if we create opportunities for them and give them employment, they will genuinely have a pathway to a productive and happy life.

Going into the 2017 election, I was reasonably nervous because the Leader of the Opposition at that time, Mark McGowan, was very keen to make sure we had out in the public a lot of policies that gave people a genuine choice between the government they had at the time and the government that he wanted to lead. He put out one document called *WA Labor plan for jobs*. It was a way in which he believed there were opportunities to improve this state. That document was put out before the 2017 election and was used extensively during the election. On page 15 of that document, one policy was the Aboriginal procurement policy. It stated —

- A McGowan Labor Government will adopt the Aboriginal procurement policy of awarding three per cent of all government contracts to Aboriginal owned businesses by 2020.

For those members who may be unaware of the Aboriginal procurement policy, it supports the economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. Of course, we won that election, so that commitment was introduced, as I think were all of the commitments the Premier made coming into that election. The procurement policy commenced in July 2018. The policy aligns with the Western Australian government's Aboriginal employment strategy and Closing the Gap implementation plan. The policy mandates progressive targets for the award of Western Australian government contracts to Aboriginal businesses and applies to all contracts valued at \$50 000 and above. There are other iterations of that policy, but that was the policy when it was first introduced. The target applied to Western Australian government agencies when purchasing goods, services and community services, and works that go along with that. Government trading enterprises have also been invited to apply these targets. The policy does not apply to local government. The targets apply at an individual agency level to improve individual agency accountability. This policy was introduced and the agencies had personal responsibility for the outcomes, so it was not whole of government, which I think was important. The policy articulates this government's expectation that its direct and indirect procurement spend will provide opportunities for the Aboriginal business sector and Aboriginal economic development. It sits alongside several other procurement-connected policies that leverage procurement to achieve social, economic and environmental outcomes for Western Australia.

The state government is a massive user of services and purchaser of products. It has long been a belief of mine that to be able to leverage that to achieve desirable social outcomes was extremely insightful of the Premier, and it has been a tremendous success. That policy was introduced initially for a period of three years. The targets were small to start with. In its first year, 2018–19, it was a designated one per cent of government spend in that area, in 2019–20, the percentage was raised to two per cent, and in 2020–21, the final year of that iteration of the policy, it was three per cent. In the first year it was introduced, when agencies were required to achieve only a one per cent KPI, the percentage of WA government contracts awarded to Aboriginal business was 4.7 per cent. In the second, when it was meant to be two per cent, the agencies achieved 5.5 per cent. In the final year of that particular iteration of the policy, they achieved 6.5 per cent. Those contracts were awarded throughout the state. For instance, in the Kimberley in the final year, being 2020–21, there were 56 businesses and 211 contracts; in the Pilbara, there were 18 businesses and 48 contracts; in the goldfields, eight businesses and 23 contracts; and in the midwest, 12 businesses and 72 contracts. It goes throughout the south west as well. In the great southern, there were eight businesses and 15 contracts. The majority of the contracts are around the Perth and Peel regions, where there were 90 businesses and 265 contracts. The good thing about this for the regions is that the total spend for those three years in the metropolitan area was \$175 333 000, and in the regions, it was \$295 868 000. It is achieving a social dividend by not only providing start-up businesses and businesses within the Aboriginal community an opportunity to grow

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but also spreading that spend throughout the regions. I do not think that the government can do much better than that to be perfectly honest.

The minister at the time of the review was Minister Dawson, who is out on urgent parliamentary business. The minister who introduced the policy was the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Ben Wyatt. I have tremendous respect for both of them and their implementation work. Mark McGowan had the foresight, and the two ministers during the first three years had the energy to make sure the policy was a total success.

Minister Buti came in at the end of the policy. He was very supportive of it and has extended it for a further three years. In the final year of the original policy, the government awarded 5.6 per cent of its contracts to Aboriginal businesses, almost double the three per cent target for that year. This financial year, 2021–22, also saw the value of the contracts for Aboriginal businesses increase significantly, to a total of \$256 million, comprising 262 contracts to 119 Aboriginal businesses, compared with \$136 million for the previous year. It is growing exponentially and providing many opportunities, and it has now been put in place for another three years.

I will mention some of the key highlights of the previous policy. GBSC Yurra was awarded contracts across multiple government agencies totalling more than \$8 million. The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia was awarded a community services contract for nearly \$31 million, and Bega Garbarringu Health Service, a regional organisation, was awarded \$7.5 million in contracts.

The number of Aboriginal businesses engaged under the policy has increased year on year. The contracts awarded to the Aboriginal businesses under the policy are not low-value contracts. In the last financial year, the average value doubled to just under \$1 million per contract. In the last financial year, more than half of the Aboriginal business contracts awarded went to businesses in regional areas, as I indicated. Aboriginal businesses have been engaged to deliver contracts for a range of goods and services, including in the construction industry, the creative industries, environmental management and, importantly, the delivery of culturally safe consultation services to government agencies.

I want to give a shout-out to the contracting agencies over the first three years. The highest numbers of contracts were awarded within the Department of Education, the Department of Communities, Main Roads Western Australia, which is a big player in this area, particularly in the regions, and the Public Transport Authority. The list goes on and on, but they are some of the agencies with the largest number of contracts. I give them a big shout-out. We do not always hear a lot of great news in this area, but this is a very good news story.

Minister Buti has just renewed this policy. In the short period of time I have left, I will read from his media statement to give an idea of the advances that the new policy will introduce. It states —

The McGowan Government is updating its Aboriginal Procurement Policy to include Aboriginal employment targets for the first time.

It is also broadening the policy, which currently prescribes targets for percentage of government contracts to be awarded to Aboriginal businesses, to include spend targets for Aboriginal subcontracting on government projects.

The updates mean suppliers will have a contractual obligation to meet an Aboriginal employment target or an Aboriginal subcontracting target from January 1, 2022.

The Aboriginal employment targets are based on region by region demographics and are measured as a percentage of the total contract workforce:

- 10 per cent for Pilbara and Kimberley;
- 5 per cent for Gascoyne, Mid-West and Goldfields-Esperance;
- 2 per cent for Perth metropolitan area, South-West, Great Southern, Peel and Wheatbelt.

The subcontracting targets will reflect current Aboriginal procurement targets—measured as a percentage of total contract value—and will increase from 3 per cent in 2021–22, to 3.5 per cent in 2022–23 and 4 per cent in 2023–24.

The new requirements will apply to goods, services, and works contracts valued at \$5 million and above advertised from 1 January 2022 within the industries of construction, community services, education and training, and public administration and finance.

**HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary)** [11.45 am]: Regional development is front and centre in my speech because there has been a bucketload of work in this space, particularly by Minister Alannah MacTiernan since 2017, when we came into office. I have a really good list to go through, but firstly I will thank the mover of the motion, Hon Martin Pritchard. What a relevant time to have this discussion. We finally have a federal government that is starting to listen, with the makarrata giving Aboriginal people a voice,

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and learning the truth and moving forward. I am very proud to be a member of the Labor Party when it comes to First Nations. From a federal perspective and a state perspective, there is only one party that is moving forward in that space, and that is the Labor Party. I do not think anyone would deny that. We just have to look at the apology by Kevin Rudd. We just have to look at the procurement policies over here in the west. Before 2017, there was a real lack of engagement, particularly by the government and particularly on utilising government money. Hon Martin Pritchard made a very valuable point: we spend a fortune in the regions; we spend a fortune across this state. Road building is one of the biggest areas. It seems to me that road building could become the new ranger program.

We can talk about the ranger program. That is something this government has championed since 2017. I went to a conference at Lorna Glen a couple of years ago, and over 140 rangers were camping there. It was one of the best experiences I have ever had. The next morning, after we got up, a ranger came over and said, “You whitefellas stay at the camp. We’re going off to do law first.” The feeling of control was totally taken out of our hands and put into the hands of First Nations people. That was one of the greatest experiences I have had since being in Parliament—to feel the ownership of what they are doing. They are merging their culture into departments such as the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

I will start with Hon Alannah MacTiernan and the regional development work that has happened. The last government did nothing on the dog fence. Nothing was done. When Minister Alannah MacTiernan got in, she knew that we had a massive issue with wild dogs and that we wanted to see a resurgence in our sheep numbers here in WA. The figures are astounding, down from over 100 000 to under 20 000 sheep, I think.

**Hon Darren West:** Zero in the Leonora shire.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** Zero in the Shire of Leonora. When the minister took this challenge on, it was amazing to see that she came out with a strong view that the contractors for the dog fence should be Aboriginal contractors. With the Gascoyne fence, the goldfields fence and the Esperance fence, there was a real push from the department and from the minister. It was not because of a KPI and a tick-and-flick operation. There were genuine outcomes, genuine contracts, genuine employment—real-deal stuff.

The private sector has failed miserably; it always does. When it comes to First Nations people, the private sector is all about a KPI tick-and-flick operation to get a few extra bucks out of a training fund—give them a six-month sugar hit and move them on. I dare anyone to challenge me on that, before 2017. The mining industry and the oil and gas industry are the biggest ones to blame in that space. They go onto country, do their work and get out, and they barely engage with culture. I absolutely applaud the minister on the dog fence project. It is one of the best projects I have seen in the state. It was solely focused around building Aboriginal businesses. They went from having standard fence posts to having fully automated smacked-in fence posts. I think over 234 kilometres of fencing was done in the Murchison area.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** In total, we did about 500 kilometres.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** About 500 kilometres. That was done solely by Aboriginal contractors. That is an unbelievable outcome. We engaged rangers on that in the goldfields as well. In early 2018, the Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission held some really groundbreaking and rigorous training on First Nations leadership programs with small businesses that were trying their hardest to produce Aboriginal products such as soaps and bush medicines, for example. The feedback on the ground from the Aboriginal small businesses was that the program was great for them. The program proved to be even better when Rowena Leslie opened the Goldfields Aboriginal Business Chamber. Who would have thought? We now have an Aboriginal Business Chamber that looks after our Indigenous businesses, brings them together and shows the private sector that they are here and they mean business. All I ever hear from the mining and oil and gas companies and the Big Ben 10s of the world is that it is too hard, they do not know where to go, there is no one-stop shop, no hub and no this and no that. Get off your arse and have a look, because, I tell you what, it is absolutely out there. All they need to do is put in a little more effort, because the bang they will get for their buck is unbelievable.

I had the pleasure of working on the Meekatharra–Wiluna road project in the last term of government, which has come full circle to become a big project now. The Meekatharra–Wiluna road is 128 kilometres, all up, but had 122 kilometres of unsealed road between Wiluna and Meekatharra. People have been advocating to seal that section of road for 30 or 40 years, because it is a really tough argument to make. People would argue that it was valuable for tourism or business et cetera, but it did not really stack up. The reality is that there is a lot of migration between Wiluna and Meekatharra. Working with Hon Alannah MacTiernan and Hon Rita Saffioti, we saw that there was some maintenance funding coming up, so we decided to look at this solely as a First Nations project. It is not just about sealing the road; it is about how many people we can train and get on the job during that project. The project was meant to be for sealing four kilometres of road but we ended up sealing 10 kilometres. Huge kudos to Main Roads. It did an amazing job bringing the stakeholders together.

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I spoke to the Shire of Wiluna, where Blackham Resources has a mine. I asked the shire how many Aboriginal people who live in Wiluna worked at the Blackham mine and was told it was one person. Out of a whole community of unemployed people, only one person was employed at the Blackham mine. Mac Jensen was at the TAFE. The TAFE building had been abandoned before Mac went back there. The TAFE used to have woodwork materials such as hacksaws and other stuff used for woodwork, but no cabinet-makers are employed in Wiluna. There is no chance of getting a job there building cabinets, so the TAFE was stripped out and turned into a car-building operation. One of the issues with the migration between Wiluna and Meekatharra is that cars would break down on the side of the road. That operation brought in interest, and once the interest came in, Mac developed a model around self-development and growing as a community. We got the elders, mining companies and Main Roads together. We had only a little bit of money and we completed one of the best road projects I think I have ever seen in this state. Straight after that, the federal government gave the state some money and the state government made it a priority to put \$20 million towards the road-sealing project because it was a First Nations project and had achieved great outcomes. More than 15 road builders were living in the local area. Kudos to Australian Potash, the Minister for Regional Development and Mac Jensen, because the Shire of Laverton has now set up a training school with Mac. That training school is focused solely around bringing people in, getting their tickets and their drivers' licences organised and getting all the things they need to become employed. The outcomes they have been achieving have been absolutely amazing. There are 32 students enrolled there from across the northern goldfields. Five are from Leonora, 10 from Mt Magnet, five from Laverton and two from Wiluna. The school has a 100 per cent attendance rate. I can tell members now that that is not easy to achieve, no matter where you are or who you are trying to educate. That is a really big achievement. Some of the tickets and operations include chainsaw operation, first aid, bobcat and skid steer, small machinery, dingo, load and unload machinery, and industry work health and safety white card. They are all relevant tickets to get people into a private industry or into road building. We have over half a billion dollars for the Outback Way to go from Laverton to Queensland. That should be a First Nations road building project. It should be packed with First Nations road builders. I am really excited about that project.

I could talk about this motion for hours. I have barely even scratched the surface. I give a huge shout-out to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission, from the CEOs all the way down. There has been a huge change in attitude, and that is about engaging First Nations people on real, true, actual work.

**HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development) [11.55 am]:** I thank Hon Martin Pritchard for giving us this opportunity to talk on a subject that absolutely energises members right across the McGowan government. I think we could hear about incredible stories and achievements in most portfolios. I note a discussion with Hon Dave Kelly just two days ago when he was very proudly talking about the number of Aboriginal contractors now working with the Water Corporation. When it first started having its annual confab, it might have had 20. That figure was 200 at the recent confab. A great energy and vibe comes from that. There is no doubt that the government has wanted to do this right across government. We recognised that if we were to empower Aboriginal communities and allow Aboriginal people to fully participate in Australian society, we needed to help Aboriginal people get a foothold into the world of enterprise.

Earlier this morning I talked about our Aboriginal Pastoral Academy program. There are 37 Aboriginal-owned pastoral stations across the Kimberley and the Pilbara, yet very few of them are run by Indigenous management. One of our aspirations is to reinspire young people about the possibilities of pastoralism and the enormous career opportunities that provides. As I said, we were very proud that our second group of graduates went through that program, all of whom have got jobs next year. We have all been doing this work.

Another important area of work that we need to focus on is that we cannot expect Aboriginal businesses and Aboriginal people to have had very much exposure to managing a business—this could apply to anyone—and understanding the way procurement works and how to successfully manage the procurement process. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is doing really important work with the Aboriginal Procurement Advisory Service, which we set up in 2017. That is designed to provide an understanding of how to go about procuring work for open tenders and also developing the back-end skills to provide real support for Aboriginal businesses to go forward.

In some circumstances we can have a protected tender arrangement, as we did with the revamping of 500 kilometres of the wild dog fence, and we can say that the project is purely for Aboriginal contractors. However, of course, what is important is not just that work, but also that the contractors are able to use that opportunity to show their skills and build on them to go forward and take on more work. Of course, a number of contractors who worked on that \$5 million project are now performing the \$1 million maintenance contract, so there is ongoing work, but it should not be limited to that. It is important that we do not just go in, do something and do a bit of a media release around it, but that we really entrench those skills. We had enormous support from the departmental offices to really give these companies the opportunity to build on their skills.

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Grant Simpson, who owns the company Jalyadi Rural Fencing, is one of our great success stories from the dog fence project. His team did a magnificent job. As I said, having seen what they could do, we wanted to give them further work. Morrgul was engaged through our Aboriginal procurement service to provide Grant and his team with help in tendering, pricing compliance and building their story so that they would be competitive in open tendering, and then, of course, building on those skills to develop an understanding of cash flow, payroll and management. Someone who starts a new business might have great know-how on the tools, but, at the end of the day, they will need help to develop that into a viable business.

Across the state, we can point to a heap of other businesses for which that very detailed work has been done to really help Aboriginal people take their incredible skills and get themselves into self-employment. Kim Le Lievre, a Derby-based gentleman, had been driving big rigs for 25 years. In 2017, he decided he wanted to become his own boss. He bought his rig and became a sole trader. He then went for a Main Roads tender in 2020, but he was concerned. He knew that Main Roads was very keen to have him on board, but he was concerned about how he would put together his tender. There was a 70-page tender document. Through our Aboriginal Procurement Advisory Service, using our consultant Morrgul, we were able to step in. We developed a plan for him, helped step him through that process and helped him to understand and complete that tender. As a result, Kim was successful in winning a place on the panel. That work led directly to a contract on the Dampier Peninsula to Broome–Cape Leveque Road. He has gone on to win more work on the Great Northern Highway.

This is really important work. We want to support people into procurement. We have these targets and we give a contract weighting, but we also have to do that detailed work to give people the opportunity to understand how to penetrate the world of tendering, how to be professional and how to manage their businesses. We have been offering those programs up and down the state, and, as Hon Kyle McGinn said, that has now developed to the point that in the goldfields, we actually have a business chamber of commerce. We are also doing very similar work in the midwest as part of the Yamatji settlement. We have contributed \$5 million to establish a business unit, and, again, this business unit is dedicated to upskilling businesses. It provides operation and procurement skills to Yamatji businesses right across that southern Yamatji area. Interestingly, I was there yesterday, and a lovely woman, Kathleen Councillor, gave the welcome to country. She urged everyone to use Aboriginal procurement.

**HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [12.05 pm]:** I would like to thank Hon Martin Pritchard for moving this fantastic motion today so that we can talk about our Aboriginal procurement policy, which is in its fifth year. This was one of our election commitments through the WA Labor plan for jobs. It is just a fantastic program. I want to read an article that came out last week that demonstrates how great this policy is. This was actually written by Zak Kirkup last week. It came out on 14 October. He wrote —

Have you ever been unemployed? In March 2021 when I lost the state election, it was the first time in my life I didn't have a job.

For more than half of my life I had known that I wanted to serve in Parliament. I worked tirelessly to realise the goal which culminated in me becoming one of the youngest leaders in the nation's history... only to lead a losing battle against one of the most popular Premier's in our country's history.

He goes on to talk about the fact that, basically, he was without a sense of purpose or direction. The article continues —

For many of us, our identity comes from our work. It gives us a sense of identity and purpose. It is who we are.

So when nearly half of the Indigenous population doesn't have a job, I have sympathy for what they experience because I've been there.

Unfortunately though it's not a once-off job loss, but a compounded generational and structural unemployment which is bloody tough to get out of.

Our mob need jobs.

It's one of the best ways to help close the Gap, to give a sense of place and foster a contribution to the betterment of the society which we all live in together.

The article continues —

The McGowan Government knew this when they introduced WA's first Aboriginal Procurement Policy.

It might sound boring but the impact has been so profound that I would argue it is one Ben Wyatt's most significant legacies.

In 2018 as Treasurer, Mr Wyatt introduced the policy which mandates targets for government contracts to be awarded to Aboriginal businesses.

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The concept seemed simple enough but there became a real risk that either targets wouldn't be met or worse that there would be some very expensive Welcome to Country ceremony's to help artificially inflate an agency's spend on Indigenous contracts.

Fast forward to 2022 and Mr Wyatt is no longer in parliament but his policy is reaping so much more benefit than anyone could expect it to sow.

On Thursday —

That is last Thursday —

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Tony Buti announced that in the four years since the policy was implemented more than \$821 million has been spent on contracts awarded to Aboriginal Businesses.

In 2021–22 alone, 119 Aboriginal businesses secured work exceeding the state's target of 3 per cent of government spent to over 5.6 per cent.

Zak Kirkup went on to say that after months of being unable to replace the sense of purpose that politics gave him, he co-founded a building services company employing more than 40 Indigenous tradies and apprentices. The article continues —

The McGowan Government and Mr Wyatt knew then what I know now: Aboriginal businesses are more likely to support Aboriginal jobs.

The procurement policy Labor put in place hasn't directly benefited our company but it has set an expectation across the market for the level of Indigenous engagement.

It has super-charged a maturity and diversification of Aboriginal businesses in WA which would not have happened without the policy.

The McGowan Government should be applauded for what it has achieved and moreover the policy should be replicated not just across government but the private sector too.

By working together, we're going to make sure that we can give every possible opportunity for Indigenous people or their businesses to get ahead and break out of the cycle of poverty and inequality and in the scheme of things, there are fewer things more important than that.

I wanted to read that because it is important to note the acknowledgement from both sides of the political divide that this has been an absolutely fantastic policy. This Aboriginal procurement policy is only one of our government's initiatives. Hon Kyle McGinn talked about the regional economic development grants, which is a \$40 million program. We are on round 5 of the regional economic development grants. It has been great to put money over the past few rounds into regional Aboriginal corporations to help them become self-sustaining and to help build their businesses. One of the grants was for Gnowangerup and Tambellup. I commend South Coast Natural Resource Management for its help with this grant program for seed collection and in developing our restoration economy and helping these organisations with seed propagation businesses, the native bushfood industry and, as I said, environmental restoration projects. This project was also funded in round 4 and achieved huge amounts of native seed planting and helped these Aboriginal organisations towards becoming self-sufficient.

The McGowan government sees huge potential for carbon farming across the state to drive these land restoration activities. This requires a scaling-up of seed collection and nursery development. Aboriginal corporations can have a key role also in the expanding area of carbon offsets. Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation also received a RED grant for a commercial greenhouse. It has undertaken a lot of great projects. It has done a project together with Greening Australia and its ranger program has been great. Badgebup has been working with all of the surrounding communities to bring in rangers from Gnowangerup, Tambellup and Kojonup and has an ethos of "Together we are stronger". The other day I met with chief executive officer Julie Hayden, which was great. She talked about local farmers supporting the Aboriginal rangers through restoration projects on their lands, and also wood collecting to help out those in need during the winter months. The Keedac Aboriginal corporation operates out of Narrogin and I thank Lotterywest for the support it has given to build up that organisation. Keedac is looking at becoming a registered training organisation. Hopefully it will receive support from other Aboriginal corporations such as Nirrumbuk in Broome, which has done a great job building up its registered training organisation.

I acknowledge also the Aboriginal ranger program. Round 4 was recently announced, which has been a great opportunity to help build up these Aboriginal corporations. During the recent round, 14 Aboriginal organisations were funded by \$22.8 million to employ approximately 100 Aboriginal people. The great thing is that about half of them will be women. The Esperance Tjaltjraak ranger program has been successful in receiving funding over the past four rounds. This has helped them greatly to get their certificates in Aboriginal site work and Indigenous land management, and to learn fauna handling and monitoring and feral animal control. Hon Kyle McGinn mentioned

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the state barrier fence Esperance extension. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development has been working with rangers as they learn to build the fences and they have gone on to construct parts of the fence, which is fantastic. The Shire of Esperance has also been fantastic in supporting the rangers.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** And the minister!

**Hon SHELLEY PAYNE:** Yes, and the minister as well—of course.

I want to mention quickly the Aboriginal advisory group, a great initiative, that has been set up to help shape the future of the Aboriginal ranger program.

I am a real supporter of Horizon Power because I think it does a fantastic job through its reconciliation action plan and everything it is doing to support Indigenous employment. When I went to the opening of the Esperance power station, all the ladies working with Horizon Power were wearing awesome scarves that were developed from local Aboriginal art; they were fantastic.

The last thing I will mention is the South East Premium Wheatgrowers Association in Esperance. Hon Alannah MacTiernan acknowledged the Rise Up program this morning. SEPWA has been working with Wongutha CAPS Aboriginal Christian school. It works with the students in an amazing program to help them into a career in agriculture and to get on-farm. Wongutha has been really good at developing on-farm training programs. The interest from Aboriginal students has been great, from last year not having any students doing ag to now having a large number of students really interested in a career in ag. I thank SEPWA and Wongutha for that and commend them on their great teamwork developing that program and supporting Indigenous people into employment.

**HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [12.15 pm]:** I note that there are time limitations but I want to speak briefly today on Hon Martin Pritchard's very important motion. The McGowan Labor government is doing incredible, real things that we can see on the ground and the impacts are immense, as many members who have spoken mentioned. I want to speak about the McGowan government's commitment to employment and procurement, but with a focus on the successes and achievements through the Aboriginal ranger program and, if I have time, Main Roads, beginning with the most successful Aboriginal ranger program in Australia.

In 2017, the McGowan government developed a \$20 million Aboriginal ranger program to protect the environment and create social and economic benefits for Aboriginal people in regional and remote areas. Funding is provided to Aboriginal organisations to employ Aboriginal people as rangers to undertake land and sea management activities such as those Hon Shelley Payne mentioned earlier, including biodiversity monitoring and research, traditional knowledge transfer, fire management, cultural site management, feral animal and weed management, cultural awareness and immersion experiences for visitors, guided welcome to country tours or talks for visitors, management of visitors, tourists and tourism assets, education programs and also mentoring. The state government's Aboriginal ranger program is delivering jobs, training and community development opportunities for Aboriginal people across a range of regional and remote communities in Western Australia. The investment in Aboriginal ranger programs supports the delivery of wider and longer term cross-government outcomes, which include employment outcomes. Funding was provided through royalties for regions with eligible Aboriginal groups and businesses under the original \$20 million in 2017, which focused on new jobs for rangers outside the metropolitan area. In 2017, the \$20 million was committed across 35 projects statewide, which were run by 28 Aboriginal organisations. In 2021, the McGowan government made a \$50 million election commitment to expand over four years the very successful Aboriginal ranger program to maximise the outcomes and benefits of the ARP, which included opportunities to better foster Aboriginal empowerment.

The new expansion fund that was set up by Hon Stephen Dawson helps Aboriginal organisations to consolidate their ranger programs and plan across the four years by supporting key ranger positions and various career development opportunities. The ARP directly supports training opportunities to help Aboriginal rangers develop skills in conservation and land management. Critical to the expanded program is the creation of the Aboriginal reference group, as Hon Shelley Payne mentioned earlier. The government has formed a 20-person reference group to provide guidance on the development and the roll out of the new funding streams and it has invested \$50 million to support new and established programs over four years with the hope of attracting further investment from local government, the commonwealth and private and not-for-profit sectors. The program is managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and it directly supports training opportunities to develop the conservation and land management skills of Aboriginal rangers while encouraging community resilience and leadership. It is exciting to see that since starting in 2017, the Aboriginal ranger program has funded 35 ranger projects across WA and provided employment for over 600 people. I am very pleased to see that women make up more than 50 per cent of those who have been employed through this program. That is a fantastic achievement in that field.

The ARP has proven to be a very successful initiative across our state. As I said in my opening remarks, I am happy to call it the most successful Aboriginal ranger program in Australia. It plays an important part in empowering

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Aboriginal people to look after land and country. As a result of the ARP, this program has had a wonderful impact on Indigenous communities and employment opportunities for both men and women. I look forward to the future success of the Aboriginal ranger program with even more ranger programs across our state creating on country jobs to preserve the environment and traditional knowledge. It is clear that the ARP is, without a doubt, a success story on many fronts, including providing employment outcomes for Aboriginal people. I look forward to seeing how this program will be expanded and its success continue to grow over the coming years.

I have very limited time in which to talk about Main Roads Western Australia, but some projects were mentioned earlier. Main Roads is the top agency performer with the number of contracts that have been awarded and led by Main Roads, so I want focus on some of its successes, albeit I will be limited in how many I can go through. I want to start with the Broome–Cape Leveque Road project that I had the privilege of driving on upon its completion. It employed over 200 Aboriginal people across the construction life of the project.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** Member, do you mean “literally” driving on the road?

**Hon KLARA ANDRIC:** Yes, on the road.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** I thought you said you were driving the project.

**Hon KLARA ANDRIC:** Maybe one day, minister, but it is a bit too early for that.

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon KLARA ANDRIC:** Thank you very much, Hon Darren West. I had the privilege of driving on the road and was talking to one of the locals about how important this road was and how 200 Aboriginal people were employed across the construction life of the project, which is a fantastic participation rate. In fact, 85 per cent of people who worked on this very project were locals, which is fantastic to see. It was great to see that project completed. In 2020–21, \$76.72 million was spent on Aboriginal businesses delivering major projects and term contract works, equating to 8.6 per cent of total spend. Aboriginal people worked 425 112 hours, which equates to 8.8 per cent of the total hours worked.

We have done a lot of things in this space but I quickly want to mention—I am so short on time—that the transport portfolio has been shortlisted as a finalist for one of the Australian Institute of Management Western Australia Pinnacle Awards. The transport portfolio has been shortlisted for the Corporate Social Responsibility Excellence Award and I look forward to seeing it hopefully win.

**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary)** [12.26 pm]: I, too, would like to make a brief contribution on this wonderful motion brought to the house today by Hon Martin Pritchard. Thank you, honourable member, for bringing this forward. It is really a great achievement for our government and something that we are very proud of. We have been able to break down some of the generalisations and the culture around employment and procurement that involves Aboriginal businesses and Aboriginal people in Western Australia. We know that there is a great opportunity in this area and we have backed that up with programs and funding. I acknowledge all the ministers involved and the Premier. Minister Dawson was previously engaged with the establishment of the Aboriginal ranger program. Minister MacTiernan was involved with the state barrier fence near Esperance, which Hon Shelley Payne talked about. These are great legacy projects for Western Australia. The road building projects mentioned by Hon Kyle McGinn will still be around in 50 years and we will always know who built them and the circumstances around that.

I am going to embarrass an Aboriginal person, President. On our farm we have had a long-term employee, Mark Warmdean. Mark has worked with us for about eight years now. He has been a pillar of our farming operation. Mark is skilled across all facets of farming. He drives a truck and carts all the hay to the processing plant. Mark does the majority of the seeding, he drives a harvester and he does all the work on the farm and has done for his whole working career. Mark is a great example for the Noongar community. Mark is a legend in Mukinbudin where he worked for a long time. I am really pleased to say that in recent days, Mark’s son Cyril Warmdean has also come to work on our farm for the hay season, which has created this generational culture. Mark is a great bloke and a really good friend of mine. I have embarrassed him highly by mentioning him in Parliament, but my great respect for Mark is now in *Hansard* forever.

Members, we are very proud of what we have been able to achieve in a relatively short time. We will continue to run programs such as the shearing training program for Noongar and Yamatji kids. One of the novice shearers has become runner-up in the novice section at the Perth Royal Show. Ordinarily, he would never have picked up a handpiece and entered the shearing industry, which has its staffing challenges right across the state. There is a strong history of involvement of Aboriginal people in the shearing industry. When the wide combs and the New Zealand shearers, who were faster at shearing, came over to Australia, a lot of Aboriginal people left the industry. They are now coming back. One young man recently shored his first 100 sheep. Anyone who has ever picked up the bog iron and bent over all day shearing sheep would know that shearing your first 100 is a great achievement. It takes a lot of



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patience, a lot of effort and a lot of skill. It always seems to happen that when a shearer almost gets their first hundred, they run out of sheep or they get some big snaggy wethers that stop them from getting it done. One of our trainees has shorn his first hundred. That is an immense achievement for him, his family, his extended family and all those who look up to that young man; he will be an inspiration for them.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** And our shearing program.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** Our shearing program is sensational. Ashley Talbot at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development has done a power of work. We have engaged farmers and contractors. We have Kevin Gellatly, one of the greats of the industry, to teach these young men not just shearing skills but life skills and turning their lives around. In the future, I can see a Noongar shearing team getting around the wheatbelt and getting the sheep shorn.

These things are possible when we have a belief, when we have an idea and when we are prepared to put some money, funding and resources behind it. If we get the right people engaged, we get the good outcomes. Nothing is new in this. I do not know why we have not done it more in the past.

I thank the honourable member for bringing this forward today. It is a great opportunity to talk about the great possibilities and all kinds of things. We have some great Noongar business leaders, such as Oral McGuire of the Noongar Chamber of Commerce and Industry and in the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Great work, everyone.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.