

Mr Shane Love; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Meredith Hammat; Mr Geoff Baker; Ms Jodie Hanns; Mr Simon Millman

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**McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — FIRST 100 DAYS — PERFORMANCE**

*Motion*

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [4.02 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government for its abject failure to deal with critical issues facing the state of Western Australia in its first 100 days.

One hundred days is an accepted measure of performance in political life. It is a point at which we take time to have a bit of a look and see how the government is performing since it came into office. If we look on the internet, we will see much discussion about whether Joe Biden has passed the benchmarks of what he set out to achieve in his first 100 days.

Last weekend was 14 weeks—98 days—since the election. Of course, that means that this week we have passed 100 days. What report card can this government expect? If the government were going to receive a mark from its schoolteacher for the performance that it has put in, I think it would expect to see an F for fail. It has failed on many fronts. As we know, we have a health system in deep crisis. We have a minister who seems to wish to deny that crisis. We have ambulances basically running hospital wards in car parks because the hospitals cannot provide the necessary beds. We have a high and shocking rate of failures occurring in the medical system, not necessarily because of faults of staff, but faults of the resources and systems that are in place, and we have a minister who denies that there is any sort of health crisis.

We know that even today we had an indication that this government, through one of its pet committees in the other place, is seeking to look into the ambulance services that look after Western Australia. The member for Roe asked a question that is very, very relevant to those of us in regional WA, because we rely on the volunteer services that St John Ambulance provides. No other organisation that I am aware of uses volunteers and provides that level of service at that cost for so many people across regional areas. The government seems to be seeking to not give proper extensions to St John Ambulance and to put out misinformation or, if you like, set out the framework for a move on it as the provider through this purported committee process. If we lose the professional organisation that provides that service in the city, St John will be less able to provide that service statewide, and that is a huge problem.

We also have a housing crisis in this state. If we drive down the main streets of the city, we see people lying on footpaths and bedding out on the streets. We know that there is a massive housing crisis going on right now throughout regional WA. There are 17 000 people on the waitlist for public housing. We have towns in which workers cannot be accommodated. In the areas affected by cyclone Seroja, this is especially going to be a huge problem that needs to be addressed by urgent action, but this problem of inadequate accommodation for essential workers is occurring throughout regional WA. We know that agencies are paying for people's car registration so that they can continue to live in their car, camp in their car and use it as a house. Sometimes these people have young children. There is an absolute dire need for further investment and a government that is going to take the time to look at the problems that are besetting the state.

All this is occurring under a government that has had a massive windfall from the iron ore price boom and the demand from China for that commodity. That windfall has not come from having a diversified economic base or from getting on the job and finding new markets and doing all those things; it is simply on the back of the development of the iron ore industry by industry players. It has not come from anything that this government is doing, because we know that the government is putting less effort into finding new markets and has less representation throughout Asia, which is an area of massive growth and a potential market for a whole range of products. I represent an area in which towns and people's livelihoods are very dependent on the Chinese market for the crayfishing industry. I can assure members that high dependence on one market is a very risky thing to have—just go and ask any western rock lobster fisher about the risk of putting all one's eggs into the China basket. We need to have diversity. We need to be out there finding opportunities in India, Vietnam and a range of other countries. We do not need to see a retraction in effort by this government in that area, purportedly on the back of some sort of review about what happened in Japan. That has nothing to do with providing an effective trade presence throughout the rest of Asia.

We know that the Metronet program has been subject to a lot of delays and that, as we move forward, we will see huge cost overruns in Metronet. The expectation on this side of the house is that the Metronet program will end up costing at least \$10 billion. Even within this 100-day period, we have evidence that that program is in trouble. We know that the Forrestfield–Airport Link has been delayed. It was announced on 7 May that there would be a further delay of six months, pushing it back by 18 months in total from when it was first to be delivered. The Yanchep extension appears to be in some sort of trouble as well. I noted an article in the Yanchep local press the other day, the *Wanneroo Times*, which reads —

**Stalled: Yanchep Rail Extension work veering off track**

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Plans to complete the Yanchep Rail Extension next year may be veering off track, as work appears to have all but ground to a halt.

There is another Metronet project that we know is in a degree of trouble if this newspaper report can be relied on.

Worryingly, we also know that there are plans to shut the Mandurah line as part of the work on the Cockburn–Thornlie link and that that will mean massive disruption between Aubin Grove and Elizabeth Quay. That will basically cut off Fiona Stanley Hospital from the CBD and with the loss of the rail network, increase traffic at a time when the freeway is already struggling to cope. I wish we could believe the minister's assurances that this will be done on time and there will be no further delays, but if those delays take us into a period beyond the school holidays, we can expect to see massive chaos on the freeway and there will be massive problems for people trying to get to and from work. That will have real impacts on productivity in this state. It is not about just convenience; it is a real economic cost. It is a safety issue and a whole range of problems will manifest. I have no confidence that the sort of management we have seen of Metronet so far will lead to a good outcome in that area. We know of so many issues that this state is facing that I do not have sufficient time to go through them all today on my own, but many members here will be able to go through the problem areas.

However, today I want to point out that I asked a question of the Minister for Fisheries. The other day he was asked a question and he had commented that nobody seemed to want to ask him questions. I can understand why, because he gave the shortest, most offhand answer to a very serious question that I think I have ever heard in this house. I am referring to the question asked about the finfish nursery in Geraldton, another project that has been mismanaged and is going off the rails. *The Geraldton Guardian* last Friday has a picture of the minister releasing yellowtail kingfish at Cockburn Power Boats Club. Interestingly enough, a note on the WA Recovery website indicates that the finfish nursery in Geraldton has already been built and there is a picture of it. I do not know what the picture is of but it certainly cannot be of the finfish nursery in Geraldton because we know it has not been built. We know the minister has no plan to get it back on track, and there is no indication from this minister that he is taking this issue very seriously at all. I can tell members that to the people of the midwest, it is a very serious issue.

There was a long period of investment; the royalties for regions program helped the local industry group to prove up some of that kingfish knowledge and expertise in the area. This government gave the project to a Tasmanian outfit to run, which has since put it on hold. That is probably the reason behind the delay to the development of this nursery. However, this infrastructure needs to be put in place so we can get an aquaculture industry up and running in the midwest. The minister must stop this delay and get on and get this project built. The money has been apparently set aside in the budget but I have grave fears we will ever see this finfish nursery running. It is beginning to have all the hallmarks of the failed Albany wave project for which the government offered the regional community some sort of marquee project of economic development and we all know where that ended up. The same sort of situation seems to be developing here in Geraldton and we need this minister and this government to take that matter very seriously.

My colleagues will now tell members about a range of issues that in the first 100 days of this government have not been satisfactory. I am sure that the report card at the end of their contribution will read that this government has achieved an F for fail in the most dire terms imaginable; yet it has had such opportunity with its windfall from royalties that have come from the iron ore industry that it could be addressing many issues but it is choosing not to.

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition)** [4.13 pm]: Thank you, member for Moore and Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I rise to support this motion —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government for its abject failure to deal with critical issues facing the state of Western Australia in its first 100 days.

It is 100 days—it is a milestone. As I said in the matter of public interest, we are about to head into the winter break when members will have an opportunity to spend concerted time in their electorate and I think it is timely in this place that we reflect on the performance of the beginning of the second term of this McGowan Labor government.

Let us cast our minds back to February 2021 when the Labor Party was presenting its pitch to the Western Australian public. The Premier was playing to the people who might not have voted for Labor before. I said this in the MPI. I think it was a safe bet. Given we were in the shadow of a pandemic, a number of people were considering that they might reward the Premier and the Minister for Health for the work done in the previous 12 months. Many were contemplating that; we do not deny that and we certainly have never not acknowledged the hard work put in during those very difficult months. We are talking about what they have done with the votes they have picked up as a result of that. Before the election, as I said before, the Premier posted on his Facebook page the following words —

Western Australians, this is my promise to you.

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If you're thinking about voting for me and my WA Labor government for the first time this election, this is my message to you.

You should feel confident in that decision.

My promise is simple—I will lead a sensible, responsible, and experienced Government.

We will keep our promises, and properly manage the finances.

And we will always keep WA strong.

As I said before, around the state, candidates and many MPs from the Labor Party were making similar comments on their social media that were very diligent in the way they utilised the popularity of the Premier. As I said before, in my part of the world Hon Darren West shared his post —

If you're considering voting WA Labor for the first time, Mark McGowan makes this commitment to you.

I've known Mark for over 20 years. He keeps his commitments.

He's a great bloke, a great Premier and he'll keep WA strong.

That was the pitch off the back of what was an extraordinary year—safe and strong; trust us; we will be sensible and responsible. I think the voting public went to the polls on one issue. I understand that the Premier, his cabinet and other members of the government think they now have a mandate to carry out a multitude of other things. However, I disagree with that. I think most people in the community will tell us now that outside the pressure of those very challenging months we went through at the peak of the COVID pandemic and the worry of having appropriate management and continuity going forward—as has been reflected in jurisdictions right around the nation and indeed in international jurisdictions—it was highly unlikely that we would see a change in the government and that people were voting almost 100 per cent on the basis of the management of COVID. I know the Premier disagrees with that because he said that he has a mandate to carry out the farce of the process we have seen for reappointing the Corruption and Crime Commissioner and electoral reform, which he continues to pretend is all about dealing with the issue of the Daylight Saving Party and the like rather than the real intent of what the Labor Party has had long-held intentions to deliver on—that is, a reduction in regional representation. It believes the mandate it has been given will allow it to do all that and, in fact, it said one thing before the election that is completely different from what it is currently doing.

In our MPI today we addressed the fact that the government has failed to meet its own promises to the people of Western Australia, and that was around openness, accountability and transparency, and its failure to keep people safe. I understand that that safe and strong mantra was very much in line with the management of the COVID pandemic. However, as a government, it has to be more than a one-trick pony, and this government has had four years. We have moved from those heady peaks—those very challenging months at the peak of the pandemic—and are now at a different stage of that management process. There is a requirement for government to turn its mind to making sure it is looking after all aspects of government, not just the one thing that falls under the banner of “safe and strong”, the mantra that was left ringing in the ears of every Western Australian as a result of the election campaign. Those words were splashed across every single outlet—media, placards, billboards and papers—drawing attention to the government's response to COVID. The government was rewarded handsomely as we see every day when we walk into this chamber. Since the 100 days of the government's election of an overwhelming majority, I think there is no doubt that the same citizens who have placed their trust in this government are now starting to see an ugly truth.

This is a Labor government that is prepared to do anything with the numbers that it has in this place, and it is also prepared to do it in an incredibly disingenuous way. The contribution that the Premier made during the matter of public interest debate about the rationale for pursuing electoral reform and stripping regional representation from Western Australia could not have been more disingenuous. He went straight back to the talking points that were trotted out before the election. That is the challenge that we have. That “safe and strong” phrase and those placations that were provided or those weasel words that were used to ensure that everyone thought that they were going to get a sensible and safe government that would use its majority with great caution has disappeared and it has taken just 100 days. While we have been dealing with those matters, public confidence has been undermined, which certainly sets a difficult tenor in terms of how the government will progress over the next three and a half years, and a raft of crises has emerged that we have spoken about in the areas of housing, health, homelessness and labour shortages, with support and funding failures across many key sectors. Those sectors are all crying out for help yet this government continues to refuse to acknowledge that. The Minister for Health says that there is no health crisis. The Minister for Housing says that the market is tight.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** They're more interested in puppy farming.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** That question today in question time really took the cake. We have articles in the daily paper about a gentleman suffering from cancer being parked in the corridor of Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, unable

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to access a room and feeling completely violated because he has no privacy to deal with an extraordinarily difficult moment in time. Meanwhile, the Minister for Local Government is talking about a matter that is, no doubt, important to some, but I suggest that the vast majority of the public of Western Australia would like the entire cabinet focused on dealing with the health crisis to make sure that our frontline workers—our nurses, doctors and clinical providers who work in the hospitals—are supported and resourced. While the government is at it, it should just fess up to the fact that we have arrived at this problem, not because of the COVID-19 pandemic, St John Ambulance or any external factor, but because this government took its eye off the ball for four years and failed to resource that sector appropriately.

I have a feeling, members, that the health sector is not the only one that will emerge in crisis over the course of the next 100 days or the next three and a half years. I know that there are issues within the Department for Child Protection and Family Support; it is a sector in crisis. We already know that there is a housing crisis. I will go into that a little bit more and talk about the challenges that some of our Western Australians are facing in terms of housing and the wait list. It affects not only those who are waiting for the Government Regional Officers' Housing, but also those in the private market, which will impact not only our most vulnerable, but also our ability to attract and retain key workers. I asked the Minister for Housing about the childcare issue and whether the government would give any consideration to an essential worker investment program, as we did when we were in government, in Port Hedland, Karratha and Coral Bay where there was a role for government to play. We used royalties for regions, because at that time royalties for regions was actually being used properly. There was a crisis in housing, the market was tight, we were having difficulties finding places for people to live and it was impacting the ability for small businesses, essential workers and government workers to find appropriately priced accommodation, so we did something about it.

I did not get an answer from the Minister for Housing on whether he would even consider something like that. I got the same answer he has given for the last four weeks of Parliament: "We understand there's a problem. It can't be fixed overnight." There have been calls from the regional chambers of commerce and industry, the childcare sector, the business sector and government departments for essential worker housing in our regions. In his answer, the minister was focused very heavily on the fact that he thinks that the rental market in the Perth metropolitan area will ease up over time. Of course it will, at some point, but we were asking specifically about how the government could assist our communities in regional Western Australia and ensure that we are able to access every available worker. If we do not have access to child care because the people who actually provide that essential service cannot access a house, then we cannot release those workers who are available in our communities. If we cannot get anyone from overseas, businesses and individuals will choose not to stay, which will place a restriction on the services that we can provide in communities like Kununurra, the goldfields, Karratha, Geraldton and all over the place. That is completely unacceptable to us when there is a \$5 billion surplus. Again, during the MPI, the Premier patted himself on the back and said that this government has that surplus because it has worked hard. This government has a record royalty rate that is rolling in the dollars. It has starved essential services over the last four years and now we have reached a crisis point that has a convenient pandemic placed across the top of it, which allows this government to deflect all of those issues, except we all know that those flags existed well and truly before then.

We have raised these issues again and again in this place during the first 100 days of this government. We have reflected on the fact that in the first 100 days, this government had the opportunity to address some of these matters, knowing that it had those dollars rolling in the door. Yet, one of the first things it did in the roll up to the state budget—to get the bad news out of the way, I suspect—was to announce that all the household fees and charges would go up. Everybody who was already stretched, who could not afford a house and who was already unable to pay their bills, was lobbed with another \$100 in fees and charges per household. There are people who are in real crisis. Today, in question time, I asked a question of the Minister for Housing about Tiffany, a 23-year-old lady who works in the childcare centre in Kununurra. She had to live in her car and then she had to live in a hotel so that she could provide that essential childcare service to the families of Kununurra. There are another 83 families on that centre's waiting list because it cannot access more staff due to their inability to access housing. That childcare issue is happening right across regional Western Australia. As I said in my question to the minister, this was raised with me in the regional chambers of commerce forum that was held last week where all the regional chambers came together; they come to Parliament a couple of times a year. I have no doubt that it was raised with the ministers of the government and I would be very interested to know what they said in response. One of the issues that they put on the table was exactly what we asked about today: can the government provide us with essential workers' quarters for our workers, such as childcare workers? The Minister for Housing provided no response to my question today. That is a very real example that has emerged. One hundred days have passed and we are yet to see any action from the government to address these said issues.

As I said, we have crises in the areas of housing, health and homelessness and we have labour shortages. This government has failed to fund many key sectors and it has not even acknowledged that there is a problem. These

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sectors are crumbling and have reached breaking point. Tragic incidents are happening in our state's emergency departments. I know that the hardworking shadow Minister for Health will no doubt talk about some of those issues in our health sector. It was incredibly difficult to watch but remarkable how the Australian Nursing Federation and the Australian Medical Association came together to protest outside Perth Children's Hospital. However, we were mocked by the government when we raised this issue in the Parliament. It was a moment in time that reflected the sheer frustration of those workers and the people who they seek to look after. Again, this is something that the government could have addressed in its first 100 days. Certainly, it could have addressed this issue well in advance because the red flags were there, but it chose not to.

The 17 000 Western Australians who are on the public housing waitlist are facing up to two years without a place to call home. I do not understand how the government can meet its promise to keep the people of Western Australia safe and strong when some of them do not have a roof over their head. This is notwithstanding the additional challenges faced by some of our communities, particularly those in the midwest and Gascoyne, and I would also include Wooroloo, Gidgegannup and the communities impacted by bushfires. We understand that natural disasters are not within the control of the government of the day, but how it responds is and these communities are still facing real challenges. Today in question time, the member for North West Central asked why it takes so long for the issues of people who are so far out of sight and mind to be prioritised by the government. That is what it feels like for them. They say that they do not feel like they are being looked after. These matters needed to be on the government's agenda the day the new cabinet was sworn in.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** These matters needed to be first and foremost for the government, but they were not, despite its \$5 billion surplus.

I have talked about electoral reform; I will not go back into it. I say to the regional members sitting on the government's side and around the table that when the time comes to vote on this matter, they must remember that their voice means something and they can make a difference. If the legacy that they want is to remove regional representation from this state Parliament—a permanent reduction in representation in regional Western Australia—I will look forward to seeing how they plan to explain that to their community because if they do not, we certainly will in 2025. I know that when that debate comes to this house, it will be a day for fairytales, spin and all the ridiculous statements that we have heard in this place again and again about fairness and equality, which is absolutely correct, but the notion of equality as a mathematical statement misses the point completely. Regional government members should be left in no doubt that if they think that their constituents will have moved on from this devious and deceitful move—it has been driven by ideology, nothing else—by the time we reach 2025, I promise them that their words and vote will be here forever and we will remind them of how they voted. Regional government members have a chance to be courageous; they should stand up against the party machine and use the voice that they have been given by their electorates because what I have seen so far in the first 100 days is a distinct unwillingness to take this issue to their electorates and say anything other than the talking points that have been provided by the government.

We have been talking about the breach of trust in the data collected by the SafeWA app, but there is a raft of COVID-19 management issues on which the government has been found wanting. Before we found out about the data breach, we had in this place relentlessly pursued information about the government's plan to shift from an emergency footing to a more sensible approach—not a more sensible approach, but the next phase of the management of the pandemic now that we have moved on from an acute emergency status. We looked to Professor Weeramanthri's report about the issues that emerged with hotel quarantine very early on this year. A number of reports have been done. We knew at that point in time that the government had dragged its feet on implementing some of the initiatives that would have prevented some of the COVID-19 outbreaks, particularly the outbreak that resulted in lockdown on the Anzac Day weekend. There was plenty of evidence in other jurisdictions that we needed to apply certain measures in our hotel quarantine system that were not applied and, as a result, we went into lockdown. Many businesses are still feeling the impact of that and other lockdowns.

Professor Weeramanthri's report made a raft of recommendations—16 recommendations—one of which was a quarantine advisory panel. The whole basis of his report was about shifting from crisis management and joining the different arms of government that were involved in managing the pandemic and hotel quarantine. He made a good point at the back of his report that we should take the next six months—this was written on 12 March 2021—as a window of opportunity to optimise hotel quarantine governance for the period that follows, which may include changes to our emergency management arrangements. That is a safe and sensible approach. That one paragraph in the conclusion of his report goes to the fact that there is recognition within government departments and those who are managing this on a daily basis that we need to think differently about what we do in response to COVID-19 now and in six months, 12 months and the rest of it. I wonder whether that thinking is being done. Certainly, when we asked the Premier and the Minister for Health again and again what the Quarantine Advisory Panel was doing,

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when it was meeting, what it would be charged with, whether it was doing work on finding alternatives to hotel quarantine, whether it was expanding hotel quarantine, whether we were looking at options outside Perth, we were met with a wall of silence. In fact, it was not silence; it was confusion. We could not get an answer from the Premier, we got the wrong answer from the Minister for Health and a different answer in a question on notice.

These are the concerns that we have because these are the promises that the government has made to the people of Western Australia. If we take it at its most genuine, the statement about keeping Western Australians safe and strong relates to the government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic. The next phase has challenged the government to deliver joined thinking and it has far more challenges in terms of risks for the state going forward. The government has got us through the last 12 months, but now what is the plan? I have not seen a plan in the first 100 days. We as an opposition asked for a review. We asked for a review last year—after every major emergency or natural disaster, typically, there is a review of the government response, what the agencies did, who was involved, what happened and whether we could take any learnings forward—because presumably this is not going to be the only time that we are faced with something like this. Our call for a review was rejected outright. There would have been, and still is, great merit in having a review of the management over the last months to inform us—it would need to be open and transparent—how we should move forward in the next six, 12, 24 and 36 months because that is how long we will be living in these new normal circumstances.

I was very interested to read the Paul Murray article on 22 May. I am jumping around a little bit, but the article related to how the pandemic would be managed. At the beginning of the outbreak and when the pandemic took hold, there were discussions behind closed doors with various different government identities about whether it was best to use the powers under the Emergency Management Act 2005 or the powers under the Public Health Act 2016. There was quite a tussle. Paul Murray said that Darren Foster was on one side of the argument—at the time he was the director general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet—and someone else was on the other. As a result, we saw Darren Foster exit stage left. Ultimately, he lost the argument about whether the Emergency Management Act should be used over the Health Act. Questions like that could be dealt with as part of a review or at least as an internal part of what the government is doing going forward. Is it right for us? I asked the Attorney General the other day, during the debate on trying to fix the loophole with the SafeWA app, whether any thought had been given to that. I did not get one straight answer from the Attorney General that night, so I could not say whether it is something the government is contemplating or would contemplate, but I think it is worth a question. The decisions of the government on border closures, what will happen to businesses if we have future lockdowns and the availability of quarantine are relevant to the people of Western Australia; they want to know what will happen because those decisions impact on them every day. The Premier told them they would be kept safe and strong. I want to know how that will happen if we cannot get access to workers because the hotel quarantine system does not have the capacity to allow us to bring those workers in. I want to know how we will keep everyone safe and strong if childcare workers are living in cars or hotels while trying to deliver an essential service because we do not have enough houses. I want to know how we will keep kids safe if we do not have enough people working in child protection and family support to pair with children who have been identified as requiring assistance. I do not know how the community will stay safe and strong if we cannot have answers to questions like that. They are the questions we raise in relation to the first 100 days of this government.

I want to circle back to the SafeWA app, because it still concerns me and I have not got an answer out of this government yet about this. I tried to ask the Minister for Police last week about the G2G PASS that we had to use when there were internal regional borders. It was not a choice. Some of us had essential tasks to carry out. We had to go across borders. We had to provide information to the police. I asked whether the legislation that was debated in the Parliament—I do not know whether it has gone through the Legislative Council yet, but if it has, it will have just recently—covered the issue that we were trying to remedy with the SafeWA app of the data being used by WA police for those purposes and not others. I get asked quite regularly whether I think that is appropriate. I would never want to see the police prevented from solving a murder, but they had tools available to them prior to COVID-19 that allowed them to do that. I understand they did not act unlawfully, and the blame does not lie with them, but the Minister for Police could not even remember that we had an obligation to use the G2G PASS. It was not about whether someone wanted to come in from New South Wales or go on holiday; we were actually forced to use it. Every worker coming from Albany, Geraldton or my electorate who had to go to the airport to fly to the Pilbara to do fly-in fly-out work had to have a G2G PASS, and all of that data was collected. They were not able to do their jobs without it. I have not had any clarity from the Minister for Police about whether the G2G PASS will be captured under the legislation we passed and whether there is the same loophole.

The reason we make that point is that we think the Premier and the government need to be up-front about it. They were very, very clear about what that data would be used for when they introduced the app. The briefing note we have seen as a result of questions in the Legislative Council showed that the government was absolutely nervous about this when it first came to light. The top four talking points, the key messages in that briefing note, were that this would undermine public confidence. My question today to the Minister for Health was about whether the

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government will continue to try to peddle the line to the public that it will keep people safe and strong and that it has not misled them or done anything wrong. It was very pointed. I want to know when the government knew about that. If the Department of Health and the police knew about that prior to the election, why were they not having those regular conversations with the minister and the Premier, as we are told they do on a regular basis?

**MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central)** [4.44 pm]: If anyone has gone to the movies, perhaps not lately, because of COVID-19, they will understand it when I say that the government reminds me of those cardboard cut-outs with the movie titles on them. The title of this government's movie is *Keep Us Safe and Strong*, but if a crowd of kids ran through the theatre and created a whoosh, that cut-out would fall down because there is nothing behind it! That is what we are experiencing here. This cardboard cut-out of a government is saying that it is keeping us safe and strong against COVID, but there is nothing behind it.

There are issues facing the state of Western Australia, and particularly our tourism destinations. There is a need to cater for the massive growth in tourism in regional areas. That growth has happened because no-one can leave the state. They can occasionally, but they fear leaving the state and not being able to come back. There are eastern staters who want to come to Western Australia but they fear not being able to get back to the east coast. Nonetheless, we have huge internal tourism. That is what the government keeps on telling us: the state of Western Australia is booming. Regional communities have needs, such as worker accommodation. The McGowan Labor government has its Wander Out Yonder campaign and says that, thanks to it, tourism has never been so good. Perhaps some members have not gone to these tourism hotspots, of which a few are in my electorate, such as Exmouth, Coral Bay, Shark Bay and Kalbarri. I recently spoke to people in Broome to see what their issues were. Everyone talks about everything being full, but when I talk to the chambers of commerce and tourism industry bodies, they tell me that they are somewhere between 60 per cent and 80 per cent full because there are no hospitality workers, and if they can get workers, there is no accommodation for the workers.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** They are not getting out past the Darling scarp.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The member for Roe is right. I think the Darling scarp separates a lot of members in this chamber who do not understand what is happening in regional WA.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Then, the Minister for Finance criticised the CEO of the Shire of Northampton, who is under a huge amount of stress, with towns that have been decimated by the cyclone. The minister commented, "You must be on the other team. You must be a booth worker for the member for North West Central." I mean, come on, guys! That just shows the lack of understanding and poor form of the Minister for Finance. It just typifies what the McGowan Labor government —

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Madam Acting Speaker.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister, thank you!

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Did he support your campaign?

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The minister would have to ask him; I do not know.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** All I can say is that I support him. It is his cause.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** All I can say is that I supported his cause.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, minister! Member for North West Central, you can continue.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

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**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Not only did the Minister for Finance criticise a hardworking CEO who is under a huge amount of stress because the towns in his shire were affected by the cyclone, but also when the Minister for Tourism went to Kalbarri—he did not inform the local member he was going there, but the people in Kalbarri told me he went there—and businesses told him in a meeting about the issues that were facing their town, he basically turned to them and said, “You must be all yellow and green. You must be all National Party supporters, because that is what the local member has been saying in Parliament.” I think a bit of a threat was made to those people that they had better watch out and be careful about what they say. That is what was reported back to me. When ministers go to electorates and basically bully people into supporting the McGowan Labor government, there is huge concern.

There is the need for worker accommodation to take the pressure off the small businesses. Tourism operators are desperate to have a break. They need people to come and work for them, and, more importantly, they need worker accommodation. Broome, Exmouth, Coral Bay, Shark Bay and Kalbarri are all in desperate need of worker accommodation. Look at the issues and what the government did. It offered cheap flights. The people of the Gascoyne are still waiting for those cheap flights. People in regional Western Australia are still waiting for those cheap flights. It still costs \$1 000 for a return flight to Carnarvon. It still costs \$750 for a return flight to Exmouth. The list goes on. Where are those cheap flights the McGowan Labor government promised? The McGowan government also promised that Kalbarri would have reliable power. Kalbarri is still waiting for reliable power. Even after cyclone Seroja and the power poles have been put up, there is no reliability of power in Kalbarri. The power keeps going on and off and on and off, and that is affecting appliances. The government said that it would fix that. It has not.

The matter of public interest also talks about a wage freeze—a wage freeze that the Premier and the McGowan Labor government applied across the public sector and to members of Parliament. But he failed to put a wage freeze on his parliamentary pension. Four members in this Parliament are on the old parliamentary superannuation scheme, and the Premier is one of them.

**Mr S.A. Millman:** Is that a big issue?

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Yes, it is a big issue. Nurses, police officers and public servants have had their wages frozen. They are under pressure. There is a crisis in the health service because there are not enough nurses, yet the Premier’s parliamentary super scheme is going up and their wages are going down. Shame on Labor! Shame on the McGowan Labor government for not putting a freeze on his generous parliamentary super scheme, which the Premier voted to get rid of in 2001.

*Point of Order*

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The member for North West Central is saying that there is a wage freeze in the public service. That is incorrect. He knows that that is incorrect, so he should not keep misleading the Parliament.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens):** That is not a point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Public servant wage increases have been capped, but the Premier’s super has not been not capped. The now Premier moved that policy in 2000, to get rid of the parliamentary superannuation scheme for all future members of Parliament except himself. Twenty years of benefit—that is what the Premier has. The member for Mount Lawley is right. He has 20 years of benefit. What have our public servants got? There is pressure on the health system. It cannot employ nurses because people do not want to work for wages that have been capped by this government. Look at the advertisements for police. The Western Australia Police Force cannot get police because of that wage cap. Government departments across Western Australia—McGowan Labor government departments—are in crisis. It is all smoke and mirrors. If the public saw what happens in Parliament and heard the spin—because this government is all about spin—they would find that there is no substance to the government. That is why the Premier called a press conference every day for 12 months—to suck oxygen and to sell fear to the people of Western Australia. Over the last four years we have been experiencing a trading halt—a trading halt in building houses, a trading halt in fixing the health system and a trading halt on anything that government needed to do to make sure that the Western Australian state functions. That is the problem that this government has. When it is swimming in a surplus of over \$5 billion, what is happening to the infrastructure and public servants who need support? The people of Western Australia are suffering because of the spin of this government.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.53 pm]:** I rise to support this worthy motion moved by the opposition—a worthy motion that highlights and reflects on what this government has achieved in the last 100 days in office—that this house notes that the McGowan government has created a crisis of confidence and has let down the people of Western Australia. How true that is in the portfolio areas that I represent. How true



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that is particularly in the portfolio of health, in which we have seen a crisis not only over the last 100 days, but also reflected in the first three years of the McGowan Labor government.

There has been an underinvestment in health that has not kept pace with growth but has reflected a lack of management in this important portfolio area and that crisis has been reflected in the tragic death of seven-year-old Aishwarya Aswath. Aishwarya is the human face of this health crisis in Western Australia. I do not intend to go over the events of 3 April, but I will raise her tragic death at our most prominent hospital, a hospital that is meant to support our youth. Aishwarya was not seen and did not receive proper care within a two-hour time frame. This goes to the heart of, and certainly reflects, a health system that is in crisis. That event that evening reflects not only a health system in crisis, but also the McGowan government's failing to handle that event in the days, weeks and months after.

Shortly after, the Minister for Health responded by seeking a briefing and calling a press conference, at which time he stated that the health system was operating magnificently. In the week following that tragedy, the minister stated that it was an exciting time to be part of the health system. How out of touch is this government? The minister has not effectively managed the health system and is just spinning the details. That is all we have seen since that tragic death. It refused to implement an independent inquiry from the get-go and instead pushed forward with a root-cause analysis report, which has since been identified as having holes. That root-cause analysis points to a health system that has not had the attention of the McGowan Labor government. We saw in the root-cause analysis the fact that senior clinicians have repeatedly raised staffing shortage issues that directly and dramatically impact on patient care. There have also been efforts made by this government, the Premier and the Minister for Health to deflect blame and to send junior staff to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, effectively throwing our junior health workers under the bus.

The handling of this tragedy at Perth Children's Hospital, together with other tragedies and significant issues that have not been addressed across the board in our health system, culminated in a protest at Perth Children's Hospital. For the first time, the Australian Nursing Federation and the Australian Medical Association came together with thousands of people to protest. It was the first time in eight years that there has been such a protest, due to not only the government's mishandling of the health system, but also its contempt and disrespect for our health workers. Under this government, they have an impossible task of working in a system that is under-resourced and not getting the support of the health minister. While the health minister is saying that the sector is facing a challenge, everyone else, including the AMA, the nursing federation and many patients and healthcare workers, is calling the situation a crisis. That will be this government's legacy in health.

That is also reflected in what people are calling the canary in the coalmine—that is, ambulance ramping. Our ambulance ramping statistics are damning. The statistics of the McGowan Labor government on ambulance ramping highlight the fact that this government has been unable to transition patient care from St John Ambulance, a not-for-profit organisation that has been doing an outstanding job and working under significant pressure. The government has not been able to effectively see patient care transferred from the ambulance at the emergency department to the hospital. That has amounted to a record number of code yellows, or internal emergencies, in our hospitals. This is something that the Australian Medical Association has said used to happen occasionally—it used to happen once or twice a year. Now it is commonplace.

We are seeing significant levels of bed block. We had a day in the last month when every one of our emergency departments did not have any beds available. That is just in the last month alone. That is at the metropolitan hospitals across our city. What an extraordinary situation we find ourselves in. This is at the beginning of winter, with no influx of flu, and no spread of COVID in the community. This is a government that, as many others on this side, or in this corner of the house, have stated, is drunk on power, is being arrogant and has dropped the ball on the important management of the health portfolio.

We have seen elective surgery suspended for category 2 and 3 patients. We have seen a state like Victoria, which has had COVID in the community, be able to resume elective surgery. The elective surgery list has grown under this government's watch by over 50 per cent. That is an extraordinary figure. These are not just statistics. These are patients who are suffering. I spoke to a patient recently who has been waiting for a hip replacement for over 12 months. The new delays and the new time lines for this important surgery mean that it looks as though she will now need to have surgery on her other hip, on which she had previously had an operation and which has now been impacted by the significant delay.

This is not an uncommon story. We are hearing these stories across the board and daily in *The West Australian*, and obviously also on radio, out in the community, and in our electorate offices. Today, we again had to urgently raise an issue relating to patients who have contacted my office in the seat of Vasse. This is not uncommon; this is becoming more and more commonplace under this government's watch.

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I touched on ambulance ramping. Those figures reflect emergency departments that have a limited capacity to ensure the transfer of patients within a suitable time frame because of bed block, because of staffing shortages, and because the government has been unable to invest in and open up beds. This has led to a situation in which the government has been well above the benchmark that it had called a crisis when in opposition. Earlier this year, in the month of January, there were over 4 000 hours of ambulance ramping. That is over triple the number of hours that we saw under the previous government, when these hours were peaking. This is a fundamental failure of the McGowan Labor government, something that we have been seeing persistently, and last month as well, when there were over 3 800 hours. Labor's first response to these ambulance ramping statistics was to stop reporting them—that was its first response when it came into government. Thankfully, St John Ambulance is providing that data.

We have heard today in the news that the government is now considering an inquiry and report into the operations of St John Ambulance, with consideration for taking over the ambulance service. We would like to see the government invest in the services that St John Ambulance provides. It should be very clear to everyone that if this government cannot handle and cannot manage its hospitals effectively, and cannot support the staff appropriately, why on earth would the Western Australian public expect this government to be able to manage the ambulance service in this state? This is the epitome of shooting the messenger. This is an opportunity for this government to deflect blame, once again. It is another scapegoat for the failings that we have seen under this government's watch. Quite obviously, it is dangerous as well. We know that St John Ambulance is a not-for-profit or charitable organisation. I understand that last year, the Productivity Commission reported on the value for money that St John Ambulance provides in patient outcomes and cost to patients when compared with the ambulance services in other states. We know also that it has an enormous volunteer workforce.

Although we are seeing situations and we are receiving feedback from workers in the health system, we only need to point to South West Health Campus in Bunbury, where there have been significant issues that are now the focus of a WorkSafe investigation. The opposition has also received emails from staff at Fiona Stanley Hospital raising grave concerns about midwives at Fiona Stanley who do not feel supported and who feel the pressure of undertaking double shifts and the pressure to work when they are sick. They have written to the opposition about the panic attacks that they are feeling at work and the pressures of working in an environment in which they have real concerns about the impact of staffing shortages on patient care. All those issues have been well documented and well published for everyone to see. Recently, at Perth Children's Hospital, over 1 000 workers protested to condemn the McGowan government for its failings. I highlight the fact that this is not exactly a government that would attract the same level of support that we see not only in metropolitan Perth, but also across the regions, with St John Ambulance.

I have stated that in the first 100 days of this government, we have seen a record level of code yellows. We have heard the Minister for Health characterise code yellows as "business as usual". They are not. Code yellows are hospitals that are in such a state of crisis that they cannot function properly and have to divert patients. We are in the extraordinary situation in which there is no influx of flu, and no COVID in the community, and the government has a \$5 billion surplus, but we cannot support patients who come into our emergency departments and hospitals. It is a damning statistic. The fact that the government's response to this is to bury the statistics and not make them available is damning as well.

I have asked a question of the Minister for Health in this place about the spin that we have heard from him in comparing emergency department attendances with those from last year during the COVID lockdown, when we had a 15 per cent increase. If we compare that with this time last year, and the year before, 2019, the growth was about 2.5 per cent, which is in line with population growth. The growth in attendances at our emergency departments is on trend and predictable and something that this government should have invested in and should have taken note of. In the portfolios of government, nothing is more important than ensuring a suitable level of care in emergency departments and hospitals to support the vulnerable.

I will touch also on staff leave. We know that this government is not supporting health workers. We have talked about them protesting at Perth Children's Hospital. Almost one-third of the workforce have the equivalent of two years' annual leave owing; that is eight weeks. This is illustrative of healthcare workers who are feeling overworked and burdened and pressured by the situation in which they find themselves under this government's watch in a workplace that should be supporting them.

In the family and domestic violence portfolio, one in six women and one in 16 men experience physical or sexual violence from a current or previous cohabitating partner. Family assault and threatening behaviour offences have increased since 2018–19 by 24 per cent.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms L. METTAM:** Additionally, sexual offences increased by 22 per cent in the first term of the McGowan Labor government. As a result of the health crisis and the lack of transitional housing, those who would like to leave the refuges that are housing them are staying up to three times longer than would ordinarily be anticipated. That is

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certainly the feedback we have had from the South West Women's Refuge. It is creating a situation whereby women are turning down or avoiding violence restraining orders. This is a dangerous situation. Domestic violence survivors are also left homeless due to a lack of social housing. This has created a dangerous environment and it deserves the attention of government. The average number of days that women spend in a shelter is tripling. We have heard a number of concerns across the community about how this is reflected in the family and domestic violence space. In some regional areas—I understand Broome is one example—staff find it difficult to maintain their roles as managers of refuges because they are unable to obtain accommodation. This obviously speaks to a system that is under extraordinary pressure—a system that is unable to support our very vulnerable.

The other area that is reflective of where the government has failed is mental health. I presented a grievance recently in Parliament that was specifically on the issues around eating disorders. What we are dealing with has quite obviously been the pointy end resulting from a lack of early intervention in this space. We know that the government's investment in community mental health is proportionally below the national average. That has presented as not only a record number of eating disorder cases, but also a lack of investment in early intervention to ensure that our youth and children do not have to present themselves at emergency departments.

We had an extraordinary situation recently. A father came to me just last week whose daughter was police-escorted from Perth Children's Hospital to Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital because she turned 16 on 31 May. What a poor standard of care this government is managing in this state when a child, just days after turning 16, is escorted to another hospital. What is worse is that a child in such a distressed state, who was effectively starving herself to death, had to spend a couple of nights in the busy emergency department at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital while the staff tried to manage and support her. That is a tragic situation. It points to a system that is under pressure. It also points to a system that is under-resourced. It is disappointing that it takes a ministerial approach for the government to act in this area. Unfortunately, time and again that is what members on this side of the house are resorting to when we try to support these individuals. Eating disorders is one condition that highlights this issue very well because it can be addressed with early intervention, but is also the deadliest of mental health cases. We have seen more than an 86 per cent increase in mental health presentations at Perth Children's Hospital for eating disorders. With just eight beds and little movement on a \$31 million investment in a hub at Perth Children's Hospital, it remains the case: what other support is offered there and what other support is there in the community?

As a regional local member I am often frustrated by the level of support at our schools as well. Chaplains and school nurses often raise their concerns. I caught up with a group of chaplains last week who raised the concern that there is nowhere else to go for help in the local community. They are overwhelmed by students who they see on a range of matters related to mental illness and they are frustrated and concerned for the youth in our community. Countless reports have been done into this need but we are not seeing a level of investment that illustrates that this is a priority of government. That underlines why this opposition notes that in the first 100 days of the McGowan Labor government, it has created a crisis of confidence and it has let down the people of Western Australia.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [5.18 pm]: I rise to support the motion of the member for Moore that this house condemns the Western Australian Labor government for its failure to deal with critical issues facing the state in its first 100 days of government, despite an absolute majority and a record \$5 billion government surplus. I agree with the member for Moore who said that if the government were in a classroom, it would be considered a fail. I would call it about three and a half to four out of 10, but perhaps the member for Moore would be slightly more generous.

We are now coming into the second four-year term of the McGowan Labor government, so we have already seen the initial four years. Now we have seen its first 100 days of its second term and scrutiny is increasing. This is where I think the government will be caught short. The Premier has his 52 other members in the chamber who all have their agenda. They also have their ambitions and aspirations. I have a concern that the undermining will start. We saw a display of the Premier's autocratic approach today. I think this autocratic approach will catch up with not only the Premier's own members, but also the public of Western Australia. The Premier has a great knack of deflecting and dismissing those views of members opposite, but his promise of gold-standard transparency before the election of 2017 has well and truly fallen short.

We have seen what has happened with the ministry and the caucus. For those who get onboard, those who do not oppose the Premier, everything is great. But we have seen some good-quality members and ministers moved to the sidelines. Hon Kate Doust in the other house was doing an excellent job as President of the Legislative Council, but no, she has been moved on. We have not seen some members here for a little while or we have seen very little of some members. I refer, as I have done previously, to the excellent former Minister for Housing.

**Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski:** He was here today.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** He is around, but I was very disappointed to see him moved on after doing an excellent job. I have spoken about the member for Kalamunda before. He was the subject of discussions today. Even though he sits up the back, somehow he was promoted to Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime

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Commission. Member for Cottesloe, I am still scratching my head about that one. The sequence of events is demonstrating that if members do not play the Premier's game and just roll in and agree with him—see you later! You are out the door. Even the Auditor General acknowledged in the *Transparency report: Major projects* in October 2020 —

Despite the significant investment in Western Australia of public money in major projects, Parliament and the public cannot easily access information on their progress.

We have a real problem with transparency. I cannot see what is going on with many of these large projects except that the budget is increasing. The Minister for Transport was very proudly talking about how Metronet is progressing and the like, but I would love to see some more numbers. I would love to know what the actual budget is. It seems to be climbing. As the Auditor General said —

... none of the 15 projects publicly report cost and time progress on a regular basis.

To me, that is a real issue. That is an issue of transparency.

I would like to move on to education. I think that is a real emphasis for me. As shadow minister, I am concerned about several issues in education. I think one was identified last weekend in an article by Bethany Hiatt in *The West Australian*. It stated that we have 60 per cent fewer teaching postgraduates since 2017, and a real issue with relief teachers. Part of the reason is that relief teachers are now being offered casual and even full-time employment because of our lack of numbers in the teaching department. When I asked the Premier a question about this matter the other day, he spoke about the economic boom and said we are a growth state. I do not recall a massive number of teachers coming in from overseas. Our issue is that we lack teachers in WA and in the production line, if you like, to bring enough teachers through the ranks. I am sure part of this is due to the wage freeze that the member for North West Central spoke about and the \$1 000 cap. There is no incentive for people to move into these areas. Teaching is a fantastic profession. We all recognise how important it is to our community and how important it is to our families and our students. I am very worried about the pattern that seems to be developing whereby we are getting teacher shortages. The Department of Education even admitted the other day that it is looking at putting training teachers who are still students into the workforce and paying them some sort of wage under supervision. That concerns me because although they are being supervised, that would take another teacher out of action to supervise them. I am curious to see how that plan progresses, but that is a concern to me.

I think the culture in some of our schools is becoming a worry. We saw the other day, Perth Modern School staff demanded the director general to release the results of a survey into workplace culture that was conducted eight months ago. That letter was signed by nine branch leaders on behalf of 72 union members at that school. So there are culture concerns in certain schools such as that. I would love to know what is going on there.

I want to recognise how important leadership is in all our schools. We have roughly 870 public schools in the state and, of course, many in the Catholic and independent system, and we cannot recognise enough the importance of leadership in those schools. I have certainly seen it in my electorate. There are 52 schools in my electorate and it is incredible how when there is good leadership, I do not hear a peep. I do not hear anything from the staff or the families. Everything just runs smoothly. But as soon as there is an issue, they are on the phone. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of recognising our good-quality leaders. I certainly think the director general has, in general, done a pretty good job of recognising our good-quality leaders, but the government needs to make sure that it keeps emphasising that as an important part of our education system. I look at somewhere such as Narrogin Senior High School, which has had five acting principals over the past five years. The community starts to get restless, because it would like solid leadership and continuity. The Department of Education needs to work on that. We find a merry-go-round in a lot of our schools, whereby a teacher is holding a substantive position from five years ago, which means someone next to that cannot have their substantive position and someone else gets moved on. There is a big merry-go-round of scenarios there. That is a concern to me in education.

I am glad the Minister for Transport is here; I do not know what is causing it, but I seem to have a multitude of orange school bus issues that have arisen over the last couple of months. I look forward to having a discussion with the transport minister on this because a couple of weeks ago I was at Munglinup, standing in front of a public meeting with 100 parents, community members, bus drivers and family members, trying to defend school bus services because we could not seem to get anyone there at the time. I was actually trying to defend their policies, which go back to 1989 and are outdated. I think we need a change. We need to move into the twenty-first century. I do not blame the people in school bus services because they have a policy and sometimes there has to be a line in the sand; they have to draw the line somewhere, but at different times, common sense also has to prevail.

We have a situation in Munglinup in which a family had their young child on a school bus. The mother is a nurse in Ravensthorpe, a nearby community. All of a sudden, the other student or two students on that bus left, so it was, "Sorry, you can't go to that school anymore. You've got to move on to another school that you're not even part of, because you're a couple of kilometres away on the wrong side of this imaginary line that we've drawn in the sand."

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We need some common sense on some of these decisions. The way it is going at the moment, the mother of that child will now have to take her son to another bus stop or drive him to school every day, but then she will not be able to work as a nurse in Ravensthorpe, where there are only two nurses. This is the flow-on effect for the community of Ravensthorpe. All I am asking for is common sense. School bus services should not be deciding where families send their children to school. That is an education decision for families, their kids and their communities.

That is certainly an issue for me. We have another one in Darkan at the moment. There are families there in the middle of an area where there are three district high schools, along with Collie Senior High School. They are being told that they cannot go from Darkan Primary School over to Collie Senior High School; they have to go to a district high school in between for three or four years and then go on to Collie. They just want continuity. If they live 500 metres further out, on the wrong side of Darkan, we cannot seem to solve that issue. Once again, school bus policy is dictating where those families send their kids to school. That is something I am really worried about and it seems to be cropping up more and more. As I said, I understand where the policy officers are coming from. They have to implement the policy that they have been left with, but I think we need to work towards a more commonsense solution in a lot of these cases.

Further to my education concerns, I turn to the issue of school attendance data. I refer to a question on notice asked by Hon Neil Thomson from the other place on 27 May. He asked about attendance rates for schools in Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Wyndham, Derby and Kununurra. Since 2016 there has been a reduction in attendance in nearly all year levels. The excuse that was given was that there had been a particularly severe flu season in 2019, and COVID-19 in 2020. Well, that does not cut it for me. This government needs to work harder to find out what the problem is and why these attendance rates are trending down.

While I am talking about schools, I am very concerned about the government's lopsided approach to some of our regional senior high schools that were built in the 1960s. I spoke briefly last week about the Esperance Senior High School. Those buildings were built back in the 1960s and are dark and dingy. The students and staff there are doing a fantastic job, and they have great ATAR results, but as I mentioned last week, there are schools in the member for Baldivis' electorate on which \$30 million is being spent on performing arts centres. I would love the member to come and have a look at the performing arts centre at Esperance Senior High School. It is a very small room where there is barely room to move; it is just like half a classroom. It is a disgrace. It is quite upsetting to me when I see the government's lopsided approach. It has committed \$1.5 million to the upgrading of science, technology, engineering and mathematics classrooms, but I do not believe that money should be spent on that; it should be spent on removing all the classrooms through the middle of the school and providing good quality infrastructure in classrooms for those students. We have more than 1 100 students at Esperance Senior High School, and we really need to look hard at what we can do there. We need a more targeted approach to schools that have 1960s infrastructure. I guess I am asking for a bit of equity, as much as anything.

**Mr S.A. Millman:** Not when it comes to votes! One vote, one value?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I am very pleased that the member actually brought up one vote, one value.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** When the member for Mount Lawley talks about equity, what is he going to say to the remote Indigenous communities out there who will no longer have any representation? Can he look me straight in the eye and tell me, when all the Labor Party members move their offices up here, close to Parliament House, who is going to go out and look after those remote Indigenous communities? There are 36 members in the upper house —

Several members interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I am sure the member for Kimberley will do her best, but there are many more remote communities than in her electorate. My electorate is 5 912 times the size of the member for Mount Lawley's. What is he going to say to the people of Western Australia when there is no-one out there from the upper house to get out there into those areas and service those communities? I can absolutely guarantee one thing: the member for Mount Lawley will not be straying further than the Darling Scarp! He will not be out there servicing those electorates. It is all very well and good for the Attorney General to talk about his independent committee. Malcolm McCusker is very independent and very well respected, but we have three other independent committee members who published their opinions on this before they even got onto the committee, as well as having worked for members of the Labor Party—if you don't mind!—going right back to 1983. It is scandalous; those are supposedly independent people. We talk about equity and equality; as far as I am concerned, it is about equity of representation and the fact that 70 per cent of the state's income comes from the regional areas of WA. It is about equity in representing the smaller Indigenous and regional communities that do not have equitable access. They cannot go down the road to the member for Mount Lawley's office after a three-minute drive and say, "Look, member for Mount Lawley: can you help me out?" Some of them are 1 500 kilometres away from their nearest electorate office. That is the real issue for

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me. I honestly cannot see how, in this day and age, there is any equity of representation in what the Attorney General and Premier have put on the agenda.

**Mr D.R. Michael:** What a lot of rubbish!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** If the member does not mind, it was not on the Premier's agenda. He was asked five times by Dan Mercer in Albany prior to the election. He said it was not on his agenda, and then, lo and behold, what happened? One day after Parliament began, they put out a press release about an independent ministerial expert committee—that is not bad! They did not even wait for two or three weeks, member for Moore. One day after the opening of Parliament, in they came. It was a very disappointing performance. The voters of the Western Australia will eventually wake up to it—do not worry about that. As the member for Vasse said, these things are all adding up. We had not seen much in the papers about the public health system; the silence was deafening. But funnily enough, after 13 March, all hell broke loose. I do not know what happened there. I do not know why it was not reported in *The West Australian*. I do not know what was going on, but it certainly is being reported on now.

The people of WA are getting voter regret. They can see what is happening. They can see the ambulance ramping numbers. Now St John Ambulance is being targeted by this committee. These are the sorts of things being done to intercept any issues. The Minister for Health must be thinking what is he going to do now to sidetrack the WA public from seeing what is going on with ambulance ramping and the like. They will wake up to it—do not worry about that—because, as the member for Vasse said, they are the people who need a hip or a knee operation. Category 2 and 3 surgeries were put off to the side last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As I said previously, many of the hospitals barely had anyone in them during 2020. I think there was a level of complacency, and now we are seeing the result: 10 000 elective surgeries were put on hold, and now the tally for the elective surgery waitlist has gone up from 29 000 to 39 000. The public of WA is waking up to it. I have real issues with the way that the Premier and the health minister are leading this issue. I have issues with the fact that the Premier had to pick up the treasury portfolio. Supposedly no-one else within the government was capable enough to pick up that portfolio. That is another issue that the public of WA are really worried about.

The other thing that I briefly want to talk about is the unions. The unions that helped this McGowan government to win the election are starting to lose their patience. I predict that after the winter break, the rallies will begin on the steps of Parliament House. The teachers, the nurses and the police are not satisfied. They have done the right thing. They have had the lid put on them at \$1 000 a year, but those nurses have been working harder than they have ever worked before and they deserve some reward for the work that they have done and the work that they continue to do. I could go on for much longer.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [5.43 pm]: I rise to join this debate. What a failure the first 100 days of this government have been. Most of the ministers in this government are in their substantive roles from the last Parliament. They have their 12 or so electorate staff in their offices and they have their legislative programs, such as they were. I might say that the Attorney General is certainly batting above the average in terms of the bills presented. Nevertheless, all their ministerial offices have been ready to go, but what have we seen in the first 100 days? Talk about voter regret. To say it has been a disappointing performance by the government is a considerable understatement. The disheartening thing is that the real issues are not receiving the focus that they should receive. We heard that people in Western Australia were going to be kept safe and strong. We were going to have safe and strong government in this state. Yet, no sooner had the government been elected, we heard about a mum with four kids living out of a tent in East Perth because she could not get any accommodation and she did not feel safe. She felt really unsafe. Pregnant mums about to have a baby were living in the same area. We now hear that Red Cross has been buying people cars, or at least paying for people's car registration so that they have a registered car to live in. That is a major charitable organisation and the only solution that it can sustain is to actually buy registrations for cars so that families—parents with children—have somewhere to sleep. I find that incomprehensible, and those people do not feel safe and I bet they do not feel strong. I bet they feel pretty beaten down and battered. We also hear of people with jobs in that position. It is just a disappointment. That is a considerable understatement in terms of the performance of this government or the meaningful action it has taken because we have not got to this position by chance. The COVID-19 pandemic has been around since about February last year when it became a significant issue in this state. We have had four years of this government, and we are heading into the fifth, so this government has had plenty of time to foresee the issues coming.

The member for Vasse asked a question of the Minister for Health yesterday and we heard him quote statistics around emergency department presentations saying that they are up 20 per cent or something like that from last year. Last year, we were in the middle of the COVID pandemic and the whole state was locked down. We did not have flu cases and elective surgery and the like was cancelled, but as the member for Vasse pointed out, if we go back past that period to 2019, the number of ED presentations now are up by only about two and a half per cent. All we have seen is normal organic growth in ED presentations over the last two years and this government simply has not maintained hospital resources to match that requirement. It is interesting to note that I heard the Premier today, in response to our

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matter of public interest, talking about a mandate. He had a mandate. We all know the truth of the election. I was out there campaigning and I can tell members, I took my seat seriously and that was reflected. I had a swing against me, but it was half the swing of the nearest swing of another member. The reason for that is that I take my seat seriously, and I take it seriously now. I spend my time out in the electorate and I speak to people.

**Mr P. Papalia:** You had the lowest margin Cottesloe has had since probably Federation.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I do not think that is actually true, but I am happy to debate that later, Minister for Police. We could perhaps have a red wine on Thursday and he can tell me all about it. I am always happy to learn. As I have said in this place, if there is one thing that members will find out about me, it is that I may express my views strongly but I am very happy to learn, and I appreciate it when I do. That is part of growing.

We heard about a mandate. There was only one mandate in this election: a mandate for handling COVID—that was it! I spent two and a half weeks at the pre-polling booths listening to what the people had to say. There was a mature gentleman at one booth whom, I take it, from the way that he spoke and was dressed, had had an opportunity for education. Nevertheless, he was a mature gentleman who must have voted in a number of elections. He literally stormed out of a polling booth with some harsh words to the electorate officers staffing that booth because he could not find Mark McGowan’s name on the ballot paper to vote for him. I was not told that story. This was not an isolated example. This happened in my electorate. I had dozens and dozens of people saying that they could not find Mark McGowan’s name on the ballot paper. I recognise that it would be called a historic triumph for any party. In fact, in this case, the Premier can duly take the credit; it was a historic triumph in recognition of and support for the way he handled the COVID-19 pandemic. I have been quite open in this place by saying that. It is quite stunning to conflate that as a mandate for every government policy. There is no mandate; the mandate is the government’s handling of the COVID-19 pandemic—that is it. The government has a mandate to keep handling the COVID-19 pandemic and, as we on this side of the house have said, we have supported, and will continue to support, the government’s strategy to follow the advice of the Chief Health Officer.

I turn to the issues that are really hurting people in Western Australia, which all have the same morphology of the government not doing anything sufficient or significant in these areas over the last four years. We have asked questions about social housing in the Legislative Assembly. Social housing stock decreased from 44 087 houses in June 2017 to 42 715 houses in May this year. Those numbers were provided in answer to a question asked in the Legislative Assembly of the Minister for Housing. That is a phenomenal decrease in the number of public houses over four years. It is no wonder we see people living in their cars. Imagine that; I cannot comprehend how it must have been for families, people with kids, living in their cars over the last couple of nights. I have occasionally slept in a car and I do not find it very comfortable, but they are sleeping in their car every night. They have nowhere to cook food, so they have to get takeaway. When it gets dark, they have to find a place that is safe, a place where their car will not be broken into and where they will not feel threatened. As they put their kids to bed, they quieten them by saying, “Don’t worry, darling. It’s okay. We’ll be all right. Things will be better in the future”, but they know that the next night, the night after that and the night after that are going to be the same because this government has not stayed on top of the housing issue. Members in this place know that I call it as I see it. The new Minister for Housing is a compassionate person who is working hard to fix this issue. I feel sorry for him because he has been given a suicide pass. The government has done nothing for four years and now this minister is desperately scrambling to fix the issues. Between 2 000 and 3 000 people are out on the streets because of the inaction of this Labor government. I do not think that is something to be proud of.

It was interesting last night; we had a spirited debate but there was arrogance and mocking. We hear all the comments from across the chamber, “You in the corner”, “You’re a joke” and “You’re this” and “You’re that.” Some of that energy and hubris should go into fixing the substantive problems facing the state of Western Australia. We can compare that with the record of the previous Liberal–National government. I have heard the Minister for Mines and Petroleum and others offer lots of comparisons between this government and the previous Liberal–National government. During the six-year period between 2010 and 2016, the Liberal–National government increased the number of social houses by 6 000 properties. If the government matched that, there would be 12 000 to 15 000 fewer people out on the streets or in tents in backyards because they have been unable to get housing. The government has simply failed in that area. It is a fundamental failure of this government.

As was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, it is not a metropolitan Perth problem. Since the new Parliament began, I have had two trips. I spent a night in Kununurra and then a night in Halls Creek, where I got my AstraZeneca jab. I went to Fitzroy Crossing and caught up with some people from one of the major Aboriginal corporations in town to have a discussion. I then went to Broome where I spoke to some community groups. I spent last Friday and Saturday in the south west. I visited Mt Barker and Albany and the next day I went to Manjimup and Donnybrook. I was told that there is no available housing in any of the towns that I visited, which is a major constraint. There is an intrinsic link between the availability of rental accommodation and the ability to get employees into communities. If we want workers to go somewhere, we have to have somewhere to house them. Kununurra cannot bring in

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workers because there is no rental accommodation. Of course, as the member for Kimberley knows, no-one goes to a town and buys a house on their first day; they want to rent. Once they get used to a town and like a community, they may decide to live there, and many often do. I have heard stories of people who went to a town to work for two or three months but ended up living there for 20 years. There is no housing in any of those communities and it is literally the same right across the state. Those are the stories we get back.

I turn to education. As I said, the morphology of all the issues that we have discussed today is the same. The canary is in the cage with education, as *The West Australian* reported on Saturday in an article headed “WA relief teacher shortage: State School Teachers Union warns shortage putting extra stress on teachers”. The article states —

A Statewide shortage of relief teachers is “the canary in the coal mine” for schools, the teachers’ union has warned.

Public schools across WA are battling to find enough relief teachers to cover staff who are sick or on leave, with one primary school principal lamenting in a social media post they were like “liquid gold”.

State School Teachers Union president Pat Byrne said the scarcity of relief teachers was the canary in the coal mine providing an early warning of looming teacher shortages, with fewer graduates available and no access to overseas recruits.

It comes as *The West Australian* can reveal the number of WA university graduates opting to study a postgraduate teaching degree has more than halved in the past four years.

It might not be lost on members opposite that that corresponds precisely with the term of the McGowan Labor government. This is not due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not an exotic thing. It is not due to a lack of people coming from overseas. This is about graduates at our universities choosing to do teaching. Clearly, the government has not done enough to make teaching attractive to those people. The article continues —

“We’re talking here from Albany to Kununurra, and we’re talking primary and secondary,” ...

Let us look at the numbers. The article states —

Education Department figures show just 479 teachers finished a postgraduate teaching qualification in WA last year—a 60 per cent drop from the 1209 who qualified in 2017, before the one-year graduate diploma was extended to a two-year masters degree.

That is a decline of 730 teachers finishing a postgraduate teaching qualification. The number of WA students who completed a four-year undergraduate teaching degree increased slightly by 15 per cent, from 935 in 2017 to 1 071 last year. That is an increase of 136. The net difference is 594.

Members on the other side take credit for things by happenstance. The iron ore price went from \$US40 a tonne under the previous Liberal–National government to more than \$US200 a tonne under this government, but that translates into outstanding fiscal management by the McGowan government. The government has had a fivefold increase in iron ore royalties due to its outstanding fiscal management, but the massive reduction in the number of schoolteachers—I am waiting to hear something from the member for Mount Lawley; I saw him writing some vigorous notes—is the fault of someone else. Despite having the Department of Education, the Minister for Education and Training and the potential to interact with all the tertiary institutions, and having seen the trend over years, it has done nothing effective about that issue.

There is the same morphology with teachers as there is with housing. The government has done nothing over the past four years to effectively deal with the housing issue; in fact, it compounded the issue with a substantial net sale of public housing—more than 1 000 homes sold—without replacing that housing stock, and now we see the same in teaching with not enough teachers being trained. The government is either not looking at this issue or is ignoring it. If it is aware of the issue, it has done nothing effective about it.

It is funny how history repeats itself. Some members opposite like to go into the past, look at things and dig them out. I happened to be looking at an article from *The West Australian* in 2007. Who was the Minister for Education and Training in 2007? The now Premier of this state. Look at the headline: “State to be short of 600 teachers in 2008: Union”. The article states —

WA is facing a shortfall of 600 teachers ...

The State School Teachers Union president Mike Keely said teachers were becoming more despondent, with many considering early retirement to take advantage of superannuation changes ...

Union vice-president Anne Gisborne said the crisis had been made worse because teachers would not get a pay rise until 2009 under the current offer, which the union has rejected.



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Isn't it interesting, members, how history repeats itself? A government fixing wages, with minimum pay rises for teachers, is not keeping its eye on the ball, and this state is facing a massive teacher shortage.

[Member's time extended.]

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The article continues —

The 2007 school year started with a shortage of 264 teachers.

Deja vu! The then Minister for Education, now Premier, had exactly the same outcome that we face today, with the real prospect of kids turning up to their classrooms at the start of the school year without a teacher. That happened under Labor but never happened under the Barnett Liberal government. That is what we face under this government. We know that the canary in the coal mine is the stress on relief teachers. Relief teachers are worn out.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Can I ask you a question? Are you saying there are fewer teachers than there were before?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I would prefer if the minister asked questions at the end.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Minister, I am not seeking questions or interjections. I have too much to cover.

We know that there are not enough teachers in this state and relief teachers are filling the gap. We have heard a lot about people coming home because of COVID. Under the Barnett Liberal government, every single child in every single classroom had a teacher at the start of the year. Over the eight years of that government, the population of Western Australia increased by 500 000 people, as much as and more every year than has happened with people coming back under COVID. Members opposite should not talk to me about how COVID has made some big difference and COVID is the reason for expatriates returning home. Under the Barnett Liberal government that happened every single year, year on year. Every single child had a teacher in their classroom every single year. Why? It is because the Liberal–National government made massive investments in new schools that the Premier himself, both in his guise as Premier and the then Minister for Education and Training, is now responsible for. He is responsible for over 118 new schools in this state. What has the Labor government done? It has basked in the glory of opening schools that commenced under the Liberal government, but it simply has not done enough on the topic of teachers. It is exactly the same morphology as the crisis in health, as the shadow Minister for Health pointed out very eloquently.

The government boasts about education and the great job it has done with education and training fees. As I pointed out in this place a little while ago, under this government, apprenticeships have more than halved. This is the government of education that has not given a pay rise to the teachers. Under the Barnett Liberal government, teachers in Western Australia were the best paid in Australia. Nurses in Western Australia were the best paid in Australia under the Barnett Liberal government. As I pointed out before, it is a morphology of the Labor Party. Goodness knows why the teachers' union or the nurses' union seem to support the Labor Party, because every time Labor is in power it cuts their wages and puts them under enormous stress because it does not stay on top of employing and training enough people to get them to their positions.

Look at Metronet. What an absolute debacle. We hear about Metronet being a signature project for this government. I am relying on the excellent memory of the former shadow Minister for Transport: has a metre of rail track been laid for the Metronet project yet as far as she is aware?

**Ms L. Mettam:** Not under their projects.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** No, there has not been under the government's projects. The Forrestfield–Airport Link, which was commenced before Labor came into government, has continued, but as far as I am aware, not a metre of track has been laid. I tell members what, though: gosh, there must have been some documents laid; there must be some plans out there somewhere. I thought the figure was \$1.954 billion, but here I read \$2.954 billion; I do not know whether it is a typo or not, but it is pretty immaterial. We heard in the last budget that the figure would be \$7 billion for Metronet. Again, we on this side get lectured about fiscal responsibility, but this is the single largest cost blowout in any capital project that a Western Australian government has undertaken in the history of Western Australia. This is the fiscal management of this government—the single largest cost blowout in a capital project in the history of the state and the government has not even laid a metre of track yet.

I wait with bated breath to see what will happen in the future, because I have been talking to a few industry people about this, and they tell me that there is substantial inflation on all construction costs because of the pump priming by the federal government with construction around Australia, but also because of the state government pumping extra money into housing, which it likes to boast about. I am told that costs are escalating dramatically. Some time ago, the member for North West Central predicted a \$10 billion cost for this project, and, as I said, Treasury should hire him, because it looks like he is going to be correct.

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The state government was going to be fiscally prudent. It was going to reduce the number of public servants, so it spent \$300 million, which is not an insubstantial sum. I tell members what, that \$300 million that was spent on those redundancies could go a jolly long way to helping those poor people, those little kids, who are freezing tonight in tents or cars all around Perth and, in fact, all over Western Australia, even if they were just given a donga to live in—something simple; nothing fancy. They do not want anything fancy; they just want to feel safe. They just want something they can lock at night to feel safe in without worrying that someone can see them through the windows of their cars. What happened with that \$300 million that was spent to get rid of 3 000 public servants? The government spent the \$300 million and public service numbers have gone up by 7 000. We get into the spin on the other side on this topic. Public servant numbers have gone up by 7 000, and what do we hear from the other side of the house—from the government? It says it is because of the extra police and nurses it has employed. Have members on this side heard of any number that even approaches 7 000? It is not even close. They add up to a small fraction of that 7 000. That number of 7 000 public servants shows a complete lack of financial discipline in various government departments. It is not because we have extra police and nurses, although the government has committed to some extra police and nurses. It will be interesting to see whether the government can actually get them. It has not got them yet, but the numbers have already gone up by 7 000.

**Mr S.A. Millman** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Does the member know what? If that number had gone up to 7 000 because the government had employed that many teachers, police and nurses, I would not be talking about it now. That simply has not happened. Those plans for 2 000 new workers are all in the future, but we have seen the public service go up by 7 000 despite the fact that the government spent \$300 million.

I turn to the outer harbour. We had an interesting debate about the outer harbour last night in this chamber. It is absolute environmental vandalism and hypocrisy. The member for Fremantle was greatly concerned, and I am sure she was genuine, that two Norfolk Island pine trees had been removed in preparation for that project. What did the state government do? As a way of saying that it was doing something about traffic congestion on South Street and Leach Highway, it put a roundabout on the corner of High Street and Stirling Highway. It destroyed—for those members opposite who were passionate about this last night—70 mature tuart trees. I remember those trees vividly. I remember them as much as anything else because a number of people that the member for Willagee named in the committees last night had tied themselves to those trees and were saying that those trees would never be removed and that they would never move. It seems that all the government had to do was to offer them some improved accommodation somewhere else and, boy, did they move. They moved aside without a whimper. The member for Willagee named 80 environmental groups last night and I believe that not a single one of them—not one—said a single word about 70 beautiful mature tuart trees being removed. Members know those trees. They were old trees with numerous nesting sites for Carnaby's black-cockatoo and the like in them. They were sacrificed for a tiny sliver of land in the Beeliar wetland. We heard that in the discussion last night. I listened to the member for Willagee. I never knew that he was so passionate about these things. Apparently Roe Highway was going through the middle of 19 wetlands. That is fascinating because they were not the plans that I saw, member for North West Central. In fact, I went to the area and saw a highly degraded hill between two wetlands. I heard passionate discussion about wetlands, peat bogs and the like. I agree; I love that area, but the only thing is that the road was not proposed to go through any of those areas.

What have we seen? The government has committed to spend \$5 million. As I said, based on the arithmetic of the Minister for Planning so far, let us say it is \$20 million. What does the member for North West Central reckon? Let us say that it is \$20 million because that is what it is going to be. We know that the existing port is at less than one-third capacity.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** You don't know what you are talking about.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** After the Minister for Mines and Petroleum's exercise on costing, my faith in him has diminished. I still think he is a very decent person.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I still think he is a hardworking minister, but I am not confident about his opinions.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** It is environmental hypocrisy.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Acting Speaker?

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**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife):** Minister for Mines and Petroleum! I will say, though, Leader of the Liberal Party, you are inviting interjections, which is also disorderly.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I am not.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** If you could bring yourself —

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Thank you, Acting Speaker; I am grateful for your protection.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Leader of the Liberal Party, I will conclude! You have another couple of minutes on the clock. You should, I hope, finish those comments in silence, but I make the point that inviting interjections is disorderly. I also make the point to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum that making interjections is disorderly.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. That is very timely.

The member for Cockburn pointed out that Cockburn Sound is an enormously sensitive marine environment and is enormously important as a mussel fishery, and for pink snapper breeding, blue manna crabs and other fish species. What is going to happen? This project that the environmental warriors on the other side of the house are promoting—400 hectares of seagrass—is benthic primary producer habitat. It is not just general C4 disturbance but primary producer habitat. It is much more extensive than that in the harbour. That is what members opposite are promoting in that pyrrhic project.

In the last minute I will come to the important topic of economic diversification and Asian engagement. What a complete disappointment. I can tell members that the Asian consular community is utterly outraged, utterly disgusted and feels utterly betrayed by the changes made to the overseas trade offices. Imagine India, our most important future economy —

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Police!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** India is the most important economy for the long-term future market diversification of this state and what has this government done? This government has the Agent General flying in and out of Dubai.

**MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka) [6.14 pm]:** I rise to speak against this motion. I am not the lead speaker, but there are many comments that I wish to make on this motion before the house. We heard a lot of wideranging debate from those members in the corner. They canvassed a wide range of issues in their comments here this evening. In preparing my comments for this evening, I spent a long time thinking about the many achievements of the WA Labor government in its first 100 days and, indeed, in its first term in office because it is impossible to separate the achievements of the last 100 days from the good work that this government has done since it was elected in 2017.

I also reflected very much on the fact that the people of Western Australia have clearly also spent some time weighing up the work that the McGowan government has done in its first term. They overwhelmingly and historically endorsed that work by electing to this Parliament the largest majority of any state Parliament for a progressive Labor government. Therefore, I am somewhat surprised that those members in the corner have proposed a resolution that in fact invites a reflection on the many achievements of the McGowan Labor government because there are many things that members could talk about this evening. I will try to constrain myself to just a few things that are important to me.

As I said, there are many things that members could reflect on. I feel somewhat spoiled for choice, but I want to talk about things that are perhaps most important to me. I will see how we go from there. I want to speak about education. We have heard from members in the corner a couple of discussions about education. I have to say that I was somewhat surprised listening to the member for Cottesloe talk about the achievements of the Barnett government in education. It made me somewhat nostalgic. I spent some time reflecting on my memories of the Barnett government's track record on education. I recall one of the biggest union rallies this state has ever held to protest the severe and deep cuts that the Barnett government inflicted on the education system in this state. There were 20 000 people who walked up to Parliament House—not just teachers, but also education assistants, parents and many other people. They came out that day to protest those deep cuts. In fact, people protested right around the state. One of my favourite recollections from that event was the union rally that was held on Christmas Island. Members came out and held their own rally because they were so aggrieved by the cuts that the Barnett government had made to education.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Ms M.J. HAMMAT:** Do not interject, member for Cottesloe. I made not one comment while the member for Cottesloe was speaking, so I will not take interjections from him. I am just enjoying the memories of the great solidarity that those education cuts brought to the union movement. I was surprised to hear about the member for Cottesloe's reflections in that regard, to be honest.

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I am very passionate about education. I told many people in my electorate that I intend to be an enthusiastic supporter of and advocate for the schools in my area because I think that schools are fundamental to transforming the lives of young people in all areas in Western Australia, but particularly in my electorate. One of the things I am very excited to be able to talk about this evening is the fact that the small election commitments that I secured for the schools in my electorate—I secured a number for the schools in my electorate—have already been delivered. When we are talking about the achievements of the McGowan government in its first 100 days, it is very gratifying to report to the house that in less than 100 days, those small commitments that I made to a range of schools in my electorate have already been delivered. I know that other members in this place, many of whom also made significant election commitments to schools in their electorates, can also say the same thing.

Members, this is a fantastic achievement. Those election commitments, although they may be small, in my view are significant for the support and assistance that they will provide to our school communities. In the last few weeks, when I have not been in this place, I have spent quite a bit of time visiting schools in my electorate and speaking with principals and teachers about the issues that are important to them.

One of the things that I have heard a lot about is the fact that there is an increasing need to recognise that students must be able to operate in a digital environment. One of my election commitments to primary schools was to provide a small commitment to enable each primary school to purchase tablets or similar devices for their classrooms so that they could support online and digital learning, which is becoming so commonplace. This is quite a small commitment in the scheme of things, but the events of the pandemic in 2020 really highlighted the importance of giving our schools access to the digital technology that they need. I am very happy to report to the house that that election commitment, which has already been delivered in less than 100 days, has been very well received by the schools in my area, as it makes a small contribution to overcoming the inequality that some of those students in the area experience. That is an excellent example of the McGowan government's commitment to delivering in education. There are many other examples of election commitments and education commitments that are being delivered right around this state, but I wanted to spend my time this evening reflecting on those quite small commitments that are very important to the schools in my electorate.

I also want to mention Gladys Newton School, which is again a school in my electorate. I have made a commitment to upgrade its junior play equipment. The school recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. It is an important school that provides educational opportunities for a full range of students, from four to 18 years of age, who have intellectual disabilities, autism or severe mental health issues. Again, I can report to the house that this commitment has been delivered in full in less than 100 days. This is a great example of a government that is committed to making children's lives better and making our education system stronger, and that is delivering on its election commitments in record time.

Whilst I am reflecting on education, I also want to turn my mind to another issue that I am very passionate about. That is our TAFE system. I have to say it was a great pleasure to attend Balga TAFE just last week and share the good news about TAFE enrolments in this state. Members, TAFE enrolments are up by 27 per cent on last year. That is an outstanding achievement. It is very pleasing that those increases have particularly come about in fields that are essential to the ongoing success of our economy—fields like aged care, electrical trades, hospitality, nursing and early childhood. These are essential areas for our economy. A 27 per cent increase, members, is a significant achievement in just 12 months. I also, in preparing my comments for tonight, spent some time reflecting on the Liberal Party's track record on TAFE in the eight years it was in government. I reflect that part of my former role required me to passionately advocate for an end to the disastrous policies of the Liberal government, which succeeded in undermining our TAFE system. It is extremely exciting and, indeed, noteworthy, that in the four years of the Labor government, that essential system for skilling our young people has been able to be resurrected. It is worth reflecting on the Liberal government's track record, because it is easy to forget how damaging that government was to our TAFE system. Under the Liberal government, TAFE fees grew by 510 per cent; enrolments, not surprisingly, dropped by about 13 000 students; and the jobs of about 200 people who worked in our TAFE system were cut.

One of the reasons that I am so passionate about TAFE is that it does a number of things that make lives better for individuals and make our economy stronger. TAFE is the critical way in which we deliver the skills and the training that we need in order to have a First World highly skilled and high-paid economy. My view is that we cannot succeed if we do not have a strong TAFE system. TAFE is a critical part of making sure that people gain the skills they need to get good-quality jobs that will help them build good lives. Having a strong TAFE sector also means that our local employers can get access to the skilled employees they need to be successful and productive. To be able to report that in the four years since the Labor government was elected in 2017, enrolments increased by 27 per cent in just 12 months is a significant achievement and one that is important for our economy, important for local businesses and important for the individuals who attend TAFE because they want a skilled job for the future.

I applaud the work that the government has done in freezing TAFE fees for all students, a commitment it gave before the 2017 election and, again, an election commitment that has been delivered and is now showing results.

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It also slashed fees for 180 key courses. The fees were reduced to ensure that courses were affordable for the people who needed to go to TAFE. The government has also invested in our TAFE system, making sure that our buildings are in a fit state for what we need.

Having a plan to make our TAFE system stronger, reducing course fees for critical courses and freezing all fees so that people can afford to go to TAFE has yielded dramatic results in people who are now attending TAFE and will achieve dramatic results for those people who are qualified for skilled work into the future and for our local employers.

In the time available to me tonight, I also want to talk about the McGowan government's investments in the physical assets of our TAFE campuses. In my electorate of Mirrabooka, the government has committed to a \$32 million upgrade of the Balga campus of the North Metropolitan TAFE—an excellent investment in an important institution. These works are well overdue. The campus was built in the 1970s and it has not really received any major upgrade since that time. The staff rely on 22 demountable buildings to help deliver the courses that they need to deliver. This upgrade will ensure that they are able to move into a more long-term and sustainable arrangement. As the member for Mirrabooka, I am extremely excited about this upgrade. It will include not only new classrooms and general-purpose rooms, but also a new library, a student learning hub and a multi-trade workshop that recognises that the future of skilled work will require the application of emerging technologies and new skills. It will also include meeting rooms and conference rooms and improvements in the hairdressing facilities and outdoor areas. I am very much looking forward to these works being completed. I understand that they are due for completion in June 2023. I cannot wait for this important project to be finished. It will provide not only significant upgrades for the facility in the suburb of Balga, but also modern, first-class facilities for the 3 700 people who use the Balga TAFE to gain skilled qualifications for the good-quality jobs that they want in the future. It will also help meet the needs of industry, particularly the construction industry people who train there, as we know there is a great demand for skilled workers.

In the time remaining to me, I want to make a few comments about jobs, because this is another area in which the McGowan government should be applauded for its delivery of important work and important policy initiatives that are critical to the success of our state. We heard the good news about jobs. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Australia. It is the lowest unemployment rate in WA since 2013. With unemployment at 4.7 per cent, it is lower than the national average of 5.1 per cent. This means that 22 000 fewer people are now unemployed compared with 2017. Since the McGowan government was elected, 22 000 more people are now in work. This is a significant and important achievement. Anyone who spends time talking to working people will understand that having a good-quality, permanent, well-paid job is incredibly important. It provides people with financial security for themselves and their family, it allows them to plan for the future and it brings them a degree of dignity and self-respect. An additional 22 000 people in work is a terrific achievement for us all.

I was reflecting on the track record of those in the corner on jobs. One of the things that is interesting is that the main approach to creating jobs that we have seen from the Liberals over time is to simply suggest that if we reduce wages, we will create more jobs. I do not think the success of that strategy has been borne out over time. The Liberal Party's answer to many things is simply to cut wages. I have spoken in this house before about its plans, prior to 2017, to cut penalty rates for hospitality and retail workers on the basis that it would put more people in employment. It is no surprise to find that cutting wages often does not lead to more jobs; it leads to more profits for employers. However, one of the things that leads to more jobs is having a plan for jobs, and the Western Australian Labor government indeed has a plan for jobs, and the Premier has been clear that jobs are his number one priority.

We could reflect upon a number of achievements, but this evening I want to comment on things that I think are absolutely critical for the people in this state and to our economic success as a state. It is about providing good-quality jobs for the people of Western Australia, providing opportunities for people to get the skills they need to get into those good jobs, ensuring that our local industry has access to the skilled workers it needs to be productive into the future, and ensuring that our schools and education systems have the resources they need to provide people with a fair go and fair opportunity to succeed.

I want to reflect on many other matters relating to jobs. The railcar manufacturing facility at Bellevue is a real example of how we create jobs. We are investing in manufacturing facilities and creating skilled jobs that go around that. Time really is against me; I am conscious of the late hour and the number of people who want to speak. I will say this in finishing.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms M.J. HAMMAT:** When I was doorknocking in the electorate prior to the election, I came across a small number of people who talked to me about the fact that they had worked at the Midland railway workshops their whole lives. They wanted to still talk about it because it was such an important part of their working life and story. They told me how proud they were to work there and the excellent things that were manufactured there. They talked to me about

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the strong bonds of community they formed there and the skilled work they did. They were devastated, of course, when the workshops closed. They also reflected on their recollection that prior to the election, the Liberal Party said that it would not close the Midland railway workshops, but then one of the first things it did when it was elected was to close the railway workshops. That had devastating consequences on those individuals who lost their jobs as a result. My constituents recalled very clearly that they could not trust the Liberals. They could not trust what they said because, in the end, they did not deliver on that commitment. All these years later, they have not forgotten that. I am very proud to be part of a government that is bringing railcar manufacturing back to this state. Hundreds of people will be employed in the production of railcars in Bellevue, in this case.

As I said, it is an interesting motion that causes us to reflect on the achievements of the McGowan government in the last 100 days and, indeed, in its first term. In doing so, I could say many things, but I want to concentrate on the things I know are important to the people I represent—that is, jobs and access to skilled work, training, TAFE and education. On that score, I find the McGowan government has done an outstanding job.

**MR G. BAKER (South Perth)** [6.33 pm]: Like the member for Mirrabooka, I want to be clear that I am not the lead speaker for the government. I would like to take the chamber on a bit of an imaginary journey for a moment. I have been listening to opposition members speak about the past 100 days. I want members to imagine that we are going back in time to April last year, as the pandemic took hold. What problems faced our government last April? There was a pandemic spreading throughout the community. There was the danger of our economy shutting down. There was the danger of the health system being pushed well beyond its limits and health workers risking their lives every day to protect us. There was a real risk of thousands of Western Australians dying. There was a real risk that our economy might fall into a deep recession. It took the action of the government to keep us safe and strong—to protect us at the border, to keep the disease out, to create jobs in WA and to keep our economy strong. We do not need to imagine what could have happened if we had failed; we just need to look at what happened in the USA and the UK, where coronavirus caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, or we can look at Brazil, where the deaths from coronavirus caused massive disruption to its mining industry. Huge international events were shut down, such as the Olympics and other sporting and cultural events all across the world. We know what happened.

If we went back to those early days of the pandemic and imagined what we would be talking about now, in June 2021, we would not have predicted that the disease would be stopped at the border in Western Australia and that there would be no community transmission. We would not have predicted that we would have the strongest economy in Australia or the world. We would not have predicted that life would be much closer to normal in Western Australia than anywhere else.

I want to tell members a little about what happened to my family; I am sure members will have similar stories. My wife is American and her family is in California. My dad's sister lives in the UK. What has happened to them over the last year was a complete disruption to their lives. They had to think carefully about going to work, school and the shops—even simple things like going to church or hugging their grandchildren. These were all complicated matters in life under coronavirus, and we did not have it here. I ask members to go back in time to last year and imagine the kinds of things we thought we would be dealing with now. Was it school bus services, as the member for Roe discussed at great length? No, it was not. That is not the kind of thing we were worried would be happening. I find that the opposition's criticisms of the government are actually an enormous vote of confidence in the path we have taken over the past 12 months.

We can compare that with the following list of government achievements in the first 100 days of this government. We brought train manufacturing back to WA; we are delivering new railcar manufacturing facilities at Bellevue. For the first time in 30 years, we will be manufacturing railcars in WA, just a few kilometres from the old Midland Workshops. We are keeping Western Australians safe from coronavirus. We have expanded the vaccination program, announced the Getting the Show back on the Road program, moved to phase 5 by relaxing restrictions, and supported the Indian community through the devastating outbreak in their country. We have announced 500 additional beds in the health system right across our state, including 20 beds at South Perth Hospital and 95 beds being brought online at metropolitan emergency departments. It will be one of the biggest expansions in emergency department capacity in the state's history. We have also announced that we will be making the necessary investments in a new children's hospice so that terminally ill children and their families will have the support they need during some of the hardest times of their lives.

I now turn to education. As the member for Mirrabooka said at great length, we revealed that our lower fees, local skills TAFE courses have resulted in a 27 per cent increase in enrolments in cheaper courses, meaning that more Western Australians are getting the skills they need for a quality career, especially in fields such as aged care, electrical trades, hospitality, nursing and early childhood. We are filling the skills that we need. We have started work on stage 2 of Bob Hawke College.

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We also announced that WA will be leading the nation in phasing out single-use plastics, bringing forward our timetable by years. We have supported communities devastated by the Waroona bushfires and cyclone Seroja. We have passed the subbies laws and, just today, I heard the Minister for Innovation and ICT announce the whole-of-government digital strategy.

What has been achieved in South Perth? I am very proud that we have committed funds to the new master plan for Perth Zoo, including a new cafeteria and new orangutan enclosure. Work on upgrading the facilities at Como and Manning bowls clubs has started. We have delivered funds for Kensington, Collier and Curtin Primary Schools to improve their play facilities; delivered over \$1 million to Como Secondary College for improved traffic management, new STEM classroom resources and a cafeteria upgrade; opened the new Kensington Fire Station; funded new lights for Hensman Park Tennis Club, which I know is a topic that is dear to the member for Roe; and delivered funding for the South Perth Bridge Club to build an all-access toilet. We are delivering.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** You've come up trumps, member!

**Mr G. BAKER:** Yes!

All of this, while we have the strongest domestic economic growth in the nation —

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Any progress on the John McGrath railway station?

**Mr G. BAKER:** Give him a call! You would be surprised!

We have the lowest unemployment rate of all the states—the lowest in Western Australia since 2013, during the last mining boom—and we have the best government policy settings in the world. Best of all, we have kept WA safe. The achievements of this government over the last 100 days have been extraordinary, and even more extraordinary when we go back a year and try to think about where we thought we would be when we got to this point. It is beyond anything we could have expected. Thank you very much.

**MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston)** [6.40 pm]: Although I am not the lead speaker today, I rise to speak against the member for Moore's motion that the first 100 days of the WA Labor government has been an abject failure. In fact, I would like to address some of the things that the opposition has spoken about in this house today. There was criticism of the fact that we kept Western Australia safe and strong. I object to that. I can tell members that I doorknocked thousands of houses in the lead-up to the election. I took nine months' leave without pay and knocked on doors for nine months solid. The people I spoke to gave me two clear reasons, even nine months out from the election, why they would be voting Labor.

A Treendale resident said to me that we had kept WA strong—not me; I cannot take credit for that, because I was just a candidate at that point. He said to me that the government had kept WA strong. He said that he had always voted Liberal, but not that year. He said the Liberal–National government had left us with record debt and that we had turned that around in four years, giving Western Australia one of the strongest economies in the world. He said he could not wait to vote for me!

On the matter of keeping us safe, another elector referred to the borders and controlling COVID-19. He said that he had also always voted Liberal, but had health conditions. He said the Liberal Party wanted to open the borders, but that he wanted to stay alive. He then said he would be happy to keep the border closed permanently—he was joking, I hope!—but that was why he was voting for us this time.

I stand in the chamber today to say I am incredibly proud of being a member of this government. I commend all the members of the very hardworking WA Labor government on their first 100 days. I would like to reflect on the first 100 days in the context of Collie–Preston and as a regional member. I would like to also remind the opposition that it does not have a monopoly on representing regional Western Australia. In fact, the WA Labor government has more regional members than ever. I would like to use the last 20 days out of the 100 to talk about the critical issues I have been involved with in my electorate.

I would like to talk about royalties for regions, to start with. On Saturday, I attended the opening of the Donnybrook town centre revitalisation project with Hon Alannah MacTiernan, the Minister for Regional Development, and the former member for Collie–Preston, Hon Mick Murray. It was incredibly pleasing to see what \$2 million of royalties for regions funding has delivered for the Donnybrook town centre. The Donnybrook goods shed has been restored. It was derelict and had been subjected to vandalism and attempted arson. The Shire of Donnybrook–Balingup undertook a revitalisation project with state government and other funding, and Perkins Builders secured the contract to deliver that project.

I was amazed when I turned up on Saturday. I had been in Donnybrook previously in November, with Hon Mick Murray, when he turned the first sod on that project. What had been delivered within six months is certainly something that the government should be very proud of. We worked with the Shire of Donnybrook–Balingup, the local community and Perkins Builders to deliver the Donnybrook Heritage Goods Shed Interpretive Centre and

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Station Square. It was a mix of heritage and contemporary build to enhance the facilities for local residents and the significant number of local tourists visiting Donnybrook potentially for the first time. I would like to acknowledge the work of the Shire of Donnybrook–Balingup staff and councillors and the builders on this incredible project and I would like to suggest that when members get the time, they visit the project and have a look for themselves. I will not spoil the surprise.

I also went to Donnybrook's Bridge Street housing project and again turned the sod on that project with the Minister for Regional Development. That project is aiming to deliver a \$3.25 million development for ageing residents in Donnybrook, with \$2 million in funding from the McGowan Labor government. That will produce 10 independent living units built by Alliance Housing (WA) in partnership with the government, providing affordable rental options for over 65-year-olds in the regional area of Donnybrook. In line with the McGowan government's commitment to maximising local business participation, south west business JAK Civil was awarded the contract to undertake site works for this project and Smith Constructions will be undertaking the construction of the housing, again generating jobs in the regions. The McGowan government is funding the project through the regional aged accommodation program, which helps to address aged accommodation in regional Western Australia. Another benefit is that potentially those people who move into that housing will free up the houses that they currently occupy, which will also alleviate some of the issues around regional housing. I look forward to that project.

I was absent from the chamber yesterday because I was in Collie representing my electorate. I start by saying that I congratulate the WA government and, in fact, the Premier, Hon Bill Johnston and the former member for Collie–Preston, Mick Murray. I am talking here about Collie's Just Transition Plan. I would like to say at the outset that, as the wife of a worker who will be affected by Collie's Just Transition Plan, I absolutely want to put on record the respect that this government has for the workers of the Collie community. It is not just the Collie community; in fact, it is the south west, because a number of people travel from places like Bunbury, Eaton and Australind to work in Collie or rely on work in Collie. When the closure of stage C of Muja power station was announced, the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, Bill Johnston; the Premier, Mark McGowan; and the then member for Collie–Preston and minister as well, Mick Murray, travelled to Collie because they wanted the workers to be the first people to know about the planned closure of Collie's Muja power station. This was the first step in a sensible approach to the transition from coal to renewables, and it is not a plan that was going to mean that people in Collie and the surrounding regions were unemployed in 2025, as was the plan of the Liberals at the election. The Premier, Mark McGowan, released the Just Transition Plan in December last year because it is a priority of the Labor government to ensure that no-one is left behind during the transition from emissions-intensive industries.

Yesterday, a memorandum of understanding was signed by a number of very significant contributors to this process. The WA government was represented by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation; and the Department of Training and Workforce Development. Also represented were South Regional TAFE; Energy Policy WA; the South West Development Commission; the CFMEU Western Australia; the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union; the Electrical Trade Union WA; the Australian Services Union; the Shire of Collie; the Collie Futures Economic Advisory Group; the Collie Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Bluewaters Power; Premier Coal; Griffin Coal Mining Company; Synergy; South32; Worsley Alumina; and Worley. They were all present in that room to commit to a just transition for the workers of Collie. I have a copy of the transition plan here if any opposition members would like to take advantage of the very fine work that has gone into this project. The memorandum of understanding signed yesterday symbolises that the companies are the lifeblood for generating the state's power, but also the lifeblood of our town, its economy and that of the south west, and that we are committed to a just transition to maximise opportunities for affected workers and to diversify our economy. I thank everybody who attended yesterday for their ongoing commitment. This is a significant step and a significant milestone and I look forward to the challenge in the next four years of working with these people to ensure again that none of these workers is left behind.

I would like to conclude my comments by saying that I absolutely object and, in fact, am offended that the member for Moore would suggest that the WA Labor government has failed in its first 100 days. I think those examples I have given from regional Western Australia demonstrate the commitment to not just the metropolitan people of Western Australia, but also the regions, and I thank the government for the work it has done. I absolutely look forward to working with the government to continue the great work so far. Thank you.

**MRS.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley — Parliamentary Secretary)** [6.55 pm]: I rise also to make a contribution to this motion. I am the lead speaker on behalf of the government. There is a breathtaking audacity in the opposition bringing a motion such as this. But by the same token, we have to give the opposition credit for the courage it has taken to bring this motion forward, because it gives us on the government benches an incredible opportunity to not just run chapter and verse through the achievements of the last 100 days that are covered by this motion, but also, thanks to the member for North West Central who took us on a journey back in time over 20 years, go back over some of the achievements of the first term of the McGowan Labor government.



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We need to consider the contributions within the context they have been made. I would like to thank my fellow members of the government, the members for Mirrabooka, South Perth and, just now, Collie–Preston, for their contributions. These are three new members of this chamber elected at the March 2021 election who stood up and spoke passionately about just how effective the McGowan Labor government has been since being elected to this place only 100 days ago. In fact, the only thing about this motion that speaks to the capacity of the opposition is that it can count to 100, because when it comes to numbers, it is hopeless. One of the things I do not understand—I struggle with this after all the weeks we have been sitting in Parliament since we resumed—is the opposition’s inability to arrive at a unified position. One of the issues every speaker raised on behalf of the opposition—I think it must be like a Pavlovian response for them—was the March 2021 state election. I think it is still trying to come to terms with the magnitude of the events of that fateful day, Saturday, 13 March.

When we look around the chamber, we can measure the extent of the achievement of the former McGowan Labor government. The inconsistency in the approach of the opposition to what happened on that day must be resolved. It has to figure out what happened at the 2021 election. The member for Cottesloe was generous in his praise of the Premier when he was discussing the prospect of this being a mandate. He said, “No; this is not a mandate; this is people saying that the Premier has handled the COVID pandemic well.” He went further and said in fact that the government has handled the COVID pandemic well. He gave the example of the gentleman in his electorate who tried to vote for Mark McGowan because he was so impressed with the way the Premier had handled the COVID pandemic. The problem is if it were true that the opposition members believed that the people of Western Australia voted for the way in which we handled the COVID pandemic, riddle me this: why on earth are they criticising the Minister for Health for the job he is doing in handling the challenges in the health sector? They are trying to undermine the government of Western Australia that they say invested in the McGowan government because of —

An opposition member: Sorry!

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** No. We are still in the midst of a global pandemic, member.

What those members need to do—they will never get the trust and confidence of the community back until they wake up and appreciate this—is apologise. They have undermined us with their support for Clive Palmer throughout the whole of the COVID pandemic last year and they continue to do it, member for Cottesloe. I know which side the member for Mirrabooka is on. I know which side the member for South Perth is on. I know which side the member for Collie–Preston is on. They are on the side of the people of WA—the people who voted overwhelmingly to send them to this place. I know whose side the member for Cottesloe is not on because he keeps talking it down; he is not on the side of Western Australia. The member for Cottesloe keeps undermining our teachers, health workers and hardworking nurses and doctors, who are on the front line trying to deliver a world-class health system. The Liberal Party and Nationals WA are undermining the incredible work that the hardworking health workers and teachers have done to keep our communities safe and strong.

The voters in Western Australia will not forget and they knew exactly what they were voting for when they went to the polls on 13 March this year. They were voting for the continuity of the McGowan Labor government. That stands in stark contrast to—I will go a little bit back in time—the ineptitude of the previous Barnett government. I took the time to go back and have a look at the last Barnett cabinet because I wondered where the members of the Barnett cabinet were now. Colin Barnett is gone, Kim Hames is gone and Brendon Grylls is gone. Troy Buswell—we know what happened to poor old Mr Buswell. John Day—there was a massive swing against John Day and he was knocked out of his seat. Liza Harvey is gone, Terry Redman is gone—more’s the shame!—Helen Morton is gone, and Michael Mischin was gone before the election even took place!

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** He got beaten by an empty chair!

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** The member for Cannington and I agree that the Liberal Party preselectors in the North Metropolitan Region exercised the right judgement when it came to Hon Michael Mischin.

Bill Marmion is gone, Terry Waldron is gone, Ken Baston is gone and Dr Mike Nahan is gone. The current member for Riverton does a fantastic job. The giant killers are gone.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** I wish he had, because then he would have brought some talent to the National Party—poor old “Tuck”.

Albert Jacob is gone and Joe Francis was slayed by Yaz Mubarakai, the new member for Jandakot. Poor old Mr Dean Nalder. I said this in my Address-in-Reply: Dean Nalder did a terrific job on the Public Accounts Committee—I am looking at the Minister for Finance—but I just wonder whether that train wreck of a press conference, with the Three Stooges and their costings, would have gone differently if Mr Nalder had survived. I look at the member

Mr Shane Love; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Meredith Hammat; Mr Geoff Baker; Ms Jodie Hanns; Mr Simon Millman

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for Bateman and I am glad that she is here and more's the pity that Mr Nalder is not. But there we go, another member of the Barnett government gone.

The worst thing about this recital of the former Barnett government is: do members know how the former Premier, Colin Barnett, described his second cabinet?

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Lacking horsepower.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** He described it as lacking horsepower! Member, you are absolutely right! He said that the cabinet was lacking horsepower. They were slain by the giant killers who now populate the government benches—slain one and all. We are left with this poor shadow of a conservative wing in Western Australian politics. The opposition members owe the people of Western Australia an apology.

When I won the seat of Mount Lawley in 2017, it was the first time ever that the seat had been won by the Labor Party. I had lifelong Liberal voters coming up to me saying, “We’ll be voting for you. We can’t believe just how bad the WA Liberal Party has become.” Hopefully, it will run a credible candidate.

Straight out of the gate, when we woke up on the morning of Sunday, 14 March, we saw the election results. Some of the results did not come in immediately; we had to wait a little bit of time for them to trickle in. I remember the member for Churchlands’ predecessor sitting over there saying to our backbenchers, “You’ll be gone, you’ll be gone and you’ll be gone!”

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Where is he?

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** Where is the former member for Churchlands? I do not know, does the minister know? I do not know where the former member for Churchlands is. I know that he is not coming back any time soon.

The results on 13 March provided an opportunity for the McGowan government to continue the incredible work that it had done since it was elected on 11 March 2017. I always thought that 11 March 2017 would represent a high-water mark for the WA Labor Party. I was astounded by that result. The member for Cannington, who is a former state secretary of the Labor Party, has seen the history of this. Some of the seats that we won on that night were incredible. It gave us the platform to go to the community and say, “These are the things we want to do. We want to save Western Power from privatisation by the Liberal Party, we want to build Metronet and we want to fix the state’s finances because debt is on a trajectory to \$40 billion.” The trouble with these conservative parties, the Liberal and National Parties of WA, is their members look at the \$5 billion surplus that has been built up by the prudent, responsible fiscal management of this WA government, and they cannot wait to spend it. They cannot wait to spend it! They have ideas all over the place. It is profligate! They want to take us back to the situation that we were in when they were running up debt and deficit, had no control over the state’s finances and were looking at privatising assets. As the Premier said today, the example has been set by the government in New South Wales. The people of Western Australia looked at that and said, “No. No deal; we don’t want it. We are so confident in the WA Labor Party and we are so confident in the leadership of Mark McGowan that we’re going to vote in overwhelming numbers to return this party to the government and Treasury benches.” They are very pleased that they made that decision.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

*House adjourned at 7.00 pm*

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