

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — PERFORMANCE — DRUGS AND CRIME

Motion

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [1.06 pm]: I move —

That this house expresses its concerns over the failure of the McGowan government to combat drugs and crime in our community.

I want to start today by apologising to the young people of Western Australia. They have been let down by this government and by previous governments. What do I mean by that? Australia is one of the worst countries in the world when it comes to drug use and the related crime that goes with that. I will demonstrate that Western Australia is the worse state in Australia, and the south west—the area that I represent—is the worst area within Western Australia. It is not a good story. Our youth have been let down because this government has gone soft on crime and drugs. A lot of people would be surprised to find that I believe that education is the key. It is not a matter of just increasing sentences and applying mandatory sentences; it is a matter of education, which we have thrown away. We have given up on our youth, our young people, and this government has broken a lot of promises along the way. I will start with the first broken promise.

Back in 2015, the McGowan opposition made a promise that it would be tough on drugs and tough on crime. The moment Labor got into power in 2017, things changed. Its members went in a completely different direction and they became soft on drugs and soft on crime. They have not supported the police or backed them up with the tools that they need to deal with the rising crime and drug use in our community.

Labor promised two specialised rehabilitation centres, one of which was to be based in the south west, which is obviously important to me. We have not heard a thing about it. The next election is only months away and this promise was made before the last election. In the lead-up to the last election, Hon Adele Farina spoke very highly about this centre, yet not a single word has been said on this since that time. It is very disappointing. Labor also promised a rehabilitation centre in the Kimberley, but all I can see in the budget is \$200 000 put aside for some planning. Those are two big broken promises on things that at the last election Labor said it would deliver.

I am not going to focus on only rehabilitation because I think there is a step before that that we need to look at. We get a lot of smoke and mirrors from this government when it comes to stats. It has a way of delivering and changing the way we do stats to make it look good, but when we weigh up the stats coming from all the different bodies, we can see it is not a good picture.

The Meth Helpline was very important. It was a very, very important place to which desperate people could get some advice and support. The government cut funding to that helpline by \$154 000, when it probably needed that amount added to it to make it work at its optimum. Those people have been let down. Another area in which the government has made funding cuts is the Mental Health Commission's prevention budget. The Labor Party promised prevention budget funding of up to four per cent. It is down to 1.38 per cent in the last budget. I believe it will go down even more to somewhere in the region of 1.29 per cent in the 2020–21 budget.

As I said before, in 2015, the then Leader of the Opposition said that education and rehabilitation are the key. The Labor Party has forgotten about that and it has not responded. I would say that that is hypocritical; some people may not say that. I certainly do not see a clear plan or direction from this government. There is no comprehensive plan to tackle drug use and the related crime that comes with drug use.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You haven't heard about the drug rehabilitation prisons?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I have heard about lots of things, and I will give the minister a chance to reply.

Most recently, the Minister for Health has said that he is considering decriminalising drugs. That is a soft approach. That was not a part of the promises Labor made before the last election. It is quite clear. I believe that drug use is going up, and the facts and figures say that. It is quite clear that it is. For instance, cocaine use has gone up 150 per cent. We cannot say that is not happening; it is happening. Those are the figures. I will say it again: there is a 150 per cent increase in cocaine use in WA. Heroin use has gone up 73 per cent. Why is this important? It is important because there is a correlation between drug use and crime. Heroin use is up 73 per cent. Once again, MDMA use has increased by 84 per cent. This is in Western Australia; the national figures are much less than that. Once again, Western Australia is the worst state in this commonwealth when it comes to tackling drug use and related crime.

Where has the McGowan government's inaction on drug prevention and control left us? Shamefully, the state does not have a standout performance in decreasing the use of hard drugs. People are being told that they are not doing anything wrong and are being given a green light to take drugs without consequences. A recent select committee report suggests that pill testing should go on. We have not had a death in the last 10 years at—they are supposed to

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be called concerts; they are more like drug festivals—a concert in WA. Why would we want to follow the New South Wales model whereby the owners and operators of those concerts take no responsibility for the people who attend? In WA, we put the onus back on those people, and they have responded, and we have not had a death at a music festival in the last 10 years. We do not need to follow what New South Wales or others are doing or suggesting.

Let me restate that this about methamphetamine. The government says that the rate of meth use is going down; however, we are still the worst state for meth use in Australia. The south west is still the worst place for meth use in Western Australia. It is double the rest of the nation. Let us not celebrate any recent figures because we are still miles behind the other states.

It costs the state \$58 000 for each dependent meth user. That is \$1.5 billion. That is not counting the people who are on heroin, cocaine, ecstasy or MDMA, or whatever. That is just for meth. The cost to this country and this state is enormous, and the related crime that goes with that is making it hard for police to keep up.

Regarding the damage to our citizens, we all know that drug use is a serious and complex issue; however, if we do not run a proper education and prevention program, then all we are looking at with rehabilitation centres and other things is the situation after the damage has been done, forgetting about the illness, disease, injuries, deaths, social and family disruption, workplace concerns, violence, crime and community safety issues. I know that people in the highest legal and accounting firms in this state probably partake in some cocaine on a Friday night or whatever. They do not live in the suburbs that have been affected by the crime that comes from drug use. They are the protected and privileged few. When we look at the damage that these drugs cause in the average suburbs of Perth and the south west of Western Australia, we see problems with mental and physical wellbeing, financial stress, quality of family relationships, alienation from social networks and the guilt and inadequacy of being unable to present for substance dependence treatment, and lack of growth at a community level.

As I said, regional WA has the highest rate of drug use in Australia. It is almost double the rate in the rest of Australia. As a regional member, that is something I am ashamed of. I think this Parliament, and this government, needs to act now to change that in the area of prevention. As I mentioned before, if we look at prevention, we see programs such as the grim reaper and smoking reduction campaigns, and ones to increase people's healthy living, such as Norm, that have worked because we have been committed to those programs. We have not seen that from this government when it comes to drug use in WA.

Moving along, the continual cutting of services in regional areas has left younger people in these communities really struggling. There is high youth unemployment and a lack of infrastructure and community activities. I look at communities like York, Kojonup, Esperance, Narrogin and Merredin—it is amazing that the day that I make this speech, the government has announced a small \$10 000 program in the Kimberley and Pilbara. My God! That must be really killing Treasury. I have to wonder whether there is a proper coordinated and comprehensive plan to reduce drug use in this state. I say that there is not.

The press has been talking about this for the last couple of years. Press releases state that the youth unemployment rate in the south west and Peel region is amongst the highest in Australia, and that 21.6 per cent of people between the ages of 15 and 24 are unable to get a job. We know that when people are desperate, they partake in other activities, because they are bored, they have no options, and the infrastructure and education is not there to help them. We are saying, "It's okay! Drugs are not that bad. You can take drugs. It's all right. We'll patch you up later." That does not work.

Youth unemployment rates in Mandurah and Pinjarra are at an all-time high and have been for a while. The press reported recently that it was at 17.7 per cent. This is not me; this is the people of Western Australia speaking about the problems that youth unemployment has caused. The young people of this state deserve better. There are alternatives. In New South Wales, the best known justice investment program is in Bourke. It is well known; it has been around since October 2018 and it was planned for many years. The program has released statistics that it has resulted in a reduction of 18 per cent in reported major offences, 34 per cent in the number of non-domestic violence related assaults, 39 per cent in the number of domestic violence-related assaults and 35 per cent in driving offences. The benefits of that program go on and on. The thing is that this program was a community-led program. We are talking about the government getting involved and being committed, not just leaving it to community groups. Yes, I want the community to be involved, but they should be working side by side with the government in a comprehensive, statewide program that will deliver a good result for the young people of this state.

I quote the chair of Just Reinvest NSW, who stated —

“Over previous decades, we have seen the imprisonment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, women and children increasing dramatically. The experience in Bourke demonstrates that the solutions to this national crisis lie in community-led initiatives like justice reinvestment that support communities to develop local solutions.”

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A lot of people do not quite understand justice reinvestment. I will explain it with another quote that comes from a community group that is running a similar program in Halls Creek —

“Things need to change; we all need to work together to implement a new approach in helping our young Kimberley Aboriginal people. This is an issue of utmost urgency and I call on the government to place a high priority on setting a new approach to juvenile justice in the Kimberley. This needs to be done now to prevent the high rates of indigenous adult incarceration which is coursing our prisons to overflow.”

(Josie Farrer, Kimberley MLA)

Members of the government are calling for this and wanting more money to be spent. According to the Western Australia Police Force, 39 per cent of adults in WA prisons are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. In this state, incarceration rates are 60 per cent above the national average. Do not tell me we are doing a good job, because we are not. The figures and the facts make it quite clear that we are letting people down, especially our youth. The governments of the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales are involved in these reinvestment programs, and I would like to see the Western Australian government getting involved as well, not just leaving it up to community groups.

Let us look at what I have talked about. We have become soft. We have not increased numbers of police. The population is growing, and the police numbers have gone down per head of population, not up. That is not good. Prior to One Nation being elected to this Parliament, it made a promise that it would push this government to recruit another thousand police officers. It changed that promise to 500, trying to work with the government to get a fair and even result for the people of WA, and we have seen that it does not want to budge. It has no comprehensive plan to deal with youth unemployment, youth drug use and youth crime related to that drug use, and other related issues. My passion is youth. For the last 21 years, I have worked in Aboriginal affairs and other areas in prevention. I know that prevention works. Everyone knows that prevention works. This government has forgotten about that. It has not even built the rehabilitation centres that it promised at the last election, yet there is discussion about being soft on crime and maybe decriminalising it. The Select Committee into Alternate Approaches to Reducing Illicit Drug Use and its Effects on the Community looked at other liberal-minded states when it wanted to make its argument stronger. It needed to go and speak to people in Singapore and other countries.

Hon Alison Xamon: We went to Sweden!

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Yes, liberal-minded states. I say that if a committee wants to get the result that it is looking for, it should just speak to the people who agree with it, and that is what it did.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members, you will get a turn.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: As I said before, this Labor government has let down the people of WA. As opposition leader, the Premier made promises. He took those to the election. He has broken those promises. That is the truth. I have indicated the promises that he broke. Where is the rehabilitation centre in the south west or the Kimberley? We are only months away from the next election and they are not even being talked about, let alone delivered. Why did the government make cuts to the Meth Helpline? Why did it make cuts to the Mental Health Commission's prevention budget? It has made cuts because it is not serious. It does not have a comprehensive plan. The use of illicit drugs is rising. The use of heroin, MDA and cocaine is going up the whole time. That means crime is going up the whole time. The police are lacking frontline resources. They need more out there to support them.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Environment) [1.27 pm]: It was maybe 50 seconds before the end when we got to the nub of the point, when Hon Colin Tincknell said, “We are only months away from the next election.” That is what this is about. There is an election on the way, he has struggled for relevance for the past little while, and now he is trying to play politics. I have to say that I am very disappointed about that. Hon Colin Tincknell is on the record in this place multiple times talking about illicit drugs. I can quote him, in fact. On 17 October 2018, he said —

We understand that this is not an easy issue and should never be turned into a political issue and used as a political toy between parties.

What is he doing today? He continued —

Although the previous government or the current government argue about many things, this is not something we should ever get into a political stoush about. I think everyone in this house and the other place agree that drugs are a scourge on our community.

Then, during a debate on a motion by Hon Martin Aldridge in August 2019, the honourable member said —

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I do not think the approach from this house for this Parliament is to just beat up on the government about this. The role of the police has changed a great deal. There are a lot more drugs in our society now, and many other threats, such as terrorism. There is a lot more violence in our community ... While this is going on, the police have to try to bring some order to a society, and their job is increasingly difficult.

The member said previously that these are difficult issues and we should work together on them. Today, we are seeing the honourable member playing politics, and I am greatly disappointed in that. This is a difficult issue. But in some of the other things the honourable member said, I have to think that he may well have been asleep for the past three and a half years as we have tackled drug, alcohol and crime issues in this place, because we have had multiple debates in this place. We have not just put out statistics; we have acted, we have delivered, and I will go through some of those points in a second. But shame on the honourable member, who has obviously been asleep.

We have not given up on young people or youth in this state. To the contrary—we are acting to make sure that they are protected and we are giving them opportunities. I am greatly disappointed in what the member had to say.

Hon Colin Tincknell interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I listened to you; listen to me now!

In relation to the debate before us —

Hon Colin Tincknell interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The member has had his chance; he can go again at the end, but I am making my point today.

The PRESIDENT: Actually, minister, you are correct. Member, you were heard pretty much in silence, so perhaps you might grant the same respect to the speaker on his feet now.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thanks, Madam President.

Obviously, this issue has been around for a long time. In 2007, the Carpenter government convened the Drug Summit with police, the community and hospitals to discuss a range of issues. Since that time, various governments have done various things, but the problem has escalated. It escalated under the last government, when the testing of people in the watch house indicated more positive tests for people using drugs. That is a fact; that happened. There have been increasing amounts of meth on WA streets. This has fuelled unprecedented crime waves over the years. From 2009 to 2016, there was a significant number of assaults, with an increase of 50 per cent. There was a 70 per cent increase in threatening behaviour, a 31 per cent increase in burglaries, almost a 40 per cent increase in motor vehicle theft and a 42 per cent increase in stealing. Since then, further water testing results and reports from the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission have shown that meth use peaked in Perth in about 2016. The last government did act, and in 2017 it gave more powers to police to target the transit of meth in WA.

We made commitments in this space going into the last election because it was very important. This is an issue that the community cares about. What have we done? We have increased the penalties faced by meth traffickers. The first bill introduced by the McGowan government increased penalties for meth traffickers. Criminals trafficking 28 grams or more of meth now face life imprisonment and unlimited fines, which is up from 20 years' imprisonment and the previous maximum fine of \$100 000. We have increased resources for police to combat meth. We provided funding of about \$125 million between 2017–18 and 2022–23 to support police doing their work and enforcement activities to help stop meth entering Western Australia. We have provided an additional 100 police officers over two years and 20 support and specialist staff to provide analytical, research, financial and investigative support.

Police are working incredibly hard. They are targeting known drug syndicates, focusing on meth importers and dealers, and disrupting the supply chains and money movers. They have been working to increase the detection of meth entering Western Australia and to increase the arrest of and disruption to organised criminals who import meth. They have been seizing cash profits from meth sales and prosecuting meth dealers. We have provided a great deal more equipment to police to enable them to do the often dangerous jobs that they need to do to tackle dangerous criminals. We have provided police with TruNarc, which is a handheld narcotics analyser; UFED mobile phone downloading devices; and police operations centres that are designed to support regional police as mobile command centres during emergencies. Then, of course, we had the \$244 million meth action plan—another positive delivered by this government. It was a comprehensive plan that, in addition to increased police resources, delivered Western Australia's first alcohol and other drug treatment prison. It has delivered a crisis centre in Midland and it has enabled the expansion of the award-winning mental health police co-response model to regional areas. It also includes support for alcohol and other drug issues. We have also funded a comprehensive alcohol and other drug youth service in the Kimberley region. We have provided a huge boost in funding for the north west drug and alcohol support program, which, as a member for the Mining and Pastoral Region in this place, I recognise; I have had interaction with the program. I know it is delivering for people in the north west of the state. We have also

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provided further support for the meth peer education program, which focuses on harm reduction and health promotion—another positive policy. We have provided funding for alcohol and other drug education programs in schools, with a focus on at-risk students. We have not forgotten young people. We are delivering. We are helping young people tackle the scourge of drugs.

Overall meth use in Western Australia has reduced since the McGowan government was elected. The latest national wastewater survey report, released on 10 March this year, reveals that meth use in WA is down by about 25 per cent since December 2016. Police continue to have success in disrupting the meth trade. They have intercepted and seized more than 2 000 kilograms of meth since 2017. From 1 March 2017 to 1 March this year, police and joint partners have been involved in seizing 2 054 kilos of meth and 7.15 litres of meth oil. In addition, WA police were involved in stings with the New South Wales and New Zealand police. Massive seizures coming in from overseas were found and stopped before they came to Western Australia and caused problems for Western Australians. We have also seen more focus on proceeds of crime activity. So far in 2019–20, the Western Australia Police Force has seized nearly \$41 million in assets, including \$10.3 million in cash.

Of course, over the last few years, we have seen an increased police budget and police numbers. Over the past three budgets, the McGowan government has invested by providing an additional \$300 million to the Western Australia Police Force to enable police to do their job. That includes \$90 million for body armour, body-worn cameras, drones and personal issue mobile devices. In April, the government announced a \$91 million package of measures to support the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the recruitment of an additional 150 police officers, the purchase of a further 100 mobile intelligence cameras, or automatic numberplate cameras, and the purchase of 200 GPS tracking devices for electronic monitoring to enhance police tracking and tracing capabilities. Although those three things are for the COVID pandemic, the benefit of them is that they will continue to be used by police after the COVID pandemic. They are extra resources that will enable the police to continue to do good work. One of the positives from the COVID pandemic, if we can see any positives, has been that the amount of drugs coming into the state has dropped dramatically. That is because we have had hard borders with the other states. That has stopped people from bringing in serious amounts of drugs, but at the same time we have given police extra resources just in case people are trying to sneak drugs into the state. We also have 135 recruits who are being fast-tracked for deployment into support roles. The 100 ANP cameras that we have bought recently will increase the number of devices currently in operation and they will assist police in enforcing self-isolation and quarantine by identifying vehicles in breach of mandated restrictions. The new GPS tracking devices support the laws passed by Parliament early this month to employ, where deemed necessary, electronic monitoring to enforce quarantine and travel restrictions. Since March 2017, the McGowan government has funded the Western Australia Police Force to increase its authorised strength by 298 FTE police officers. These additional resources reflect a significant commitment by the McGowan government to the Western Australian community and to the police to help them do their work and keep us safe.

I will mention Operation Heat Shield. This has been a significant investment in our police force. Police were provided with an extra \$5 million to conduct a sustained operation from December last year to May this year. It has involved about an extra 55 000 additional police hours, and that has been delivered right across Western Australia. Police figures and feedback from the community and local businesses have been overwhelmingly positive. Retailers in shopping malls report that they are seeing more police and much less crime. In the metropolitan region, we have seen a great deal of work. We have seen more focus by police on catching criminals, and the rate of people being sanctioned has risen significantly. We have also seen reductions in reported offences compared with those in previous months. That work has happened right across the state, in the metropolitan area and, indeed, in regional Western Australia. As we would expect, more high-visibility patrols result in increasing counts in crime statistics because more offences are identified by police and there is a greater willingness of people to report matters. There was a 1.9 per cent increase in crime from January to March compared with the same quarter last year. We know that historically this is a quarter in which we see a rise in crime associated with more people enjoying the warmer temperatures over the summer months. Significantly, high-visibility policing has improved community confidence and has provided reassurance that offenders will be caught.

Police in this state have a difficult job. I take a moment to pause and acknowledge the two police officers in Port Hedland who put their lives at risk the week before last to stop somebody with a knife who was going through the shopping centre where my office is located. Those police officers were in the shopping centre at the time dealing with another issue. It was lucky they were there because had they not been, there would have been absolute carnage in that shopping centre. I am very grateful to them for their work and for keeping my community safe. I want to acknowledge that today. That is just one day in the life of a police officer in Western Australia, and, indeed, every police officer in the world. Those women and men who put their lives at risk do incredible work. On that day, police officers certainly put their lives at risk and they will have to deal with that for years to come. I am very grateful that they were there on that day, being visible and doing the work they do.

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I return to crime statistics. Extra resources are being directed to police for more equipment and for the creation of family violence teams in all metropolitan districts. That has increased resourcing to not only target perpetrators, but also engage and support victims so that they are encouraged to report all matters. That increased focus is reflected in the statistics. The crime statistics show that police are locking up more offenders and taking them out of commission. As a result, community reassurance has been boosted and more incidents are being reported to police, with more offenders being apprehended and charged. That is good news on both counts. Additionally, police response times are getting faster. Police are also responding to crimes faster. The percentage of priority 1 and 2 incidents that are responded to within 12 minutes or less increased from 78 per cent in 2015–16 to 85 per cent in 2018–19. We, as a government, have provided the Western Australia Police Force with significant extra resources to combat methamphetamine in our community and significant seizures and ongoing operations are delivering results for the Western Australian community. Police officers in Western Australia, and indeed interstate, national and international law enforcement agencies, are all doing an outstanding job. As Hon Colin Tincknell has previously said, although he forgot it today, this is a very difficult job right around the world. There are a lot more drugs in our society now and many other threats, such as terrorism. There is a lot more violence in our community and police need to do a lot more work.

Western Australian police officers are stepping forward. The McGowan government is providing them with significant resources to support and keep our community safe. This will always be a difficult issue. If we had a bucket of money, we could continue to throw every dollar of it at crime in Western Australia and around the world. We do not; we have to be smart. We are certainly doing the things we said we would do at the last election. We are putting money into the police service. We are also putting money into tackling mental health and drug and alcohol issues. We have seen a great investment, led by Hon Roger Cook, as the Minister for Mental Health with responsibility for drugs and alcohol issues. We have also seen significant resources and leadership from the Minister for Corrective Services, Hon Fran Logan. Of course, Hon Michelle Roberts continues to be a fantastic police minister, working incredibly closely with the Western Australia Police Force and making sure it has the resources it needs to do the job it does in this state.

I am disappointed that Hon Colin Tincknell seeks to play politics today, particularly as he is on the record as saying that this is an issue about which we should not play politics. Obviously, it is about an election in 10 months. I am incredibly disappointed that he has changed his tune on that. We, as a government, remain committed to protecting Western Australians. We, as a government, remain committed to working closely with officers of the WA Police Force to ensure that they have the resources necessary to do their job. We thank them for their work and we will continue to support them. Last but not least, the government will oppose this motion today.

HON NICK GOIRAN (South Metropolitan) [1.45 pm]: Today's *Daily Notice Paper* informs me that Hon Colin Tincknell has moved a motion that this house expresses its concern over the failure of the McGowan government to combat drugs and crime in our community. I only wish that the honourable member had included the words "over the past three years" and "the time for excuses is over". This Labor administration has been one that loves to talk a tough game on crime—no person more so than the Attorney General of Western Australia—yet in preparation for today, I note that despite all the rhetoric we have just heard from the Minister for Environment, the crime statistics, which are publicly available and published by his government and were released as recently as 30 April this year, show an overall increase in crime across Western Australia, including in many key offence types. The Minister for Environment might be interested to know that in the January–March quarter, for which the statistics have been provided by his government, stealing was up by two per cent; robbery, five per cent; family assault, 14 per cent; graffiti, nine per cent; and arson, 23 per cent. How we do reconcile the rhetoric of the Minister for Environment with those statistics that his government published as recently as 30 April? The information we have been provided by those statistics indicates that offences during January were up by three per cent from January the previous year, and the figures for February this year are also up by three per cent from February the previous year. As a member for the South Metropolitan Region, I am particularly concerned to note that in certain suburbs, such as East Fremantle, there has been a 50 per cent increase in crime. In the new suburb Treeby, there has been a 24 per cent increase; in Shelley, 29 per cent; in Rossmoyne, 36 per cent; in Bull Creek, 26 per cent; and in Willetton, 49 per cent—all under this administration.

I note that the Minister for Environment was quick to boast about police resourcing, yet it is clear from the police annual report that there are fewer police now than when this government took office in March 2017. Honourable members should not take my word for it; they should read the annual report of the Western Australia Police Force. In 2017, there were 6 793 police and in 2018, there were 6 808, which is an increase. In 2019, the figure reduced to 6 768 police, fewer than when the government first started. At the moment, Western Australian police are being expected to do more with less. They are having to tackle an increase in crime under this administration with fewer resources. It appears to me that there is not a targeted strategy to recruit more police. Despite the summer recess and the government's fanfare announcement of \$5 million additional funding for police overtime, it seems to me that that was merely a stunt that demonstrates that this government has been playing catch-up ever since it ripped out \$250 million from the 2017 police budget.

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I also note that in recent times this government was quick to boast about Operation Heat Shield. It claimed that 134 more offenders had been caught for retail theft offences in the October–December quarter compared with the same period in the previous year. No doubt that information is correct, but it is not hard to catch more offenders when crime goes up. Although crime has been escalating in Western Australia under this administration, the government is very quick to boast about how it has caught more offenders. How about we not have the offenders in the first place? This has been a consistent pattern with this government. It has been responding in a hotspot-type fashion in that it provides surge response. We can give a few examples, such as Cockburn Gateway Shopping City, Fremantle CBD, Perth CBD and, indeed, Hillarys Boat Harbour. As we look at this more closely, it continues to demonstrate that WA police at the moment are being expected to do more with less.

I am very concerned to note that regional policing districts and the majority of metropolitan policing districts are understaffed when compared with the authorised strength. I will give a couple of examples in the South Metropolitan Region. Cannington’s authorised number of police officers is 262, yet the actual number of police officers by headcount as at 31 January this year was 252. Fremantle has 262 officers instead of 266. We could go on about all these various districts and regions where it is clear that they are understaffed. The backdrop of this is that we have crime increasing and police under-resourced. We then have a toxic culture between police and the current WA government by virtue of the government’s decision not to fulfil its election commitment to give police a 1.5 per cent pay increase. The government has repeatedly broken this commitment when negotiating its wage agreements with the police. I note that as recently as 19 March this year, the WA Police Union remarked that the McGowan government’s latest pay-off was “disrespectful” and that it “reeks of desperation”. Our police officers are working hard to protect our community every day, and they deserve far better treatment than this administration going back on its word prior to the election that it would give them a 1.5 per cent pay increase. Nothing was said about that today by the Minister for Environment representing the government.

Meanwhile, prior to election, this same party committed that it would introduce mandatory jail for meth dealers. I heard the Minister for Environment wax lyrical about its plan for methamphetamine and the like and praising Hon Roger Cook, the Minister for Mental Health. Minister for Environment, what has happened to the 2017 pledge to introduce mandatory jail for meth dealers? The now Premier, when he was in opposition, was quick to say on 6 February 2017 that he was fine with the policy, but he would like to say that it was all too little too late. He was quite happy to criticise our government at the time. Indeed, his shadow Attorney General at the time, who has become the current Attorney General in our state, said that Labor’s tough new laws would cut the head off the snake. This government has been in power for three years. It controls the agenda of legislation in this place, and when it introduced the Misuse of Drugs Amendment (Methylamphetamine Offences) Bill 2017 in the first year of its four-year term, the opposition in the other place attempted to amend the bill to reflect mandatory sentencing, as had been promised by both major parties prior to the election. My colleague and learned friend the member for Hillarys led the charge in that respect to ensure that that bipartisan approach prior to the election was implemented in the legislation. Not only did the government not support the member for Hillarys’ amendments, but also it used its majority to quash the amendments. This government wants the Western Australian public to quietly forget those commitments it made in 2017. It promised mandatory jail for meth dealers, and it had a chance to do that and said no. The government effectively said to the people of Western Australia, “You cannot trust us. What we say prior to an election means nothing.” Prior to the election, the Labor Party said to police officers that it would give them a 1.5 per cent pay increase. Now the government has told them no, so much so that the police union has said that the current government is disrespectful and reeks of desperation.

Putting my shadow Minister for Child Protection hat on momentarily, I indicate to members that I have a grave concern about the impact of drugs in our community on the rearing of children. In particular, I want to draw to members’ attention a 2016 report titled “The Social Costs of Methamphetamine in Australia 2013–14” by the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University. I have to say that this report makes for sobering reading, particularly from a child protection perspective, because of the impact on innocent children and the ongoing ramifications for their entire lives. I will selectively quote from that report, starting at page 100, where it says —

The RAND review reported that in 2005 the cost of methamphetamine-related child endangerment in the US was US\$904.6 million, the third leading social cost of methamphetamine use after premature death/intangible costs of addiction, and crime and criminal justice costs ... In addition to health costs due to exposure to toxic chemicals, parental substance use is a risk factor for neglect, maltreatment, physical abuse and sexual abuse by parents or drug using acquaintances ...

In chapter 8, this report goes on to say —

There are also major impacts on the enduring quality of life to infants and children raised in a neglectful setting ... Child maltreatment in Australia is estimated to contribute 1.4% of all disability-adjusted life years ... in males and 2.4% in females just relating to depression, anxiety and self-harm ...

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Later in the report, at page 103, the authors go on to say —

... the clandestine manufacture of methamphetamine involves a range of volatile and toxic substances, placing residents and neighbours at risk of hazardous exposure. It is estimated that about 30–40% of clandestine laboratories have children present ... Young children are likely to be more susceptible than adults to the adverse effects of toxic exposure and those aged six months to two years are likely to experience high levels of exposure ...

At page 115, the report goes on to say —

Methamphetamine intoxication appears to be a common feature in serious road traffic accidents, for example, Drummer et al. in a study that examined 3,398 road crash fatalities in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia over the period 1990 to 1999 ... found that 4.1% of drivers in road crash fatalities tested positive to amphetamine type stimulants.

I note that the *Daily Notice Paper* includes a bill that looks to address this issue, yet the Road Traffic Amendment (Impaired Driving and Penalties) Bill 2019 has been languishing on the notice paper at the behest of the Leader of the House since 28 November 2019. We have an opportunity to deal with these road crash fatalities whereby people have been testing positive to drugs as well as alcohol, but we cannot do it because this administration and the ongoing decisions of the Leader of the House to bury these types of important bills rather than bring them on for debate prevent us as legislators from being able to address these very issues.

Disturbingly, it is some coincidence that Hon Colin Tincknell's motion, which he gave notice of on 2 April 2020, should happen to be debated today when we heard the disturbing accounts of a Nicholas Rodney McDonald, who was sentenced in the Perth District Court on 12 July 2011 but who has now been unleashed on the community by this administration.

This person's case is deeply disturbing. A WAtoday article of 12 July 2011 states —

McDonald had been on bail for domestic violence offences against his girlfriend when he committed the crimes on a 33-year-old mother, a 25-year-old woman and a 20-year-old university student over a period of two days from November 1, 2010.

The mother had been travelling home from work and got off at Edgewater station to walk to her car, when McDonald came up from behind her and put her in a choke hold, which restricted her breathing.

"She was so scared she lost control and wet herself," prosecution lawyer Laura Christiansen said.

She was dragged to bushes, where McDonald told her, "you're not going anywhere", and pushed her to the ground, Ms Christiansen said. He then set about raping her while calling her names and making derogatory remarks towards her. The ordeal lasted a few minutes but she was left with multiple abrasions to her body.

The next day, after spending the day drinking Bundaberg Rum and beer with his roof-tiling workmates and boss during a Melbourne Cup function, he boarded a train, this time to Glendalough station.

It was early evening when a 25-year-old Asian woman of slim build got off at the station and began to walk home. She became aware of McDonald following her and ran home, managing to reach her front porch before he grabbed her.

McDonald asked "are you scared of me?" before he was interrupted by the woman's male roommate who came to her aid and scared McDonald off, Ms Christiansen said.

He again boarded a train back to the Edgewater station, where he waited on an overpass and within half an hour he spotted a 20-year-old university student.

The student had been walking to her car when he grabbed her from behind and pushed her into her car, climbing in after her and locking the doors.

He told her, "be a good girl and do whatever I tell you to do", the court heard, before subjecting her to a brutal and sustained sexual attack and beating.

This is the person who is being talked about in the media today—my colleague Hon Peter Katsambanis was dealing with this matter earlier today—and this is the type of individual we are talking about. Why is the opposition so angry about this particular situation? No doubt many people in Western Australia are as well. It is because this government's Dangerous Sexual Offenders Review Committee did not make a referral to the Director of Public Prosecutions to consider this particular individual a dangerous sex offender. Is anyone going to do anything about that? Is anyone within government going to apologise to the people of Western Australia? As if a person like that should be able to be released without any consideration as to whether they are a dangerous sex offender! It is up to the courts to decide whether a person is declared a dangerous sex offender; I am not saying that that is the job

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of this government. But this government has a responsibility to make sure that its review committee is operating in a competent fashion and is sending referrals to the DPP so that the court can make those determinations, rather than having this notorious rapist back out on the streets. It is no wonder Hon Colin Tincknell raises a motion like he does today, expressing concerns over the failure of the McGowan government to combat drugs and crime in our community. Look no further than today's case.

I am indebted to the shadow Minister for Police, the honourable member for Hillarys, Peter Katsambanis, who has been prosecuting this matter today. I agree with him entirely that the government must explain how this catastrophic failure happened, what it is going to do about it and how it will satisfy the community that it will never happen again. Do not tell us it has anything to do with COVID-19. It has nothing to do with COVID-19. I do not want to hear from any member of this government that the Dangerous Sexual Offenders Review Committee could not do its job properly over the last few months because of COVID-19. I am sick to death of hearing about that! This government has done a good job of making sure that we have flattened the curve and the people of Western Australia have done a good job complying with the restrictions put forward by this government, but that does not excuse this government unleashing this notorious rapist on the community.

The Minister for Environment during his contribution on behalf of the government this afternoon said nothing about that whatsoever. He was too busy chastising Hon Colin Tincknell for having the temerity to bring this motion before the house. He spent all his time in his character assassination of the leader of the One Nation party instead of dealing with this particular case. Who in government is going to stand today and provide an explanation for this case? Why is it that this Corrective Services-run committee, the Dangerous Sexual Offenders Review Committee, did not make a referral to the DPP? Why? People are entitled to an answer to that. As I say, it is not the responsibility of government to declare people dangerous sex offenders, but it has a responsibility to put the paperwork under the nose of a judge so the judge can actually make that decision. That did not happen. I join with Hon Colin Tincknell and share not only my concern but also my disgust over the failure of the McGowan government to combat drugs and crime in our community, no more so than this particular case that has been highlighted and debated in our community today. I call on someone from government to provide an explanation.

HON ROBIN SCOTT (Mining and Pastoral) [2.05 pm]: Although it is important that we tackle the coronavirus pandemic, we must not lose sight of the other issues in our state. In my electorate there are many issues and regardless of where we live—be it Norseman, Carnarvon, Newman or Kununurra—the people in those towns will tell the same story. They have to live their lives day by day with antisocial behaviour and crime, which is fuelled mostly by drugs. This is not a new issue; generations have grown up with it and now accept it as part of their daily lives. They know the people that they are walking amongst who have severe drug, alcohol and substance abuse issues. Sadly, substance abuse is very high amongst our Indigenous population and this is simply unacceptable. Aboriginal people are not solely to blame. Past and present governments have to accept responsibility for the lack of firm action. Many people in Perth have no idea what goes on on the other side of the Darling Range. I am sure that if mothers in Perth—metropolitan mums—knew that children in the regions were choking on their own vomit, foaming at the mouth and sitting in a corner rocking backwards and forwards with their eyes rolling in their head, they would choke on their skinny lattes. This is a big, big problem, and it is too big for a government that I believe is too concerned about re-election. Premier McGowan's government had an opportunity to do something different, but it did not. It has failed miserably. It is like previous governments before it. It believes that success is measured in the amount of dollars it is spending and that a hike in spending fixes the problem when in actual fact it is avoiding the problem. Different politicians take on this portfolio and, unfortunately, the politician keeps changing due to elections or changes within their own party. In the end, no-one is held responsible and the problem just gets worse. Eventually, our society will pay for this procrastination.

When asked how drug problems are being managed, the answer is successfully. The government thinks success is measured by the amount of dollars being spent. When asked how many lives are saved, no answer is the answer. The government needs to be more involved. Just writing out cheques on behalf of taxpayers is not good enough. Those cheques go to hundreds of agencies—millions, if not billions, of dollars are handed out. I believe that that money does not have to be accounted for where it is spent. No money, not one single cent, should be given to any agency without a plan, and I do not mean a business plan. A business plan cannot explain a hike in drug use. It does not project success stories or a reduction in drug use. All this work is outsourced. That prevents the government from getting its hands dirty. We have created a completely ineffective and sometimes crooked industry. According to the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet run through Edith Cowan University, there are 287 agencies, and there may be many, many more that are not registered. With 287 agencies, that is 287 directors, 287 management structures, 287 property leases and 287 lunch rooms that need topping up daily with biscuits and coffee. I am aware that these agencies perform different roles and work in different regions, but surely there must be an overlap somewhere. Is the taxpayer getting an efficient bang for their buck? The proof of the pudding is in the pudding. There are 287 agencies and there has been no improvement in the lives of our Indigenous people and the problem is only getting worse.

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For a moment, let us forget about the taxpayer. Let us forget about the people living in regional towns who suffer antisocial behaviour day after day. Let us concentrate on the Aboriginal kids whose lives have been ruined, generation after generation, through drug use. Let us not forget the ones who lose their life through suicide. When do we stop and say enough is enough? When will we pull our finger out and actually do something? We can save money, but, more importantly, we can save lives. Non-performing agencies should be disbanded and their funds distributed among performing agencies. That raises my next question: how do we measure the performance of agencies? We do it through key performance indicators and rubberstamping. I doubt that this paperwork receives any scrutiny. We need a holistic approach. I am aware that agencies have to stick to their guidelines. If an agency that handles domestic problems comes across a domestic violence problem, it has to be handballed to another agency. By the time that agency responds, it is too late. The government oversees the management and the structure of the strategy, but the whole strategy is failing. There are simple measures that we could implement. Volatile substance abuse, mainly paint sniffing and glue sniffing, could and should be made illegal. I could go to Bunnings right now, buy a can of my favourite spray paint and bring it back to the Parliament. When the regular smokers go outside for a fag, I could join them. I would not have a fag, but I could have a snort on my spray can if I wanted to and nobody in this chamber could do anything about it.

I will go back to the agencies. I know I bashed them, but I do sympathise with them. They have to work within the legal framework, which is completely unfit for purpose. Agency staff cannot restrain a child causing damage unless it is classified as major property damage. An example, which I am sure everyone has heard, was a child who was jumping on car roofs. He had caved in five car roofs and was about to jump onto the sixth when he was restrained by an agency worker. That agency worker was reprimanded as a result of a debate about whether damage to six car roofs was classified as major property damage, all because of political correctness and a fear of using a firm hand. I would like to see agency officers who have the power to pull these kids off the street when it is obvious that they are high on drugs or are affected by substance abuse, take them to a safe place, provide them with a proper meal, give them a safe place to sleep and, more importantly, let these children see that they are with an adult who cares for them. Most of these children have never had any care or attention from their own families. We have to show these kids that we care and that they have a future without drugs. Manual intervention should be a priority to get them off the street and break their addiction.

Pauline Hanson's One Nation supports compulsory rehabilitation policy. We have to stop kids from killing themselves. These kids can no longer think for themselves. They have had to put up with physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and drug abuse. Someone who has suffered that amount of misery in such a short life cannot do it alone—they just cannot—but with a firm hand we could help them. The alternative is what we see happening in the regions today. Children are being encouraged by their older siblings to take up drug and substance abuse. Parents who use drugs and alcohol allow their children to do the same. I still see groups of remote visitors come into Kalgoorlie–Boulder. When I leave my office in the evening, I can look up the street and see groups of 10 or 12 people sitting in a circle, huddled in their blankets. This environment breeds drug use. No wonder these children see no future for themselves in a modern world.

The government's response has been to produce a paper called "A Path Forward", which focuses on culture to solve problems using Aboriginal-led solutions. What a total waste of time and money that was and is. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs should get his head out of the clouds and his feet out from underneath his desk. He should come to the regions and show me how this could possibly help these people. This is why the government is failing. We have a federal Minister for Indigenous Australians and a state Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Both are part Aboriginal, yet no progress has been made for decades.

We need to get back to basics. These kids need someone who cares for them, who gives them positive reinforcement when they get it right and who shows them that there are consequences when they get it wrong. We have facilities in the regions that are not being used or are barely being used. They could be used to house these kids, to get them out of harm's way and to break the drug cycle. Compulsory rehabilitation can provide this. Pauline Hanson's One Nation believes that we could do more and we need to do more. The finer mechanics of compulsory rehabilitation can be debated later. The current system is not working and we need a firmer hand. When it comes to things for which we all share the responsibility and cost, we turn to the government; that is its job and that is why we pay our taxes. We expect that money to be used wisely and for the benefit of all Western Australians, including those from regional towns and remote communities. While the government stays soft and wastes money, we will never achieve results. The government has failed on tackling drugs and crime, and because of that it has blood on its hands.

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [2.15 pm]: I rise because I most certainly want to speak on this motion. Members are no doubt aware that I would very much like to speak on the complex issues that arise from the use of alcohol and other drugs. It is important to note that I am not going to be coming out with bouquets for this government or previous governments because I do not believe that any government, either state or federal or of any political persuasion, has yet cracked the very difficult nut of how to tackle the very complex and wicked

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issue of drug use within our community. I always welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues. We all know, and I say it all the time, that illicit drug use and the crime that arises from that cause an immense amount of suffering and pain within the community. We know that the current approach is simply not working. Our prisons are filled with drug users and people who have committed a range of offences as a result of drug use. We know that black markets for illicit drugs are thriving. In Western Australia, around 23 000 drug-related offences for either possession or dealing are recorded each year. I note that that number has declined slightly from the five-year average, but illicit drug use costs our country billions of dollars every year in lost productivity, health care and dealing with the consequences of crime.

Our approach to illicit drug use and crime more generally needs to start coming from a strong evidence-based perspective and not just rely on cheap slogans to win over some sort of populist position. We need to look at where the evidence takes us to what actually works. It is vital to look at what has been proven to reduce drug-related harm and crime. Just as important, it is essential that we also look at what has been tried and what has failed. It is precisely for this reason that this house set up what ended up being a more than yearlong committee inquiry to look into the approaches to reduce illicit drug use. One of the recommendations that came out of the methamphetamine action plan was that a committee of this sort be established for the exact purpose of looking at the regime of how we are tackling drugs. One of the witnesses who attended a public hearing for that inquiry was Mr Ron Alexander, the chair of the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce. He indicated that it had always been the desire of that inquiry to have a cross-party committee look into how we treat the issue of illicit drug use because evidence from the meth inquiry had led the task force to realise that that issue needed to be looked at.

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to raise the findings and the recommendations of the report “Help, Not Handcuffs: Evidence-Based Approaches to Reducing Harm from Illicit Drug Use”. I again remind members that this ended up being a consensus report that was comprehensive and evidence based. The committee found that a number of approaches used within Australia and also internationally had successfully reduced drug-related harm by shifting policy priorities from prohibition towards health prevention and harm reduction.

The committee found that by far the most effective approach involves defining and treating drug use as a health and a social issue rather than a criminal justice issue. As a result, one of the many comprehensive recommendations in this report is that the committee has called on the Western Australian government to do just that. It is really important to note that as part of the work of this committee, in response to the many submissions we received, it decided it was important to not simply look at those countries held up as being a great success on taking a health-based approach to drug use, but also those countries that have taken a really strong tough-on-crime approach to see how successful that approach has been. Sweden has been looked at comprehensively and it had been proffered as an example in some of the submissions. Sweden has taken a very punitive approach to the prohibition of illicit drugs. The committee went to Sweden and met with multiple people over many days, from members of Parliament to researchers to people in drug services. Pretty much across the board, people in Sweden said that its very strong tough-on-crime approach to drugs does not work and that they would not recommend it. In fact, quite a lot of people were bewildered that anyone would want to come to their country to see how it operates as an example. That became a very telling example of what not to do. That does not mean that Sweden does everything poorly, and there are some really important recommendations in the report that I recommend members look at. I have noticed that some elements seem to have been picked up by the McGowan government, but we will see. It is really important that members, rather than taking the utterly inaccurate view that the committee looked at only jurisdictions that have successfully implemented a health-based approach, actually read the report and recognise that the committee took a very comprehensive view of a number of jurisdictions and approaches, and as a result was able to make informed, evidence-based and unanimous recommendations.

Remember, there are three elements to addressing illicit drug use. It is about reducing supply, reducing demand and, importantly, harm reduction. Addressing supply is important and is often the element we focus on most when it comes to elections, but, unfortunately, on its own it has a very limited capacity to reduce drug use. Currently, over two-thirds of drug-related government spending goes towards law enforcement efforts to target drug supply. Despite this, we know that illicit drugs remain widespread and relatively cheap, and, unfortunately, very easy to obtain. We need to recognise that interrupting supply will always be particularly challenging in Western Australia, given our state’s size and geography. Although it is absolutely an important part of the strategy for how we deal with illicit drug use, it is clear that reducing supply cannot be the only strategy for reducing drug-related harm. I note the impact of COVID-19 border closures on meth supply. I understand that the cost of meth has increased significantly as supplies have reduced with the borders closed and travel restricted. This is very interesting and welcome news, but that will not last forever and there is now a risk that we will have an increase in home-produced illicit drugs.

There is, of course, the issue of making sure that we address demand as well. This is when we start to look at ensuring that we have early intervention and prevention programs. Addressing demand involves preventing the uptake and

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delaying the onset of drug use, reducing drug misuse and supporting people to recover. The committee found that there were significant gaps in work to address demand within Western Australia, including in the availability of drug treatment services. I think everyone would agree that people who need help for drug-related issues should be able to access help in a timely manner. It should not matter that a person lives in Perth or a regional or remote area, or that they are in our prison system. But, unfortunately, at the moment, it is not the case that a person who needs immediate assistance with illicit drug abuse issues can access the support that they need. People living outside the metropolitan area face increased risk factors for problematic drug and alcohol use, and greater challenges accessing drug and alcohol treatment services. The committee found that a person living in Bunbury might have to wait six weeks to even access a drug and alcohol counsellor, a person living in Albany does not have access to residential treatment services and there is a lack of specialist addiction physicians and psychiatrists in our hospitals and the public health system across the entire state. The financial and human cost of not having sufficient services is huge, and it is a false economy if we are not able to invest in these essential areas. Addressing this shortfall will be crucial if the government is going to adequately address drug-related harm.

The report's recommendations also talk to the need to fund the "Western Australia Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–25". I have been talking about this for the three years that I have been in the fortieth Parliament. We have found that we are simply not keeping pace. I note that there is increasing agitation from community-managed services to have this addressed, and it is going to be more and not less of an issue as we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis.

The committee looked in quite a lot of detail at the issue of diversion. The committee found that diverting people whose offending is related to drug use away from the criminal justice system into health interventions has been shown to be an effective way to reduce the adverse health, social and economic harms associated with drug use. WA has some very important police and court diversion programs, including our very successful Drug Court, which has been going for a number of years, but these are not working as well as they could potentially. The committee made a range of recommendations around diversion strategies, including broadening the eligibility criteria for the Drug Court and expanding it to the regions. This is consistent with a Law Reform Commission report from over a decade ago. Successful diversion relies upon treatment services being available to divert people, too, of course. If these services are not available, we end up with less effective and much more expensive criminal justice responses, including prison.

I will say a little bit more about prisons. The committee talked about and looked at them specifically, and its members went to one of the prisons as well. A 2013 survey of prisoners who had recently arrived in a Western Australian prison found that 74 per cent of women and 77 per cent of men met the criteria for a clinically diagnosable alcohol and/or drug disorder. Despite imprisonment presenting what the Auditor General has recently characterised as an ideal opportunity for the state to intervene in the cycle of addiction and drug-related crime, the committee found that many prisoners in WA cannot access drug treatment opportunities while they are in our prisons. In April last year, only 10.7 per cent of prisoners discharged from a drug possession-related sentence had completed a drug treatment program. In 2017, approximately 65 per cent of prisoners could not access a drug treatment program due to being remanded in custody or serving a sentence of six months or less. Frankly, I think this is appalling, and the situation does not seem to be improving. I think the community would rightly expect that someone who has been sentenced for drug-related offences would be required, but also able, to access treatment services, whether that be in the prison or in the community, especially when the treatment has been court mandated. I think we should be pretty angry and the community is entitled to be outraged that this is far too often simply not the case. To provide one very recent example, I quote the opening paragraph of an article in *The Kimberley Echo* from last Thursday —

An East Kimberley man will spend nearly a year in prison for alcohol and driving offences after a government-run rehabilitation program was unable to provide his court-mandated treatment.

The program in question was Kununurra's Indigenous diversion program. This government-run program is administered by the Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service. I would love the minister to be able to tell me that this newspaper article is not factual, but I have heard similar stories to this far too many times. There is no community benefit in spending \$300 a day to keep an adult in prison for drug-related offending when we have not resourced community programs to be able to meet their needs. As I have mentioned, there is also little expectation that this individual, if sent to prison, will get access to the treatment services there either. Although drug treatment programs in prisons such as Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison are promising initiatives—as I mentioned, we went there—we need adequate services across the whole prison estate. I was contacted last week by a family member of a young man who is in prison for drug-related offences. He is not going to be eligible for parole because he has not completed a drug and alcohol program. To be very clear, he wants to do the program—he is desperate to do the program—but it has simply not been made available. This is happening all the time. It is exacerbating pressure on our prison system, which we know is already overcrowded, and results in people being released without having any of their criminogenic needs addressed. Not only are specific drug and alcohol treatment needs not being

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addressed in prison, but also this is on top of their other health needs, including mental health care, not being met. People are being released into homelessness all the time, so do not be surprised that people still have drug and alcohol issues. I do not think it is at all surprising that more than four out of 10 adult prisoners are returning to prison or to community corrections. We are missing an opportunity to reduce long-term costs, address some of the drivers of criminal behaviour and help set people up so that they can be successful, law-abiding citizens upon release. It is clearly not an effective way to address either drugs or crime within our community.

The evidence from jurisdictions across the world indicates that the most effective way to reduce drug-related harm is through moving to a health-based approach. In order to be successful, there must be sufficient treatment services when and where people need to access them. The evidence to the committee was very loud and clear. If someone has reached crisis point and needs help, we need to help them then. We do not wait for two weeks. We do not wait for six weeks. We need to make sure that those services are there at the point that someone has reached rock bottom and wants help. Services are also needed to address the other social needs of drug users that contribute to their drug use, addressing issues of trauma, health, mental health and accommodation needs.

The committee report totals nearly 200 pages and covers a broad range of issues. We looked at the excellent WA Police Force mental health co-response program, and I absolutely support its expansion to drug users and regional areas. We call for more investment in harm reduction, as well as the development of a harm reduction strategy for Western Australia, which is something we do not have and recognise we absolutely need. I really hope the government will pick up on this work, and I hope that when it finally gives its response to this community report, it will be favourable to these recommendations. The committee has also called for better data collection in analysis and reporting, because we found that the true extent of drug-related offending in Western Australia is not even known or measured, and that the Department of Justice was not collecting information on Drug Court completion rates, recidivism rates or even costs. This is really basic, vital information, and was also a recommendation of a 2006 review of the court. This recommendation was made 14 years ago and it still has not happened.

Moving briefly away from the committee's work, I also want to take the opportunity to talk about youth justice again and the government's approach to crime and young people. We know that research demonstrates that the earlier a child becomes involved with the justice system, the more likely they will go on to offend again and end up in the adult justice system. This means that we need to have a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention in family support and child protection. Unsurprisingly, jurisdictions that base their youth justice system on a holistic approach that looks at making sure they are addressing children's housing, health, mental health, education and family support needs have much better outcomes. According to data released last year, almost 82 per cent of young people who were released from youth detention in Western Australia ended up being returned to either sentence detention or adult custody within five years. I think this is a horrendous statistic. I have raised many concerns before about our overall approach to vulnerable young people in WA, a lack of investment in family support, support for children who have disengaged from schooling, and specialised mental health support, and I am still waiting for the all-of-government approach to foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Specifically on youth justice, there has still been no reform of the Banksia Hill Detention Centre, which is absolutely not fit for purpose. This has been found to be the case over and over again. I remain disappointed that the Young Offenders Act has still not been prioritised as an area of reform, and we are still locking up children as young as 10 years old.

The subject of the motion is broad and there are many important aspects that I have not touched on. Of course, no-one can deny that dealing with drugs and crime are challenging issues, but what we do know is that a tough on crime, populist stance that is not backed by evidence is a futile waste of taxpayers' money. I urge people to read the committee report and to read it properly.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural) [2.36 pm]: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Nationals WA to talk to the motion brought to the house by Hon Colin Tincknell. In a similar way to Hon Alison Xamon, I want to focus my comments around the Select Committee into Alternate Approaches to Reducing Illicit Drug Use and its Effects on the Community report into methods to reduce the harms from illicit drugs. I want to start by talking about a couple of things from that committee and that report.

I think it is important to note that the report itself is really focused in many respects on the reduction on the demand side of the equation, if you like. We have heard others talk today about the supply side of the equation—about hard borders and the sorts of things that reduce the availability of illicit drugs in this state. I think, if anything good can come out of COVID-19, there is a massive opportunity that has come out of this circumstance, in which government has the opportunity to look at what those border closures have done for the importation and availability of drugs, the price of drugs, and, as a result, the crimes and associated harms related to those drugs. I hope the government is taking that very seriously. I encourage it to analyse the numbers that become available as further reporting is done, including the wastewater reporting, which is probably not too far away.

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This is a fairly broad motion. As I said, I will focus on some of the issues surrounding illicit drugs. Again, the statistics provided by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission in its wastewater drug monitoring report do not paint a good picture for Western Australia at all. Our use of methamphetamine is way above the national average. Particularly in a regional context, those numbers are dire and very high. I think that speaks to the need for us to address the issues around drug consumption, availability et cetera in a regional context as well. In some other areas, we have less of an issue compared with other states; however, as we all know, more than any other drug, methamphetamine creates significant harm for not only the user, but also the community around those people. That is the biggest concern with methamphetamine, and the reports showing Western Australian methamphetamine consumption indicate a real problem that needs to be dealt with from a government perspective.

I move to the report of the select committee, “Help, Not Handcuffs: Evidence-Based Approaches to Reducing Harm from Illicit Drug Use”. “Evidence-based” is the important bit, as Hon Alison Xamon alluded to. This is about evidence. It is about making sure, and what this committee did was understand the evidence around illicit drugs and their effects on people and what can be done to reduce the harms that those illicit drugs create. As I said earlier, that is focusing on the demand side of the equation rather than the supply side of the equation. A two-pronged approach is needed, but let us talk about the demand side a bit. A moment ago, I talked a little bit about methamphetamine and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission report. The rate of illicit drug use in Western Australia has remained stable at about 16.6 per cent over time, and that is about one per cent higher than the national average. As I said before, we have the highest rates of meth and ecstasy use, and regional WA had Australia’s third highest rate of drug use in the past 12 months, at 22 per cent. It is a particular issue that drugs have become such a problem in regional Western Australia, and it will require the focus of government and politicians of all persuasions to deal with it. Although drug use has declined a little bit since 2010, the problems associated with the use of drugs have not declined, and that is the important thing. The prevalence of methamphetamine and the issues associated with its use will naturally result in more harms in the community and to users, and that presents a real challenge for government to deal with. Some of those harms are primarily economic. Obviously, there are the physical harms to the user from methamphetamine, as it causes damage to the user’s brain, but there are also the obvious harms to others around the drug user. It may not be a direct harm; it may not be a physical interaction. Members can imagine the anguish that families go through when a loved one is addicted to a drug like methamphetamine, so there is a need for support for them, as well as for the user.

The Select Committee into Alternate Approaches to Reducing Illicit Drug Use and its Effects on the Community did a fantastic job of investigating and understanding the various harms from different drugs and looking at the different aspects of those harms and how they should be managed. We have to ensure that when we talk about dealing with drugs and crime, we are not just talking about locking people up and throwing away the key, because that does not really deal with the problem. The issue is a problem of addiction—a problem of disease—which requires a health-based approach. It requires an understanding of the particular drug, because they are all different. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to dealing with issues around drugs. It is very important that when we have an approach, we are comprehensive and understand fully what we are doing, which is why this report is so important. The report tabled in November last year by the select committee is a very good, comprehensive report. As Hon Alison Xamon said before, it is a consensus report by members from a variety of different political persuasions who all had the same evidence presented to them and arrived at the same conclusions at the end of the day. It is very disappointing that although this report was tabled in November 2019, on 11 February 2020, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Mental Health made a statement in this place in which she said —

The response would normally have been tabled on 23 January 2020, but due to the need for collaboration across government agencies, it has been delayed.

Okay; we accept the delay to some extent, but the next sentence says it all —

Subject to cabinet’s endorsement, the response to the final report will be tabled as soon as possible.

There is no end date. There is no idea when a response will be tabled—a response to a comprehensive report that offers some very good guidance on a framework to manage illicit drugs and reduce the harms associated with them in the Western Australian community. It is a framework that should provide guidance for a government of any persuasion, yet there has been no response. We do not know what, if anything, the government is going to do with the information in this report. That is extremely disappointing for not just members of the committee, but also the community of Western Australia and all the people who took the time to provide submissions to the committee and presented evidence. Some of that evidence was heart-wrenching but important. For all those people, it is very disappointing that this government has not yet responded to the committee’s findings and recommendations in the report, so I look forward to that happening at some point soon. In fact, it would be good if the responsible minister could give us a date when the government is likely to reply.

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We have talked a lot about the problem in this state over many years. Equally, this government has talked about the problem and went to the election with a number of different promises about methamphetamine. We have had the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce, which made some good recommendations, and the select committee, which also made some good recommendations. Now is the time for action. We need to see things happen in this space. In particular, I want to talk about the issue that confronts our prisoners in this state, many of whom have issues with drug use and addiction. As Hon Alison Xamon said, they cannot get the help they need. They get locked away in prison and, even if they are on remand, they cannot get access to the treatment services they need and they cannot get access to a management plan to help them with their addiction, so the problem does not go away. We are not fixing the problem by putting people in jail, because when they are in there, we are not dealing with it. Prisoners on remand cannot even access drug treatment services. That is a massive issue. I accept that the government has done some work on the treatment program in one of the prisons in Western Australia. It is a great program. Committee members visited that prison and were very impressed with what they saw, but, again, there is still this massive issue of prisoners being locked in jail with no ability to recover from the illness they are afflicted with and reducing the overall demand for illicit drugs. I recommend highly that the government get on with the job of, firstly, gathering the numbers—as Hon Alison Xamon said, there are statistics that are required to understand these things—and, secondly, providing treatment services to prisoners. Again, all of that is in this report. If the government is serious, it will have read the report and it will respond to it. We will know what that response is at a point in time not too far away.

I want to talk a little bit about the issue of drugs in a regional context. It is important that we understand that services that may be fairly difficult to access in a metropolitan context are impossible to access in a regional context. That is a massive problem, given that the methamphetamine consumption rate in regional Western Australia in particular is very high; it is higher than the rate in the metropolitan area. It is a very important issue and a very important area of work. The government needs to ensure that we find a much better way to deliver the services that regional Western Australians need in order to deal with drugs and their associated harms. It is not just about the rehabilitation and treatment of users; it is also mental health related. As we know, and I am sure Hon Alison Xamon would agree, it is a struggle to access mental health services in the metropolitan context and it is even more so in a regional context. We must ensure that the government follows the plans that are outlined in this report and understands them and acts. It took the committee more than 12 months to consider all the various issues that face those people who are challenged by an addiction to drugs. At the moment, we are waiting to hear the response from the government. I look forward to it coming through very soon so that this state can develop a comprehensive plan. It is something that crosses the boundaries of politics. It is something that both sides of the chamber should work on together to reduce the harm from drugs for everyone right across the community. As I said at the commencement of my contribution, that involves reducing the supply, as well as the demand. It involves working hard with law enforcement agencies to ensure that they have the tools they need to combat the supply of illegal drugs. Police officers who deal with addicts—those who suffer from the affliction of an addiction to drugs—need the right tools from a legal perspective to deal with them. That is not just about a punitive punishment or a criminal record, because the committee found clearly that those things make the problem worse. Giving someone a criminal record for a relatively minor possession offence or similar is a bad outcome that ends up creating problems for that person down the track, and they may never recover from that. It is an opportunity to reform those legislative mechanisms to ensure that they are appropriate. All the information is in this report. I encourage the government to read it. I thank the honourable member for bringing this motion before us today and I indicate that we will support it.

The PRESIDENT: Hon Adele Farina has the call. I remind the member that five minutes before the end of the time for this motion, I will interrupt to see whether the mover wants to make a reply.

HON ADELE FARINA (South West) [2.49 pm]: Thank you very much, Madam President. I am well aware of the standing order and I hope not to even take up 10 minutes. I just want to respond to a swipe that Hon Colin Tincknell took at me at the beginning of his address on this motion. I worked very long and hard over the nine years of the previous Barnett government, lobbying and raising the issue of the need for drug rehabilitation beds in the south west. Sadly, under the Barnett government, those calls that I made together with others in the south west fell on deaf ears. I was pleased that in the lead-up to the last election, Mark McGowan promised to commit \$18 million for a 33-bed new residential drug rehabilitation facility in the south west. That was the culmination of nine hard years of lobbying and advocating. At the time that announcement was made, existing in the south west was a private rehabilitation clinic, the Blackwood River Clinic in Nannup, which had 20 rehabilitation beds. It opened in about 2016 but, sadly, closed on 6 March 2019. Following the announcement by Mark McGowan about our commitment to deliver a residential drug rehabilitation facility, Palmerston purchased a facility at Brunswick Junction for a residential drug rehabilitation facility. In light of those developments, and in an effort to deliver drug rehabilitation beds to the south west at the earliest possible opportunity, Mark McGowan, once elected to government, decided to deliver the beds that were desperately needed in the south west rather than take the two years that would be required to build

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a new facility. The Blackwood River Clinic, which had capacity for at least 20 beds, had closed and was sitting idle, and Palmerston had invested in the Brunswick Junction facility and was also looking for funding for the delivery of rehabilitation beds. Rather than spend money building a new facility and taking two years to deliver the much-needed rehabilitation beds in the south west, the government elected to fund 19 residential beds at Brunswick Junction, followed by another 15 special treatment beds. In addition, the government funded Cyrenian House to provide 12 beds and three low medical withdrawal beds at the former Blackwood River Clinic at Nannup, making use of that clinic that had closed. Further, based on my strong representation, additional funding was provided to the South West Community Alcohol and Drug Service, which assists people needing support for drug rehabilitation but who, for personal reasons, cannot go into a residential drug rehabilitation facility.

These were important investments by the McGowan government. In addition, the government helped support Doors Wide Open, which established its premises in Bunbury and provides counselling support for people who have had a problem with drugs and who are trying to get clean, and also for the families. The pressure on families supporting people to become clean can be extremely difficult. The government promised a 33-bed rehabilitation facility. It has actually delivered 49 beds in the South West Region. I want to put that on the record to correct the statement that was made by Hon Colin Tincknell. The reality is that the McGowan government has delivered for the south west. That is not to say that there is not more that needs to be done; there is always more that needs to be done and can be done. However, the commitment the government made to the south west and its delivery on that commitment are very important and are making a difference in the south west. I am proud of my record in this space and the work I continue to do in this space delivering to the people of the south west.

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [2.56 pm] — in reply: It was interesting to listen to all the contributions to this debate. Yes, I was critical of the government because I was simply pointing out that the government has had three years and the issue is getting worse, not better; that is a fact. Harm minimisation and harsh penalties are important. I know that. Rehabilitation centres are important. However, no proper education program is running. As I mentioned before, the grim reaper campaign was so effective that it wiped out AIDS in one generation. The anti-smoking campaign made smoking uncool, yet we have not attempted in any real terms to run an education program or advertising program to make drugs not cool. When we talk about harm minimisation and the language softens, we are not giving the right message to the young people of this state. We need to make it clear that education is the key, and the overriding message in our society should be that illicit drugs are bad for people and should not be consumed. That is why they are illegal. It is a protection, yet we are not saying that. We are not getting that message across. The perception of many young people is that drugs are not that dangerous: “They’re a bit of fun and I’ll be fine.” We know now that they are not fine. It is clear that once people get into that circle, they are badly affected, and so is everyone who comes into contact with them, including the victims of their crimes that follow on from that.

I was merely stating to the government, to the minister, that it cannot make promises and then not be held to account. We will always do that. I note that the minister did not refute the budget cuts in the prevention budget. There was no mention of the 150 per cent rise in cocaine use. The national average is a 51 per cent rise; in Western Australia it is a 150 per cent rise. The increase in heroin use in WA is 73 per cent; the national average is a 13.4 per cent rise. As I mentioned, the increase in ecstasy—MDMA—use is 84 per cent. It is going up—double in this state. We are losing the battle. That is what I was saying. I was holding the government to account for the current figures.

We need a comprehensive plan to reduce drug use. Yes, we need those rehabilitation centres and we need to increase our harm minimisation programs. I gave very good coverage of justice reinvestment programs. I am saying to the government that four other states have made that investment. I need this government to show that commitment to make that investment as well. Do not just leave it to community groups.

I turn to police FTEs. I am a regional member and FTEs in the midwest and the Gascoyne are down. They are down in the south west, the wheatbelt, goldfields—Esperance, the Pilbara, Mandurah and the great southern. That is the difference with FTEs on the ground right now. They are the latest figures. I say that the Western Australia Police Force is doing a fantastic job. I have seen the collars that have been made on meth. I am a great supporter of the police force, but it needs more support, more men on the ground and more frontline police.

As I said, the answer to this drug problem in Australia is education. We have not spent enough money, time and effort. We have allowed kids to think that drugs are okay, that they are even cool. Many leading members of our society also take drugs and they are sending the wrong message. This Parliament and this government need to send the right message and get its education program running well.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Extract from *Hansard*
[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 13 May 2020]
p2537e-2553a

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Nick Goiran; Hon Robin Scott; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Adele Farina

Ayes (20)

Hon Martin Aldridge
Hon Jacqui Boydell
Hon Robin Chapple
Hon Tim Clifford
Hon Peter Collier

Hon Colin de Grussa
Hon Diane Evers
Hon Donna Faragher
Hon Nick Goiran
Hon Colin Holt

Hon Rick Mazza
Hon Michael Mischin
Hon Simon O'Brien
Hon Robin Scott
Hon Tjorn Sibma

Hon Aaron Stonehouse
Hon Dr Steve Thomas
Hon Colin Tincknell
Hon Alison Xamon
Hon Ken Baston (*Teller*)

Noes (12)

Hon Alanna Clohesy
Hon Stephen Dawson
Hon Sue Ellery

Hon Adele Farina
Hon Laurie Graham
Hon Kyle McGinn

Hon Martin Pritchard
Hon Samantha Rowe
Hon Matthew Swinbourn

Hon Dr Sally Talbot
Hon Darren West
Hon Pierre Yang (*Teller*)

Question thus passed.