

YOUTH SERVICES — FUNDING

Motion

HON DAVE GRILLS (Mining and Pastoral) [11.27 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house, in light of the commencement of National Youth Week on Friday, urges the federal government to allocate adequate and continued funding to youth services to ensure the needs of young Western Australians are met.

I apologise for being late. I thought I was due to speak at 11.30 this morning.

The PRESIDENT: You are all right; the floor is all yours.

Hon Ken Travers: It was another government cut!

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Hon Ken Travers would say that!

I would first like to acknowledge National Youth Week, which commences on Friday, 4 April and runs until Sunday, 13 April. National Youth Week festivities commence in the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder on Friday following the successful partnership between the Liberal–National government, the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder and non-government organisations such as Propel Youth Arts WA. The Kalgoorlie–Boulder celebrations will provide the opportunity for young people to celebrate what it means to be a young person living in regional WA. Following the Kalgoorlie–Boulder launch, youth-related events will be held throughout the state during the course of the week. National Youth Week is the largest celebration of young people aged from 12 to 25 years on the Australian calendar. It provides young people with an opportunity to express ideas, showcase talents and have their voices heard.

Given that National Youth Week commences on Friday, it is an appropriate time to recognise the tremendous youth service providers in our community. Youth service programs play a crucial role in creating links between education, training and employment to ensure that young people, and particularly disengaged youth, can investigate these paths. I would like to take the chance to highlight one of these youth programs, Youth Connections. The Youth Connections program provides a holistic approach to servicing disengaged youth. The program provides services to people aged between 13 and 19 years. The program is available to eligible young people who are most at risk of disengaging or are already disengaged from education, family and/or community. In the Youth Connections program providers work with the spectrum of at-risk youth, including those who are most at risk of disengaging from school through to those who are severely disengaged from education, family and community. The aim of Youth Connections is to support young people to reconnect with education or training and to build resilience, skills and attributes to promote positive life choices and wellbeing. Services under the Youth Connections program are provided by way of individualised case management that enables participants to remain engaged and to re-engage them with education and/or further training and to improve their ability to make positive life choices. Some of the strengths of the Youth Connections programs include outreach with the most disengaged and inactive youth who are not in receipt of income support, and the capacity to provide intensive support and individual case management. This practice in turns leads to the crucial development of trust and understanding between the caseworker and program participant. Other strengths of the program include flexibility for services to be tailored to suit individuals and complement both local and state initiatives; and the ability to collaborate with other service providers to improve the support available to the program participants.

Hon Wayne Martin, AC, Chief Justice of Western Australia, in his address to the National Youth Health Conference on 15 November 2013 highlighted the importance of identifying young persons at risk in order to divert them away from the criminal justice system. The Chief Justice stated —

... it is at least as important that we devote very significant efforts to identifying young persons at risk, with a view to diverting those persons away from the criminal justice system and placing them in a community-based therapeutic environment which will reduce the risks of offending behaviour.

The Chief Justice further explained that in order to fully cater for at-risk youth, cross-agency cooperation is required to ensure that all relevant issues such as health, housing, employment and schooling can be identified and addressed. The individualised case management model that Youth Connections has adopted allows for a program to be tailored according to the needs of the participant. This is in line with the recommendations of the Chief Justice and is recognised as best practice.

I now provide an example to the house about the impact that youth service programs can have on a young life. Again, I will touch on the work of Youth Connections in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. A 17-year-old Kalgoorlie–Boulder girl became homeless due to family breakdown. To make matters worse, during this time she was in secondary school and attempting to sit exams and going through other issues that were happening in her life. She was also

experiencing some issues with depression, and she had no finances. Youth Connections was able to assist her by helping her to obtain a Centrelink benefit, by securing emergency accommodation, by helping her to maintain attendance at school, providing emotional support and assisting with life skills by helping her obtain her birth certificate to apply for a learner's permit. Youth Connections also provided her with the opportunity and helped her to build a resume so she could gain employment. Twelve months later the story has a good ending. With the help of Youth Connections, this young lady has now reunited with her father and returned to the family home. She obtained casual employment, which helped her with her finances, and she graduated from secondary school. She also improved her emotional position and is now coping well with life's challenges. At the moment she plans to move to Perth to study media, because she wishes to become a movie director. That is not the only story I know of, thanks to my involvement with young folk around the goldfields, but if that is not a good story, I will give this up!

I now touch on funding for Youth Connections. The Youth Connections program is federally funded under a \$288 million four-year agreement that is due to expire in December 2014. The Australian Council of Social Service's submission to the Senate inquiry into the Abbott government's Commission of Audit dated 22 February this year raised a number of points. It referred to an evaluation of the Youth Connections program nationally, which found that current funding of the program was enough to reach only one-quarter of the target group of at-risk school leavers. It stated that analysis by Mission Australia found that if the 30 000 young people supported by Youth Connections each year ended up on income support, the potential cost to the government would be greater than \$390 million a year. Also, a Youth Connections national network survey found that 94.2 per cent of participants were in education or employment six months after completing its program. Given the current rate of youth unemployment of 12 per cent, which is double the general unemployment rate, programs that have a proven track record in supporting youth participation in employment, education and training should be a priority. The figure is much higher than 12 per cent in many pockets of the state, with reports of youth unemployment hitting 18 per cent in the Mandurah region. Australian Bureau of Statistics data show that over the past two years youth unemployment jumped 70 per cent in outback Western Australia—an area covering Kalgoorlie, Exmouth and Kununurra—and 65 per cent in the wheatbelt. Nationally, the situation is even grimmer with reports that on average one in four 18 to 19-year-olds are not fully engaged in work, school or training. Unfortunately, the labour market for youth has not picked up since the global financial crisis in 2008. Given these alarming youth employment statistics, governments must continue to support programs such as Youth Connections; they are making a difference to the lives of so many young Australians and Western Australians. To cut funding to these programs would be socially and fiscally irresponsible.

Youth Connections is just one of many examples of successful youth services that are making a difference to the lives of young Western Australians. As highlighted, without early intervention programs, the outlook is grim for disengaged youth. The flow-on effects of the loss of these programs cannot be underestimated, with serious social and economic ramifications felt by welfare dependants, and a strain on the criminal justice system and health providers, particularly in the area of mental health.

I urge all members to lobby their federal counterparts to ensure that funding for youth service programs such as Youth Connections is continued. This is in the interests of all Australians from both a social and economic perspective.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [11.37 am]: The opposition is happy to support this motion. I was also contacted by the Youth Connections program in South Metropolitan Region, and I visited them in January of this year. I wrote to the federal government asking it to provide Youth Connections with some surety as to its future funding. I was disappointed with the response I got, which did not provide Youth Connections with the certainty that it needs to continue to do the fantastic work that it does.

I visited Youth Connections' Bridging the Gap program in Rockingham at the end of January this year. They were able to introduce me to some of the young people who use their services. The particular group that I met included young mums who, without the assistance of Youth Connections, would not be able to provide their kids with the best possible future. Those mums have had to disconnect from school for a little bit, and they face all of the other kind of issues that arise when at a very young age they end up with the responsibility of raising a child, for most of them, by themselves.

Bridging the Gap is a fantastic program. What caused me to visit them was the letter they sent me in December last year, which reads —

I represent the Youth Connections provider in the Fremantle–Peel area. Each year we assist over 500 young people to reconnect through the provision of flexible, individualised case management and creation of opportunities for group learning activities such as our FUELLS (Future Understanding of Education and Lifelong Learning Skills) and Ngage alternative education programs which provide a non-traditional learning environment for disengaged students to complete a Certificate I in Work

Preparation whilst also partaking in career development, activities that build soft skills such as communication and self esteem as well as participating in a community or volunteer project.

They went on to tell me —

Funding for Youth Connections beyond December 2014 is uncertain. In Western Australia the Australian Government invests \$8,081,782 in young people through the Youth Connections programme. Even though Youth Connections is an Australian Government programme, its potential loss will have serious consequences on our state community as a whole.

Youth Connections is really proud of the destination study it did of a random group of young people who completed and successfully exited its program in 2011. Of those surveyed, 62 per cent were completely disengaged from their education when they started the program. Of this disengaged cohort, 17 per cent had been out of education for more than 12 months. The study found that six months after exiting Youth Connections, 94.2 per cent of young people were still engaged in education or employment. They followed up and found that two years after exiting the program, 81 per cent were still engaged in employment or education. Interestingly, the majority of young people surveyed were not receiving any Centrelink assistance as they were sufficiently engaged in paid work that they could support themselves. Colin Kerr is the chief executive of Bridging the Gap. Youth Connections makes the point that running programs that are flexible and have intensive case management delivers long-term results.

The proposition that that kind of program might be at risk is of great concern to Youth Connections. I met with staff and looked at the program. I spent an hour or so with them and I met some of the young people. I came back and wrote to Senator Eric Abetz, the federal Minister for Employment, to ask the government to provide Youth Connections with some funding certainty because of its success. In particular, the Bridging the Gap people told me that they also run the only funded Teen Parents Program, under the Youth Connections banner, and they work with local schools and non-government agencies to ensure participants complete year 12 or certificate II in general education. In 2013 that program had a 100 per cent success rate in the outcomes achieved. Some schools in Western Australia cannot achieve a 100 per cent graduation rate, yet this program for some of the most disengaged young people, some of whom have been out of education for more than 12 months, was able to achieve a 100 per cent success rate through its intensive case management. It is a fantastic program.

It is really worrying for the staff and, more importantly, the young people who use the program that the federal government will not give them certainty. All the federal government will say is that Youth Connections has to wait until the budget. Budget processes are budget processes; we understand how they work. However, for organisations such as this, the fact that a question mark is hanging over whether they can continue to do these programs is a real concern. I am happy to join the member in encouraging all members to lobby the government to make sure that these programs can continue because they are genuinely having a real impact in areas of real need.

HON COL HOLT (South West — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.43 am]: I thank Hon Dave Grills for bringing this motion to the house. Given the event that will happen this weekend, it is timely to talk about funding from our federal colleagues into important areas in our state continuing. I too have written to the federal government about continuing Youth Connections funding. Although I have not yet received a response from it, I think I will probably get a very similar response to what the Leader of the Opposition received. I think that because some tough language has been coming out of Canberra about its budget; the federal Treasurer continually reminds us that it will be a tough budget and everyone in Australia needs to do their fair share. I reckon Western Australians are doing well and truly more than their fair share in propping up the federal government budget. These sorts of programs have very tangible outcomes for Western Australia, as big and broad and remote as it is, in addressing some of the issues with our youth in not only remote and regional areas, but also metropolitan Perth. Therefore, I thought that this request would be favoured; I do not think it is a request that is out of line with what the federal government is also trying to achieve.

From speaking to staff in Albany, my understanding is that Youth Connections works with years 11 and 12 students who find it difficult to comply with compulsory attendance. In the past, some students have decided that school is not for them and tried to find an apprenticeship or enter the workforce, but sometimes employment is hard to find. Staff at Youth Connections in Albany work with those kids who are not necessarily academically minded and do not want to pursue an academic career; they have to go to school but they do not like it and tend not to turn up. Youth Connections plays a very important role, as Hon Sue Ellery has pointed out, in getting those young people into jobs and housing and keeping them off the streets and contributing to our society generally. I think we need to continue that sort of program for those outcomes.

The half-Senate election has provided an opportunity for rhetoric around the three anti-Western Australia taxes, which are the carbon tax, the mining tax and the goods and services tax. I personally would like to hear about the positive things that the federal budget and the federal government can deliver into Western Australia. I have not

heard anything in the campaigning about continuing Youth Connections or what it will be replaced with to deliver similar outcomes. I would like to see that for a start so that we can stop feeling worried about the budget and what it means for Western Australians. Let us have some confidence in what the government will deliver for Western Australians. From the many debates in this house, I am sure everyone knows that we feel like the poorer cousin of the eastern states.

Moving away from Youth Connections, there is some overlap between this debate and the debate we have just had on education resources. Young people are often in the education system. Youth Connections and these sorts of programs have worked on a community level to improve our educational outcomes. I will take an example I know about in the great southern. Some analysis has been done on achievements in our education system and compared schools to find out the factors in delivering those outcomes. A range of schools in the great southern were looked at to see what sort of Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank and National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy scores they were getting and one school stood out and shone. It is an unlikely school. I will not name it, but people would wonder why they are going so well. A more in-depth analysis revealed that it was not about how many teachers or education assistants were in the classroom; it was about the approach the community had to their school and education outcomes. The school has a program that encapsulates the whole of the school community. The delivery of those outcomes resulted from not only what happened in the classroom. If we had taken a traditional approach of getting more teachers and education assistants in front of the kids to get better outcomes, the same results would not have been achieved. The first port of call is to get the kids into the school. Once they had the kids engaged and going to class, their educational outcomes naturally improved. Local community champions and mentors delivered those outcomes; it was not necessarily what happened in the classroom. It was about getting kids to go to school and be in the classroom in the first instance.

Some of those programs have been extended. For example, Mount Barker Community College is working with the Shire of Plantagenet as leaders of the community and the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. That program works outside the classroom to engage the whole of the community to get better educational outcomes. We talked about education reform in the previous debate, but my view is that we need to look at the broader issue of engagement and getting kids to school, rather than looking only at what we teach them once we get them into school. I am not saying that that is not important, but I think the key to that school in the great southern showing such great outcomes was that it happened way outside the classroom boundaries; it occurred in the community. That is why this motion calling on the federal government to maintain that funding to support education in the community is so important. We should be demanding it from the federal government in the debate in the coming extraordinary half-Senate election. I therefore fully support the motion brought to the house by Hon Dave Grills. I look forward to the outcome of the federal budget and what our next steps will be in either supporting a move to get the funding allocation back to Western Australia or maybe fighting a bit harder.

HON PHIL EDMAN (South Metropolitan) [11.50 am]: I also thank Hon Dave Grills for bringing this motion to the house. When the opportunity arises, I like to talk about youth programs in Western Australia, especially the one mentioned by Hon Sue Ellery, Bridging the Gap, which is doing a fantastic job in our part of the region. I stood before in this house and said that I was not very happy with our Commissioner of Police when he wanted to take police officers out of the police and community youth centres, although that has not happened at the centre in my electorate. The Right to Write program running out of our local PCYC in Rockingham and supported by the state government has had an 85 per cent success rate in dealing with youths who have committed graffiti offences. The Weld to Life program has also had similar success with around an 85 per cent reduction in the crime rate and success in a reduction in daytime burglary in people's homes. Weld to Life is teaching youths how to weld, and I believe most have been successful in obtaining an apprenticeship or in joining the workforce from that program.

However, I do not see things getting better in my electorate with some of the problems that we still have in the cycle of life—a phrase my mum would use. My mother is a counsellor who used to work for Relationships Australia in Rockingham. She now lives in Tasmania having a quieter, peaceful life. These youths are our kids. Many of us in this place are parents. Some members are young parents such as Hon Donna Faragher. We have to be very careful not to make mistakes because kids basically watch what mum and dad do and if we are not careful they repeat those mistakes. Some problems in society facing youths are due to substance abuse in the home and some are due to domestic violence, which is still a problem in South Metropolitan Region; and these problems seem to be ongoing.

I would like to give the police commissioner a bit of a plug instead of running him down. He was quoted in *The West Australian* in the heading to an article saying, "Call me a wowsler on grog but I'm not alone". The police commissioner, talking about a survey that was done, said —

The survey also highlights our concerns about young people and drinking. If the survey is an accurate reflection of attitudes of the population, we find that 15 million of us want to see an end to alcohol advertising on television before 8.30pm.

I do not know whether anybody recalls reading that article. I thought it was a very good opinion piece by the police commissioner. I genuinely feel that our attitude in Australia and in Western Australia on alcohol needs to be looked at. I am not going to stand in this place and be a hypocrite, because I too like to drink a red wine or a beer once or twice a week over a nice meal. However, my wife constantly reminds me that we need to be careful with our children seeing us do that. She says that we do not want to make it a regular thing because in that way my two boys will say that it is cool to have a drink. I think alcohol advertising has gone a little too far.

I grew up in a family with my mum and dad who also drank. I can tell members—I will be very careful as I want to protect my parents—that I too had an interesting upbringing. It was tough to get a job in Western Australia at the time my mum and dad came here from New South Wales. There were countless fights about money. It was a hard time. I am not going to reflect much more on my childhood, but I guess I have a little experience of what it can be like for children dealing with mums and dads who might be subject to financial constraints or who might be abusing drugs and alcohol that leads them to domestic violence.

There needs to be a lot more done by not just the federal government, but also this government, future governments and the community and parents—all of us. The youth of today are very important. The youth of today are the Premiers, Prime Ministers, members of Parliament, doctors, teachers and lawyers of tomorrow. We are just passing through. If members think they are going to be in this place for a long time, I can tell them that already at 44 years of age—boy!—my life is going quickly. We are passing through, so we must make Western Australia a better place for the next generation. Whatever we do in this place will reflect on the next generation as well. There definitely needs to be a lot more done, and I do not see things at this point in time improving in those issues.

I do not remember all these programs being available when I was 15, 16 and 17 years of age. They probably were not needed as much back in the 1970s as they are now. The PCYCs were definitely around. I did judo at the PCYC at Morley. I made it all the way to the top. It was a sport, and I think my mum and dad just wanted to make sure I was occupied and not running around the streets causing trouble. It was good being at the PCYC.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Thank God for the PCYC!

Hon PHIL EDMAN: If I was not there, I was bowling across the road at Morley bowls. I do not know whether that is still there for those in North Metropolitan Region.

Hon Donna Faragher: It is still there.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: Morley bowls is still there? It used to be owned by the Gianottis some years ago.

I will say again that I have never in my 44 years seen any government that is perfect. There is always room for improvement in all of us, but I really think that we need to think seriously about alcohol. I think the industry itself needs to start taking some responsibility for advertising and for when ads should be on television. I do not know how many people in this place have kids under 12 years of age. My children are in bed by 7.30 pm and I do not think it is good for them to be watching ads on TV at four or five o'clock with the message that we should all get on the booze and have a drink. I think that is in a beer ad for Super Dry or something like that. I think we need to have a serious look at this issue. It has got to the point now that there is enough evidence at play in our community that we need to take a serious look at not only the amount of antisocial behaviour, but also violence, domestic violence and the trouble we are having out on our streets.

That is my input. I again thank Hon Dave Grills for bringing the motion to the house and I look forward to listening to everybody else in this debate.

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.58 am]: I also want to thank Hon Dave Grills for bringing this motion to the house. Like other members, particularly Hon Phil Edman, I have to say that whenever there is a motion that refers to youth, it is one in which I am very keen to participate. I appreciate that the motion is quite specific with respect to the Youth Connections program. It is a commonwealth-funded program and is aimed at young people aged between 15 and 24 years who are at risk or who are already disengaged from the education, training and employment system.

In considering this particular program and the motion before us, I would like to, as Hon Col Holt mentioned, look at the broader issue of engagement of youth within our community. In an ideal world, it would be great if we did not have a Youth Connections program; it would be great if all young people were engaged in a positive way within our community. A long time ago when I was Minister for Youth, I was constantly amazed by the fantastic work and enthusiasm of young people right across Western Australia who made a difference in whatever capacity they could. We have to remember that 99 per cent of young people do the right thing; they get on with their lives, make a contribution to their communities, volunteer their time, engage in education and training and further their opportunities through careers in whatever field they may choose. However, the sad reality is that some young people in this state—it is not isolated to Western Australia; it would happen in any country—are disengaged and find it difficult. They may have had an upbringing that was not like the upbringing

that I had. I have said many times in this place that I am very fortunate to have two parents who love me very much and who provided me with every opportunity to ensure that I succeeded in life. Not every child has that opportunity.

When we look at the issue of youth engagement and youth at risk, we have to look at not just this particular program, but all those programs and activities that are in place within the school environment. The most important initiatives, which should always be supported, are those that try to engage young people before they get to the point of being totally disengaged from the education system, training and employment opportunities. There are examples of initiatives that are working well, but there are always opportunities for government, local governments and community organisations to work together, sometimes more closely. As Hon Phil Edman said, many positive initiatives are taking place right across the state. Could they work better if they were coordinated in a better way? Perhaps they could. That could be looked at a little more closely.

One particular project that I know I talk about a lot in this house, and I will continue to do so, is the important initiative of Cadets WA. Hon Dave Grills will know that I am particularly passionate about Cadets WA. We met for the first time at an Army Reserve weekend for a number of cadets in Bindoon when I was the minister. I got the opportunity to see these young men and women doing their drills and various activities over that weekend. It was absolutely fantastic. The fact is that around 7 000 young people now participate across a range of cadet types. The value and importance of the cadet program has always been that it is not just targeted at Army, Navy and Air Force cadets. They are very important, but not everybody wants to be part of those particular reserves and cadet types. There are other opportunities for them, whether that be with the Bush Rangers, surf-lifesaving cadets or the Police Rangers. When I was the minister, I constantly saw examples of young people who became engaged in school, when they otherwise would not, by becoming involved with the Cadets WA program. I recall a remote community in the north where young children did not go to school. A police cadet unit was established and all of a sudden these kids went to school. They were mentored by one of the police officers. There was enthusiasm to be there; they wanted to be there. They could participate only if they went to school. It worked. Those young people would not have otherwise gained an education.

That is just one example of the benefits of a program such as Cadets WA, but there are many other examples. It is a program that all young people can participate in. They do not have to come from a disadvantaged background and they do not have to be at risk, but many are. I went to a number of ceremonies for that program and I was told of some of the young people and their backgrounds. Some of them had a very sad background, but those young people turned their lives around because all of a sudden they were learning new skills, they had the capacity to be involved, they were making friends, they had the opportunity to talk to mentors and others and they had a sense of belonging. That can never be underestimated.

There are other important programs—Hon Phil Edman has talked about this—such as those run through police and community youth centres. The Albany PCYC has been a very positive program. I have been there on a few occasions. Much like Cadets WA, it provides young people with an opportunity to learn new skills and participate in a safe environment. A police officer has a great capacity to be a role model to others. I do not say that just because I am the daughter of two retired police officers; it is a fact. It is incredibly positive that young people who might be at risk can see police in the light of someone who wants to help them and does not want to see them participate in crime or to be at risk of other antisocial activities. Programs such as the ones in Rockingham to which Hon Phil Edman referred should be supported and encouraged.

In thanking the member for bringing this motion to the attention of the house, I recognise the reasons he has done so, particularly with the Youth Connections program. However, today serves as an opportunity for me to very much reflect on the importance, as Hon Col Holt said in his contribution, of looking at the broader issue of engagement and at those programs that should be encouraged by all levels of government and by the community to ensure that young people get on the right path before they get on the wrong path, when they are required to participate in programs such as that. They are incredibly important. As I have said, we would all agree that it would be great if this program was not required because those children had been picked up early and were encouraged and put on the right path before they got into that situation.

HON PAUL BROWN (Agricultural) [12.07 pm]: I thank my colleague and member for Mining and Pastoral Region Hon Dave Grills for bringing this important motion to the house. This is indeed a timely discussion, knowing that funding for the Youth Connections program is under review beyond 2014. We are in a very tight fiscal state at both a federal and state level at the moment, so I strongly support the motion of Hon Dave Grills. I hope that funding for youth services is not one of the casualties. Many programs are aimed at developing human capital across Australia, but programs that are aimed at building life skills and confidence, as well as access to education, training and employment opportunities for young people, especially disadvantaged or at-risk youth, are an obvious priority.

I would like very quickly to highlight the benefit that sport and recreation play in providing positive outcomes for children in communities throughout Western Australia. Believe it or not, with my background, the confident, affable, erudite individual whom members are looking at at the moment could have slipped backwards. I grew up in a broken home in a small country town. One day when I was five years old, my next-door neighbour, Mr George White, who unfortunately is no longer with us, dragged me down to the sporting oval, plonked me in the square at full forward and said, “Stand here and don’t move.” That is when I became involved in community sport. I can honestly say that I have never looked back.

Federal funding of all these youth programs is essential. I would like to highlight some of the programs that are funded by the Liberal–National state government. KidSport is one such program that ensures that up to 30 000 eligible youths within our community aged between five and 18 can participate in community sport. It is a \$20 million, four-year program aimed at increasing participation of disadvantaged children in sport and recreation clubs, along with all children within our communities. This program helps kids get engaged in our community. It is of great social, physical and mental benefit to those disadvantaged families and kids who have not been able to afford the small luxury of participating in community sport. They are provided with a voucher that goes to the community groups, which they then give to the Department of Sport and Recreation to gain funding.

A range of programs are delivered throughout WA but some also get federal assistance. The Aboriginal Sport Development program is jointly funded by the state and federal governments. Under this program, nine Aboriginal sport development officers have been employed to develop working relationships between Aboriginal communities and local sport and recreation, community and state government agencies in order to improve Aboriginal physical and mental health, along with social and emotional wellbeing. We would all recognise the benefits of that. Another significant program being run by the Department of Sport and Recreation is the athlete travel subsidy scheme. This scheme provides funding to talented junior athletes to assist with out-of-pocket expenses to compete at regional, national and international events. As a result of the Nationals’ 2013 election commitment, the state government has provided funds of \$3 million over four years, using funds from our royalties for regions program. Royalties for regions provides funds of \$500 000 a year along with \$250 000 a year from other agencies. Athletes aged between 13 and 21 who are registered members of a recognised sport association can apply for assistance.

There is also the regional talent development network, whose objective is to develop appropriate models and implement specific regional initiatives that address the needs of regional athletes. It is funded through an allocation of \$3.6 million from royalties for regions over four years. This network supports talented athletes from regional communities in their daily training environment in their chosen sport to achieve progression along their sporting pathway. Some of the key sports that have been identified by a steering committee are AFL, cricket, netball, basketball, hockey, tennis and swimming, just to name a few.

Hon Dave Grills and other members here today have highlighted many of the poor outcomes for the youth of our state that are obvious when inadequate and ongoing funding is not allocated. Many of the programs that provide outstanding outcomes if funded and delivered should be considered essential services. I commend the state government and royalties for regions for ensuring that the youth of our state are able to access sport and recreation activities that lead to better social, physical and mental health outcomes. As I have previously stated, I commend Hon Dave Grills for bringing this motion to the house. I certainly encourage both state and federal governments to look at ongoing, adequate funding for youth programs throughout our regions and the metropolitan area.

HON DAVE GRILLS (Mining and Pastoral) [12.15 pm] — in reply: I thought I had a pretty good week last week but this week has been my best week in Parliament so far. Today has been a good day. I would like to thank everybody who spoke. I was not too keen on the debate we had prior to this but we had to have it. The debate we have just had is probably one of the best debates I have heard. I think most of the comments made came from the heart. I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for her comments as well as Hon Col Holt and Hon Phil Edman. Yes, I remember the Gianottis. They used to have a bottle shop and I used to box at the police and community youth centre in Morley. Back in the old days, it was not very good. I also thank Hon Donna Faragher. Yes, we met at a cadet camp. I am still involved in cadets. My 12-year-old daughter had her first night with the cadets on Wednesday, which made me very proud. I also thank Hon Paul Brown for talking about sports and how well that fits into this debate. I thank Hon Jacqui Boydell for her comments on the other matter and the passion she put into her speech, talking about getting the best bang for our buck. That is a good outcome. As everybody said, that is what we are chasing—getting the best bang for our buck for our young folk because that is vitally important. Hon Phil Edman said that the young people of today are people like us tomorrow. They are the police and the people who will look after me in a few years when I am an old bloke in an old person’s home. I also thank Hon Peter Katsambanis for his comments a couple of weeks ago when he spoke about exactly the same thing, saying that some people should man up. I guess we should man up as a

government, and as people who deliver good governance. I think we should man up as there is much to be gained, much to be heard and much to be had. The more we talk about it and work towards it to achieve better outcomes, the better the opportunities we will have for our young people.

It was a great opportunity to have this debate. It is unfortunate that more members are not here because we should all get on. Those members who like to interject a lot should be listening to this debate because it is part of the debate of how we make this state of ours a better place to be and bring up our kids. The WA Nationals talk all the time about small country towns such as Meekatharra, Menzies, Laverton and Leonora being better places to live. Everybody says, "Oh, my goodness, where are those places?" We know where they are and we know the people who live there. People from the country understand that the sporting and other programs that have been put in place help bring better outcomes. Hon Colin Holt was dead right when he said that there is a bigger and broader picture about how we do this and how we make it work.

I was in Broome last weekend attending a crime forum. It was very good. I was quite surprised by what some of the people said. One of the things that really surprised me more than that was that the Minister for Police asked to have a chat with me about my trip to Broome. I thought to myself that if we say it long enough and loud enough and the message is right, somebody listens. I think that is a good thing. I am happy that that is happening. There should be more of that. I know we are on opposite sides, with the government on one side and non-government parties on the other, but we should be more bipartisan about the things that are important and have a bigger impact on us and our lives.

I thank everybody who spoke. Thank you for my best week in Parliament so far. I look forward to it getting better. I am looking forward to better outcomes. I look forward to more positive outcomes and more positive things when members stand and say that they went out and did something the other week and it was a great thing for their community, because we will have a better state and live in a better place if we look after our communities.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.