

## LOCAL PROJECTS, LOCAL JOBS PROGRAM

### *Motion*

Resumed from 15 August on the following motion moved by Hon Darren West —

That this house congratulates the McGowan Labor government for its Local Projects, Local Jobs initiative and for the positive impact this will have on local communities.

**HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan)** [1.10 pm]: I took the opportunity last night to remind myself of the quality of contributions made to debate on this motion. I might go over where I left off. Some very serious questions remain unanswered about the operation and administration of this pork-barrelling scheme. One of the stark facts for which we have not received adequate explanation is the reason that an election pledge, which began its life at a quantum of \$22 million or \$23 million, suddenly found itself growing to a level of \$40 million when it was read in during the government's first budget speech on 7 September last year. I remind members that the Local Projects, Local Jobs scheme was referred to in those budget papers as a grants scheme. Furthermore, media releases made by the Premier and other ministers referred to Local Projects, Local Jobs as a grants scheme. For some reason, that categorisation, that nomenclature, dropped off the face of the earth for some potentially very interesting reasons. I get back to the growth of the scheme. Why was it that almost another \$20 million was found to bolster that scheme? Why the change? Where was the funding revenue found? At whose request did that scheme grow? I thought we finished last week on an interesting note about the \$150 000 that Halidon Primary School benefited from to construct a new administration building, and good luck to it. Well done. We do not begrudge any of the recipients of funding and we would not. I know that is the argument of first resort from members on the other side, because they will try to say to us, "Why don't you go around and tell these groups that they don't deserve the money?" That is not our argument. Our argument is that this scheme is so cloudy and we suspect that it demands examination. We also say that the beneficiaries are beneficiaries, but guess what? We are sure that other worthy community groups have missed out as a consequence of the operation of this scheme. That is a clear fact.

It is difficult in this place—I will not say sometimes, but often times—to get cogent, coherent, complete answers to very basic questions that we put across the chamber. We have no other recourse, as time consuming, expensive and frustrating as it can be to submit freedom of information requests. In my hand is about 200 pages of a significantly narrowed freedom of information request that was put in to the Department of Sport and Recreation, as it was before the machinery-of-government changes, and to the office of the Minister for Sport and Recreation. It has taken me some time to read through the probably 150 pages of the freedom of information request, but certain issues have come to light that should utterly undermine or demolish anybody's support for such an obnoxious motion in the terms that it is put today. I will canvass a number of the issues that resonate and focus on three key aspects to suggest to this chamber that this motion should be opposed.

For clarification, the scope of these documents has been limited to between 20 March to 20 June last year, as well as between 1 August and 31 October last year. That was done by way of negotiation because the initial request apparently flagged far too many documents for the department's FOI system to handle. They are just the time-bounded things. Within those periods a number of issues came to light about how this scheme was administered through the public service. This is the issue: it is not a problem with community organisations, schools, sporting groups and RSLs that may have been lucky enough to receive money. My concern and our concern more broadly is with how public sector processes are co-opted and politicised to deliver political solutions for a new Labor government and to buttress the reputations of Labor members in marginal seats. That is what we find objectionable. A number of the issues that come to light are references to the agency identifying potentially more appropriate or efficient use of grant funds, which is no surprise; agency advice suggesting changes to scope; and recipient groups requesting changes to the funding pledge or to change the parameters of grant funding because they were not consulted in the first place. A request that also happened a couple of times was of recipient organisations saying, "Actually, you funded us for project A. We got this at 80 per cent of the cost, can we spend the residual on something else?" That is not what this scheme was apparently designed to effect, but that is effectively what happened. There is obvious insufficient planning and the need as well to find supplementary funding to make the grant make sense. Additional costs are added onto these programs, which are a concern for the taxpayer and the department. It is clear that this scheme is not designed to support community groups. Its overwhelming focus is on maximising the publicity of little-known Labor marginal seat members of Parliament. This is all that this is about. It is a story as old as time.

As I said, if for no other reason, we should oppose this motion because of the mechanics of how this grant-like scheme was administered through departments. I mentioned at the outset that I would cite three documents. With indulgence I will read the first one in. This concerns the means by which these individual grant-like programs were approved by the minister. This document, folio 12 of about 50, is an email dated 9 June 2017, at 12.06 pm

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Australian Western Standard Time. It is to some departmental advisers, who I will not mention for *Hansard*. It says —

Afternoon all,

The Minister has given his verbal approval to progress the 156 grant agreements under the Local Project Local Jobs initiative.

The Minister will sign the authority on Sunday when he returns from the Electorate.

Thanks for expediting the process.

**Kind regards,**

There are a couple of things to think about. This was 9 June. What happens on 30 June? It is the end of the financial year. There is an obvious desire to approve the expenditure of moneys before the end of the financial year.

Even if I am at my charitable best, I could never consider that the Minister for Sport and Recreation has a brain the size of Jupiter, Saturn or one of the larger planets. As skilled as he may be, I do not think that he can hold in his head the merits of 156 applications at the same time and then consider that they are all meritorious and should be funded because they will all contribute to good work, and say, “Go for it, boys. I’ll sign it off on the weekend.” This is how the Labor government has spent public money. I know that government members want to give us lectures every now and again—more often than every now and again—about financial management, but this is, in written form, how a minister of the Crown deals with the expenditure of taxpayers’ money—156 programs on the nod. He gave his verbal approval. Guess what? He was told, “Thank you, minister, for expediting that process.” This is the kind of scheme that we are dealing with. The whole scope of money that came out of the Department of Sport and Recreation, as it was known then, probably contributed to about 25 per cent of the overall scheme. For a \$40 million program, the Department of Sport and Recreation, as it was known before the machinery-of-government changes, contributed something like \$10 million—I think the quantum of 156 projects at that time was in the order of \$6 million or \$7 million. It is not a huge amount of money, but it is a significant amount of money to take that kind of cavalier attitude towards approvals.

I think the clear intent of the operation of the scheme is best demonstrated when local members find a challenge. It is not as easy as Labor headquarters said it would be. Another document—folio 21.5 of the suite of documents that I received by virtue of this freedom of information request—has names redacted, but for *Hansard*’s purposes, it is an email, very obviously, from the member for Forrestfield to Minister Mick Murray, dated 16 June 2017, at 12.43 pm. Before I read this document, I want to explain that the then Department of Sport and Recreation operated a funding scheme for sport and recreation facilities called the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. It is a proper grant scheme because it has an application process. It is a competitive process and there are criteria to weight certain applications against each other. It has been raided to fund Local Projects, Local Jobs, but it also exists in its own form. Members need to understand that the Department of Sport and Recreation was placed in a position of funding election pledges through two discrete programs—one for which there is good governance process and another that is shifty and dodgy, which is the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. I want to illustrate that this program is not about community resilience; it is about ego boosting, name identification and saving seats for next time—for those members who were lucky to get in. This email is from the member for Forrestfield to the minister, and it begins —

Hi Mick, —

It is a bit detailed but we will get there —

I am emailing you regarding a major concern I have with the recently announced CSRFF grants announced yesterday. For a period of time now, the Forrestfield Bowling Club and the Shire of Kalamunda have been working towards the replacement of one of the turf bowling greens at the club with a new synthetic turf bowling green.

This is going to cost \$180k, which would be funded through 1/3<sup>rd</sup> coming from the Forrestfield Bowling club, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> from the Shire of Kalamunda and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> through a CSRFF grant.

The Shire of Kalamunda had put in a CSRFF grant application for 3 projects within the shire with the number one priority being for \$60k to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> co-fund the installation of a synthetic bowling green at the Forrestfield Bowling club. During the election campaign, I also committed \$60k from my “local projects local jobs” campaign funding to support the club’s co funding 1/3<sup>rd</sup> commitment.

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Obviously, every candidate got the scoop, “You’ve got this bucket of money. Go out there and pledge away. It doesn’t matter what it is; go out there and spend it and make commitments.” This member dutifully did that and obviously had been given every incentive to do that. The email continues —

The final 1/3<sup>rd</sup> co funding of \$60k is from the Shire of Kalamunda, as previously mentioned.

This is when all these great plans start to come a bit unstuck. The email continues —

Late last week, both the Shire of Kalamunda and the Forrestfield Bowling Club, separately raised concerns with me that after speaking with DSR —

That is the old Department of Sport and Recreation —

they both got the impression that the commitment I made (\$60k) to the Forrestfield Bowling Club was going to replace the CSRFF grant that had been applied for.

What! That is not in the email; that is my expression.

**Hon Jim Chown:** Talk about corrupt.

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** The email continues —

Now I don’t know if this is the case or not, but it certainly was never the intent of the local projects local jobs campaign.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** By way of interjection, I clearly heard across the chamber Hon Jim Chown use the words, “Talk about corrupt”. That is pretty serious language to use and I think it is unparliamentary. I draw that to your attention, Madam President.

**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you for that, Leader of the House. I did actually hear those words being used. I was surprised to hear that from Hon Jim Chown. I want you to withdraw those comments.

**Hon JIM CHOWN:** I am happy to withdraw the comments. In regard to further review of this particular —

**The PRESIDENT:** No, member. I think you just should withdraw the comments.

**Hon JIM CHOWN:** Okay. I will just withdraw the comments.

**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Thank you, Madam President. I will just recap —

Now I don’t know if this is the case or not, but it certainly was never the intent of the local projects local jobs campaign.

That is interesting to note. This is where I start to get more intrigued, because in an answer provided to me by the Leader of the House in answer to a question from about November last year, it was identified that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, who I understand is the member for Perth, John Carey, MLA, effectively acted as the coordinator general for all these Local Projects, Local Jobs pledges. The pledges were so disaggregated and spread around so thinly that someone in the executive of government needed to try to grip them together and codify them to try to understand which promises for what amounts were made to whom and when. I think that is a necessary administrative task. That context is important. The email continues —

I even spoke with the relevant Parliamentary Secretary —

The name is redacted under clause 3(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, but I think it is the person I just mentioned —

who had carriage of the roll out of the Local Projects Local Jobs commitments, regarding this, and he strongly agrees with me, that was never and is not the intent of those commitments.

It is not the intent of those commitments that an election pledge displaces other public money—it is all good. The email continues —

As it turns out, the Shire of Kalamunda did miss out on the CSRFF grant for the 1/3<sup>rd</sup> funding required ...

That is obviously to its great disappointment —

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Not only that, the once positive commitment has now turned out to be a negative one, where essentially this has stalled if not killed this project.

I am extremely ...

I will not mention what he wrote; it is unparliamentary. But he is something “off”. He is not happy. He continues —

... because not only do they now miss out on the new bowling green, it is my reputation that has now been damaged and it looks as if I lied to both the members of the Bowling Club and the shire of Kalamunda.

After only 3 months in the role. Thank you very much!!!!

I think he is trying to make a point. I think he is upset because he is not allowed to double dip into departmental resources to pay for his election commitment. His charm, skill, experience and reputation are not enough; he needs it buttressed by the resources of the Department of Sport and Recreation, and unfortunately it has said no. But he goes on —

This is complete rubbish and it needs to be fixed asap.

I could not agree more. This program is complete rubbish and it needs to be fixed. I think it is a bit too late to do it but we need to find out a little more about how it got so broken. He continues —

I have also heard this is not the only case where DSR might have taken this approach.

If that is the case, well done to those public servants at the old Department of Sport and Recreation because if this government is not committed to the appropriate disbursement of public funds, at least they are. That is what is problematic with the government scheme; that is, it places political pressure on the public service to deliver for members of Parliament. It is not for the community, the good of society, the sustainability of schools, clubs, RSLs, scout halls or poodle people in Perth, but for the MPs concerned. It is about mendacity. It is base electoral politics, which is a story as old as time, but this government finds a way to renew it at every opportunity. That is not the only thing that I will read in.

I was staggered, and there may well be good reason for it, to come across concerns the department held about another program that was funded through Local Projects, Local Jobs. About a week or so back a story concerning it appeared in *The Sunday Times*. It concerns \$350 000 found for the Stephen Michael Foundation administered through an entity associated with the South Fremantle Football Club. Stephen Michael is a fantastic sporting and cultural icon of this state and I have no problem with that man. I am a Subiaco supporter, but I have absolutely no problem with the South Fremantle Football Club.

**The PRESIDENT:** We all bear scars, Hon Tjorn Sibma.

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Indeed, we do!

This is not about that man or the intent of the program that he was attempting to put together and seek funding and support for. I think it was meritorious. This is not about an opposition getting stropky with grant recipients. It is about the discipline, process and accountability of the way that public funds are used in this state. I am about to read in a written brief submitted by the department to the minister outlining its grave concerns about the way it was being pressured to move its departmental budget to support this. I need to read this in because this is not me making a political point; this is evidence that should undermine any claims of pride in this program, which the government has run so sloppily. This is a “Sport and Recreation Briefing Note” to Hon Mick Murray, MLA, dated 30 August 2017, with the subject “Approval Request: Local Project Local Jobs Grant—Stephen Michael Foundation”. The background is —

As part of the LPLJ election commitments, \$350,000 has been allocated to the Stephen Michael Foundation from the following members of Parliament:

The name is redacted under clause 3(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, but un-redacted is —

... Member for Armadale (\$100,000).

I think that is Dr Tony Buti. The next name is also redacted under clause 3(1) of the FOI act, but reads —

... Member for Darling Range (\$50,000).

I think that was ex-member Barry Urban. The next name is redacted under clause 3(1) of the FOI act, but reads —

... MLA, Member for Fremantle ...

There is only one person that could be. She was good for \$200 000, which brings it to \$350 000 overall.

I will skip ahead to the departmental concerns. The brief states —

Sport and Recreation ... has identified some concerns with the information provided by —

Name redacted —

... to date. —

I do not know who that is —

These include:

- The lack of planning in respect to the Foundation's strategic direction and program delivery.
- The lack of other funding sources impacting on the sustainability of the Foundation and its programs.
- The proposal to use the funding to deliver programs in Meekatharra which is outside of the electorates of the three members who made funding commitment.

I thought that was a bit strange when I saw it. There might be a justification for it, but I wonder whether the voters in the seats of Armadale, Darling Range and Fremantle were happy to fund a program that was delivered in Meekatharra. That is just geographically interesting. It continues —

- The lack of information around the relationship between the SFFC —

That is the South Fremantle Football Club —

and the Foundation and what role each organisation will have going forward.

- The lack of information provided to Sport and Recreation ... in relation to the Foundation's governance structure.

This brief was written at the end of August last year, five months after the election. That is five months of the department attempting to chase its tail after all these grants had been approved verbally by the minister, mind you, so they were all okay. The department was placed in the position of attempting to grip this up and at least put some discipline over the way that this money was being spent. It has identified four or five, on the face of it, pretty reasonable observations that would give someone pause for thought and make them think that perhaps a bit more work needed to be done around this one.

The brief has a further request. Notwithstanding some of the identified flaws and gaps in the governance structure that might guarantee that the \$350 000 of taxpayers' money that is going towards the delivery of what is probably a meritorious program of some kind in Meekatharra will be sustainable, the department was approached to fund a full-time employee to help the recipient organisation do all the governance paperwork to release the funds to that organisation at approximately \$90 000 for one year. Quite reasonably, the brief continues —

Sport and Recreation ... has concerns with a full year salary being allocated to the planning of the Foundation and would like to propose a smaller proportion —

The department is trying to be helpful —

of the funds are provided to develop the appropriate plans over a three-month period.

I do not think that the member for Armadale, the member for Darling Range or the member for Fremantle would ever have envisaged the need to take money that otherwise would have gone to their electorates to fund a full-time equivalent person to help the recipient organisation draft the governance plan to release the residual of those funds. I do not think that was the intent. I think that the department knew that was not the intent either, but that is where it gets interesting—that is, the administration and the sheer incompetence of this minister and this government in delivering on these programs. I have been in and around governments for a while as a junior woodchuck to someone with some seniority, albeit relative, for about the last 17 years, but never ever have I read a recommendation from a department to a minister along these lines —

It is recommended that the Minister approves a meeting between Sport and Recreation (DLGSC) and —

The names are redacted—guess who they are! I think they are the three I mentioned before —

... to clarify the intent of the Stephen Michael election commitment and any conditions for how this funding is to be used by the Foundation.

If he were a halfway competent minister and the department that he is responsible for was asked by three of his colleagues to fund a single program, would he not, at the very least, call them into his office or even go out to

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them, maybe in a breakout room from the big caucus or the little caucus or whatever the room is called? Is it not that minister's responsibility to take charge of the way that funds move from his department out to the general public? It seems not. Here is a frustrated department that is doing the work of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the work of his office and, frankly, the work of the member for Perth, because I understand that he was the point man on this. By the looks of it, he is a point man who likes to handball the task of administration to others. I have never seen anything like this. This kind of stuff is embarrassing and it reflects sheer incompetence and a lack of organisation. The government really had no idea what its candidates were saying to groups in the fog of the election campaign when everyone was very excited. There was no centrally administered process to capture all this and to mitigate some of the risk that comes with spending tens of millions of dollars so very easily. In times gone past when we all used to subscribe to the notion of ministerial accountability, something like this would be enough to undo a minister. But standards have fallen and continue to plummet rapidly under this government, so I doubt that will happen. I am sure the Minister for Sport and Recreation will be able to finalise a final farewell Labor Party lap before a cabinet reshuffle occurs sometime this year. This is an appalling abuse of public funds. Far be it from us to say, "Bravo, well done, Hon Darren West, on this wonderful program." This is shameless electioneering. The government has caused work for the public sector in attempting to mop up the mess, and considering the pressure those public sector employees were under, they have done an admirable job. This is but one department of the five or six departments whose budgets were raided to fund this program.

The opposition will, in the strongest possible terms, be opposing this motion. I look forward to the time when we can address my motion to establish a select committee into the administration of this program, because the three examples that were mentioned from a single department are a snapshot in time and undermine the claims that the government makes about accountability, openness and transparency. It is an absolute disaster, it is a disgrace, it is a scandal and I am very, very upset.

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [1.43 pm]: I am pleased to speak in support of the motion. Honourable members opposite have noted that we made a lot of election commitments. We did and we are proud of them. We had to make them because when members opposite were in government, they stopped listening and paying attention to, and meeting the needs of, suburbs and towns across Western Australia.

**Hon Jacqui Boydell** interjected.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Honourable member, I listened to the debate in silence.

**Hon Jacqui Boydell** interjected.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** This is my contribution; the member can choose how she wants to receive it, but this is my contribution.

We made a lot of election commitments because members on the other side stopped listening to their local communities and stopped providing their local communities with what they needed to survive, thrive and grow. They stopped listening and they ignored the things that really matter to people. What really matters to people is their local football club, their local playgroup and the local organisation that supports them and their family. In opposition, we worked hard to identify the things that matter to local communities, and we worked hard to work with the local organisations that have taken on the mantle of supporting their community year after year by raising money through sausage sizzle after sausage sizzle, for example. We took on the responsibility of providing them the kind of support that the former government stopped providing. Small grassroots organisations make a real difference at a local level.

What has been disappointing in the debate so far is that some members opposite—not, for the most part, Hon Tjorn Sibma—used inflammatory and intemperate language to talk about the funds that have been provided to local organisations. I say with the exception of Hon Tjorn Sibma because he did not use language that belittled or questioned the needs of those organisations. But other members opposite who have contributed to not only the motion before us now, but also general discussion about Local Projects, Local Jobs in this chamber used language that has had the effect—whether or not it was intended—of sully the good name and work of many organisations. I ask them to stop and think about how they describe the provision of funds to these organisations. When they choose to belittle the provision of funds and say that it is not required or that it should be given to organisations that do not have robust governance procedures, they sully the work those people do. I will give members a classic example. There is a line of questioning and commentary about Halidon Primary School, which has mostly been led by Hon Michael Mischin. Halidon Primary School is thrilled with its new administration upgrade. I was at the opening. The chair of the school board, the president of the parents and citizens association and certainly the leadership of the school wanted those upgrades and they lobbied, campaigned and asked for those upgrades—and they got them. Every time a matter such as Halidon Primary School is raised in Parliament—newer members might not realise this—that triggers a ministerial. I get to provide an answer and that answer is put together by a chain of people in the Department of Education and, as was the case with Halidon Primary School,

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that chain of people includes people from Halidon Primary School. Members opposite may think that what they say in here does not get back to them, but ultimately it does and it sullies the outcome of the project, which, in this case, is a school that is really pleased about and proud of the project and really values it. I ask members to consider the language they use when they describe what they say is about the process, because the language that some of them used has undermined the good work that these organisations are doing.

I will talk about one in particular—the Stephen Michael Foundation. This is where I pay tribute to Hon Tjorn Sibma because his language was quite considered and temperate, but others did not use that kind of language. The Stephen Michael Foundation does outstanding work for a very disadvantaged cohort of young people. Hon Tjorn Sibma got hold of documents that he says—he limited what he said—go to the fact that serious concerns were raised by the department about the allocation of funds. What he did not say was that after the Department of Sport and Recreation highlighted concerns associated with the foundation's initial proposal that may have potentially impeded on the foundation's ability to deliver a sustainable program, those issues were worked through and thrashed out in a meeting in October with department representatives, Stephen Michael, other members of the foundation and relevant local members. Agreement was reached on how those concerns could be addressed, including a payment schedule and, as a result, an enormous amount of work was carried about by the Stephen Michael Foundation and the department to deliver planning, management and government structure outcomes to guarantee the foundation's sustainability into the future. If it had not been the recipient of that commitment and if the department had not done its due diligence and had not identified that there were potential problems, irrespective of a particular allocation of funds, the Stephen Michael Foundation may have found itself in real trouble and not been able to continue its good work. But, as a direct result of this and the free and fearless advice from the agency, the organisation is now much better placed to deliver the programs that it needs to deliver to that particularly vulnerable group of young people it looks after. It needs to be said that Hon Tjorn Sibma underestimates the commitment of the good people of the electorate to which this commitment applies to supporting an organisation like the Stephen Michael Foundation.

I also want to touch on the issue he raised about the Forrestfield and Districts Bowling Club. He read out a letter from the local member, Stephen Price, who used some colourful language; there is no question about that. I think that indicates a passionate member who is determined to make sure that he can deliver on the commitments he made. The commitment of \$60 000 to the Forrestfield bowling club was an election commitment. It was not designed to replicate or replace existing grant programs such as the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. The CSRFF went through its normal process. As evidence that there was no interference, it is highly competitive and significantly oversubscribed, and in this case funding was not allocated to that particular project. The Forrestfield bowling club is welcome to apply for this funding in future, as are others. No doubt it will, and I wish it success in that. In fact, this is an example of the system working well. There was no interference to guarantee that the club would get the CSRFF funding. It went through due process and on this occasion it was unsuccessful. But somehow that is sullied and is evidence that there is something wrong with this program. No, it is not. It is evidence that the program and all the other systems that are in place in the public sector to manage this are, in fact, working well.

Other issues have been raised about the so-called absence of a business case. Hypocrisy writ large here! This is coming from the people who, when in government, did not meet the standard requirements that were spelt out so clearly in the Langoulant report. Treasury's strategic asset management framework states now, and stated then when they were in government, that a business case is to be prepared for all investment proposals with a total capital cost of \$1 million or more. That did not occur when members on the other side were in government. The Langoulant special inquiry report found that many projects that were valued at significantly more than \$20 million did not have a business case. The projects that we are talking about under this program are valued at less than \$1 million.

I want to touch on a couple of other projects that were referred to. Hon Robin Scott raised a few. He expressed the view—I am sure he will forgive me if I paraphrase—that perhaps these organisations did not need the money that was allocated. I want to touch on a couple of those. I will talk about the Filipino Australian Club of Perth in particular. The club's main hall facility is very small and the stage is in disrepair. The club was struggling to run events for its large membership base because it did not have the kinds of stage facilities that it wanted. It was seeking support to purchase an appropriate staging rostrum and dance floor, and the Local Projects, Local Jobs money that was allocated helped it to do that. The honourable member also mentioned the Italian club. The Italian club that received the money was the Collie Italian and Sporting Club. The honourable member may have thought it was the one in North Perth, when, in fact, the allocation was to the Collie Italian club. I will quote from the *Collie Mail* of September last year. Leo De Angelis, the Collie Italian club president, thanked Mr Mick Murray, the local member, for delivering the funds. He said —

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“We will be using the money to build a patio for the warmer months and use any left over for paving, furniture and a wood fired pizza oven,” ...

“This is part of creating family friendly outdoor settings as mums and dads can keep an eye on their kids outside ...

So they can do that while they participate in the club’s activities. It also posted on Facebook that it wanted to thank the government for honouring the election promise to build an outdoor area to be enjoyed by members using the club.

One of the other projects that was mentioned was the Rotary club food van in Mundaring. I will read from the 2017–18 annual report of the president of the Rotary Club of Mundaring, Geoff Francis. He says —

The completion of the new food van has been a major investment for the club and thanks are due to State Member Mathew Hughes for providing State Government financial assistance to enable us to do this. The van is already earning us money at the markets and at various other events.

That enables the Rotary group to do all the fantastic work that it does in allocating funds to the projects that it sponsors. Those members who are active Rotary members—I am sure there are many—will know of the good work that Rotary does not just in Western Australia, but sometimes around the world.

Another issue that was raised was the shade project for Beaumaris Primary School in Joondalup. It was well received by the school community, now that more students are able to play outside —

**Hon Michael Mischin:** It was well received by me, too. It was a personal viewpoint of taxpayer money, but that’s beside the point.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is good. I listened to the honourable member’s contributions.

**Hon Michael Mischin:** No, you didn’t.

**Hon Peter Collier:** He hasn’t made one.

**Hon Michael Mischin:** I haven’t made one yet.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I have listened to the member’s contributions about this matter on all sorts of occasions. I am going to finish my contribution and then others can make theirs.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! It does not help to have support from your own team, Leader of the House.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sometimes it does, but of course it would be inappropriate for that to happen.

**The PRESIDENT:** Absolutely.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Another issue that was raised was the support for Harrisdale Primary School. Remember, I am putting this in the context that the question raised by Hon Robin Scott was whether these organisations even wanted or valued the contributions that they received. The Harrisdale Primary School Parents and Citizens Association valued the contribution.

**Hon Michael Mischin:** How much was it?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It was \$224 000.

**Hon Michael Mischin:** Wow—a quarter of a million dollars!

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Honourable member —

**Hon Michael Mischin:** I am sure they welcomed it.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! We all know that the Leader of the House does not need any assistance from anyone —

**Hon Michael Mischin:** I think she does.

**The PRESIDENT:** No, I do not think she does. She does not need any assistance to complete her speech, so I ask that you listen to her in silence.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Members will recall the point I began with. When they try to belittle the organisations that have received these funds, that does them no good, it does not progress their argument, and it sullies and is terribly disappointing for those organisations—the P&Cs, rotary clubs and whoever else—that receive those funds. By all means, if members feel they need to attack us because they think there are process issues, they should deal with those,



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but they should please temper their language. In fact, I congratulated the member's colleague for tempering his language when he was talking about particular projects and not belittling the organisations that received those funds.

**Hon Michael Mischin:** Who's tried to do that? Give me an example.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Look in the mirror, honourable member.

The final point I want to make about examples of people not realising the value of the organisation is about the commentary made about the Roebourne Art Group. The Roebourne Art Group received money for shelving racks to display and store artwork, and the suggestion was made that it in fact no longer existed. It is true that for a while that organisation was struggling; however, it is back up and working. The storage means that artworks will no longer be sitting on the ground or piled on top of each other on tables. The Roebourne Art Group chief executive, Rex Widerstrom, said that although the group was not out of the woods yet in terms of getting itself organised, the future was looking positive. He said —

“The cost of moving in terms of lost sales for being shut down has left a huge hole in the cashflow but being here certainly helps,” ...

He said that the group would be able to rebuild itself slowly.

I know others want to make a contribution to this debate. I thank Hon Darren West for putting this motion on the notice paper. I end where I began. We did make a lot of election commitments and we had to because the former government left the community behind. It stopped listening to the community, and governments do that at their peril. It stopped contributing to the suburbs and towns across Western Australia. We filled the hole that the government left. We are proud of this program. We support the organisations and the work that they do. I ask members to consider that when they make their contributions to the debate on this outstanding project.

**HON JACQUI BOYDELL (Mining and Pastoral — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA)** [2.01 pm]: I rise today to contribute to the debate on the motion brought to the house by Hon Darren West. I will not support it for a couple of reasons. When I read the motion that this house congratulates the McGowan Labor government for its Local Projects, Local Jobs initiative and for the positive impact it will have on local communities, I could not agree with it because there is no reporting mechanism, no key performance indicators in place and no way of this government recording any positive impacts these grants have had on local communities. There is absolutely no way to measure those things. I have listened to the contributions of Hon Sue Ellery and many other members this afternoon and I still come back to the fact that when we talk about Local Projects, Local Jobs, this Labor government is missing the point. It is not about election commitments and it is not about the viability of the people who receive those grants; it is about the administration, the probity, the process and being able to report to taxpayers what the government has done with their money. We have continually said that the way this program has been administered does not allow for that. We are not casting any aspersions on any organisations that have received the money; members on this side of the house have repeatedly said that. In fact, if members of the McGowan government are suggesting that members of Parliament not agreeing with the way funding is allocated for a particular project means they think the project was not viable or a great project in the local community, they should stop saying that they do not believe royalties for regions was administered properly. If we carry on from the logic of what Hon Sue Ellery was saying when she said she believed royalties for regions was not administered correctly, I have to draw the conclusion that she is sullyng the reputation of those organisations that received funding under royalties for regions. I believe that is entirely untrue. When the current government was in opposition, its members suggested that royalties for regions projects that had been funded were not worthy and they questioned that funding, and many times we asked which projects they would not have funded. This is not about that and it is not sullyng the reputation of organisations because they receive funding; it is about asking this government for transparency. This is a government that Mark McGowan has said many, many times would roll out a rolled-gold level of transparency for Western Australia, but which continues to do otherwise. This motion is asking the house to support that process, but I do not support that process and I never will. If we are talking about people's reputations being sullied, I suggest that the actions of this government in administering the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund, grant system, or whatever it is, have done exactly that. I refer to the Stephen Michael Foundation, which has been spoken about previously and mentioned in the media. The actions of this Labor government have sullied his reputation through not seeing to the correct administration of the funding it intended to give to his organisation. Unfortunately, his name has been caught up in this. He is a fantastic champion for Aboriginal people and children and he was a great role model for me as a child growing up. I find it very disconcerting that the actions of this government have led into disrepute an organisation like the Stephen Michael Foundation, which seeks to do very good work. Unfortunately, Stephen Michael and his foundation have been caught up in the lack of transparency of this government.

We have tried many, many times to get answers about the administrative process and the accountability of government oversight of those funds. I have asked for lists from the Minister for Regional Development about

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projects in the Mining and Pastoral Region that have received funding, but to no avail, with no information about what the funding was used for, whether it had been spent in a timely matter or whether the organisation had received it but not spent it on what it was intended for. Has the Minister for Regional Development asked for that money back, like she did in other areas of my electorate, such as local government? She said, “Give that money back, if you are not spending it on the thing you requested it for.” Is this government asking those people or organisations who received Local Projects, Local Jobs funding that has not been spent on what it was intended for, or not been spent at all, for its money back? How would we even know that, because there is no accountability to those funds and no reporting requirements? Those are legitimate questions to ask on the behalf of the people of Western Australia and we should be asking them. When government does not get its processes right, the reputations of organisations have shadows cast on them. Unfortunately, that has occurred with the Stephen Michael Foundation. Aside from having the Leader of the House, Hon Sue Ellery, read an explanation and a report to this house on where some of the funding to organisations mentioned in this debate is at, which is what she just did, how else will the people of Western Australia get any transparency about this process? It leads me to think that I should read out every single project that I think received money from the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund. That might be the only way that this Parliament will have oversight on the reporting requirements and accountability for that money—what it was spent on and when it was spent. Then we could have some idea about where that money has gone and whether it has been spent by this government in a reasonable manner.

Should we do that? I would not have thought that that was a good use of the house’s time. I would have thought, given the repeated questions from members on this side of the house, that there would have been plenty of opportunity for the government to provide details of the grants received by those organisations. However, I can tell members that I have not been able to get any information at all in response to questions that I have asked. There is not even transparency at the level of what the projects actually are. I find it absolutely incredible that the mover of this motion is suggesting that the government should be congratulated and recognised for its positive impact on local communities, when there is absolutely no way of measuring any of that. For that reason, just looking at the motion in itself, I cannot support it because I cannot validate that statement.

Members on this side of the house are asking all these questions and are not getting any answers so, quite rightly, questions will continue to be asked. It is quite within the right of any member of this Parliament or of the public to ask the government about its due diligence and assessment processes for very substantial amounts of money—\$39 million.

**Hon Peter Collier:** It was 22.

**Hon JACQUI BOYDELL:** It was \$22 million before the election, now increased to \$39 million. That is a significant amount of taxpayers’ funds. The government has announced an initiative that is then broken down into anything from \$1 500 to \$750 000. If there is a fair and equitable process for determining how or why those funds got there, or where they are at, I would be happy to hear it. As I said at the outset, no-one on this side of the house has cast aspersions on any organisation that has received that funding. I am not doing that; I support and congratulate them for what they have been able to achieve for the organisations they work for. Members on this side of the house have no issue with individual members of Parliament, the Labor Party, the Liberal Party, any of the crossbench or the Nationals WA making election commitments. I expect members to do that, because we are all out there, listening to our constituents and formulating opinions around potentially good uses of government expenditure. When the McGowan Labor government came to power, it needed a process that was accountable to the people of Western Australia, who put it there, to deliver its funding. A sum of \$39 million is absolutely nothing to be sneezed at. A new government absolutely should spend on its election commitments, but it should also have a process in place for the administration of the expenditure of that money that is accountable to the people, Treasury and the relevant departments. We are in a very serious situation when we hear, in this Parliament, that government departments are raising concerns with their ministers about the intent of the government’s spending. That is a very serious issue, and something that we might get a chance to investigate when we get to a motion further down the notice paper. As a house of review, we absolutely should do that.

When I think about Local Projects, Local Jobs in my electorate, I ask myself: when will the government table in Parliament a report into individual projects that have been granted funds so that the people of my electorate and I can understand what is happening? How many jobs have been created from that funding? I want to know, because that is the claim the government is making. Were there various tenderers in the process? Were people vying for funding? Who were they? How can we know that? If they were not successful, how do they know where else they can go for funding? Why were they not successful? Was it just because they were not friends with their local Labor member? That is not the way to run government. Do any milestones exist for any of those projects? Who knows? Is that just up to the local member and their electorate office? I would not have thought so, because it is the government that has delivered that funding. There should be responsibility and accountability to the executive, one would have thought. How do we know whether the funds have been spent wisely? How do we know whether

the right people and the right organisations have received those funds? It is a fair question to ask; it is not casting aspersions on anyone. Indeed, the Labor Party asked that same question many times of projects funded by the previous government. It is a fair question; an opposition should ask that question. The people of Western Australia should ask that question, and I have every right to do so.

For all those reasons, earlier this year I called in this house for the Local Projects, Local Jobs program to be investigated by a special inquirer under section 24 of the Public Sector Management Act. That is the same section that invoked an inquiry by John Langoulant to examine the previous government's arrangements and decision-making processes. It was apparently a random selection of projects between 2008 and 2017 that were investigated. The terms of reference of that inquiry included: assessing the adequacy of decision-making processes, including the adequacy of processes leading to the awarding of projects; the adequacy of business cases and procurement processes; whether reasonable value for money outcomes were provided; and the use of commercial-in-confidence.

It was an important motion and I moved it for two reasons. Firstly, this government went to the election promising to deliver gold-standard transparency and accountability. That was backed up further in February this year when Mark McGowan, as Premier of this state, said —

“My Government will continue to strengthen governance, accountability, transparency and focus on the key economic and social benefits of government decisions when dealing with taxpayers' money.

That is a fantastic motherhood statement, but it means nothing unless the government actually delivers on it. It also means nothing if members opposite do not hold their leader to account to deliver on that undertaking, because it has not been delivered on with Local Projects, Local Jobs. The government continues to say one thing and do another, and like a stone gathering moss, it will continue to be an issue until it addresses the issue at the heart of this motion, and that is that there is no accountability.

The investigations Hon Tjorn Sibma undertook and brought to the house earlier today, which we have discussed many times in this house, are the tip of the iceberg. It raises the question of how many other departmental officers have concerns about the delivery of this program and are forced to turn a blind eye to the government's election commitments. That is a very serious state of affairs for any department and government to be in.

Does that extend to all other election commitments made by this government? What has been the department's advice around the delivery of those election commitments? I think that would be of interest to the people of Western Australia considering the current environment. That is an abuse of taxpayers' funds and it is now evident that every single one of those projects needs to be investigated by an independent arbitrator.

I think I have said enough on this motion. I will not support the motion purely because in itself there is no way it could measure what the motion is saying. The debate that this motion has brought to the house has raised further concerns for government, further concerns for members of this house, and indeed probably for the people who received funding under this project, and for the people who did not because they have actually had no process in which to engage with government through this fund. That in itself is a real problem as well. We will not be supporting the motion.

**HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West) [2.20 pm]:** I think it is particularly disappointing to hear the way that some of the country members sitting on the opposition benches have responded to this splendid motion by Hon Darren West, which I was delighted to see on the notice paper. I have been looking forward to debating it. I do not find this particular part of the legislative program in this place to often be particularly productive, but I was very glad to see Hon Darren West's motion on the notice paper so that we could talk about what the Local Projects, Local Jobs initiative has delivered, particularly for regional Western Australia. It was very sad to hear from country members, who surely are in touch with their electorates to the extent that they know the benefits that this program is rolling out. If there are questions about what is going on in the metropolitan area, the metropolitan members can talk about that, but away from Perth the benefits of this program can be seen every day. I find it very strange that the country members in this place have not stood in support of this motion moved by Hon Darren West. I make that point at the outset.

I have lots of things to say about this because I was one of the many people in the Labor opposition in the last period of government who was particularly keen to see this kind of program rolled out. I will tell members why it became so important to me. Since 2004, when I was preselected to run for the South West Region, I have been very assiduous at trying to make sure that whomever is in government does not forget about the small community groups that actually keep our regional centres and small towns going. One of the things I found over what is now several decades of campaigning outside the metropolitan area is this curious fact. I say it is curious because it has actually taken me many years to persuade some of my metropolitan counterparts that this really is a thing outside the metropolitan area. What I have found in those years of campaigning, particularly with Hon Mick Murray, the member for Collie-Preston, is that we often find there is more value in these small grants than there is from some

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of the big-ticket items. I can walk around a small town or a regional community and talk about the big projects. I know one that Madam Acting President (Hon Adele Farina) has had a lot to do with over these years is the Bunbury bypass and the extension of the port facilities in Bunbury. Those sorts of projects have lots and lots of dollars associated with them. It is very, very important that all members put their shoulders to the wheel and get these big projects recognised, properly funded and off the ground, and completed.

In my day-to-day life as a regional member of Parliament, what I hear most of all is people who want little bits of money here and there. These are the things that irk people day by day. It is things such as the shade cloths at the day care centre and covered assembly areas at schools so that kids do not have their assemblies cancelled because of inclement weather. For decades now I have been saying to my metropolitan counterparts that if we had a way of listening to those concerns, registering them and bringing them back to central campaigns and to governments during periods in office to have them taken seriously, that would be delivering to our local communities in a way and on a level that some of those big projects do not do. They are addressing the big things that people will notice when they hit the headlines, and of course many of them are immensely significant. These little things remove those irritants—the things that people have been trying to fix for years. That is how we can actually make a difference.

What happened a couple of years ago now is that once we started choosing the candidates who were going to run for WA Labor in the 2017 state election, we were able to talk to them about the sorts of conversations that they could have with people in their constituencies. What was the result of that? The result is that we ended up making a whole series of commitments to local community groups, schools, women's refuges, and theatre groups. All of those things are the glue that keeps our communities running. We did not get anything flashy. We did not get any gimmicks or tricks, or sleights of hand; what we got was just a series of solid commitments built on and emanating from the relationships that our MPs and candidates had established with individuals—real people, with names and positions in small community groups—who were then able to deliver these small projects. What did we get? Did we get something that could be branded as a new grants program? Of course we did not. This is not a new grants program. This is exactly what we told people it was in the year to 18 months leading up to March 2017. This is simply a collection of small commitments that were made during an election campaign by a political party that was in opposition at the time when those small commitments were made. That is what we promised. That is what we have in front of us and that is what we are delivering.

I used to get paid to think. When I was lecturing at Murdoch University, that is what I used to do. I like thinking. I like engaging in debate and I like contesting ideas. I like playing with language and all that sort of thing. But I have to say that in this particular case I want to say to members opposite: you can overthink these things. You can pump yourselves up and rub your tummies and put in your freedom of information requests. You can get all excited and puffed up and all that, but really seriously, you can overthink these things. Local Projects, Local Jobs is a collection of small election commitments made by a political party when it was in opposition.

This is what I want to put next to members: I wonder whether anybody on the benches opposite has ever engaged in a conversation with a small community group about a small project that they would like to have funded. I can tell members that I have many, many times over the years.

I can tell members that it is not something we raise in the first five minutes of meeting somebody. If we as a candidate or local politician and member of Parliament walk in the door and say, "Hello, Joe Blow, it's lovely to meet you; how much money would you like me to give you?", they will show us the door within minutes. That is not what people want to hear from their local politician. This might go against all the community perceptions about how politicians go around dolling out money, but it is not like that. We establish relationships with groups. We go to their monthly meetings. We help them out with their photocopying. We get them information when they need help with funding applications or procedural stuff about how to hold an annual general meeting. We get to know them. We get to engage with them about their activities. A small theatre group might ask us to become their patron, so we go to opening nights and we encourage new people in the organisation. We get to know them, and we find out what is important to them. If it is a P&C, we will gradually piece together, over the months and years that we are involved with them, that a covered assembly area, or shade sails over their school's recreation area, is holding them back and is something that they need. That means that when we get into the context of an election campaign, we are able to say to those people that if a Labor government is elected, we will do our absolute best to make sure they get the funding for what they need.

What we are looking at here is the pay-off for the work that was done by a whole swag of Labor election candidates across this state. We are looking at what happened as a result of the relationship that those candidates and members of Parliament crafted over months, and sometimes years, with their local communities. That is what we are looking at here—nothing more, nothing less. I am not saying that is a small thing; it is actually a very big and significant thing. As my colleague Hon Sue Ellery said, one of the main reasons that we won the 2017 election is that we went into the community and established those relationships and got to know people and groups and what their priorities

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are. We then came back to Perth and argued for that funding to be made to those groups. We are looking at a collection of small election commitments that was made when WA Labor was in opposition—nothing more, nothing less.

There is another word in this motion that I think is very important. I have not heard much talk about that word, although Hon Jacqui Boydell said that she is looking for more information on this, so I am sure she will be able to piece that together. I say to Hon Jacqui Boydell that if she is not clear about what some of these projects are, she might want to get involved with these groups herself. If she were to leave Perth occasionally and go into the regions, she would have those relationships herself with those groups, and they might even tell her what they are using that money for. The word that I want to stress was one of the cornerstones of our election campaign. It is no accident that we used that word in the title of the scheme that is funding the small election commitments to which I have referred. That word is “jobs”. Over our past four years in opposition, we went into the community and talked about jobs.

I have to say that one of the most interesting things I have seen over my decades of working in politics is that we now have a political party that has put an emphasis on jobs and job creation, with all the things that go with that, such as training and apprenticeships. I remember that when Hon Mick Murray and I announced the fracking ban in the south west, we did it on the basis that the two key economic drivers in the south west are tourism and food production. Tourism and food production are both industries that, first, generate local jobs; and, second, and just as important, generate training opportunities for young people that will enable a person born and bred in Boyanup or further down in the great southern to find a career or profession in their local community. That was how we framed that announcement. Hon Mick Murray and I then came back to Perth and sold to our colleagues in the metropolitan area that we believe that fracking ban was very important to protect those two industries in the south west that potentially were under threat —

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** From which processes were they under threat?

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** They were under threat from certain industrial processes—not all by any means. Those members who have taken any notice of anything I have said since I have been in this place will know that my political association is with the Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union. Of course, Hon Mick Murray and I are not anti-industry or anti-resource development. However, we argued that fracking is not compatible with our two main economic drivers in the south west, those being tourism and food production. They are the drivers of jobs and apprenticeships and traineeships in the south west and great southern.

WA Labor talked jobs for years, and that is what the electorate heard and responded to. We talked about jobs and growth security and opportunities for young people. That was one of the reasons the people of WA turned to us and away from the misery of those eight and a half years that the Liberal–National government served up to them.

This round of funding for these election commitments was labelled Local Projects, Local Jobs for very good reason. Unlike those members who were in government for that long, long eight and a half years, we on this side of the house get that if we want to create jobs, that needs to be a part of everything we do. We cannot treat it like a pie chart and say, “Today we are going to create jobs, but tomorrow we are going to do something else.” We cannot do that. Jobs must be a part of everything we do. Do members remember that famous American election campaign in which every campaign worker has written on their wall, “It’s the economy, stupid”? We need to do that all the time. If we believe in jobs, that is the talk we need to talk and the walk we need to walk every day. Every day, if we are campaigning for jobs, we should sit down and ask ourselves what we have done that day to create a local job or a local apprenticeship or traineeship, or to guarantee a person’s job security so that they have a better idea about where they will be working next year or in the next five years or 10 years than they would have had when this mob opposite was in government. This mob did not get it. It did not get that what people want is jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships, and job security.

Of course if we want to create jobs, we need to look at the prosperity of local businesses, labour market conditions, and the quality of service provision to our local communities. This kind of thing is not just dreamt up. This does not happen for no reason. This is all part of WA Labor’s plan to create jobs for Western Australians and opportunities for young people.

When Hon Tjorn Sibma was speaking, and I know he has carriage of this issue and has files and files of paperwork from his FOIs and that sort of thing, I sat here and thought —

Several members interjected.

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** He did not speak for 45 minutes, because he did not have that much to say.

Several members interjected.

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**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** He did not fill up all his time. I sat here for well over half an hour—my colleague Hon Martin Pritchard will bear me out—with my pen in my hand, waiting to make notes, knowing I would be speaking at some stage after him.

An opposition member: We thought you were asleep!

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** It was hard. I have to say that there were moments when I said to Hon Martin Pritchard — Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Adele Farina):** Order, members! Hon Sally Talbot has the call.

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** There were moments when I had to get Hon Martin Pritchard to give me a bit of a kick to keep me awake. I did not write anything down and I honestly think that the most interesting thing I heard the member say—I may have dreamt it—was that the member for Collie–Preston does not have a brain the size of Saturn. I do not know what the member knows—I think that is what he said.

**Hon Tjorn Sibma:** Yes, I did.

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** Hon Mick Murray does not have a brain the size of Saturn. I do not know how much engagement Hon Tjorn Sibma has had with the member for Collie–Preston, but he has a very, very interesting brain. Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Order, members!

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** Having worked with the member for Collie–Preston for many years over an almost uncountable number of election campaigns, the most recent being the fifth or sixth he has won—the first half dozen he did not—he has a very interesting mind and one that I respect enormously. The amount of work that man put into putting together projects for the Local Projects, Local Jobs commitments was absolutely phenomenal. Working with that member of Parliament, I saw the way that we deliver for our community. That man is completely embedded in his community. I remember once giving him a list of people whom we thought, for various reasons, it would be good for him to ring. He looked down this list and he knew them all. He knew whose kids had just started school and whose wife had just had gallstones. He knew everything about everybody. Working with him for all those years, I know this to be true. I do not know whether he would appreciate me saying this, because at times he can actually be quite modest, but he is one of the main architects of this program. He was one of the first people to back me up when I said to our metropolitan counterparts that we needed a program to deliver on small election commitments outside the metropolitan area to show people that we are not just like politicians on the other side of the chamber and that we actually listen to them, we take their concerns seriously and we recognise the nature of the glue that holds our small communities together. He put in an enormous amount of work to put this small election commitment program together. I take my hat off to him. I was a bit worried when I heard Hon Robin Scott talk about the Italian club. I thought: I do not remember seeing the Italian club in the list. I was delighted today when Hon Sue Ellery was able to clarify that that Italian club commitment was to the Collie Italian and Sporting Club. Come to Collie and talk to people about how long they have wanted the facilities delivered by this funding and what a difference the funding has made to that community. To bring the money back from Perth and give people outside the metropolitan area the money they need to do these small but such significant projects is a big thing to do in a small town. I feel a bit of ownership over this program and very protective of this process we have gone through, and I would be very, very happy to do it all again. This is what I want to do; this is what we do when we deliver.

I undersold Hon Tjorn Sibma a little bit in my comments a few moments ago, because I said that the size of Hon Mick Murray's brain was the only thing that I wrote down, but I did write down something else. A couple of times the member said, "This is a story as old as time." It occurred to me that I agree with him. I think Hon Tjorn Sibma is absolutely right; this is a story as old as time. Since time commenced, we have had good solid Labor Party candidates and MPs going out in communities, getting to know the local community, forming relationships with the people who operate local groups and are the movers and shakers in those communities, working out what their priorities are and then helping to deliver those priorities—those projects—to the people they serve. Indeed, this is a story as old as time. I think it will go on and on in the future, and I would be very proud to be part of that because I think it is a great thing to do. I would encourage any aspiring politician on any side of politics—we have seven sides in this chamber—to do exactly this, because this is how we form and forge those relationships. I want to see a lot more of it as we go on, because our communities will be better places the more we do this.

We know how members of the Liberal and National parties think government should be conducted because we had eight and a half awfully long years to watch them, and it was not hard to work out how they think the business of government should be conducted. First, they think that government should be really, really small, so they shut things down, withdraw government support and services, and batten down all the hatches. Then they start selling things off, because they think the private sector can do it better and more efficiently. Over and again we have

shown that it cannot. What did eight and a half years of small government and a program to privatise anything that moved give us? It gave us uncontrolled expense growth. How did that happen? Members opposite belie their own rhetoric with every breath they take. It just does not work. Over eight and a half years, they sat there while the government spectacularly unravelled around their feet.

When I was doorknocking in the 12 months before the March 2017 election, I reported back to organisers in Perth that I had never seen the electorate look so dispirited. That is what happens after seven or eight years of watching a government unravel. It is a horrible thing to watch, but we watched it for all those years. We had uncontrolled expense growth and at the same time uncontrolled capital expenditure—the two things that conservatives are supposed to be good at controlling. I actually do not think that the Liberal Party now is the voice of conservatism. I think the Liberal Party now is the voice of extremism and everybody in the Liberal Party is now some kind of fundamentalist. I think that the real voice of conservatism has been taken over by the Nationals. Unlike some of my colleagues on this side of the chamber, I have more time for people in the National Party than I have for people in the Liberal Party. I hope I have time a bit later to explain that in a bit more detail. This is not an unconsidered conclusion that I have arrived at.

What happened in that eight and a half years? We had small government and an aggressive program of privatisation, but uncontrolled expense growth and uncontrolled capital expenditure. It was extraordinary to watch and it pulled everybody down. One of the reasons our candidates were so successful—when I say “candidates”, I am drawing a distinction between them and people who are already MPs—is that people were hungry to hear from somebody who actually had some solutions, some way of working and who heard those community voices and put those voices in a context in which they felt they had some kind of reception and some way of inputting into the local political process. It was a very important thing to do. When I saw Hon Darren West’s motion coming up on the notice paper, I was very keen to pay tribute to how some of those candidates operated during that time. We gave them a very hard job to do in the south west! What a job we gave Robyn Clarke, in the electorate of Murray–Wellington! We chose candidates in a decent amount of time to campaign and put them into communities that had only ever voted conservative for the last couple of decades, and it was a real challenge for those people. I remember meeting Robyn Clarke, who is now the member for Murray–Wellington, for the first time about 18 months before the state election. When I was introduced to her, I saw a warm, energetic dynamo of a woman who talked Labor Party values that absolutely came from her heart. She glowed with values of equality and justice and social fairness and it was an inspiration to get to know her. I thought she had a big contribution to make to the Labor movement and we chose her to run in Murray–Wellington. What a job to give somebody with that kind of energy and that kind of talent! She found herself dealing with communities that were very disappointed in their local member, who was a member of the Liberal Party. Members may remember that that member’s problem was that he was at war with his own party and the former government. He had a reasonable idea of what he wanted to deliver for the community, but he was not able to do it because he was shackled by all that ideological stuff—ideas of small government and “sell it all off”. It was not a message he could take to his community. All credit to Robyn Clarke! As the candidate for Murray–Wellington, Robyn Clarke spoke to thousands of people in that electorate during the 12 months or so that she was the candidate. She spoke to them on doorsteps, in shopping centres and on the telephone. She joined local groups and went to their meetings. I had never seen a candidate put that amount of energy and effort into a campaign. Do members remember the margin she was fighting against? It was not a knife-edge seat. My golly! She walked the walk for that year! I think it is fantastic that she is now able to turn around to the community and say, “Look at what we can now deliver to you.” I looked at some of the projects that have already been announced in the electorate of Murray–Wellington. I will not have time to go through them all because I want to also talk about Bunbury, where we have another excellent local member, who I think will be the member until he chooses to retire, hopefully at the age of about 105.

One project in Murray–Wellington was the Australind skate park. How long have we been talking about the Australind skate park? My goodness! It has been years and years. The Australind skate park has now been delivered. There has been a contribution for the construction of new facilities for the Brunswick River cottage stage 2. Members who live and work in that area will know I am not talking rubbish or making this up. They will know how important the Brunswick River cottage is to that area and the reception that the announcement of \$100 000 of funding has had. Another \$100 000 has gone to the construction of new facilities for the Harvey library. There is also the Lake Clifton fire shed and roadworks.

I have a long list and I may not have time to go all the way through it, but I want to add something. This will not be a big surprise to anybody who has been involved in politics. They will know that after a member makes a commitment to a local group, that is not the end of the job. We cannot sit back and tick it off our list, go home and move onto the next thing. Members must keep every one of their commitments at the front of people’s minds. The reality is that when we won in March 2017, all these local commitments had to be taken from a process that was devised when we were in opposition. Opposition parties do not have any resources or access to any of the resources of the public sector. We have to talk to groups and say, “If we win, I will do my best to get you this money but there will have to be a process.” On the day after the election we started looking at what that process would be. These

**Extract from Hansard**

[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 22 August 2018]

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Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Sue Ellery; President; Hon James Chown; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Sally Talbot;  
Hon Michael Mischin

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things can be overthought. How did we decide to handle these dozens of local commitments that had been made by our members and our candidates? It was not rocket science. We went to the appropriate agencies and said that they would need to process them through the normal channels. Why would we need to invent anything more complicated than that? We have very experienced public servants who know how to handle applications from small community groups for \$50 000 or \$100 000. Langoulant's own observation was that projects under \$1 million do not need a business case. I bet the opposition wishes it knew that when it was in government. It clearly forgot that bit because it did not get business cases for anything—even if they were worth millions of dollars.

A whole section of the public service is very good at processing these kinds of things, so we put it to work doing that. None of this is rocket science. None of this needs to be subject to a process that is over and above everything else. We were not setting up a grants program; we were looking for a way to service small commitments made in the context of an election campaign by a party that was in opposition. That is what we came up with. Guess what—every now and then we went back to a group and they said, "The local mining company down the road has offered to build us shade sails, so we now have the shade sails from somebody else." That is great! That is what local resources companies should be doing. It is called protecting their social licence, but that is another subject for another day, which I can talk about at great length. That is what they should be doing and something we should celebrate. It does not mean that an election commitment program comes tumbling down around our feet in ashes. We looked at what we could do to move on to a sensible solution, in which everybody gets recognition for the work they have done to put projects together and everybody has their say about how that money is being spent.

There are a lot more projects in Murray–Wellington, but one of the most impressive things I have seen since I have been a member of Parliament—I make the point about being a member of Parliament as opposed to being a member of the Labor Party, because a member of Parliament gets to participate in party room meetings, which is when we have discussions with ministers, the people who ultimately hold the purse strings, about where some of this money will go—is that I have never seen anybody fight as ferociously for the interests of her electors as Robyn Clarke has done over the last 18 months since she became the member for Murray–Wellington. It has been like watching a terrier go after a ball. She will not leave it alone or take no for an answer. She has been able to deliver a dozen or so projects for her electorate in line with the commitments that she gave during the election campaign. I take my hat off to her! Most of us can learn a lot by watching a member like that go about the business of being a good local representative. I think she has done a fantastic job of showing local communities what it means to have an active and connected local member of Parliament with a Labor government.

I pay tribute to my other colleagues in the South West Region, of which there are now many; indeed, five of the eight seats in the South West Region are held by Labor members. I have already talked about the member for Collie–Preston who, similar to the members for Albany and Mandurah, knows how this works. They have had relationships with their community groups for nearly two decades. They know what their local community needs and I must say that they are very experienced at going into the party room and telling ministers that these things will be delivered, which they have been doing for a number of years very, very effectively. They are re-elected all the time because they are able to deliver for their local communities. For the new members, it is a challenge. The other new member who I have been watching with enormous admiration is Don Punch, who was clearly born to be the member for Bunbury. His immersion in that community is so complete that we were able to use endorsements from conservatives in his campaign to win the seat back from the conservatives because that is how respected he is. Don Punch, as the member for Bunbury, has delivered an equally impressive list of projects. He has relationships with many of the ministers and the Premier, with whom he worked very closely during his time on the South West Development Commission. The member for Bunbury knows exactly how to deliver for his electorate, and I am absolutely certain that he and the member for Murray–Wellington will keep delivering for their electorates for as long as they choose to continue to be the local members. I am very proud to have them as colleagues and to be working with them.

I noticed that one of the things that members on the other side have raised has not come up so much in this debate, which I am a little intrigued about. Having gone through the paperwork on the Local Projects, Local Jobs program, I think my back-of-the-envelope calculation is that about 25 per cent of the funding comes from royalties for regions, which is entirely appropriate. The other day on the radio, I had a sparring match with Hon Dr Steve Thomas about the use of royalties for regions money. Hon Dr Steve Thomas and I share a view about the significance of a lot of the projects around the south west and the great southern—indeed, when it comes down to the brass tacks of delivering, there is not all that much on which we disagree—but we had a sparring match on the radio about royalties for regions funding. The thing that really makes me angry at the moment is that the conservatives seem to think that it is okay to go out there and not tell the truth about the way the royalties for regions program is being run under this government. Royalties for regions money funds 25 per cent of the program that we are talking about today in the debate on the motion. Members know that the Royalties for Regions Act 2009 has not been changed by this government, that the royalties for regions development trust has been left in place as the watchdog, and that this government is committed to strengthening it, which is what the mob opposite should have done when it was in government. Members opposite know that the \$1 billion cap will stay. They have seen the funding in the



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forward estimates and read the very detailed material. I printed out the press release of Hon Alannah MacTiernan, as the Minister for Regional Development, and the Premier and read the media statement after the budget. I thought I would print it out because it had a lot of interesting material in it—it is 13 pages long! It is 13 pages of commitments that have been funded under royalties for regions, yet the mob opposite thinks that it is okay to go around our communities and say that in some sense, we have withdrawn funding from the royalties for regions program. It came to a head for me the other day when I opened my letterbox and found a newsletter from a National Party MP. There was a graphic on the back of the newsletter that was simply wrong. It said that between 2009 and 2017, the WA Nats had given \$1 billion a year to royalties for regions and that WA Labor will give \$417 million in 2021–22. That comparison is simply not true. The funding cap has not changed. Perhaps Hon Alannah MacTiernan needs to put out a 26-page press release to make it a clearer —

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** It won't work because the National Party business model is made on the back of creating a divide between metropolitan and country, so no matter what the truth is, their whole *raison d'être* requires that they create this illusion.

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** Every time a member on this side of the house stands in this place, it is incumbent on them to point out to members on the other side that they should not distort the truth. They should not tell anything other than the truth; namely, that royalties for regions has been left untouched. I suggest that members opposite have a lot to learn. I actually use *The West Australian* for a lot of material when I prepare for my contributions. I draw members' attention to an article in *The West Australian* that has a wonderful cartoon—I will cover up the picture of the Prime Minister; he might not be the PM for much longer—which says, “I will try not to talk bollocks!” I suggest that members opposite take this very much to heart, particularly when they talk about royalties for regions, and try not to talk bollocks.

**HON MICHAEL MISCHIN (North Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [3.06 pm]: I refer to the motion before the house —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Hon Michael Mischin has the call.

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** Thank you, Madam Acting President.

As usual, Hon Dr Sally Talbot has demonstrated her talent for filling up as much time and saying as little as possible to squeeze out any debate and proper analysis of the motion before the house. Congratulations once again, Hon Dr Sally Talbot. There were some amusing parts in her contribution. I am sure that she will make a very useful witness at the select committee that may be set up in due course, because she can provide information about how the Local Projects, Local Jobs scheme was concocted in the first place and how it was intended to run.

The motion before the house asks us, invites us and calls upon us to congratulate the government on its Local Projects, Local Jobs initiative and the positive impact it has had on local communities. I agree with one element of the motion; Local Projects, Local Jobs has had an impact on local communities, certainly certain community groups that are the recipients of this largesse. We have heard interesting accounts of all the little local handouts that have been made for local votes in order to curry favour with particular groups. That is all very well, and I am sure that all of them have been well received. Good luck to them! For the Leader of the House to get up and say that the intemperate language used by opposition members has sullied the reputation of these groups is an indication, firstly, of her inability to tell the truth, and, secondly, her desperation to deflect attention, proper attention, away from the manner in which this pork-barrelling scheme works and the propriety of it, and onto the recipients.

I hope that ministerials are generated by these inquiries because that way we can request information—unless the shredding machines and delete buttons on computers work overtime—to get to the bottom of who is responsible for these individuals payments. I make it quite plain that I have no problem at all with the recipients getting money—good luck to them and well done—but I have a problem with the use of public funds. We had eight and a half years of complaints about the indiscriminate spending of public money, yet this government has made \$39 million worth of promises without having done any assessment of the amount that is necessary to hand out for so-called projects that may be purchasing things and “jobs”, which even the Labor Party admitted was tacked on the end to make it more appealing to the electorate. I have yet to see any jobs generated by these funds, other than those that would have been generated by appropriate expenditure by those departments concerned. On the contrary, amounts are being promised but not for a particular exercise whereby someone says, “I support your getting shade cloth. Can you do an assessment of how much it would cost and I will do my best when we are elected to advocate for that?” No, we have had amounts—\$25 000 here and \$225 000 for Harrisdale Primary School, but we are yet to find out what sort of shade cloth it will get. That has to come from somewhere, and that somewhere is public funds, at a time when this government is chopping services, firing public servants, restructuring departments, cutting back on frontline expenditure and denying police officers their pay rise, all on the basis that we have to save money and there is none. The impact on the community is that it builds uncertainty and divisiveness when one group gets access to this pork barrel but another does not. I will speak more on this point when Hon Tjorn Sibma raises his motion.

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*Division*

Question put and a division taken, the Acting President (Hon Adele Farina) casting her vote with the ayes, with the following result —

Ayes (11)

Hon Alanna Clohesy  
Hon Sue Ellery  
Hon Adele Farina

Hon Laurie Graham  
Hon Alannah MacTiernan  
Hon Kyle McGinn

Hon Martin Pritchard  
Hon Samantha Rowe  
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

Hon Darren West  
Hon Pierre Yang (*Teller*)

Noes (15)

Hon Martin Aldridge  
Hon Jacqui Boydell  
Hon Peter Collier  
Hon Colin de Grussa

Hon Donna Faragher  
Hon Nick Goiran  
Hon Colin Holt  
Hon Michael Mischin

Hon Simon O'Brien  
Hon Robin Scott  
Hon Tjorn Sibma  
Hon Charles Smith

Hon Aaron Stonehouse  
Hon Colin Tincknell  
Hon Ken Baston (*Teller*)

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Pairs

Hon Matthew Swinbourn  
Hon Stephen Dawson

Hon Jim Chown  
Hon Dr Steve Thomas

Question thus negatived.