

APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2024–25) BILL 2024

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Ms R. Saffioti (Treasurer)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the Treasurer.

Second Reading

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Treasurer) [2.01 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

[The Treasurer read the following speech.]

INTRODUCTION

Madam Speaker, I rise to present the eighth Budget of our WA Labor Government, and my first as Treasurer. The 2024–25 State Budget is a Budget for the times.

A Budget presented at a time when the Western Australian economy is firing on all cylinders.

At a time when we have record numbers of people moving to Western Australia.

At a time when our nation adapts to a higher cost environment.

And at a time when global conflicts continually challenge supply chains and commodity prices.

Madam Speaker, this Budget rises to the challenge.

It invests to create more jobs into the future and diversify our economy; invests like never before in key services; and delivers cost of living support to all Western Australians across the State, at a time when it is most needed.

Western Australia's economy has defied predictions.

People are moving to Western Australia like no other time in our history.

This year alone, Western Australia's population increased by a record 94,000 people, the equivalent of the population of Bunbury and Karratha combined.

Just a few years ago, critics said people would never come to Western Australia.

The opposite has happened, with people flocking to our State.

Managing our extraordinary economy, and the population growth that fuels it, undoubtedly brings with it opportunities and pressures, including additional demand for housing, health, and education services.

This Budget makes additional investments to address these demands.

Across the country and around the world, economies are emerging from a high inflation environment, defined by increased costs to deliver essential services and priority infrastructure.

Western Australia is no exception.

We are in the midst of a transition in our economy. While forecasts generally expect inflation to continue to moderate, some sectors are still adjusting to this new environment.

Another feature is global uncertainty, whether it be changing economic conditions in China, or volatility in the Middle East.

Despite this, the Western Australian economy remains strong.

Our responsible management of the State's finances has allowed us to address demands and boldly invest in the future of our State.

In this Budget, we have boosted our cost of living support for Western Australian households and businesses.

We make significant investments in health, education and training, and community services.

We double down on our efforts to increase housing supply.

We invest in infrastructure that will shape our State for decades to come. This is truly a Western Australian Budget.

It is bold and ambitious.

It builds on our economic success.

It celebrates our natural environment.

It enhances our quality of life.

But most importantly, it also ensures that the most vulnerable in our society are supported, no matter where they live across our great State.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY

Madam Speaker, Western Australia's economy continues to go from strength to strength.

When we came to office seven years ago, we made a promise to Western Australians.

We said we would turn the economy and the finances around, and create more jobs.

It is the delivery of this commitment that makes Western Australia the envy of the nation today.

What was the nation's weakest domestic economy seven years ago, is now the strongest.

What was the nation's highest debt burden, is now the lowest.

And since 2017, more than 300,000 jobs have been created in Western Australia. The current unemployment rate of 3.4 per cent remains at historically low levels.

In fact, the unemployment rate has remained at or below 4 per cent for 29 of the past 30 months, the longest sustained period of low unemployment since 2009.

Western Australia's domestic economy grew by 4.7 per cent in 2023, more than twice the growth of the national economy.

Madam Speaker, the growth is far from over.

Treasury forecasts our domestic economy will grow by 5.25 per cent this financial year, well above the long-run average.

As the economy has grown, business confidence has grown with it.

Business investment is expected to grow by more than 13 per cent this year, the highest growth in more than a decade.

It's this confidence that helps Western Australia outperform other States.

Government investment is expected to grow by 10 per cent this financial year, underpinned by our record \$10.6 billion infrastructure spend in 2023–24 alone.

To put that in perspective, this is more than double the annual government investment when we came to Government.

Our \$42.4 billion investment in infrastructure over the next four years will continue to drive our economic expansion and meet the needs of our growing population.

Madam Speaker, one of the most important economic signs for working families is this:

Wages are going up, and inflation is easing.

Wages grew by 4.4 per cent in 2023, the highest annual average growth rate in the nation, and more than double the decade average.

STATE FINANCES

Madam Speaker, I am proud to announce that Western Australia is on track to deliver a sixth consecutive operating surplus in 2023–24 at \$3.2 billion.

For 2024–25, Western Australia is forecast to achieve a \$2.6 billion operating surplus, with operating surpluses to be maintained across the forward estimates.

This achievement is despite ongoing volatility in our revenue base through fluctuations in commodity prices, taxation revenue, the GST, and other Commonwealth grants.

For these reasons we continue to budget conservatively and ensure we live within our means. It is why we continue to fight every day to ensure Western Australia gets its fair share of the GST and other Commonwealth grants, recognising no State provides more to the Federation than ours.

This Budget uses our strong financial position to invest in the things that matter to Western Australians.

Highlights in this Budget include:

- \$762 million to deliver record cost of living support to Western Australian families;
- \$1.1 billion for housing and homelessness, focused on boosting housing supply and affordability;

- a record \$3.2 billion boost for our health system, supporting more doctors and nurses across Western Australia;
- \$1.3 billion for education and training, including more teachers and education assistants, and new and upgraded schools to keep pace with our growing population; and
- \$1.8 billion to diversify and decarbonise our economy, driving Western Australia’s energy transition and the jobs of the future.

Consistent operating surpluses have allowed us to fund infrastructure that will benefit Western Australians for decades to come.

At the same time, net debt remains over \$15 billion lower than projected under the former Liberal National Government.

Net debt is expected to be lower than originally budgeted this year at \$28.6 billion by 30 June 2024, compared to the \$29.4 billion estimated at the 2023-24 Budget.

Net debt as a percentage of Gross State Product is expected to be just 9.7 per cent by 2027–28, unchanged from the forecast in the last Budget, and significantly lower than any other jurisdiction.

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

Madam Speaker, while the economy remains strong, and employment is at an all-time high, we understand cost of living pressures on working families.

That’s why the Cook Labor Government is delivering \$762 million in new cost of living support measures in this Budget.

The initiatives will help Western Australian households and small businesses through the current cycle of higher costs.

This Budget’s cost of living support builds on prior measures and brings the total assistance provided to over \$3.5 billion since we came to Government.

As I speak, our WA Student Assistance Payment is supporting Western Australian families.

Around 170,000 Western Australian families have now claimed the payments of \$250 per high school student, and \$150 per primary and kindergarten student.

In addition, earlier this year, we made public transport free for school students, saving a family with two kids around \$560 per year.

And in regional WA, we have more than doubled the transport allowance for students who cannot access a free orange school bus, the biggest increase in two decades.

Further to that, we are adding \$65 million to extend our Regional Airfare Zone Cap. This Australia-first initiative, introduced by our Labor Government, has already delivered more than 250,000 capped regional airfares, saving regional residents hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars per year.

Additionally, this year we are increasing the Regional Pensioner Travel Card by \$100 to \$675, to support pensioners in regional WA with the cost of transport.

Madam Speaker, these initiatives will make a huge difference.

And today, I am proud to announce that thanks to the strong management of the State’s finances, we can again afford to give all Western Australian households a new electricity credit.

This Budget delivers a Household Electricity Credit of \$400 to more than 1.1 million Western Australian households.

This is the fourth time our Government has delivered a household electricity credit.

Importantly, our credit will also be extended to more than 90,000 small businesses to help hard working Western Australians with the costs of running their business.

The combination of cost of living measures means an everyday family with two school-aged children will receive more than \$1,400 in State Government assistance this year alone.

But Madam Speaker, we know some households do it tougher.

That’s why more than \$3,500 in targeted assistance is available for households with eligible concessions. This includes, for example, the \$334 Energy Assistance Payment, that will be provided to around 330,000 households on top of the \$400 electricity credit.

This will be the fifth Budget that the Government has limited increases in household fees and charges to below inflation.

In fact, for the third time during this period, the basket of household fees and charges will actually decline in 2024-25, with a 2 per cent, or \$124, reduction.

Significantly, households will spend around \$140 less this year on State Government fees and charges than they did six years ago in 2018-19.

In line with our commitment at the last election, electricity, public transport, and water prices will rise by less than inflation.

This Budget well and truly delivers cost of living support to all Western Australians, delivering extra support to those who need it most.

HEALTH

Madam Speaker, good quality healthcare that's affordable and accessible is a right of every Western Australian.

In this Budget, we are continuing our major investment in the Western Australian health and mental health system:

- with a record \$3.2 billion to boost system capacity;
- by investing in more nurses and doctors; and
- improving access to quality care for patients across the State.

The WA Labor Government's investment in our health system over the past seven years has been unprecedented.

Since June 2017, we've increased the health workforce by over 4,400 nurses and 1,800 doctors, an increase of almost 35 per cent.

We will spend \$12.8 billion in 2024-25 alone; up 45 per cent since 2017.

We have the best funded hospital system of any State, with the highest per capita spending on hospitals, 14 per cent above the national average.

In this term of Government alone, we have delivered 709 new beds.

A further 550 hospital beds are set to be delivered, not including those in the new Women and Babies Hospital in Murdoch.

Our health system is normalising following the significant disruption of the pandemic.

Ambulance ramping is easing, and elective surgery wait times are down 31 per cent since they peaked in the pandemic.

Things are moving in the right direction.

To keep it going, this Budget includes a further \$1.2 billion for our public hospital services to meet the growing demand in Western Australia.

As part of our reform plan, we are committing a further \$155 million to improve emergency access and reduce ambulance ramping, bringing our commitment to emergency department reforms in this term of Government alone to \$827 million.

A further \$405 million will be spent on health services in the regions, including funding for regional workforce initiatives, priority programs, like the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme, and the Kimberley Ambulance Service.

We will invest an additional \$260 million on mental health and alcohol and other drug initiatives, including further investment in suicide prevention and mental health hospital services.

Our new commitment to health and mental health includes \$61 million to build on our previous responses to the recommendations of the Infants, Children and Adolescents Mental Health Taskforce.

This includes more Acute Care Response Teams, and extending the Crisis Connect service, providing a rapid response to support young people in crisis.

Importantly, we are reforming our health and mental health systems to meet the changing needs of our growing population.

We also understand the incredible demand for Child Development Services in the community.

That's why in this Budget, we're also significantly expanding these services, with an additional \$39 million for more staff to provide an increase in assessment and intervention services.

This Budget also includes a further \$839 million in health infrastructure, with funding for the next stage of the roll-out of the Electronic Medical Record and Critical Health ICT infrastructure programs.

An additional \$173 million has been committed to the redevelopment of Bunbury Hospital, plus \$15 million to deliver an MRI unit at Hedland Health Campus, and close to \$9 million to expand Child Development Services in regional WA.

Meanwhile, we continue to roll out major upgrades to hospitals across the State, including at the Geraldton Health Campus, as well as redevelopment of the Peel Health Campus, with services on track to return to public hands in August, and redevelopment enabling works set to commence later this year.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Madam Speaker, we need more homes for Western Australians.

The pandemic, and the population surge in its wake, has created unprecedented pressure on housing markets across Australia, and indeed, the world.

While there are some positive signs, including rising building completions and approvals, the State Government will continue to deliver new initiatives to boost supply and support those without a home.

This Budget delivers a massive \$1.1 billion for housing and homelessness-related initiatives.

A further \$400 million is being invested in the expanded Social and Affordable Housing Investment Fund, taking our total investment in the Fund to \$1.6 billion.

In this term of Government, we have now funded almost 5,000 additional social homes, with more than 2,100 homes already delivered.

The new investment will help support a pipeline of affordable multi-residential housing across a range of high priority sites, including METRONET precincts.

We will partner with the Commonwealth through Housing Australia, and the community housing sector to build hundreds of new affordable rental homes in the coming years.

In addition, this Budget includes \$144 million to deliver new social and affordable residential apartments across Western Australia, including the Pier Street project in Perth.

We are also providing a \$179 million boost to maintain the State's portfolio of around 45,000 social houses, key worker and Aboriginal housing.

Our Government continues to make significant investments in regional housing.

Grants totalling \$60 million will be delivered to regional community housing providers for new and refurbished housing, while \$25 million is being provisioned to improve the energy performance of housing in Aboriginal communities.

A further \$35 million is being provided to deliver additional development-ready land in Broome, Karratha, and Kalgoorlie, and \$9 million to boost homelessness services in regional WA.

An additional \$44 million has been invested in Government Regional Officer Housing, plus a further \$6 million to extend the freeze on tenant rents.

We know that growing the supply of labour is critical to delivering more housing.

That's why this Budget includes an \$85 million boost to the capacity of our residential construction workforce.

This includes an additional 150 apprenticeships in group training organisations to increase the number of carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, and electricians to build our homes.

This is on top of the 150 places already taken up since January this year.

Madam Speaker, we know we need to explore all avenues to increase housing supply.

That's why we introduced a \$10,000 payment to convert short-term holiday rentals to the long-term rental market, with around 140 released as a result of this scheme in the first six months.

To build on this, we are introducing a new scheme to further increase the availability of long-term rentals. \$5 million has been allocated for grants of \$5,000 for owners of vacant homes who place them on the long-term rental market.

Madam Speaker, we know that the increase in the average house price means fewer Western Australians have been eligible for stamp duty assistance for their first home.

That's why I'm pleased to announce this Budget will increase assistance to those buying their first home, including those who are currently renting.

This Budget delivers \$82 million to increase the first home owner transfer duty exemption and concession thresholds to \$450,000 and \$600,000 respectively. This will assist almost 5,000 first home buyers per year and increase the maximum duty relief under the concession to over \$15,000.

Our WA Rent Relief Program, delivered in partnership with community service organisations, continues to support those experiencing financial stress due to higher rents, with more than \$2.4 million already provided to almost 600 Western Australians to help keep a roof over their heads.

This Budget also provides a further \$92 million to support critical homelessness services delivered by more than 120 providers, as well as case management and wrap-around support for rough sleepers to transition into permanent accommodation.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Madam Speaker, a world class education and training system that's accessible to all is the key to remaining the nation's strongest economy in the decades ahead.

We're improving the system on several fronts, more teachers, more schools, and affordable training, including Fee Free TAFE.

We've added more than 6,000 new teachers and education assistants to public schools across Western Australia since 2017.

This Budget delivers a record \$1.3 billion investment in education and training to meet the needs of our rapidly growing population and economy.

In fact, almost \$34 billion will be spent on education and training over the next four years, plus more than \$1.7 billion on new school and training infrastructure.

\$410 million will be spent to build new schools, expand capacity, and upgrade and maintain existing schools.

A further \$391 million will be invested to meet projected enrolment growth for schools, as well as support students with English as an additional language and students with disability.

Importantly, a new feature of this Budget is a further \$3 million to bolster swimming and water safety programs in Western Australia.

Madam Speaker, this Budget doubles down on our efforts and commitment to training Western Australians.

Nearly 40,000 Western Australians have accessed Fee Free TAFE over the past year, giving more Western Australians the skills they need for the jobs that support our economy and community.

Western Australians who wanted to become Early Childhood Educators had to pay almost \$7,000 under the Liberals and Nationals.

Today, they pay nothing under WA Labor.

Western Australians who wanted to become Enrolled Nurses had to pay almost \$10,500 under the Liberals and Nationals. Today, they pay nothing under WA Labor.

In this Budget, an additional \$195 million will be invested in our training system, including:

- as mentioned previously, \$85 million to train more tradies to build more homes; and
- funding to continue the Government's Fee Free TAFE places in 2025, ensuring everyone, no matter their income, has access to training.

Importantly, we are getting people who may have never worked before, or been out of work a long time, into jobs.

Just look at our Heavy Vehicle Driver training program, which has seen 650 people trained and employed as truckies, nearly 40 per cent of them women.

An incredible achievement considering women make up around five per cent of the industry nationally.

And this Budget, we are expanding the Heavy Vehicle Driver Training Program to the regions, as part of our overall investment of \$1.1 billion for training in regional WA.

Madam Speaker, not only will this Budget give our schools, TAFEs, and training organisations the immediate boost they need to cater for our growing population, it will prepare our younger generations for the future economy, where more jobs require specialist skills and education.

Our training system is offering more and more opportunities, and engaging more and more people in our economy.

METRONET AND TRANSPORT

Madam Speaker, education and training is just one way we're creating opportunities.

But we also need to ensure people can get to these opportunities.

One of the best ways we can do that is ensuring they have access to affordable, efficient public transport.

As cities continue to develop, and our population grows, it is those cities that can move their people around quickly and reliably that will gain competitive advantages and continue to prosper.

METRONET is setting Western Australia up for future success.

It gives communities and families the ability to move beyond their suburbs to access employment, education, training, and services.

Since being elected in 2017, we have rolled out METRONET across our suburbs.

Over the past year, we have opened Lakelands Station and the New Bayswater Station, following the delivery of the Forrestfield Airport Link, the METRONET Railcar Facility, the Mandurah Multi-Storey Car Park, and the Denny Avenue Level Crossing Removal.

And importantly, after a former Liberal National Government shut down the industry in the early 1990s, we've brought railcar manufacturing back to Western Australia.

Right now on our rail network, the first locally made train in over thirty years is carrying passengers on our Joondalup and Mandurah lines.

\$2.7 billion will be invested in METRONET in 2024–25, which will see the completion of the commitments we made at the 2017 election, including:

- the Yanchep Rail Extension;
- the Morley–Ellenbrook Line;
- the Byford Rail Extension;
- the Victoria Park–Canning Level Crossing Removal program; and
- the Thornlie–Cockburn Link.

From reopening the Fremantle Line, to building the Joondalup and Mandurah Lines, to now delivering METRONET, affordable, high-quality public transport is in Labor's DNA.

Our commitment to capped fares, free student travel, and free travel on Sundays means there is no other place in Australia where people living in the suburbs have access to high-quality public transport at such an affordable rate.

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Madam Speaker, our investment in METRONET is one way of improving our State. Creating safer and stronger communities is another.

This Budget continues our Government's track record of investment in programs and reform that support the most vulnerable in our community, and improve community safety.

We are spending a further \$96 million on initiatives to prevent family and domestic violence, bringing our investment to \$422 million in this term of Government.

Since 2020–21, we have supported an extra 58 refuge beds for women fleeing violence in the home, with a further 77 beds to come.

An additional \$54 million will expand our interagency Family and Domestic Violence Response teams. Support will be extended to seven days a week, with a focus on early intervention to keep victim-survivors safe.

We are delivering an additional \$88 million for child protection initiatives. This includes more than \$46 million to expand access to the Home Stretch WA program to support young people leaving out-of-home care.

\$16 million is being committed to the 10-year Early Years Partnership, with a further \$19 million from the Minderoo Foundation. The Partnership will improve early childhood learning, intervention, and support for families in four Western Australian communities, Armadale West, Central Great Southern, Bidyadanga, and Derby.

This Budget also includes:

- \$70 million towards reforms that improve fairness, advocacy and services for people with mental impairment in our justice system, while ensuring the safety of our community;

- \$16 million for youth justice programs that provide targeted early intervention and intensive support for at-risk young people, including alternatives to detention; and
- \$23 million to extend the successful Operation Regional Shield, to allow WA Police to rapidly deploy officers to the regional areas where they are needed most.

A further \$17 million has been allocated to support our Government's landmark firearms reforms.

This includes funding for the development of a new Firearms Licensing and Registry System.

It also includes additional resourcing to manage the voluntary buyback scheme currently underway, which has already taken thousands of guns off our streets, making our community safer.

Since 2017, we've increased our police workforce by an additional 604 officers, and we have a record number of recruits going through our academy right now.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Madam Speaker, this Budget delivers \$72 million to bolster emergency services and protect the Western Australian community.

This includes funding for an additional 60 career firefighters as part of the biggest boost to frontline emergency services in Western Australia in more than 50 years.

A further \$9 million will support Western Australia's vitally important volunteer bushfire brigades, including equipment upgrades, and funding for Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service stations in the South West.

In addition, this Budget includes more funding for the Emergency Rescue Helicopter Service and Critical Care Paramedic contracts, and the Air Operation Fleet to ensure the safety of Western Australians during emergencies.

A further \$30 million will be provided to boost bushfire mitigation and frontline resources at key priority locations across the State. This includes 34 additional firefighting and fire management staff, and an extra eight fire trucks.

OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Madam Speaker, Western Australians are rightly proud of our incredible and unique environment.

Our Government continues to deliver on our vision to create five million hectares of new conservation estate under the Plan for Our Parks, with a further \$73 million to continue these efforts in partnership with Traditional Owners.

We are protecting our native forests for generations to come, investing in sustainable tourism and outdoor adventure projects.

We are investing \$67 million in the ten-year Forest Management Plan, that will support forest monitoring, create new jobs, and work with Traditional Owners to protect native wildlife and forest health.

And we are investing \$46 million in new hiking and cycle trails and \$17 million in new and upgraded camping facilities across the State as part of our Outdoor Adventure Tourism Package.

DIVERSIFYING AND DECARBONISING OUR ECONOMY

Madam Speaker, Western Australia is an economic powerhouse and continues to dominate the national economic landscape.

This Budget delivers an additional \$1.8 billion to further diversify and decarbonise our economy, increasing our investment to \$11.2 billion in this term of Government.

To fuel economic growth into the future, we are:

- supporting the decarbonisation of our economy and our trading partners;
- making our Strategic Industrial Areas ready for projects in new and emerging industries like critical minerals and hydrogen;
- investing in economic infrastructure, including desalination plants, transmission infrastructure, ports, road, and rail;
- undertaking economic reform, including streamlining government approvals, to attract new investment;
- investing in tourism and the creative industries like never before; and
- building capacity in science, innovation, and technology to improve the competitiveness of our industries.

Climate Change and Decarbonisation

We're closing our coal-fired power plants by 2030 and moving to cleaner, more reliable and affordable energy. To enable more uptake of renewables, we're overhauling the South West grid.

We previously committed over \$4 billion to the grid to expand generation, transmission, and storage infrastructure.

This Budget provides a further \$324 million for planning and to procure long-lead items for network infrastructure.

A further \$148 million has been committed towards the North West grid that will help our energy-intensive resources sector to transition to more renewables.

But we're not just thinking about our backyard, we also have the resources to help our trading partners' shift to clean energy.

With vast quantities of the critical minerals required to decarbonise, Western Australia will play a central role in the global transition to net zero.

Strategic Industrial Areas

Strategic Industrial Areas will be a key element.

Our industrial land will host projects that enable us to process the minerals we extract.

We are achieving more downstream processing. We can also manufacture more products that will contribute to the world's energy transition.

This Budget delivers a new Strategic Industries Fund valued at \$500 million to ensure these areas are project-ready for new investment.

Economic Infrastructure

In a State like Western Australia, delivering economic infrastructure is fundamental to our continued prosperity.

We are a State rich in resources, but these don't simply jump out of the ground onto a waiting ship.

Our ability to move products efficiently around the State, on roads, on rail, and through our ports, will determine our economic success.

Our ports play a key role in our economy. This Budget invests a further \$373 million in our ports from the Kimberley all the way to Esperance. These investments include the delivery of the Dampier Bulk Handling Facility and Lumsden Point.

Meanwhile, Westport is moving ahead, delivering a larger, more efficient container port in Kwinana, with dedicated rail and road links to help move freight around our State. A further \$116 million is included in this Budget to continue planning, including provisioning for the early marine, civil and road works.

Our Government continues to roll out investment to support the more efficient movement of grain through the Agricultural Supply Chain Improvement Program.

And Madam Speaker, WA Labor is delivering major road projects in regional WA that will improve productivity, regional growth, and liveability for local communities.

Projects like the Bunbury Outer Ring Road and the Albany Ring Road will support economic growth, reduce travel times for freight and take trucks off local roads.

Over 7,500 kilometres of our regional roads have been made safer through our investment in the Regional Road Safety Program, and we will continue to roll out those life-saving improvements through a \$107 million investment in this Budget.

Meanwhile, our investment in Great Northern Highway in the Kimberley and Pilbara, including \$107 million to replace the Brooking Channel Bridge and other investments, are making it safer for truck drivers and the general community.

In addition, \$29 million has been committed to upgrading airstrips in Carnarvon, Onslow, Eucla, Albany, the East Kimberley, and in remote Aboriginal communities.

In our drying climate, we are taking significant steps to ensure the ongoing supply of water across regional Western Australia.

\$15 million has been allocated towards planning for future water supply to the Goldfields.

Early works have also commenced in Alkimos on Perth's third desalination plant.

The \$2.8 billion facility will help secure water supply for the Western Australian community for generations to come.

Economic Reform

Our Government is also making it easier to do business in Western Australia, slashing red tape to unlock job-creating projects.

Late last year, the Premier announced an overhaul of Western Australia's environmental approvals system, building on the nation-leading reforms we've made to our planning system.

This Budget includes \$36 million to facilitate those reforms to help drive the projects of the future, while protecting our environment.

Tourism and Creative Industries

Madam Speaker, we've made no secret that tourism is a key pillar of our State's economic diversification journey.

Nature is a big part of our appeal, and we're leveraging those strengths.

We want more people to holiday at home, and we want to make sure we have the infrastructure to support interstate and international tourism.

That's why in this Budget, we have committed \$165 million for a new Outdoor Adventure Tourism Package, including creating and upgrading key boating, camping, and fishing facilities across the State.

It's the single largest regional tourism infrastructure investment in our State's history.

Madam Speaker, Rottnest Island is a tourism icon; and the global capital of the coveted Quokka selfie.

A record \$150 million is committed to ensure we have the staff accommodation and infrastructure to allow Rottnest to reach its full potential.

To further progress Western Australia's tourism potential, we'll continue to focus on creating a nationally significant events calendar.

We'll continue supporting our homegrown events, including a new metro events program to match our regional events program, and working to attract and secure unique and exclusive blockbuster events.

And in this Budget, we see further funding for our Screen Production Facility in Malaga.

Backing it in is an additional \$13 million toward our Screen Industry Strategy, which is focused on developing the skills required for the productions that will be made in our new facility.

We've also increased funding for arts organisations to support their role in nurturing Western Australian talent and supporting future productions.

Science and Innovation

Madam Speaker, Western Australia has an extensive history of scientific and medical advancement.

Our vast space and our dark skies make us attractive to those looking to the stars, with the Mid West housing the globally significant Square Kilometre Array. Another \$10 million is allocated to help grow our space industry.

This Budget also includes \$16 million to support innovation by industry, including to open a Founders Factory in Western Australia to support entrepreneurs and start-ups to commercialise new technologies.

REGIONAL WA

Madam Speaker, throughout this Budget we have highlighted our Government's incredible efforts in regional WA.

Across the entire Budget, priority has been given to the needs of our regions.

Our dedicated cost of living initiatives, like the increase to the Regional Pensioner Travel Card, and the extension of our Regional Airfare Zone Cap, highlight our commitment to regional communities.

We continue to support Royalties for Regions, with \$4 billion allocated in this Budget.

But WA Labor's commitment does not end there.

A record \$12.8 billion is being invested in regional infrastructure, and billions more in regional service delivery over the next four years.

CONCLUSION

Madam Speaker, this Budget continues to drive our State's economic momentum.

This eighth Budget of the WA Labor Government delivers on our commitment to the people of Western Australia in 2017 and 2021.

It was a commitment to:

- manage the finances responsibly;
- create more jobs and a strong economy; and
- improve services and infrastructure right across Western Australia.

And despite the global challenges we have faced, our State is much stronger today than it was seven years ago.

This Budget sets Western Australia up for future generations; and makes sure our State continues to be the envy of the nation.

A State where we can continue to support the most vulnerable. A State that creates new jobs and opportunities.

And a State, where even the daughter of migrant parents can grow up and become Treasurer.

Madam Speaker, this is a Budget that delivers on our vision for the State and reflects our proud Labor values.

I commend the Budget to the House.

[Applause.]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Now for the boring bits, the formalities! A bit of an anticlimax, but we have to do it! It continues —

I would now like to proceed with the formalities.

Appropriation (Recurrent 2024–25) Bill 2024 is for recurrent services, which comprise the delivery of services and administered grants, subsidies, and other transfer payments.

Recurrent service estimates of \$33,789,966,000 include a sum of \$2,985,161,000 permanently appropriated under Special Acts, leaving an amount of \$30,804,805,000 that is to be appropriated in the manner shown in the Schedule to Appropriation (Recurrent 2024–25) Bill 2024.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr P.J. Rundle (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)**.