APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) RECURRENT 2012–13 BILL 2012
APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) CAPITAL 2012–13 BILL 2012

Second Reading — Cognate Debate

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [5.03 pm]: Mr President, I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later stage of today's sitting. Just by way of explanation, I am not the lead speaker for the opposition on these bills. The lead speaker for the opposition is available now but will not be available later, so I will give my time up now.

[Leave granted for the member's speech to be continued at a later stage of the sitting.]

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [5.04 pm]: There are a range of issues that I want to briefly touch on this evening, many of which go to the specifics of the budget that we are being asked to pass tonight. However, there is one more general issue regarding the financial operations of the Minister for Transport's portfolio with respect to taxis that I want to raise at the commencement of this debate tonight.

About a month ago now, I read an article in the *Eastern Suburbs Reporter* about a woman's terrifying 3.00 am taxi ride. The woman alleged that she had been sexually harassed both verbally and physically by a driver who had taken the wrong route. It was alleged that this incident occurred at about 3.00 am on Saturday, 12 May, when this woman caught a taxi from St Georges Terrace. She freely admitted in the article that she was quite drunk. But her view is that that taxidriver had no right to treat her in that way. I think everyone in this chamber would agree with that. In fact, one of the first things that the new Minister for Transport did when he took over from the former Minister for Transport was to say that making taxis safer would be his priority. We know that there has been increasing concern in Western Australia since the election of this government about taxi safety. I am not necessarily suggesting that there is a direct relationship between the election of this government and the fact that taxis have not been safe, but there has been increasing concern about taxi safety, and the job of any government is to address the concerns that are raised by people.

The article went on to outline the details of the case of this woman, who had her sister following in a cab behind her. The sister got so concerned about the route that was being taken that she called to see whether everything was all right when she saw the taxi continuing along the terrace, and the woman quoted in the article—Serena is her name, but she did not give her full name to the paper—said to her sister not to worry. It was then that Serena said the harassment started. The article goes through the incident in quite graphic details, and I do not intend to go through all those details, because I am not here to try to glorify this event in any way. But, needless to say, the article goes on to state —

> In the wake of a taxi driver being found guilty of rape in February, the Department of Transport has cracked down on the conduct of drivers. In a letter sent out by the Department of Transport to every taxi driver in the State two months ago, passenger services business unit general manager Aaron de Rozario, made it clear further infringements against the code would not be tolerated.
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> The letter said if the Department of Transport had any evidence of a driver propositioning or inappropriately touching a passenger, the department would immediately suspend and/or cancel a driver's taxi licence."

The article concludes —

> A Department of Transport spokesperson confirmed the incident was being investigated and urged passengers to submit complaints as soon as possible following any incident.

As I said, that article appeared on 29 May. The incident occurred on 12 May, so that was well over a month ago. One would expect, then, that we would know where that matter was up to today.

Before I get to the response that I received in question time today, I want to refer in a bit more detail to the letter—which was referred to in the article—that had been sent out by the Department of Transport following a driver having been found guilty of rape in February. That letter, surprisingly, was given to the ABC *7.30 WA* as they were about to run a story on the state of taxis in Western Australia. It may have just been a coincidence that that letter was able to be provided at the same time as that story was about to be run, or it may have been that the government was responding to the fact that this issue was about to become known in the media. We will probably never know the full answer to that. The letter goes into quite a bit of detail. The letter is in very strong language. The first paragraph of the letter says —

> Recently a taxi driver was convicted of a very serious criminal offence which occurred during the course of his occupation as a taxi driver. As a consequence it is evident that unacceptable behaviour by

> a few individual can tarnish the reputation of the whole taxi industry and undermine the good work the vast majority of taxis drivers provide to the community.

I absolutely agree with that statement. We are talking about a very, very small number of drivers who are tarnishing the reputation of the many. One of the things that I always say to people is that we will always remember the bad taxi ride; we will not remember the good taxi ride. So I am not suggesting in any way in these comments tonight that this is an issue about all taxidrivers. This is an issue about identifying the bad taxidrivers and getting them out of the industry.

The article goes on to say —

> As the industry regulator, I am responsible for ensuring that every taxi driver is aware of his or her legal obligations when driving a taxi, and that the reputation of the taxi industry is not compromised by the actions of a few individuals. In this regard, I remind you and all taxi drivers of your obligations under the Western Australian Taxi Driver Code of Conduct and the *Road Traffic Act 1974*.

The letter then talks about how the code of conduct outlines customer expectations of taxi drivers, and that any form of sexual advances or activity with a passenger, irrespective of whether that passenger is a consenting adult and/or initiates the contact, is a clear breach of the code of conduct.

There can be no doubt that if drivers engage in sexual behaviour, consensual or not, that is a breach of the code of conduct. The letter then goes on about the road traffic authorisation to drive regulations and the need to be someone of good character. The letter also reads that —

> When information is received that suggests that you may no longer be of good character, the Director General Transport has the power under regulation 41 to suspend or cancel your T extension and you will be prohibited from working as a taxi driver in Western Australia.

This is where the letter gets even stronger —

> The Department of Transport (DoT) has a very firm view of behaviour that does not meet the character test. This includes (but is not limited to):
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> - propositioning a passenger;
> - inappropriate touching a passenger;
> - offering or accepting sex for fares;

It goes through a number of other criminal activities. The letter concludes —

> If DoT has evidence of any of the above, even in instances when the Western Australia Police elects not to investigate or press charges, it will immediately suspend and/or cancel your T extension.

That is, the licence to drive a taxi. Drivers got that very strong letter, and the minister relied upon it when he appeared on *7.30 WA* to make it clear that he was cleaning up and getting on with ensuring that his agency was dealing with the problems in the taxi industry and getting those drivers out. So, I would have thought that one could reasonably expect, if that was the case, that if a serious allegation such as the one I outlined earlier this afternoon regarding the behaviour of a taxidriver had been made to the department—we know it was made before 29 May, so almost exactly a month ago—by now we would have at least some idea of what happened to that taxidriver. I asked a question during question time today about what had happened; what the department had done regarding the issues raised in the article; whether an investigation had been completed, and, if yes, what was the outcome; whether the driver involved in the incident had had their licence cancelled or suspended, and, if yes, on what date did it occur; and for how long was any suspension. I then asked another question about whether the driver had had any previous complaints made about them, and I will come to that issue in a little while.

But I believe the answer to the first question is a totally unsatisfactory answer to this house. This is a serious matter; the point of question time is to ask the executive what it is doing. We expect proper answers to very clear, very straightforward and very unemotive questions. The answer was that the Department of Transport has referred the issues to the Western Australia Police sexual assault squad, and that the Western Australia Police investigation is ongoing. It may be ongoing, but is there enough evidence so far to have taken this driver's licence away? Are we going to allow this driver to continue to drive? The clear implication of the answer I got today was that the driver involved in this incident is still on the road today. If that driver offends again, who will be responsible? Will it be the minister? I say yes. I understand that at least a prima facie case needs to be established, which should take only a couple of days. That is about whether a statement can be obtained from the person involved sufficient to establish a case. For allegations as serious as this, I would have thought that the department would have immediately suspended that driver's licence. If the department does not do that, while we wait for the police to collect the necessary evidence to prepare a prosecution brief, why would that driver not

continue to offend, knowing he is about to lose his licence and his opportunity to offend? Why would he not continue to offend, knowing that if he gets caught a second time he probably would not get a significant increase in any custodial sentence? If there is prima facie evidence to say that this occurred, which should not be that hard—it should not take more than a couple of days; it certainly should not take a month—my view is that a decision should have been made about whether to cancel this driver's licence. It is just unbelievable that we get those sorts of trite answers on such a significant matter.

I have heard members on the other side of the house lecture me about our views on prostitution and all the rest of it, and suggest that I do not care about women. I do care about women; I have stepdaughters who catch taxis, and I do not want this bloke out there on the roads if there is prima facie evidence that he did what he is accused of. I think anybody who saw *7.30 WA* on 16 March or read the letter that was sent by the department would expect that, a month after an incident like this, the Department of Transport would have made a decision about at least suspending the licence. It just highlights to me that this government is not serious about taxi safety. I have said in radio interviews that the problem this government has is that there are conflicts for this minister in dealing with these issues in the way in which I think the community expects, and to the standard it expects.

The final question I asked was whether this driver had had any previous allegations made against him. I do not know whether this driver has, but I know that in the past drivers have had allegations made against them that have not been acted upon, and they have then gone on to offend and been found guilty of offences of a very serious sexual nature. It is about whether or not the system is broken.

In, I think, April last year the minister promised to bring in a demerit point system for taxidrivers, so minor offences would actually build up. I do not believe there should be a demerit point system for the sort of offences we are talking about today; if there is enough evidence to suggest that a driver inappropriately propositioned a passenger, they should be out of the industry—no ifs or buts. We cannot risk having someone in a position of trust driving taxis daily if there is evidence to suggest they have behaved inappropriately. I think there is a role for demerit points, but it will be very interesting to see the government's plans for the demerit point system. We were told in April last year that a demerit point system would be brought in, and there would be a toughening-up of the demerit point system. Here we are; more than a year later and we have still not seen that legislation. I do not expect that this legislation, because I suspect it will have financial implications, will be introduced into this house before we rise this week. At the very earliest, the legislation will be introduced in August. Then as we go through the process, even giving its progression a degree of urgency, it will be some considerable months before it gets through the house. I asked a question about the implementation of another bill and when it would be enacted, and I found out that even though we had already passed it, the department did not intend to enact it for another 12 months at least. One wonders when it would actually enact demerit point legislation. I suspect we will not see any action on a demerit point system for taxidrivers until at least 2013; of course, there will be an election in March 2013. Maybe one of the first jobs I will have when I become Minister for Transport is to get on and fix this matter. I would prefer it to be fixed before I get that job, but if it has not been done, I will make it an absolute priority because the safety of women is absolutely crucial.

Several members interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Members opposite can laugh and mock, but if their government continues to ignore and not progress matters of public safety like this, I become more and more confident that I will be the next Minister for Transport in this state, unless, of course, as this government goes through yet another reshuffle, we see another Minister for Transport in the interim.

Hon Simon O'Brien: On turnover of ministers, we don't hold a candle to you lot, that's for sure.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I do not know—Hon Simon O'Brien has been through a few portfolios already.

It is a serious matter. I cannot believe that some two and a half years after the minister said that this is a priority, we will not see the implementation of the mechanisms that this Minister for Transport said would be part of his priorities. This Minister for Transport is making the former Minister for Transport look as though he was efficient and got on with things. That is what we are seeing in all this. It is unbelievable. In the meantime, we still continue to see drivers who, in my view, if those allegations made by that passenger are correct, should not be out on the road but who very well could be. We as a house do not know whether they are, because this government does not provide proper answers. I suspect that we got the answer we did because that driver is still out there on the road or has a licence and could potentially be out there on the road. We have seen it before; this is not new. It has been going on for some considerable time.

I can assure members of this house that I will continue to pursue the issue of taxi safety, as I have done for some time. We have seen a clear increase in concerns about the inappropriate behaviour towards women in taxis. It is simply unacceptable. It is a matter of urgency. It is unacceptable that after two and a half years we will not see the demerit system, which, in my view, is not even necessary; we should simply get them kicked out.

I want to touch on a couple of things in the debate tonight. I had hoped that we might get some answers from the recent estimates hearings on the budget. One of the things that cause me grave concern is whether the budget and the forward estimates presented to us back on 17 May paint an accurate picture of the state's finances. We need to know whether they paint an accurate picture. We know that the Premier of this state does not believe in forward estimates. I must say, the longer I watch the forward estimates that are produced by this government, the more I can understand why the Premier does not trust the forward estimates. He is absolutely right; the way they are now being presented to the state of Western Australia does not give an accurate reflection of the future of Western Australia. I will give members a couple of examples of why I believe that to be the case.

If we were to look at the projections and the graph about state debt in budget paper No 3, we would believe that state debt will peak in year 3 and start a downward trend in year 4, the final year of the forward estimates. Is that an accurate reflection? No, it is not. If the government does all the activities that it has said that it will do, the forward estimates are not an accurate reflection of the state debt figure. That is a problem in two areas. The first area is royalties for regions. The royalties for regions fund has about $1 billion of un-expensed money over the forward estimates. We know that under the act $1 billion needs to go into the fund, but the expenditure of that $1 billion is not included in the future expenses of the budget forward estimates. That leads to two questions. Does the government intend to spend that money over the period of the forward estimates or will it sit on it and leave it in the regional development fund in perpetuity, as the Under Treasurer told us during the estimates hearings could occur, or will it spend it? If it leaves it there in perpetuity, the government will have a problem because the $1 billion cap, which was put in the Royalties for Regions Act for the purposes of ensuring the government spends the money, will be breached. Therefore, one must assume that the government will spend it. If it spends $1 billion, state debt will increase. That is not the only example, but that is the biggest one.

An amount of $180 million in the road trauma trust fund fits into the same category. There is a commitment by this government and an act that states it must spend 100 per cent of its speed and red-light camera money on road safety initiatives, yet no expenses in the budget tally with the $180 million that is expected to come in. If the government is committed to spending that 100 per cent over the forward estimates and to not leaving it in the road trauma trust fund in perpetuity, state debt will increase. We understand that. We knew that when we went out the weekend before last and made a commitment to the people of the north-eastern suburbs of Perth that we will spend the additional $10 million so that we can complete the works needed to make Gnangara Road safe. We understand that that will have an impact on state debt.

When we present our finances before the next state election, we will present a set of books on which people can make their decision. We will be honest with the people of Western Australia about that. We will have to go through and it will be a difficult task for me and those in the opposition economics and budgeting team. We will need to find the cuts and savings to make sure that we honour those commitments. The question is not whether we will do it, but how this government will do it. We were presented with a budget and told that this budget shows the government's expectations of what it will do over the next four years, yet all this money is not expensed in the budget. I suggest it is not expensed in the budget for the sole reason that the government wants to create the illusion on the day of the election that it has state debt under control. The government clearly does not have it under control, because it has a Premier who cannot control his wish list of wonderful projects in the CBD of Perth. That is where most of the money is going; it all goes into the CBD of Perth. As I have said before, it amazes me that the National Party used to rail against the Mandurah railway line, which cost about $1.5 billion, yet it is more than happy to be part of a government that is spending about $500 million on the Perth Waterfront.

Hon Wendy Duncan: Money is being spent in the regions, which was not being spent when the railway line was built.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The interesting thing is that Hon Wendy Duncan's department could not tell us yesterday whether that is true, could it? During estimates yesterday, this government came in and said that it would do a "backcast" of the amount of money expensed in the regions. The government has not been able to produce that document after three years of being in government. I reckon that is because that document shows that the previous Labor government spent money in the regions; it fixed hospitals and spent money on things such as Karratha–Tom Price Road—$125 million of expenditure on that road alone. I have to tell the member that $125 million is more than the Liberal–National government appropriated for roads in the 2010–11 financial year. We spent more on that road alone than what the Liberal–National government appropriated for new roadworks in the 2010–11 financial year, which had the lowest ever state appropriation on roads in over a decade. One of the things about roadworks is that the majority of that money goes into regional Western Australia. I understand that this government does not see roads as important.

Hon Liz Behjat interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If it does, it is not spending the money.

Several members interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Look at the figures. Look at the budgets. The only reason roads are being fixed in Western Australia at the moment is the money that people pay in their motor vehicle registration fees—it is shown in the budget under the line item referring to money from the Road Traffic Act—and money from the commonwealth government. This government is spending the least amount on roads in regional WA compared with previous governments. I have gone back 10 years in the budgets and I cannot find a period when less money was put into state appropriation for roads than under this government. The 2010–11 financial year in particular was the worst ever.

Hon Alyssa Hayden: More action—your budget just forecasts what is going to be spent. We actually action and build on the roads. Things are being done now.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is the member saying that the Perth–Bunbury highway does not exist? What about Reid Highway in Hon Alyssa Hayden's electorate? That was built under the Labor government. There are plenty of examples. As I mentioned earlier, Karratha–Tom Price Road is another example. We can go through a long list of roads that the Labor government spent money on. This government has deferred roadworks that were due to be done a long time ago by the previous Labor government.

Hon Simon O'Brien: That is an absolute falsehood!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The member knows it is! Let us talk about the commitments that this government made about roads. At the last election, members opposite went to the people of the south west and said in Bunbury that they would build an overpass at the Eelup roundabout. They said that they could do it for $30 million. Everyone said, "You're crazy; it'll cost you at least $70 million." Members opposite were elected and what did they do? They put in a set of traffic lights for $16 million that in five to 10 years will need to be ripped up when the flyover will need to be built because the traffic through that intersection will be too great even for traffic lights to manage. They went there, they made a promise and they swore on oath to the people of the south west that they would build an overpass at the Eelup roundabout. Even though people said, "There's no way you can afford to do this", members opposite made that commitment and promise, and they have failed to deliver on it. They simply cannot honour an election commitment on roads and rail, particularly rail; this government has a long history of breaking promises. I listened to speeches, taking note, in which people kept talking about the expenditure on rail and the fact that Labor did not spend any money on the grain rail freight area. That says to me that those people who made those speeches do not understand the nature of the grain rail freight, because rail needs cyclical maintenance about every 15 years. It was last done during the time of the Court government as it prepared the lines because it wanted to privatise them.

Hon Simon O'Brien: And what happened during all the years of your government? Nothing!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is what I am saying—this highlights the ignorance of members opposite. The grain rail was upgraded in the mid-1990s and was not due to be upgraded again until 2010. Who was in government in 2010? Alannah MacTiernan had started to do work on saving those rail lines and negotiating with the commonwealth government. The commonwealth government put in $135 million for the rail. That funding was supposed to be matched, but did this government come up with the money? No, it did not. Because of its bad decisions and the way it has implemented them, the final figure of what the government spent on rail is still an unknown quantity. We have seen the government continue to explore regional grain rail freight. The government has put in transition assistance package payments and it keeps the rail lines open because it still has not got the roads done in time. It has been an absolute basket case with not only the bad decision in the first place, but also the bad way in which it is being implemented and managed. People still do not know what is going on. I asked a question the other day about Cunderdin–Quairading Road—the minister said he did not know—which is one of the major routes that will be required to carry grain out of Quairading once the Quairading–York rail line is closed. I took a drive along that road a couple of weekends ago. My partner probably hates that my idea of a great Sunday afternoon is to go for a drive around the wheatbelt of Western Australia and look at a few roads! I bought her a nice coffee at somewhere we stopped—Beverley I think it might have been. It was a lovely Sunday afternoon drive.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Don't you have to be somewhere?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I do in a few minutes. But it is all right; I have a few more minutes, minister! I can understand why members opposite are keen for me not to raise these issues.

When I drove down Cunderdin–Quairading Road, it blew me away that the roadworks appeared to have been completed. The straight stretches of the road have been widened, although in a couple of places, trees right on the edge of the road have not been removed. I understand the issues about that with the approvals process and all

the rest of it, but from a road safety perspective, it will be interesting. However, it was on the bends that I started to realise that none of the bends had been upgraded.

Hon Alyssa Hayden: Since when? For how long?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When I was out there about —

Hon Alyssa Hayden: How long have they not been upgraded for?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If the member listened, what I was saying was —

Hon Alyssa Hayden: I'm trying; I can't understand where your logic is.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Cunderdin–Quairading Road is one of the roads that is supposed to be getting upgraded to take the freight task as a result of the closure of the rail. The widening of the straight stretches of that road has now been completed. On the corners, that work has not been done.

Hon Alyssa Hayden: Since when, though? For how long? How long since it has not been done?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Since the straight stretches were finished.

Hon Alyssa Hayden: So you don't know.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I do not know the exact date that the straight stretches were finished, but it was relatively recently, I can assure the member.

Hon Alyssa Hayden: But did you do it in your term of government?

Hon Sue Ellery: You're not listening to what he's saying.

Hon Alyssa Hayden: I'm not understanding what he's trying to say.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If members opposite block their ears and want to continue to believe in their own rhetoric, they will never understand this issue. That is fine; feel free to do so. But I will continue to put the message out there and I will continue to talk to the people—as I am about to do. When I leave this place, I will have a chat to the people of the Mundaring community about the impacts that the grain rail issue will have on their community as extra trucks come in because of the bad decision to close the grain rail freight network.

There is no doubt that it has been appallingly badly handled. It was a bad decision and the implementation has made the initial bad decision look like a joke. The Minister for Transport is not even aware of it, as I understand from the answer I got the other day, and it would appear that the money provided for the Cunderdin–Quairading Road upgrade can do only the straight stretches and cannot do the corners. Where we need the most width on a road is on the corners, not on the straight stretches.

Hon Jim Chown: That's not quite correct, because you widened those roads on the straight stretches to pass. You can't pass on corners; it's illegal and it's extremely dangerous. It is totally logical that the $2 million allocated to that particular road to have the road widened in the straights —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So is the member saying that it is okay to leave the corners with a narrow seal of less than seven metres?

Hon Jim Chown: I've just stated the reason why the widening has taken place on the straights. At some future time, I assume, there will be a realignment. What I'm actually asking you, as the future Minister for Transport in a future Labor government, years down the track —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Will the member get on with the question? How long does he want?

Hon Jim Chown: You've asked me the question and you want a response.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What is the question?

Hon Jim Chown: The question is: As a Minister for Transport for a future Labor government, how much money will you be spending on the tier 3 railway lines? How will you rectify the maintenance programs and the bridges et cetera? That's the question!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Brian Ellis): Order, members! Hon Ken Travers has the call.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I think there was a question in there somewhere and I will try to work it out. I do not disagree that we need to widen the straight stretches. I am amazed, though, that a member for the Agricultural Region is interjecting in this place to tell me that they are very comfortable with the fact that the corners on that road will not be widened, that it is not a necessary thing and that it may occur at some time in the future, even though there is no budget for it.

One thing that I can assure this house is that, before the next election, people will be left in no doubt what the commitments of the Labor Party are for the state of Western Australia. What we had from an incumbent government the other day should have outlined what its commitments were, and we did not get that. The government is not prepared to put its commitments out there, and it has $1 billion sitting in an account and we cannot work out whether it will spend it. I will outline my policies, in my good time, to the people of Western Australia. I can assure members that I will not do what the current Minister for Regional Development did —

Hon Jim Chown interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Let me finish; the member will agree with me on this point about what the current Minister for Regional Development did. If I am not going to fix the tier 3 lines, I will not promise that I will get into government and then not do it. The thing I have to look at is the ability to do that. I have clearly expressed a view to many people that it is my aspiration and desire to fix those tier 3 lines and keep them open. I will do everything I can that is possible within my powers to ensure that that occurs. But it will very much depend on how much this government has wasted on the waterfront development and whether this government has signed up to a Burswood stadium option that gives us no choices. I can tell members opposite now that if they give me a guarantee that their government will not sign up to the Burswood stadium options, I can outline in a range of detail, a lot more quickly, what my commitments will be at the next election, because the Burswood stadium will take about half a billion dollars more out of the budget than a similar stadium at Subiaco would cost. If government members tell me whether they will have that signed up before the next election, I might be able to give them some answers to the questions that they are asking. I personally want to see those tier 3 lines kept open and I will continue to campaign for that. I will do my very best to make sure that they do stay open. I hope that members for the Agricultural Region from all sides of politics will support me on that. Clearly, that might not be the case. However, I believe the tier 3 lines should be kept open, but it comes down to financial responsibility.

The other issue that I want to touch upon before I conclude tonight is the issue of statements of corporate intent. The former Minister for Transport, the current Minister for Finance, would remember that the issue of statements of corporate intent is something that has regularly caused the Auditor General to express concern, on an almost annual basis, about the failure to table them on time and in accordance with the act. On 24 May I asked whether agreement had been reached on the 2011–12 statement of corporate intent, a document that should have been tabled before 30 June 2011; and, if not, why not? I then went on to ask whether agreement had been reached on the 2012–13 statement of corporate intent, the one coming up. These are the equivalent of the budget documents. These are like the budget papers for the port authority. They are the documents about which we should be able to say, "This is what the future of the port authorities will be like over the next 12 months." I was told that they were presented to the government on 14 December, the year prior to when they were required to be tabled, and that process issues have caused some delays; however, it is expected that this will be resolved expeditiously. That answer was given on 24 May. We are now here in the last sitting week before 30 June, the last opportunity for documents to be tabled, and those documents have still not been tabled. I wonder whether the government can give me a commitment today that they will be tabled for 2011–12 in the first instance, for this financial year—it almost becomes redundant to ask whether they will be tabled before the end of the financial year—or is this government going to thumb its nose at important financial legislation? The second question is: are we going to get the 2012–13 statement in accordance with the act before the end of this financial year? There are still two days for this government to provide those documents. It is just extraordinary that those documents have still not been tabled. I am also disappointed that we have still not received responses from a number of questions that were asked during estimates that might have given me an opportunity to make a few more comments about the statements of corporate intent.

Hon Ed Dermer: Are we being asked to vote for the appropriation in the dark?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: On port authorities we are not but this would certainly be cause for a debate because we do not vote on their appropriations other than capital works. In that sense, on the capital works side of it, yes. On the other side of it, we are being asked to vote on a range of matters. We do not have all the details that it would be appropriate to have before the chamber to make those decisions. This is a government that just treats issues of financial responsibility with complete and utter contempt. I do not envy those poor officers at the Department of Treasury, whom I know are good people who would like to see the state budget papers reflect the true state of the state's finances but they are not able to do that because the government does not give them the information that they require and they can only include the information that has been provided.

I make one final comment. I return to the issue of the road trauma trust fund and the regional development fund under royalties for regions. That money could have been expensed in the budget as a notional amount. We know that because if we look through the budget, we will find $20 million under royalties for regions for upgrades of regional schools. That is included in the budget but I bet no-one can tell me where. Money is included for the

hostels. Yesterday we learnt that money was notionally allocated for the City Beach Senior High School. I find it extraordinary that royalties for regions money is being spent on City Beach Senior High School. That was only a notional amount. We have a line amount for six new primary schools. That is in the education department's budget but no-one can tell us which primary schools that will be spent on because it is only a notional allocation. There are plenty of notional allocations contained in the budget where it suits this government but there is expenditure of somewhere in the order of $1.5 billion where the activity has been committed to, by legislation in many cases, yet the money is not expensed in the budget. That is not a good way to run a business. My father always used to say, "If you run two sets of books, you will eventually come undone." That is what I think this cabinet is doing. It has a set of books that it runs in the cabinet room and it has a set of books that it provides to the Under Treasurer for the purposes of the budget. It is a dangerous thing to run two sets of books. I will conclude with those comments.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [5.45 pm]: I resume the remarks that I was making before I sought leave to make them later. Prior to question time, I said that two reviews are going on between the Department for Child Protection and other government agencies. The first is by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. It is looking at FTE numbers. It is a concern that this is the second budget in a row in which no additional staffing positions will be created for caseworkers in the area of investigations of allegations of abuse against children and in the area of caring for children once they come into the care of the CEO. The second area of review is by Treasury, looking at the demand model. The demand model arose out of the Ford report, which was conducted in 2006 by Prudence Ford and commissioned by the Carpenter government to look at the functions of what was then the Department for Community Development, to address some very serious issues that had been raised and to look at better ways of focusing the efforts of that department into the area of child protection. A number of recommendations came out of that. The government of the day accepted every single recommendation except one. The one recommendation, just as a side note, that the government of the day did not accept was the recommendation of the Ford review that we not do mandatory reporting of allegations of child sexual abuse. We disagreed with that and we introduced legislation to give effect to mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse.

The Ford report also said that rather than a budget by budget, political cycle by political cycle way of funding child protection, a formula of funding ought to be put in place that is driven by demand; that is, driven by factors such as the number of children predicted to be coming into care. That was driven by predictors of all the drivers that bring children into care and who require intervention by the Department for Child Protection. It includes things like not just the basic demographics about the numbers of people moving into Western Australia, for example, and not just basic demographics like the number of births, for example, and where those families are but the socioeconomic status of families in Western Australia and some of the other key drivers such as family and domestic violence, mental health and alcohol and drug abuse. It is an important model because it provides an objective and as scientific as we can get it—which is a difficult thing to do in the human services area—set of figures that the department and the respective minister are able to put to Treasury about the level of funding that is required. It is of concern to me that the Department of Treasury has decided it needs to review that demand model. It is of concern to me because Treasury was intimately involved in putting the demand model in place in the first place, working out the proper design and applying it when it was first introduced. I hope the purpose of that review is to make the model more rigorous so that it generates greater resources going into the area of child protection because the one thing that I think everybody would agree with is that we have to be vigilant in the area of child protection —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: And I believe you acknowledged that we've gone up 57 per cent since we came into government.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Let us talk about the increases. One of the things that was made available in the days following the budget was a video of the director general of the department doing a presentation to staff about the budget. One of the points that he made in that video —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: You be very careful when you explain this. You have been very, very remiss on radio.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Does the minister want to let me get the words out of my mouth? In that video presentation to all staff across the Department for Child Protection he referred to a set of numbers which he said he quotes frequently. Since the Ford review, child protection's base has grown over the past five years and it has had a 90 per cent increase in budget allocation and a 70 per cent increase in staff allocation. I certainly acknowledge the increases in budget and staff made under this government but I also think it is right to acknowledge that the Ford review generated significant increases under the previous government. They are the figures that the department's director general uses to describe to his staff the increases that have been made. It has had a 90 per cent increase in its budget and a 70 per cent increase in staff over the last five years since the Ford review.

That is important. I think there is a danger that an agency such as Treasury—I dare not look into the President's gallery—might look at those numbers and say that that is enough for the Department for Child Protection. It is not an agency about which we can be complacent or on which we can lose vigilance or let the ball drop, so to speak.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: We agree, and we haven't.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The minister will get the opportunity to make a speech on the appropriation bills if that is what she would like to do, but this is my speech.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not huffy; I am trying to make my speech, not the minister's.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I was making the point that the base of the department has grown. The minister is correct; I do acknowledge the increases that have been made since she has been in government, but those increases began when the Carpenter government was in place, when the Ford review was commissioned, and when its results were accepted and funded. Indeed, this government was spending some of the funds that were allocated to the Ford review implementation.

Hon Robyn McSweeney interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I have already acknowledged that, minister. I have said that there were really serious issues that needed to be acknowledged, and that is why we commissioned the Ford report. I said that about five minutes ago.

The point I was making was that the base of the Department for Child Protection has grown over the past five years. But this budget, unfortunately, is the second one in a row in which there has been no increase in full-time equivalents in those two critical areas of service delivery by the department and in which the department is starting, in the words of the director general on the video presentation, behind the eight ball. The department has been carrying a structural deficit for some time. This year there was a cut of $7.6 million in the budget. I think the way he described it on the video was that the room to move is more significantly reduced than it has ever been before. It is a very tight budget. It is a tough time to have such a tight budget and to have limited room to move, while, at the same time, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is looking at the department's FTE and the Treasury is looking at the demand model. I look forward to a very positive outcome for the Department for Child Protection.

Hon Robyn McSweeney interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: One area that I want to touch on with the Department for Child Protection is complaints handling. The reason I want to touch on that area is that a case has come to my attention very recently that has caused me great consternation. Normally, I would not do it in this way; I would write to the minister. But, frankly, given the length of time that this family has had to wait for a response, and given the opportunity I have to make this speech, it behoves me to do it as quickly as I can in this place. So that is what I am doing.

Members will be aware that I asked a question last week about the waiting times for complaints to be allocated to a senior complaint investigator. I asked how many complaints are currently unallocated and how many senior complaint investigators are employed in the complaints management unit. The complaints management unit handles the difficult area of complaints from people who believe they have been badly treated by the Department for Child Protection. This is a difficult area of work because the nature of intervention by the Department for Child Protection frequently involves removing children from the family home. Naturally, people are aggrieved by that process—people who have done the wrong thing but think that what they have done is nobody's business but theirs; people who do not realise they have done the wrong thing and perhaps, with a bit of help, could do the right thing; and people who have not done the wrong thing but against whom false allegations have been laid. It is a serious thing to remove a child from their home. All the research shows that children will say that they do not want to be removed from their home and from their family. Despite some of the most appalling ways that they will have been treated, they want to stop the behaviour and the treatment; they do not want to be removed from their family home. It is terribly traumatic for the children. It is equally traumatic for the family that is, if you like, once removed—often the grandparents. There are many, many times when complaints are made that are not legitimate complaints but are complaints that people got caught. What they are really cross about is that they have been caught doing something to a vulnerable child and the child has been removed. It is a difficult area because there are people who are angry and upset that children have been removed. Often it is members of the

generation beyond who make the complaint because they cannot believe that their child could have done something horrible to their grandchild. Often complaints are made by aunts and uncles or grandparents. It is a difficult area, and I want to start to describe this case by first acknowledging that.

The answer I got from the minister to the question about the current waiting time for a complaint to be allocated was that the current waiting time is 30 days. That was described as the average length of time a complaint is currently awaiting allocation. Obviously, to get an average of 30 days, some complaints will have waited a little longer than that and some complaints will have waited a considerably shorter period than that. The minister's answer last week indicated that the longest a complaint is currently awaiting allocation is 44 days and the shortest time is one day, and that complaints are allocated based on the date received. I asked how many complaints are currently unallocated and the answer to that was 10 complaints. I asked how many senior complaint investigators are employed and was told that there are 3.5 full-time staff.

Senior complaint investigators are responsible for assessing the initial complaint, and that can involve the first point of contact with the person making the complaint; and for determining the appropriate level of response—this is a tiered structure of complaints—and whether it is a tier 1 matter that ought be resolved at a district office level, whether the complaint should be investigated by a senior complaint investigator, which is a tier 2 complaint, or whether it is so serious that it needs to be referred to the Ombudsman. Senior complaint investigators are responsible for reviewing the complaint responses that are completed by the district officers. They are responsible for conducting independent assessments of complaints, and that might include reviewing the department's documentation and interviewing the complainant and the staff involved. It is worth noting that sometimes conducting the investigation is hampered by the fact that, for example, people might move address. Sometimes people who have had their children removed from them frequently move addresses. Sometimes part of the reason the child is removed from their care is that the family is not able to provide a stable environment. They might be homeless and moving between environments; and, if those environments are not safe, that might be a reason to remove children temporarily from their care. It is important to acknowledge that the work is difficult, because sometimes it is difficult to physically track down the people who need to be investigated to check the complaint that has been made. People move between the respective child protection districts, and that means that the files have to move with them and sometimes that can take a while to happen. I think it probably takes too long to happen, but sometimes that can happen, so getting all the relevant documentation in one place can take time and can be very difficult. Sometimes senior complaint investigators interview people who do not want to be interviewed. Even though a grandmother or grandfather may have made a complaint that the department acted inappropriately by removing their grandchildren from the care of their daughter or son when they know that they would never have done anything wrong, sometimes the person from whom the child has been removed does not want to cooperate with the investigation and so they will make themselves unavailable; or they will be asked to provide information and they will not provide it in a timely way or will not provide it at all; or they will be asked to provide documentation and they will not make that documentation available. It is a complex role. It is not always straightforward. It is certainly not a matter of doing a desktop investigation and just looking at a file. It requires talking to human beings, and talking to human beings who may be caught up in difficult circumstances or in circumstances in which they do not want to reveal the nature of what went wrong that led to the intervention in the first place. Senior complaint investigators are also responsible for proposing resolutions for the complaint—that is, if you like, acting as a bit of a mediator.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will embark on my fifth attempt to conclude this speech! I was addressing the issue of the complaints management process within the Department for Child Protection and I was outlining the role of senior complaint investigators. In addition to those I have already listed, the role includes informing the complainants about the complaint process and the outcome, including any resolutions that might have been identified, and preparing internal reports for the relevant district director about the outcome of the complaint investigation process, including any actions that need to be taken to improve the service if that has been identified as needing to happen. The reason I asked the question last Wednesday is that last Tuesday I was provided with information from a colleague of mine about one of his constituents, Mr Nathan Bosenberg, whom he had been dealing with. Mr Bosenberg has given me permission, and I have written authorisation, to speak about these matters.

Mr Bosenberg is the father of a child called Ruby. The mother of that child is his former partner, who is younger than him. His former partner was abused as a child and has mental health issues. The parents separated in November 2010. The child is now three. Since the child's birth, she has been in the care of both parents at various times, but it is my understanding that she has been predominantly with her father. In December 2010, a court order was made by consent for Ruby to live with her father with shared parenting responsibilities and open access to her mother. Up until October 2011, Mr Bosenberg was living in a caravan park, albeit with adequate facilities to care for his daughter. His former partner was staying at a backpackers' place in the city,

which meant she was unable to have her daughter with her. From time to time she would visit her family interstate, leaving her daughter in the care of Mr Bosenberg. Because of her mental illness, from time to time her behaviour can be a bit erratic. In September 2011, police advised Mr Bosenberg that he should take out a violence restraining order against his former partner because she had been making false claims about him. He applied for and was granted a VRO, and he arranged for his daughter to have continued access to her mother via his mother. In October 2011, his former partner attended where Mr Bosenberg was living, in breach of the VRO, and physically assaulted him. The police called about four days after that and inspected the caravan home to do a welfare check on Ruby. They told Mr Bosenberg at the time that they were happy with her home environment. Three weeks later, on 26 October 2011, at 11 o'clock at night, seven police arrived saying that they were there to remove Ruby from her father's care. They said they were acting on a VRO that had been taken out on behalf of Ruby, which prevented her father from having Ruby with him. The police also had an order to remove his daughter from his care. Despite arriving in four police cars, they did not actually have a baby seat to transport the child, so Mr Bosenberg lent them his. It was a very distressing set of circumstances for him; he had no reason to believe that any violence restraining order should have been taken out against him. He had not done anything to provoke his daughter's removal. Nevertheless, to minimise the distress the child would experience by being removed at 11 o'clock at night, he cooperated with her removal. The next day, when he went to Warwick Police Station to pick up his baby seat, they told him that he was accused of assaulting his former partner on 3 October. However, he was not charged with assault at that time and he has not been since. The police later charged his former partner for breaching the VRO that she was subject to, and for assaulting Mr Bosenberg, based on the evidence of witnesses present when she visited the caravan park.

Earlier in November 2011, Mr Bosenberg approached his district child protection office in Mirrabooka to inquire as to the whereabouts and welfare of his daughter. This was a matter of days after he had been told by the police that, while he was accused of assault, no charges were to be laid against him. The child protection office told him that his daughter was in a loving and caring environment. Later in November, he attended court hearings after the Department for Child Protection initiated action to remove his daughter from his custody. To date, those court hearings have cost him $40 000, in part due to matters having to be adjourned three times because the Department for Child Protection files were not ready for presentation to the court. He did not have access to Legal Aid, but his former partner did. The magistrate requested all the child protection files, but the court was advised that they had been transferred to the Fremantle office, which caused further court delays. Mr Bosenberg was not able to see his daughter Ruby for six weeks. He found out through the court processes that his former partner had rung police, threatening to kill herself and her daughter; he had not been notified of this when it happened.

In December 2011, he lodged a complaint with the Department for Child Protection, and in its response to him the DCP stated that the complaint was closed as the department had no concerns for Ruby's welfare. In January 2012, the court granted Mr Bosenberg access to Ruby for eight hours on a Monday. It was acknowledged in the court proceedings that until she had been removed from his care, Mr Bosenberg had been Ruby's primary caregiver. The order for him to be granted access was made against strong opposition from the Department for Child Protection's independent children's lawyer.

In February this year, Mr Bosenberg got a phone call from his former partner's sister-in-law to tell him that his former partner and his daughter Ruby had been staying with her and her family in their house, but that his sister-in-law had had enough of the erratic behaviour of his former partner and wanted her to leave. Startlingly, she also told him that during the time his former partner had been with his daughter, living in the same premises as her sister-in-law, the Fremantle office of the Department for Child Protection was reaching an agreement with Mr Bosenberg's sister-in-law about the care of her child. This was after the Department for Child Protection's Mirrabooka office had told him that his daughter was in a loving and caring environment, and after Ruby had been removed from his care with no evidence that he had, in fact, done anything wrong, and with no charges having been laid against him. That agreement was that she would not remain living in the family home, the same family home where Mr Bosenberg's former partner and his daughter were residing. The reason the Fremantle district office of the Department for Child Protection entered into that agreement that Mr Bosenberg's sister-in-law no longer reside in those premises was that the measure was agreed upon with the Department for Child Protection due to the extreme severity of environmental neglect and pest infestation at the property. The proposed plan—that is, what was agreed between Mr Bosenberg's sister-in-law and the Department for Child Protection—was also aimed at minimising a continuing exposure of the children to the negative influence and lack of support she had received from her mother. In the past, the agreement notes, the Department for Child Protection had substantiated that the parents of Mr Bosenberg's sister-in-law, where his former partner and his daughter were residing—the owners of that home—were responsible for causing physical, emotional and sexual harm to their own daughter and to her siblings and that, although another person who was responsible for abuse was not officially residing in the family home, he continued to visit the house and remained at the house for various lengths of time.

Members can imagine the great distress that this caused Mr Bosenberg. His child had been removed from him at 11 o'clock at night when he had done nothing wrong—had not been charged with anything—and was told when he asked about the welfare of his then two-year-old daughter that she was "in a loving and caring environment". That is the environment she was in during that period. She was in a household where at the same time as the department was telling him she was in a loving and caring environment, the department was taking action, with other residents of that house, to get them out of the house into emergency accommodation because of the filthy state of the house and because the residents of the house, the parents of his sister-in-law, had a history, which DCP had substantiated, of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of their own children. We can imagine his distress at that; nevertheless, he took action to ensure that he got better custody arrangements of his daughter.

It is worth noting that while living at this house, his daughter suffered a broken arm and damage to her front teeth. There is no further evidence before me of how those two incidents occurred. But, unfortunately, there is a pattern of such injuries to children residing in that house. Ruby, Mr Bosenberg's daughter, was removed from that house in February when police were called to the property over a complaint that Mr Bosenberg's former partner, Ruby's mother, had committed an assault. As she, his former partner, was very pregnant at the time and had police with her and had Ruby with her, the police called in the Department for Child Protection, which removed them both to a refuge.

Later in February the Family Court magistrate said that Mr Bosenberg had been the primary carer and Ruby should reside with him for three days a week. Since April, Mr Bosenberg and his former partner have agreed on cooperating over the care of Ruby. Right now, she is in his care for three days a week, although that increases regularly when his former partner is either unable to care for her because of her own illness or when she is visiting interstate to go back to her family. All Mr Bosenberg wants out of that—frankly, if it was me, I would want a lot more—is an apology. He wants the Department for Child Protection to acknowledge that at the time they were telling him she was "in a safe and caring environment", she was far from that. He wants an apology from the department for not giving him the information that he requested about her safety and that it in fact, from his point of view, put her in an unsafe place.

On 17 February, he received a letter from the Ombudsman's office responding to his attendance at the Ombudsman's office seeking to complain about the Department for Child Protection. He was advised in that letter that the Ombudsman's office had made inquiries into his complaint and was advised that the district office of the department had investigated the claims that his daughter's safety was at risk but determined there was no immediate risk and that the district office was in constant contact with the family. The Department for Child Protection informed the Ombudsman's office that his tier 1 complaint had been completed and that his tier 2 further complaint was currently awaiting the allocation of an investigator. The tier 1 first-level complaint was finalised with the department taking the view that there was no immediate risk to Mr Bosenberg's daughter, despite at the same time taking out an agreement with another resident of the same house saying that that person's child could not stay there because it was not safe for children to be there. That is what the Ombudsman's office told him. On 14 March 2012, Mr Bosenberg received a letter from the Department for Child Protection from the senior complaints investigator of the complaints management unit. The letter states —

> Dear Mr Bosenberg
>
> Your complaint received by the Complaints Management Unit on 10 January 2012 is currently on hold pending allocation to a Senior Complaint Investigator.
>
> The Complaints Management Unit further acknowledges the delay in the progression of your complaint and your continued patience is appreciated.
>
> The Department is committed to resolving your complaint and it will be allocated to a Senior Complaint Investigator in the near future. You will be contacted by the complaint investigator to confirm your complaints prior to the investigation proceeding.
>
> Should you require any further information …

The letter gives him numbers that he can call. That was on 14 March this year, and he has been waiting since he lodged his complaint on 10 January. My office contacted him last Wednesday to check whether he had received any response to date, and as of last Wednesday he had not.

Let us go back to a question I asked in the house last week. I asked what the current waiting time was for a complaint to be allocated to a senior complaint investigator and the answer I got was that 30 days was the average length of time. Since January when he first lodged his complaint, it actually has been 109 working days, or 161 ordinary days. Since March, when the department wrote to him and said it was still waiting to allocate his complaint to a senior investigator, it has been 65 working days, or 99 ordinary days. That is a lot more than 30 days. All he wants is an apology and an acknowledgement that his daughter was not safe at the time that the department claimed she was in a safe and caring environment. That is what he wants.

I note that the minister is out of the chamber on urgent parliamentary business. I will provide her with a detailed copy with all the relevant information in it that I have to ensure that this matter can be followed up. For the purposes of debate in the house, I seek leave to table a copy of an agreement between the Department for Child Protection and individuals whose identifying information I have blacked out. This is the information that I referred to earlier. It is the agreement that was entered into between the Department for Child Protection and the mother of Ruby's sister-in-law about whether she and her child should reside in that house.

Leave granted. [See paper 4700.]

Hon SUE ELLERY: This is a very serious matter. I will raise two things here. With due respect, I do not want to write a letter to the minister, who responds to my letters in a timely fashion, that will take another month to get a response. This man has been waiting since January when his daughter was placed in a house where, I believe on the basis of the information that has been provided to me, she was at risk. I do not normally raise individual child protection matters in this place but I do it for two reasons. Firstly, I do not want Mr Bosenberg to have to wait unnecessarily any longer, and, secondly, because the information was made available to me last week and this is an opportunity to raise it here. That is why I have done it. The information that was provided to the house was that the longest waiting time is 44 days. Something is wrong; either the minister is not being provided with accurate information by the department or something has gone wrong in the translation of the information she has been provided with because the answer she gave in this chamber was that the longest waiting time is 44 days. For Mr Bosenberg, it has been 109 working days since his complaint was first lodged and 65 working days since he got the letter in March saying, "Please be patient with us. We're waiting to allocate your case." That is appalling. Meanwhile, the most important thing is that his daughter is safe, and she is. For the most part of her life, she spends her time with him in a loving, caring and safe environment. That is important. Mr Bosenberg spent $40 000—he is not a wealthy man—in the courts to defend his right to continue to provide her with a safe environment. Clearly, on the evidence that has been presented, the Fremantle district office of the Department for Child Protection took the view that the house she was in was not safe for another child that it was dealing with.

We must bear in mind what we have in this case. Ruby is being looked after by the Mirrabooka office, but she lives in a house that comes within the purview of the Fremantle office, because that is where the mother and child it is dealing with live. So we have the Mirrabooka office saying, "Yes, she's fine. She's in a safe and caring environment", while the Fremantle office is taking action and saying to another parent, "You cannot have your child in that environment." All this man wants is an apology, and he is certainly owed one. I look forward to the minister responding to that in due course. As I said, I will provide her with all the information I have that identifies everybody involved.

The final issue that I wanted to touch on is that I welcomed the announcement last week by the Minister for Disability Services and the Minister for Transport about an improvement package for multipurpose taxis. I welcomed that package of more licences and incentives for drivers. I am a regular user of multipurpose taxis, and I have had good experiences and bad experiences. I think that the announcement is a good one but, whilst it is welcome, it needs to go further. Most recently it is the case that whenever my mother wants to go out, we need to use a multipurpose taxi. That was not always the case, but her capacity to transfer safely now has diminished somewhat, so it is safer that she stays in the wheelchair and we wheel her into the back of a multipurpose taxi.

The most recent experience that we had was about three weeks ago, at the beginning of June, when we were going to my brother's house, which is literally about five minutes around the corner from the nursing home where mum lives, to celebrate the eleventh and fifteenth birthdays of Libby and Declan Ellery. Normally we would use one of about three drivers who are regular providers of services to this nursing home. We know them and they know us, and they are absolutely trustworthy and reliable, and very safe. On this occasion they were not available, so we went through the normal booking service with one of the major taxi companies, which I am very tempted to name but I will not because, frankly, I think this can happen with both of the major taxi companies, and my experience is that it has. So the booking was made, and we always make a return booking for a couple of reasons. Mum cannot be away for a particularly long period. Given we were doing this on a Saturday afternoon and we were going to come home early on Saturday evening, that is a busy time for multipurpose taxis. If people make their booking in advance, rather than ringing up when they are ready to go, they are much more likely to get the taxi close to when they want to go. So we booked the taxi for the afternoon. It was 40 minutes late. That is not that unusual. It is inconvenient, but it is not that unusual. When the driver arrived, he was polite and he was safe. He moved mum into the taxi with no problems, and we were there in 40 minutes, albeit a hungry 11-year-old and 15-year-old were demanding to know why they had not been able to eat the sausage rolls while they were waiting for us to attend. Nevertheless, that was fine.

My brother's house is not the most accessible house. We have to use ramps and go down the side, and there is gravel. Therefore, if we knew that the taxi was booked to pick mum up about 6.30 pm, we would try to start

leaving the house about 6.15 pm so we have time to get down the side through all the gravel, put the ramps out and all the rest of it. That is what we did. We went outside to wait for the taxi that was booked for 6.30 pm. An hour later it still was not there. It was freezing cold. We were making a decision about whether we should take mum back inside or bring out a blanket to wrap around her, because what was the bet that as soon as we got her inside, the multipurpose taxi would turn up. We had several conversations with the company, and what they said was, "No, there is no return booking. You made a booking one way. You did not make a booking the other way." We did make a return booking. That is what we do every single time. When something goes wrong at their end, these companies say, "You did not make a return booking." I can guarantee to members that we did make a return booking. So they said, "You did not make a return booking. We do not have a cab available now, but we are trying to find one." After an hour, I rang the other company and I said, "We are in Mt Lawley. How soon can you get a taxi to us to take us literally five minutes around the corner?", and they said that they would do their best, and within half an hour, the second company had sent a multipurpose taxi. That was after we had waited for an hour and a half in the cold on a Saturday night for a multipurpose taxi. That is because the booking service does not function properly.

I therefore welcome the announcement about more multipurpose taxi licences, and I welcome the announcement about incentives for drivers to enter into this work. This work is difficult, and sometimes it is not the fault of the drivers if they are running late. If a driver has to take a client to a doctor or to a medical appointment, and that appointment is running late, other things will start to flow from that. So I recognise that it is difficult. But the booking system needs to be addressed. I therefore call on the government to have a good look at that.

The other thing that needs to be addressed—I am not sure whether this package addresses it, but I hope it does—is proper health and safety training for drivers. It is a difficult job. The drivers have to physically lower the ramp at the back of the taxi and push the wheelchair onto it, and then, without securing the wheelchair, they have to raise the ramp using the hydraulic lifter, and then with one foot they have to lift themselves up onto the raised ramp and hold onto the wheelchair at the same time. That is not safe for the driver, and, frankly, I do not think that is safe for the person in the wheelchair either, but that is the way they all do it. The wheelchair is unsecured at that point, because it does not get secured until it is wheeled into the back of the multipurpose taxi.

Hon Jim Chown: That would be a design fault, surely?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is either that or a work process fault. But there has to be a way around that.

I acknowledge that that is a difficult thing for the drivers to do. I would be interested to see the statistics on the number of back injuries sustained by taxidrivers as a result of just that one lift with their foot up on the raised ramp. Most of the taxidrivers do their job really well, and I commend them for it. But we have also had our experiences with those who do not do it so well. The person who is the most infamous in our family is the guy who was on his mobile phone as he tried to do the lift. I said to him, "You know what? That phone call is obviously really important, so we are going to wait on the ground while you finish that call." He looked at me and he said, "I can do both", and I said, "No, you can't, so I'm happy to wait while you take your call." Anyway, if looks could kill, I would certainly be dead. But there should be basic training to prevent that kind of behaviour from occurring.

Other things have happened to mum in the back of a multipurpose taxi. On one occasion when they were trying to put on her seatbelt and the restraints to the wheelchair, she was whacked on the head by the metal buckle of one of the seatbelts. Someone was not watching and went to throw it around her, and instead they threw it over her and it hit her on the head, which is not a good thing to do with a person who already has a head injury, so that person copped the wrath of the bolshie daughter as well.

I have to say, and I am happy to say this on the record, that most of our experience has been very good—but it is not consistent. Therefore, although I welcome the package that was announced last week, I hope that something serious is done about the booking system, because what happened to us three weeks ago is not the first time it has happened, whereby they say, "No, you did not make a return booking", when we know that we did. I also think that there needs to be more training for the drivers so that they know that they should not use a mobile phone at the same time as they are putting a person in a wheelchair into the back of a multipurpose taxi. With those comments, I conclude my remarks.

HON WENDY DUNCAN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary) [8.00 pm]: I welcome this opportunity to talk about the budget this evening, and I would like to focus on the goldfields. The main reason for that is that there has been a fair bit of commentary in the media about how the goldfields sees itself as having missed out on funding. I actually feel there is plenty of evidence that the goldfields has done very well not only from royalties for regions, but also in general in the budget and over the period of this government. I did some sums and added up how much royalties for regions funding has been committed to the goldfields over the past four years of this government, and with funds expended and funds committed, it came to more than $100 million; that is $100 million of benefits that would not have existed in the goldfields without royalties for

regions. Looking at those projects, one of the key criteria of royalties for regions is to endeavour to leverage funding, and the value of projects being undertaken in the goldfields at the moment is actually in excess of $1 billion. There is a lot going on there.

We have of course heard about the major project, which is the Kalgoorlie Hospital upgrade, but more general royalties for regions funding is going into the goldfields such as for the Country Age Pension Fuel Card and the upgrade to the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia, which is of great benefit in that part of the world. The community resource centres are providing great assistance there, and a fair proportion of exploration incentive scheme funding has gone into the goldfields. There is the augmentation of the patient assisted travel scheme, new housing for government workers and improvements to regional airports, and the upgrading of police and emergency services communication has been a very important commitment over the period of the Liberal–National government. There is also, of course, the funding towards the upgrade, restoration and repair of Burt Street, Boulder—a really historic precinct—in the wake of the April 2010 earthquake. Other quite large projects are in the pipeline, such as new student accommodation for the WA School of Mines, and greatly expanded mobile phone coverage, which is of high priority to people in that part of the world, and of course funding for planning for the PortLink project.

If we drill down and start to look at some of the other aspects, such as the country local government fund and the regional grants scheme, they have provided funding for projects that are making a real difference to people who live and work in the goldfields. These include investment into high bandwidth communications at the WA School of Mines, increasing the capacity of Prospect Lodge, which helps men recovering from alcohol and other addictions, and the expansion of Foodbank. There has been funding towards Kalgoorlie Central Playgroup; the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Urban Landcare Group; Mt Charlotte walk trail; Goldfields Tennis Club; a major upgrade to Goldfields Crematorium; the Western Desert kidney health project, which is delivering health services to the remote parts of the area; and the Golden Quest Discovery Trail to augment tourism product in the region. I had the pleasure of driving one of those trails not long ago, and I thoroughly enjoyed the work that has gone into that and the information available. The Goldfields Regional Toy Library has benefited, and the Stage Left Theatre Troupe was able to set up its theatre in a historic building in Boulder—so killing two birds with one stone there. There has also been funding for Full Circle Therapies, the Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre, and the Ray Finlayson sporting complex. That is just a small list of the funding that has gone into the goldfields. There is always more to do, and I suppose that is why we need to make sure that royalties for regions can continue, but also, of course, there is always a challenge for government in prioritising expenditure.

Obvious needs in the Pilbara were crying out for attention; people were living in containers, rents were incredibly high and young couples were not able to have their babies nearby.

It is a similar case with the Ord–East Kimberley expansion project. The previous Labor government under Eric Ripper did some excellent work in negotiating a native title agreement with the Miriuwung–Gajerrong people. That came through in 2005. The federal government was ready to commit to an expansion of the Ord. I think it was very timely for the state government through royalties for regions and other funding to commit to Ord stage 2 with a particular focus on Indigenous employment and Indigenous advancement. What has been achieved there is spectacular; not only has the project seen the expansion of available land for irrigation, but also the Indigenous content in the workforce is nearly 30 per cent. The training that has been provided and the capacity building for Indigenous corporations and contractors is something of which we should all be very proud. The issue is that with royalties for regions being only four per cent of the state budget, it was never going to be possible to deal with every region's needs all at once and in one term of government, but no doubt great headway has been made. Key issues have been dealt with right across regional Western Australia.

The goldfields are a very important part of our state and the gross regional product coming out of the Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission area was estimated in 2009–10 to be $8.1 billion a year, which represents 4.4 per cent of gross state product. It has a substantial economy, which is mainly based on the extraction of mineral resources such as gold and nickel, but of course there are other diversified industries, particularly at the Esperance end where agriculture and forestry come into play. Tourism is also incredibly important in that part of the world.

The region was estimated in 2009 to have a population of 58 727. I think it is ambitious to pin it down to the last few people. With new statistics from the census coming out during the last week, I am sure that those figures will be refined. On those figures, the population is 2.6 per cent of the total population of Western Australia. The Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku has the greatest Indigenous proportion of any LGA in Western Australia; 88.7 per cent of the people there are of Indigenous origin. The *Kalgoorlie Miner* of 22 June, just last week, noted that the population of Kalgoorlie–Boulder has increased to a bit over 31 000, which equates to a 9.5 per cent increase in population since the last census. The leaders in the community, Mayor Ron Yuryevich and Deputy Mayor Allan Pendal, who is involved in real estate, say that these figures are far more realistic. There was a lot of concern about the previous census and the fact that it did not pick up a lot of people who may be itinerant or moving in

fly in, fly out situations. I note that Deputy Mayor Allan Pendal commented that the increase of 9.5 per cent—getting closer to 10 per cent—growth is the minimum we would expect. Therefore, it is an area that is growing considerably; nevertheless, there has been quite a bit of debate. In the *Kalgoorlie Miner* was a big headline saying "Region shafted" and that projects have not come the way of goldfields–Esperance. I did some sums and the reported expenditure under royalties for regions up to 31 March is $71.5 million. For student accommodation for the Western Australian School of Mines, another $20 million has been allocated in the budget, but the final details have not been announced. Add on top of that the $5 million that has been put aside for planning for the PortLink project and, more recently, the extra nearly $2 million going into Burt Street, Boulder and that gives the region very close to $100 million. That actually does not take into account other government projects that are happening in the goldfields—that is, the regional prison and the courthouse.

I thought that I would go through a few of these projects and give details of some of the things that are happening in the goldfields for the benefit of not only members of Parliament, but also, hopefully, members who live in the goldfields so that they can read and see in some detail what this government is endeavouring to do in their part of the world. Of course, as members are aware from my inaugural speech—I know they were all clinging on every word, as we do at that time!—I was born in Kalgoorlie and raised on a pastoral property north east of Kalgoorlie. I was one of the first students on the Kalgoorlie School of the Air. In fact—this will show my age—Kalgoorlie School of the Air celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year and we are looking forward to quite a party. Therefore, I have very good knowledge of that part of the world. I spent my early married life there as well. I am pretty keen to see that area reach its full potential.

The project that Kalgoorlie–Boulder in particular really was crying out for was Kalgoorlie Hospital, which was in the budget for the capital works program for the Department of Health for many years but did not ever really seem to get over the line. As soon as this government came into play and with the strong work of the local member, John Bowler, one of the first commitments made was $55.8 million towards Kalgoorlie Hospital. That project has continued and $15.8 million of that funding was from royalties for regions. The first stage of that project, which I think caused some frustration to the people of Kalgoorlie–Boulder because it was the sort of stuff that people do not really see in the initial stages, was work on getting the sewerage, power and other services up to scratch to be able to then take up the major redevelopment of the campus. The next stage, which was the palliative care unit that provided three home-style purpose-built rooms, each with access to private courtyards for the exclusive use of palliative care patients, was completed in late 2010. I went and saw them when they were completed and they really are excellent. There are not only the palliative care room units, but also a separate area for families to sit and relax and talk to each other, and another meeting room where professionals such as lawyers, accountants, specialist doctors and so on can meet with the patients. The other really important part of this development is the fact that it was built with great cultural sensitivity. Each unit has access to an outdoor area with curved fencing, and native vegetation that is familiar to the Aboriginal people coming in from remote areas so they will not feel quite so boxed in. I commend the designers of that project for the work that they have done there.

As part of the background work, two emergency generators were installed, a considerable amount of drainage and sewerage work was undertaken and stormwater pumps were installed. Phase 2 of the development is to develop the front entrance in the foyer, which will lead to the new emergency medical imaging department. That emergency department will increase the treatment bays from 11 to 16 and include isolation bays, single rooms and a separate waiting area—stuff that will make that hospital so much friendlier for patients. An area is specially designed for fast-track service at busy times. I was there only a couple of weeks ago looking at progress. I was really pleased to see the new front entrance, which incorporates artworks that reflect all sectors of the goldfields community. There will be a panel recognising the contribution of the pastoral industry in that part of the world. It has been there for over a century but because mining is so important in the goldfields, often the pastoral industry does not get the recognition that it deserves. It certainly did a lot to underpin the community in the early days.

The goldfields regional prison project was not funded by royalties for regions but it is still a major project that the Liberal–National government has funded. The project is now well advanced. It will be a 350-bed, all-security mixed gender prison to be designed and constructed using private sector expertise through a public–private partnership procurement model. Because its population will be predominantly Indigenous male and female prisoners, it is good to know that the offenders will be housed closer to their homes, their families and their country in a facility that is culturally appropriate.

Another major project in the goldfields is the courthouse project, which has been allocated $43 million. There is something that we really need to understand about this project. There was a lot of debate in Kalgoorlie–Boulder at the time about the courthouse moving into the old post office building in Hannan Street. That magnificent building is the sort of building that is very difficult for private entities to establish themselves in. It is a heritage-listed building. It had quite difficult demands for its refurbishment, upgrade and maintenance. I think it is a win-

win situation when government decides to move into some of these magnificent historic buildings and ensure that they are cared for well into the future. The exterior restoration of the old post office, which is now the Kalgoorlie courthouse, is pretty well complete. The building looks fantastic. In particular, I love the gold leaf dome that has been placed on the post office building. That project was undertaken by the locals of Kalgoorlie and is an indication of their can-do attitude. They decided they wanted the dome at the post office to be gold leafed so they got themselves together, fundraised for it and made it happen. It really looks spectacular. The courthouse itself will have a new annex at the rear, with an overhead footbridge to the police complex, which is at the back. The public functions will be held in the front of the building, looking out onto Hannan Street. It will house a new four-courtroom complex, with the potential to expand to five courts when required. This should provide state-of-the-art facilities for our officers, magistrates and so on, who do an excellent job. In the previous location, the amenity was starting to look very tired. Two of the courts will be Magistrates Courts, a third court will be designed in consultation with the Aboriginal community for use as a Children's Court or a community court, and the fourth court will have jury facilities for criminal trials. The complex will be well set up to service the whole region once it is complete.

Another major project in the region that has been announced but has not yet commenced—the funding is still being gathered—is the Ray Finlayson sporting complex. It has received over $1.6 million of royalties for regions money to augment what has been provided by the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Department of Sport and Recreation and also under the federal government's regional local community infrastructure program. It will be a major redevelopment of the area where the tennis courts and the BMX and cricket facilities are. The end result will be a $16 million sports precinct to complement the existing facilities. It will provide soccer, rugby league, rugby union, cricket, squash and equestrian facilities in the same location. New change rooms and multipurpose clubrooms also will be constructed.

I was there just two weekends ago to see the BMX club, which is also in the same area. The club has used Department of Sport and Recreation and other funding to upgrade the BMX track. It has this fantastic six-metre automated ramp that is of a national standard. Kids as young as three years of age fly down this ramp and go around the track produced by the parents who volunteered labour and plant and equipment. The track will be good enough for state championships; in fact, a couple of the riders from the BMX club in the goldfields are of state and national quality. I do not think it will be long before we see an Olympian come out of the BMX club in Kalgoorlie. It is now an Olympic sport. The people there have set their sights on that. They have a state-of-the-art facility. It is just fantastic to see those kids flying through the air. There was a bit of a prang when three or four little cyclists—they would not have been older than six—all came unstuck and there was a tangle of wheels. The parents dusted them off and set them off again. It was really good to see kids getting that sort of exercise. Those sorts of things really make a place such as the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder a place where young families want to live. The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder is quite determined that its days of being a wild west town well-known for two-up and Hay Street are behind it. Certainly, those are parts of its heritage that it will never lose, but the city is well and truly on the way to being a well-rounded regional city that is a great place for families to live.

Members will be well aware, of course, that in April 2010 there was a very severe earthquake in Boulder, which is a beautiful historic part of the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder. It has a precinct of intact historic buildings which are a century or more old and which are equal to what would be seen in places such as Albany. Many of the places are on the state heritage register. Even before the earthquake the heritage precinct had been identified as a place for the allocation of funds from royalties for regions for its upgrade, but, of course, along came the earthquake and the state government responded with $5 million to assist buildings and businesses that were adversely affected. On top of that, with the unfortunate demolition of the Boulder United Friendly Society building due to damage from the earthquake and subsequent further damage from a flash flood, the Minister for Regional Development, Brendon Grylls, allocated a further $1.35 million to the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder for the restoration project and for the block of land on which the BUFS building had been so that the precinct could continue to reach its full potential. More recently, another $1.8 million was allocated under the action agenda to make the verandas more consistent, restore some signage, help with the redevelopment of the shopfronts and alter the traffic arrangement to make it more pedestrian friendly so that the area has the ability to attract tourists and business, which I am sure it has great potential to do. I walked down the street in Boulder not long ago and dropped in to speak with the people in the shops there. They are starting to notice the difference, which is great. There has been adverse publicity about Boulder, but the shop owners say that all the stuff in the media is not as bad as everyone says and that it is a great place to do business as the rents are reasonable, the people are great, the community spirit is good and now the precinct is starting to look good as well. Particularly on Boulder market day, it is just a great place to be. There are a lot of specialist shops in the Boulder precinct, which are well worth visiting if anyone is in that part of the world.

Looking to the future, the major project that will make a difference to the goldfields and work towards diversifying the economy is the PortLink project. The goldfields are fairly heavily dependent on the extraction and export of minerals, but it also has the potential to be a freight hub for the state of Western Australia. There has been $5 million allocated out of royalties for regions for planning for that project, which came about in response to a visit from Minister Anthony Albanese, who allocated $2 million of federal funding to that project. It is the sort of project that needs to be looked at in a bipartisan way. It is a nation-building project that all sides of politics should support. It does have the ability to really make a difference to the whole of the state of Western Australia. The project is about linking Port Hedland, Esperance and Geraldton with Kalgoorlie as a freight shipment hub. The first phase will be looking at the intermodal terminal in the goldfields, the realignment of the railway line around Kalgoorlie and the sealing of the Wiluna–Meekatharra road. That will make a huge difference to not only the people of the goldfields, but also the people of the metropolitan area, because if we can reduce the amount of freight that comes to Perth and then has to turn around and go back out again, that will reduce congestion and save about 600 kilometres in travel for freight. That will hopefully reduce not only freight costs, but also greenhouse gas costs.

While we are looking at this project, we must not forget Great Eastern Highway, which is one of the main arterial roads in Western Australia. Parts of it are in need of upgrade. There are parts of it that need to be dual carriageway; only a few weeks ago there was an accident in which two road trains clipped each other as they passed on a section of road that is only 7.6 metres wide. The regional freight transport network plan is a strategy that is being developed at the moment by the Department of Transport and is nearing completion. I am really looking forward to seeing what treatment there will be for Great Eastern Highway in that plan.

The PortLink project may look like a hard economic project that is going to provide economic diversification to the region, and so it is; but it also has the important social aspect of sealing the link between Wiluna and Meekatharra. That is very important to the people of that part of the world. There have been some quite serious and fatal accidents on the road. I have driven on it, and in places one can hardly see over the side banks because the gravel has been graded off to the side so many times that the road is almost below ground level. When people get stuck behind a big truck—there are quite a few mining projects in that part of the world—the dust makes it virtually impossible to pass. There is a lot of traffic between Wiluna and Meekatharra; a lot of Indigenous people travel back and forth along that road, and a lot of our government officers travel from Geraldton because Wiluna is in the midwest region, and they all run the risk of injury on that road. In fact, I think there have been fatalities involving some of our very dedicated government officers. I know there has been quite some debate about whether we should just cut the corner and take the road from Wiluna straight through to the Goldfields Highway, but I am actually very pleased that this decision has been made. Of course, it is still subject to planning; that is what the $5 million is for, and a steering committee has been established to undertake that planning. The committee will meet soon in the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder.

The other program that I am quite proud of is the exploration incentive scheme. When I first became involved with the Nationals, it was predominantly an organisation that was focused on the wheatbelt and agricultural industries. I was very keen to see it broaden its base, and I did a lot of research looking at the Plan for Accelerating Exploration scheme in South Australia, where incentives were put in place for the drilling of greenfields sites, and funding was provided for the collation of the geological information that has been gathered over the years by various companies to produce maps that will be of assistance to exploration companies. I thought that that would be a really good thing to implement in Western Australia, so I actually took that idea to the Nationals and it became one of our key promises at the last election. Of course, it was also something that Hon Norman Moore and the Liberal Party were very keen on, so when we got together it was great to actually see $80 million of royalties for regions funding going into the exploration incentive scheme. The scheme involves co-funding of exploration and environmental work in greenfields areas. It assists with innovative drilling, geophysical and geochemical surveys, the promotion of strategic research in the mining industry and three-dimensional geological mapping. A portion of that funding, $3 million, also goes towards promoting sustainable relations with Indigenous communities. It has been a very successful program. For instance, the goldmine in Mt Magnet has been reopened, thanks to the extra drilling that has happened there, and the Speewah Metals Ltd vanadium deposit in East Kimberley as a result of that. Just a month or so ago, with the funding for this program, Minister Moore announced a new electronic lodgement system for minerals titles. That will make a huge difference to mining companies.

We have seen in the past disputes over mineral tenements. I remember during the serious droughts of the 1970s my poor dad pegging mineral claims when he was down to his last few sheep and still had kids to put through boarding school. They would sneak out in the middle of the night, having got information from the Mining Registrar about when a claim was about to lapse, and hammer in a peg or two and then flog it back to the company that had allowed it to lapse. A fair bit of that went on. This new system will mean less disputation over

mineral tenements and much easier lodgement. There are certainly very important cases in which failure to lodge the application at the right place at the right time has caused incredible disputation.

Quite a few companies have benefited from the exploration incentive scheme: the Fairstar Resources Ltd Steeple Hill magnetite project, Echo Resources Deep "Thought Targets", Breaker Resources NL's couple of projects, and Anglo American Exploration (Australia) Pty Ltd at Skirmish Hill. Quite a few have been successful, and that is just in round five. There have been four previous rounds in which mining companies have been able to explore new ground. I guess we have a bit of a vested interest there because out of these new projects, hopefully, will be new production and more royalties for the state and royalties for regions.

Housing is another really important issue. The goldfields certainly has not been neglected on that front. We announced $200 million of royalties for regions funding for government regional officers' housing, something that we figured was very important. A lot of government officers do great work in quite remote locations. In many cases the housing has not been up to standard. Most of the 400 GROH units that were promised have been constructed. As at 29 February, 28 houses were built in the goldfields. In fact, I was in Warakurna last year or the year before and saw some of the beautiful new houses that have been built there for the police. The police do a fantastic job in those remote locations, working hard alongside the police from the Northern Territory. In speaking to them, I heard that they were absolutely delighted with their new homes. Good accommodation certainly makes life in that part of the world much more amenable. The affordable housing strategy has seen 36 houses in Kalgoorlie and 22 in Boulder available to allow low to moderate income earners to get into housing. Of course, LandCorp has been working there and developing land in association with the new Kalgoorlie golf course.

Hon Peter Collier: That would be the grass golf course.

Hon WENDY DUNCAN: Yes, a beautiful golf course.

LandCorp has engaged private builders to build houses that are responsive to the climate and lifestyle of the people of Kalgoorlie–Boulder. I went to their official opening and they are magnificent. They look out over the state-of-the-art golf course with its beautiful green fairways. It is a typical outback golf course that cuts away to red dirt and salmon gums. I do not know how people can play golf on it; I would just gaze around. It is a sight to be seen and a magnificent asset to Kalgoorlie–Boulder. It is these sorts of things that make Kalgoorlie–Boulder a place where people and families want to stay and live their lives. It is fantastic to see how many people retire and stay in Kalgoorlie–Boulder and the goldfields.

A couple of weekends ago I was in Leonora, where there is a big population of retirees. The town is looking great and the community is very proud of where they live. As an aside, I know that the people of Leonora get quite dismayed when they find themselves in the media concerning the alternative place of detention—APOD—and Leonora is described as a very inhospitable place to send those people, when in fact it is a very beautiful little town and a great community. The people of Leonora have been very welcoming of the detainees in the APOD and were quite disappointed when the federal government changed its policy and stopped sending the children from the alternative place of detention to the local high school. Interestingly, while those children were attending the high school, the local Indigenous children also started to attend. The Indigenous children found that they were with kids of their own age and were not the only ones with a different skin colour or who did not have a full mastery of English, literacy or numeracy. They knew how to kick a footy and were quite happy to teach the kids from the detention centre and, vice versa, they were thoroughly enjoying learning to play soccer. When that relationship ended, the people of Leonora were quite disappointed. I have done a fair bit of work on this matter and raised it with Prime Minister Gillard when she was in Esperance recently, with Minister Anthony Albanese and also with the Premier when I found myself in a plane with him not long ago. I am really determined to see those children out in the community and attending school as soon as possible. Statistics show that they will end up being accepted as refugees and living in our community, so the sooner they are interacting with our community, the better. The fact that we here in Perth look on Leonora as inhospitable is a very ethnocentric point of view. Many of the people who are being held in Leonora probably come from very similar climate zones to Leonora and probably have not lived by the sea, which most Western Australians seem to hanker for. We must all be very careful when we judge whether a place in regional Western Australia is a good place to live and work. Judging a climate from one's own perspective is not reasonable. I was in Port Hedland not long ago and someone said to me, "What I love best of all about Port Hedland is the climate. It gets a bit hot in summer but the rest of the year it is beautiful. Perth is cold, wet, miserable and congested." We need to open our minds and understand that regional Western Australians love where they live.

I got sidetracked, so I will go back to some of the things that we are doing in the goldfields area. Following on from talking about the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison, as part of that program there is the new community work camp at Warburton, which is a 24-bed camp for low-risk prisoners. It was opened in September last year. It enables Aboriginal offenders to be managed and rehabilitated near their own homes. I was speaking to some of

the officers involved in that, and they are training the Aboriginal detainees there in building maintenance and other skills that will assist them in serving their community once they are free to leave. Of course, having those sorts of facilities will hopefully reduce the amount of transportation of people from there to other places to serve their remand or their sentence. Also at Warburton, as part of this facility, there is a six-bed secure facility to provide short-term accommodation for prisoners if they are returning back to Warburton to attend family events or funerals. That is a great project. It has been funded by the Department of Corrective Services. It is not a royalties for regions project, but it is a project that demonstrates the commitment of the Liberal–National government to the people of the goldfields.

There has also been considerable investment in homelessness support in that part of the world. Through the work of Hon Robyn McSweeney, as Minister for Community Services, an additional $612 000 has been put into providing extra support workers in the regions. This is a very important investment. There are 4.5 full-time equivalents. A housing support worker is working with the Australian Red Cross to provide support for people who have severe and persistent mental illness. A homelessness accommodation support worker is also being delivered through the Red Cross to provide support for people leaving specialist homelessness accommodation and looking for stable long-term solutions. Also in the goldfields, a domestic violence outreach worker has been assisting the Goldfields Women's Refuge Association. As part of this program, there is also a remote outreach team that works with people who are sleeping rough to help them find accommodation. Of course, that works well with the Indigenous visitor hostel that has been established at Boulder. That is a very important project that is nearing completion and will certainly assist a lot of the Aboriginal people who need to go to the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder for medical, family or other reasons and who find themselves with nowhere to stay.

One of the programs that has been incredibly successful, of course, is the Country Age Pension Fuel Card. In fact, the 30 000th card was issued in the goldfields to Mrs Valerie Regan. She was absolutely delighted to receive that card and noted how important it was to help her and her daughter, who makes sure that Mrs Regan can do her shopping, get to medical appointments and visit family and friends. That program now reaches over 42 000 pensioners, and these are not just aged pensioners. The program has been expanded in recent budgets to allow people on a disability pension, carers and widows to also access the card, and the area for which it is made available has also been expanded. The really good recent news regarding the Country Age Pension Fuel Card is that the federal minister, Jenny Macklin, has given it permanent exemption from being counted in the income of pensioners. We did get a temporary stay so that pensioners who receive the fuel card did not find that it adversely affected their pension entitlements. But the minister, having reviewed the program and having seen how successful it is, has now given it a permanent exemption. So that is great news and good work on the part of the ministers involved. The Country Age Pension Fuel Card is a well-established program and in fact is now being managed by the Department of Transport, and managed well.

Other programs statewide have been very beneficial to the goldfields. One of those is the regional airports development scheme. That scheme is run through the Department of Transport, through consolidated revenue, and it has been augmented by royalties for regions funding. That has enabled upgrade of the runway at Forrest, and considerable upgrades at Kalgoorlie–Boulder, including security fencing, lighting, closed-circuit television and the installation of bollards, and there is more funding to follow.

The most exciting program for me in that part of the world in recent times is the installation of 113 mobile phone communication towers, which will be funded with $39 million of royalties for regions funding, and Telstra has topped that up to around $100 million worth of value. The most important thing about that project is that Eyre Highway will now be pretty much covered by mobile phone towers. I am sure members present have travelled along Eyre Highway. It is incredible that once we leave South Australia, we lose communication until we get to Norseman. There are emergency phones along the way. When I was travelling on Eyre Highway with Tony Crook recently, we picked up a couple who had broken down. We pulled up at the nearest emergency phone, which had a little solar panel to power it, and it did not work. So we had to take these people all the way to Balladonia, and then they had to get a tow truck to go all the way back out to near Cocklebiddy, which was a hugely expensive process. Fortunately, they had just broken down. But if somebody is injured, it really is a very lonely piece of road. There is a lot of traffic on that road, but there is not much communication. I know that for the pastoralists and the people in the service stations who live and work along that road, communication is a matter of huge importance. The mobile telecommunications program is focusing on major roads. It will also be focusing on the road between Esperance and Kalgoorlie–Bolder. In fact, there have been two fatalities in recent times on that road between Norseman and Kalgoorlie, and there was no mobile phone coverage. So I am pleased to say that this will fix that black spot. I note that Leinster is also in the process of getting a new mobile phone tower, so hopefully the highway heading north from Kalgoorlie to that part of the world will also be covered.

The other really strong focus in the early part of this program is mobile telecommunication towers in the Western Desert in the Ngaanyatjarra lands. We have heard recently about the young girl and her carer who went out on a hunting trip and became lost, and they were not that far away, but they were unable to communicate,

and tragically a life was lost. This project will make a huge difference to the people of the goldfields, and I am really pleased to know that this is rolling out for them.

Some excellent work has been done in sprucing up the smaller regional towns. I am thinking about the Leonora Sporting Complex, which received more than $600 000 of royalties for regions funding under the country local government fund. That funding paid for function facilities, which has enabled catering for local sporting clubs and events. I had the pleasure of experiencing that great new venue when I was at the Leonora Golden Gift during the June long weekend. I know the people of Leonora, the shire president and chief executive officer were very pleased to hold a function there to thank their sponsors and welcome dignitaries and Olympic runners to town in a venue they were obviously extremely proud of; it was great.

Speaking about the Golden Gift, that program, of course, has benefited from the boost that royalties for regions has given to the regional events scheme. That scheme has made a huge difference to amenity, enjoyment of life, and the ability for people in regional Western Australia to partake in new experiences. We have committed more than $40 million to augment the regional events scheme, and in that part of the world that funding will be used in the next period of time for the WA PGA Championship on that fantastic golf course we were just talking about. There will also be the St Barbara Festival in December, which all members should try to get to—it is amazing to see one of those massive big Haulpak trucks driving down the centre of Hannan Street. Of course, the Golden Gift benefited from it, as did the goldfields KidsFest, which has just taken place in Kalgoorlie–Boulder.

We have also supported the arts, and money has been allocated to major performing arts programs. At present, Tim Winton's play *Signs of Life* is wandering around the regions, put on by Black Swan State Theatre Company; I know that has been really welcomed. Also, WA Opera will take a full 32-member chorus to the Kimberley, which is also pretty exciting.

That really is a bit of a run-through of the major projects that are making a difference to the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder. But the message I really want to give Parliament tonight is that it is a mature, well-rounded, great place to live. There has been considerable debate in the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder over recent weeks about the Director of Liquor Licensing having issued a show-cause notice to licensees in the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder. A city with more than 30 000 people has been told by the Director of Liquor Licensing that he is considering prohibiting the sale of liquor on Sundays, limiting the sale of alcohol in containers of more than one litre with an alcohol content of six per cent or more, or in glass bottles of over 500 millilitres, and also limiting the sale of alcohol from Monday to Saturday from 12 noon to 8.00 pm. My major objection to that is that I think it is unreasonable to impose those sorts of restrictions on a city the size of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, when the majority of people know how to enjoy alcohol and manage themselves. There certainly are examples of serious problems there, but we also hear examples of things happening in the metropolitan area. We have heard a lot about the tragic story of the young man being thrown from the window of a hotel in Cottesloe, we hear about one-punch injuries in Northbridge, and we hear about out-of-control parties in the suburbs of Perth. Why are these sorts of restrictions not proposed for the metropolitan area? If this is good for the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, it should be good for the whole state.

I think it is absolutely discriminatory that the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder should be faced with these sorts of liquor restrictions. People work shifts there, as they do here in the city. They work sometimes in hot, hard circumstances, underground or in foundries. Someone may come off shift at six o'clock in the morning and want to have a beer before they go to bed, because that is how their shifts work. There are people who do that and do it responsibly. Although I understand that there are problems, it is unreasonable to impose something such as this on a city the size of Kalgoorlie–Boulder without saying, "Let's do it statewide."

I believe these sorts of restrictions can only ever be considered as a temporary measure anyway, because we really need to go to the root of the problem. I have spoken to Hon Helen Morton about this and I am very pleased to see the first drug and alcohol treatment facility committed to in Carnarvon, which will be a $3.4 million facility that will operate 24 hours a day. This is an innovation that will provide day-and-night treatment services for people and help them with their drug and alcohol problems through a sobering-up shelter in association with counselling and support services. We should really target our attention on assisting those people who have difficulty managing their alcohol.

I notice that Hon Terry Waldron, the Minister for Sport and Recreation; Racing and Gaming, put out a media statement just last week in which he talked about the success of barring notices in Northbridge and identifying and targeting problem drinkers. The media statement reads —

> Comparing the 12 months prior to barring notice introduction with the 12 months since they were introduced
>
> - Common assault (non-domestic) down by 9%

- Threatening behaviour down by 37%
- Disorderly conduct down by 44%
- Liquor licensing offences down by 82%

There are ways to deal with this and we definitely need to deal with this. I know that I cannot put in a submission to the Director of Liquor Licensing; it has to be the licensees who have received the show-cause notices. However, I hope that we can look at broader-based measures.

The other thing we really need is some way for the people who find themselves on the streets in the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder to get home. Often they come to town for medical, education or family reasons or to visit a relative in prison, or for cultural reasons such as a funeral, but then they cannot find their way home. It is very important for us to look at what we can do to assist these people to get home, which is where they want to be, rather than sleeping rough on the streets or finding that they really have nothing better to do than buy themselves too much alcohol.

Another area of interest of mine is rangelands reform. As members know, I have a very strong interest in the pastoral industry. My family is now up to its fourth generation in the pastoral industry. My dad was on the Jennings inquiry in 1979, which looked at amending the Land Administration Act. A lot of the things that he wanted to achieve back then, which have for various reasons failed to come to fruition, are the sorts of things that I would like to achieve in my time in this government. I put a lot of work into, initially, the southern rangelands review and also supporting the diversification review. I used that information to look at the Land Administration Act and endeavoured to come forward with a document that will meet the needs of not only pastoralists, but also other people who love to live and work in remote parts of regional Western Australia at the same time as making sure that our rangelands are cared for and repaired. I think there has been a fixation in the past about the viability of pastoralists when I think we really need to talk more about the viability of the rangelands. To ensure that the rangelands are well used, effectively used and populated, which I believe is important for the state of Western Australia, we need to make sure that there are opportunities for people to live and work in those remote places, because they love it. They actually do not want to move to the nearest big town; in fact, Kalgoorlie is too big for a lot of them. Therefore, we need to ensure that they have the opportunity to diversify and make other income. The work I have been doing in preparing amendments to the Land Administration Act, which hopefully we may be able to bring into the house in the spring session of Parliament, will see some new forms of tenure and also improve the security of tenure for pastoralists. I am really looking forward to that legislation coming into the house. I will not go into a lot more detail now because we are getting towards the end of the evening.

There is one more matter that I want to discuss before I finish—that is, the proposal for a solar power plant and a data centre in the Mungari industrial park. That project has great potential to provide for the diversification of the goldfields economy. The data centre proposal is for a large-scale modular facility at Mungari that will provide secure hosting for computers and data for domestic and global organisations. It is proposed to work alongside the proposal that Investec Bank Australia has put forward for a 100 megawatt photovoltaic solar technology power station. If the facility gets off the ground, it will be one of the largest in the world, and is designed to be installed in two stages of 50 megawatts. Those two projects will go really well together. The proponents have been working very hard with the Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission and the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder. I must pay tribute to the past chair of the Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission, Graham Thomson, and his CEO, Robert Hicks. When they first brought this proposal to me quite some time ago, I thought that they were dreaming! In fact, they worked very hard on the proposal and it is looking as though it may well move into the feasibility stage. It is a project that will help diversify the economy, provide employment opportunities in green energy and computer technology, provide practical education facilities for local students in technology and significantly increase the number of business travellers to the region. Construction of the project will provide a great boost to the local economy. There has been some concern about the use of the Mungari industrial park and a little delay on whether that project will go forward. The Premier recently gave his tick of approval for the data centre to have a conditional lease at Mungari and for the project to go into its feasibility stage. That is really great news. I am very pleased that the work that has been done by the people supporting this project has moved on to the next step. That really bodes well for the future.

There is plenty more to do, as I said at the beginning of my speech. The Menzies nursing post needs upgrading. There is also some difficulty at the moment finding a staff member for that post following the retirement of Janet Mazza, a local who had worked there for many years. I have had a commitment from the government that it is committed to doing that, which is great. In Leonora, we really need a co-located facility for government agencies. That is something that I would like to see dealt with in the near future. Obviously, there is the debate over the Goldfields Arts Centre in the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, which none of us would like to see closed. I have been talking to Minister Collier about that. I know that he is committed to seeing the centre stay open, as is

the Premier. With supporters like that, I am sure that we will come to a solution. I also know that a solution for the Mining Hall of Fame is in the wings.

Laverton is a town that needs a fair bit of attention. The hospital needs upgrading. Laverton has done a lot of strategic planning work to prepare itself for a CBD upgrade and to construct an Indigenous hostel. It is very committed to the Outback Highway, which I have had the pleasure of driving along from Laverton all the way to Uluru. It is a very inspiring drive; there are some pretty interesting places along it. The people of Laverton would love to have it sealed but that may not happen in the near future. It is something that we should aspire to in the long term. We certainly need to seal sections where communities are and to enable safe passing so that the safety of the road is improved.

I will conclude by saying that in this first term of government, royalties for regions has really devoted itself to the urgent needs of the people of regional Western Australia and the projects that were crying out for attention. I think we are now moving into a new phase in which we can take time to ensure that we can see the vision for the regions and for the whole state. A lot of strategic planning has been happening through the SuperTowns project, through the Pilbara Cities project, through the country local government fund, where all our local governments have been planning for the future, and also through the regional development commissions review, which I chaired. The recommendation that we have regional blueprints has been taken up, and those blueprints are being prepared. We are now getting to the point where, through working with the Department of Regional Development and Lands and the WA Planning Commission, we will have an overarching plan and some vision and the ability to allocate our funds in a way that meets the priorities of regional Western Australia, which also meets the priorities of our state and makes it a balanced and diversified economy that will be transformed not only from these four years that we have had but also, hopefully, in this next phase of delivering royalties for regions. Should we be given the honour of doing that, it should be something that we can look back on as a time of transformational change in Western Australia and a time that I have been very proud to be associated with.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan — Minister for Finance) [9.14 pm] — in reply: I would like to thank members for their contributions, firstly, to the motion that has been attended to at the start of each business day for the last three sitting weeks or so to note the budget papers that I tabled in this place in May. Latterly, of course, we have considered the actual budget bills themselves and that is the question before the Chair now. For each of those things, members have addressed themselves to issues relating to the budget, but certainly issues relating to their electorates and particular areas of interest that they wanted to highlight for the benefit of the house. All of that collectively makes it a very worthwhile exercise, and that is why I thank members for conscientiously and faithfully presenting the matters that they felt needed to be brought to the house's attention in the course of such a general debate as a budget debate.

For me, it is a great privilege. This is the second time I have been involved in a budget in this way. I value the opportunity to have that as part of my parliamentary experience. Putting a budget together is hard yards. I am on the subcommittee of cabinet that is responsible for it, and there are some very long hours. I listened with interest to the comments of Hon Ken Travers, who will no doubt read the *Hansard* with interest, and his conspiracy theories about how this government apparently practises some sort of black arts in the formulation of the budget and, in particular, the out year figures and so on. There actually is a phrase we use in relation to Treasury and that relates to the dark arts of Treasury, which of course is not meant sincerely, but it relates to the mysteries that we mortals outside Treasury can only hope to gain familiarity with. Suffice to say, a budget for a state such as Western Australia that involves some $24 billion to $25 billion is a very complex beast indeed. We have a very large number of government agencies. We have more than 130 000 employees. We are certainly the biggest employer around. We are certainly the biggest builder in the southern part of the state. It all adds up to a very delicate balancing act.

I remind members that as we drew our budget process—it is one that goes on for months, I might add—to a conclusion, we received the news that the funds available to us through the GST had been depleted virtually overnight to the tune of $660 million. Although we were not practising black arts, we certainly had to exercise some prudent financial management to make sure that this state continued to have a budgetary outcome that ensured that we still had a surplus, that we were within all the other stiff parameters that we had set ourselves, that we met all our obligations, and that we continued to provide the essential capital works program which we are providing and which is helping to drive Western Australia and prepare us for the challenges in the future. We had to do all of that, and that is why we have in these bills before us now the bare detail—the dollars—involved in the packages that we are delivering. I have previously outlined to the house the very impressive double-figure percentages—in some cases, some very high double-figure percentages—of increases that key areas of government services have enjoyed in the life of this government so far, including child protection, disability services, education and certainly health. For heaven's sake, if members look at the successive appropriation bills for capital works, they will see that we are virtually rebuilding the health system in Western Australia. These are substantial things, and I am very, very pleased to be a part of it. I also recognise that members in this house come

from a variety of positions. There is nothing wrong with submitting the government's operations to scrutiny or, indeed, advancing some ideas of their own.

The efforts of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations are quite extraordinary. I remember we used to have three or four days—a week, basically—given over to estimates hearings. Now it seems to continue for months and probably totals about 10 days. I am not exaggerating.

Hon Liz Behjat: That's because you've got such a good story to tell.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: One thing on which this government prides itself is its capacity for brevity, so we do not really need that long to tell it. I acknowledge the work of members and particularly that of the members of the estimates committee and their staff. It takes a lot of time and effort to examine the budget and all the divisions that are involved within it. I thank them for that, and also all other members who have been casually involved in those hearings. I might add that the hearings seem to continue throughout the year so I will be enjoying them as a minister for some time yet to come, particularly next Tuesday when I am appearing in a representative capacity from first thing in the morning until some time after dinner! That is part of the necessary process.

I was interested, too, to hear the lead speaker of the opposition talking about when he is the minister for this or that, as he inevitably will be come 9 March! He will announce his policies and his budgetary things.

Hon Donna Faragher: Who is this? Hon Ken Travers?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Yes.

Hon Donna Faragher: That's a bit presumptuous, isn't it?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Normally, his colleagues in the past have tended to wait until they have secured the Treasury bench for some time before they exhibited that sort of arrogance, but perhaps he is just trying to get ahead of the game.

Be that as it may, the appropriation bills that we have been discussing are supported by all sides of the house. They have had a thorough examination. I am confident that they will withstand further scrutiny and tests, not only of examination in this place but also the ultimate test of delivering what we said we would to the people of Western Australia. I commend the bills to the house and thank members once again for their contributions.

Questions put and passed.

Bills read a second time.

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading.

Third Reading

Bills read a third time, on motions by **Hon Simon O'Brien (Minister for Finance)**, and passed.