

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) RECURRENT 2014–15 BILL 2014
APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) CAPITAL 2014–15 BILL 2014

Second Reading — Cognate Debate

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield) [2.46 pm]: Prior to the lunch break I was making my contribution to the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2014–15 Bill and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2014–15 Bill. In that first, approximately, 20 minutes, I highlighted the things this government had been doing for not only the capital city but also Western Australia in general. I will not go back over that. I then went into detail on several key portfolios about what this Liberal–National government is committed to and has been delivering, particularly for those most vulnerable in our community. I highlighted several of those in mental health and disability services and touched on the KidSport program.

I had got to the stage where I was going to focus on my own electorate of Forrestfield. I love my electorate of Forrestfield. I love the places in it and I love the people in it. I also love the opportunity to represent the people of my electorate. I touched on some things that we have been delivering in Forrestfield.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker) Members!

Mr N.W. MORTON: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I touched on some school upgrades that we have delivered or are delivering to my electorate and highlighted \$150 000 of expenditure for Forrestfield Primary School to refurbish some classrooms into a commercial kitchen–style to complement the kitchen garden that operates very successfully at the school; \$200 000 for East Kenwick Primary School to roll out a stop-and-drop facility for parents at pick-up and drop-off time; \$3.6 million of capital works programs underway at Darling Range Sports College in my electorate, which the Minister for Education and I toured recently. It will be a welcome addition to the facilities at that high school. There is also, of course, \$5 million committed to Maida Vale Primary School, which, last year I think, celebrated its centenary. It is certainly a school with a lot of history. It will be great to deliver that \$5 million upgrade to that school community.

I think the Minister for Police or the Minister for Transport spoke in question time about the 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing speed signs. With the Minister for Transport recently, I had the great pleasure to switch on the 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing signs near Dawson Park Primary School in the heart of my electorate in Forrestfield. The community warmly welcomed those signs at that particular site. Given the nature of the school and the road on which it is located, that will certainly be a stark reminder to motorists transiting through that area to slow down during those times.

We also committed to some train station upgrades. I have two train stations in my electorate—Maddington train station and Kenwick train station. I had the great honour of opening Maddington train station late last year. One of the better parts of that project delivery was that it incorporated public art from local students at Yule Brook College. On the day we opened the train station, I had a chat to the students. They said they felt a real sense of ownership of that public facility. That is an important point. When we are delivering these projects, we need to ensure that the community is involved and is brought along on that journey so that it gets that sense of “buying in” to the public asset, which bodes well for the future.

Before the break, I also touched on Hartfield Park Recreation Centre, a major sporting complex in the heart of my electorate of Forrestfield. It is receiving a tad over \$6 million for an upgrade. It is great to see the line item of \$3 million allocated in this year’s budget and a tad under \$3 million to complete that funding in next year’s budget. As we all know, community sport is a great vehicle for bringing people together and all the added benefits that that has. I have some extremely strong sporting clubs in my electorate. These sorts of facilities will greatly enhance their capacity to support the wider community. That is a welcome advancement in Forrestfield.

We committed to a noise wall at the 2013 state election. It was envisaged that it would stretch 2.6 kilometres along the western side of Roe Highway in High Wycombe and Maida Vale. I recently toured that site with the Minister for Transport to inspect the site works that are underway. Every time I drive past that section of my electorate, I see something new. It is great to see that. As a local member of Parliament, there is nothing more exhilarating than knowing that the commitment we are delivering to our electorates will bring real and sustained benefit to those residents. I had the opportunity to doorknock those residents before the commitment was made. I was greeted by people who were captives in their own homes. Some shed tears. Some just told me stories of how they could not entertain in their backyards and they could not sleep with their windows open in summer because of the noise from the highway. This noise wall will be a real benefit and make a real improvement to

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their standard of living. As a local member of Parliament, I am very pleased that this government is delivering that project for those residents.

I mentioned Midland public hospital. About \$95 million has been allocated to that hospital in this year's budget. We will continue to see that facility develop as a key part of the health rebuild that this government has undertaken. It will deliver state-of-the-art healthcare facilities to people in the eastern region for many years to come. That is another welcome project delivery for the east.

I also wanted to talk about the Berkshire Road–Roe Highway intersection, which was just mentioned in question time. The Leader of the Opposition was recently in my electorate trying to throw mud at me. There is a picture of him on the front cover of the local newspaper. I will come back to that picture. I am not sure whether he superimposed himself onto the intersection. I will explain that later. I will read a few excerpts from the article in the newspaper, headed “Morton in the crosshairs”. I apologise, but the way the Leader of the Opposition has been missing targets recently, I will be excused if I am not shaking in my boots. The article states —

Opposition Leader Mark McGowan has pinned responsibility for the State Government's failure to upgrade the dangerous intersection of Berkshire Road and Roe Highway on Liberal Forrestfield MLA Nathan Morton.

He rabbits on a bit longer. The article goes on to state —

He said Mr Morton was responsible for getting the project on track in a timely manner.

I look forward to the forthcoming press release that says, “Morton to be congratulated on delivery of intersection upgrade” because that is what is happening. I am quoted in the article. I will read a couple of excerpts. It states —

Mr Morton said he had been working “tirelessly behind the scenes ...

I am sure the Minister for Transport can back me on that. It also states, tellingly —

“At the election, I also committed to an upgrade to Maddington and Kenwick train stations —

Tick —

which have or are being delivered. I also committed to a noise wall along Roe Highway and construction is under way as we speak.

Tick —

“I also delivered 40km/h flashing signs to Dawson Park Primary School, which is another election commitment delivered.

Tick. It goes on to state —

“If I say I am committed to something, you can rest assured I am committed to it.”

Absolutely. What do we see as a line item in this year's budget? Wait for it. We see \$15 million for the construction of the Berkshire Road–Roe Highway intersection, starting later this year and to be completed by 2015. I made mention of the photo on the front page of the local paper. Apparently, the Leader of the Opposition was at the intersection but I do not know how he could have visited it and missed the enormous signs that are plastered all around the intersection, which clearly state: “Berkshire Road”, the road in question; “Intersection Upgrade”, pretty plain English; “Project Cost: \$15 million”; and “Completion: 2015”. It beggars belief whether he visited the site. The only other options are that he needs to get his eyes checked or he cannot read. There is no other logical explanation. Maybe that is why there are so many rumours from members opposite about his future in the leadership role. I do not know.

It just gets better. As we heard in question time today from the Minister for Transport, we have been successful in securing another \$30 million approximately. We got \$15 million—it is budgeted, so it will happen—for a four-way controlled intersection, which would have made it a much safer intersection for road users and commuters through that part of the road network. We now see a commitment to build a full interchange at that intersection, which will still be delivered in the same time frame and which will be a far better outcome for not only residents who live in my electorate, but also all road users in that part of the world. That is a fantastic outcome for my community. I look forward to its delivery on time.

In the final two minutes I have, I want to talk about the \$2 billion Forrestfield–Airport link. This link will change the way people in my electorate live their lives. A 20-minute commute from Forrestfield to the CBD will change the way people in the east live their lives. There is one party they have to thank for that; that is, the

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Liberal Party—this government, which committed to and is building the Forrestfield–airport link. This is a game changer for the east. There will be fewer cars on the roads, thereby easing congestion and making public transport a real and viable alternative form of people’s daily commute.

I have spoken on this rail link several times in the Parliament and I have used several different narratives. Today, in my final minute, I want to focus on, say, a young professional who lives in Forrestfield and works in the city. It is a Friday morning. He goes to Forrestfield train station, catches the train to work, heads down to Elizabeth Quay after work and has a meal, heads across to the new Perth Stadium, watches the Dockers have a win, jumps on the train and comes back to Forrestfield in 20 minutes. This is a game changer. This is what this Liberal government is about—investment in the east that is unheralded and delivered by this state government.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [3.00 pm]: I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2014–15 Bill 2014 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2014–15 Bill 2014. I think that from time to time members in this house need to go back to first principles. That is something I would recommend the Premier and his government do. All of us would do well to think about what we are actually elected to do and what the community expects of us because, quite frankly, that is what we are all here for. We are elected to represent our communities and to act in their best interests. When we ask ourselves, what are the basic things that the community expects us to do when we are elected, we should answer that they expect us to represent their interests, they expect us to act with integrity and to keep our promises. For most people that would seem achievable; they are fairly simple things to do. Of course, I am sure that many in here would acknowledge that there have been politicians of all persuasions who have broken promises over the years but there are few governments that have broken as many promises as the members in this house who sit opposite—the Liberal and National Parties that have been governing our state for the last six years.

We often hear politicians on election night say that they will govern for the many, not the few—that they will govern for all Western Australians. They say that they will honour their word and keep their commitments. That should really be the basic compact that we have with the people of Western Australia when we are elected to government. When a government fails to do those things and fails to act with integrity or keep its promises, it disappoints the community, and the community has every right to be disappointed. The community has every right to be cynical about politicians’ promises when the truth goes out the window.

I know that one side of politics has a monopoly on individual broken election promises, but I think that the Barnett government has taken this to new heights. It would appear that fast on its heels, the Abbott-led federal Liberal–National government is about to do the same. In my view, there were two basic and pervading promises that the Premier made during the 2013 election. Firstly, that his promises were fully funded and fully costed. Some of my colleagues have held up signs with that red seal that was on every one of the Liberal’s policies—bold, in red, “Fully Funded, Fully Costed”. As many of my colleagues have already pointed out, it is not as though the government did not know what was in the books and was not in government for the previous four and a half years, because it was. It was running the books for four and a half years. People would not have thought that at the end of that time government members could claim, “We did not know what the books said. It was an honest mistake. We did not realise things were quite so dire.” They were the ones in charge of the books! There cannot be any wriggle room or weasel words that will let the Premier off that hook. He was in a position to know and he put the policies out there. He put his name and his word, and the Liberal Party’s name and its word, to the fully funded, fully costed policies. What is plain for all to see is that those policies were not fully funded or fully costed and nothing that has emerged since the election has in any way changed the financial parameters that we are dealing with. The fact of the matter is that nothing huge and unexpected has happened. There has been no global financial crisis and no sudden withdrawal of the goods and services tax component of state funds. There has not been a dramatic change that would suddenly cause the government to have to rewrite the books. What is known now was known before the election. It is plain and simple—in a crass and contrived way, the Premier went to the people of Western Australia and lied. He said his policies were fully funded and fully costed.

Withdrawal of Remark

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): The member cannot say that the Premier lied and needs to withdraw the statement.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It was a gross mistruth, Mr Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member first needs to withdraw the statement.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I withdraw that statement.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member.

Debate Resumed

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will instead say that he told the grossest untruths to the Western Australian community. He said that his policies were fully funded and fully costed. That is the huge, big untruth that the Premier told the community of Western Australia. What is the other big untruth? It is that the Premier said he would keep increases to taxes and charges at or around the rate of inflation. Again, I make the same points—he knew the state of the books, he knew what income he would be getting from the GST, he knew that his revenue streams were increasing and he knew what the other demands were. He had been steering the ship for four and a half years but he went out and, bold as brass, said to the Western Australian community, “Re-elect me and I will keep the increases to household charges, fees and taxes at or around the rate of inflation.” It was a pretty clear statement. I could cite numerous policy documents and point to the numerous times that the Premier spoke in the media and gave that commitment.

The two key lines that the Liberal Party repeated again and again at the 2013 election were, “Our promises are fully funded and fully costed”, and, “When it comes to taxes and charges, we will keep them at or around the rate of inflation.” It is as if the Premier was a naughty child who had crossed his fingers behind his back. We have heard some weaselly explanations such as, “Well, that promise was really only to do with electricity”, and “It was really only for one year not four years.” That is not what the Premier said beforehand. He has breached the community’s trust. I think he may actually get more credit if he admits that, because in my electorate the Premier’s name is mud and it is the same with everybody else I speak with. Everyone says, “What has happened since the 2013 election? What has happened to the Premier’s fully funded and fully costed promises? What has happened to his core promise to keep taxes and charges at the rate of inflation?” He has not delivered on those promises. In my view, he wilfully misled the people of Western Australia to buy their votes.

He did it on a global scale with the promise of his policies being fully funded and fully costed and promising to keep household charges down. He did it on so many other individual promises too, and I will get to some of those during this contribution. One example of the broken promise on costs and charges is that electricity prices would be kept at or around the rate of inflation. In this budget they are going up by 4.5 per cent, whereas inflation is just 2.57 per cent. That is 64 per cent above the rate of inflation and comes on top of the earlier increases. If the Premier takes his own figures for the coming financial year, the average cost of a basket of goods and services is up by 6.6 per cent. That is the government’s figure, not mine. I put it to members that that is just the tip of the iceberg, because the government has introduced a range of other charges and put up a range of other costs to families.

I highlighted yesterday, during the matter of public interest debate, that the government said it would keep the cost to the motoring public at or around the rate of inflation, and I quoted the figures that have been put out into the community by the RAC. The Premier gave a commitment to the RAC and community of Western Australia that he would keep motoring costs—the cost of vehicle registration and the like—at or around the rate of inflation. I have just quoted the rate of inflation at 2.57 per cent, but those charges have gone up by 12 per cent. This is a very clear example of a Premier who says anything at all to get elected; he promises one thing before the election and does completely the opposite after.

My own electorate is used to broken promises and the neglect of the eastern region by the Liberal Party. Many people in my community have long memories, but some who are new to the electorate are unaware of what has happened in the past. Those who have been in my electorate for a long time remember the words Richard Court uttered in the lead-up to the 1993 election. I was not a member of Parliament then, but in the lead-up to the 1993 election a press statement was put out by Richard Court, as the then Liberal leader, that stated that the Liberal Party would expand the Midland railway workshops and turn them into a centre of engineering excellence. That was the promise that Richard Court and the Liberal Party made for the 1993 election. Those people in and around Midland who were bought off with that promise rightly had an expectation that that is what the government would do. Within two months of that election, it announced the closure of Midland railway workshops. Maybe there was a business case for closing the workshops, but the government certainly breached the trust of the community when it made that announcement just two months after being elected. That announcement was made, from memory, in about April 1993, and the workshops were closed in December 1993 and just lay fallow for a number of years. Not only did the government not meet its promise to create a centre of engineering excellence, but also it did not even let the workshops continue in the way they were; it in fact did the opposite. I think that echoes the kind of comments I heard the member for Hillarys making earlier today. It is one thing to not meet a promise, but it is another to do the opposite, and that is what Richard Court did to the Midland community. Many in my community are aware of that and will never forgive the Liberal Party for it.

We saw similar cynical exercises at the last election. We have given the Premier some time to come up with the money and plans to meet those election commitments that he cynically made in an attempt to win the seat of Midland, and prop up neighbouring seats like Swan Hills and Forrestfield. He came to the electorate as bold as brass and promised a university for Midland. Accompanied by his entourage of upper house members and media

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advisers, he turned up at Midland railway workshops and said, “Yes, we will provide land here at the workshops for a university, and we will commit \$22 million towards infrastructure or a building.” He commented that he was hopeful that Curtin University might be able to put a medical school there in the future. Again, the Premier really had his hand behind his back with two fingers crossed. I do not know how he had the gall to come out to a community and promise something that he clearly never intended delivering on. It was a vote-buying promise that had Liberal Party people spruiking, as they were handing out how-to-vote cards in my electorate, “Vote Liberal for a university in Midland! Get a university in Midland—vote Liberal.” That was the mantra. But it was a con and a lie. At no stage had this government put \$22 million on budget for that; I could not imagine what kind of a university the government would get for \$22 million. I think if it had been \$220 million, that might have been a start, but a university would clearly cost significantly more than that. The rebuild of Governor Stirling Senior High School, not including any land component, cost \$63 million. For \$22 million the Premier said that somehow he was going to deliver a university.

Look at the state of the books. Look at what the Liberal Party has done. The government now is heading towards \$30 billion worth of debt. In the Labor Party’s last budget in 2007-08 it was \$3.6 billion. Debt is set on a trajectory to increase tenfold. The interest payments on that, as people have calculated in this house, will be phenomenal. My colleague the member for West Swan has made some calculations, and today I heard the member for Hillarys giving some calculations on what that will be. At the very least, the interest payments on that kind of debt will be in excess of about half a billion dollars a year—it is just a matter of how much in excess. That is the lowest figure I could possibly come up with, and that is being generous; it is potentially more than double that, depending on what happens in the next couple of years. At a minimum, this government has cost us half a billion dollars a year in interest payments alone; over four years, that is a minimum of \$2 billion. I think I have made a gross underestimation; I do not think anyone will say, “Oh, you’ve exaggerated what they’re going to have to pay back, member for Midland.” It is \$2 billion, and people should think about what \$2 billion buys and what we have to forego and what we cannot do. Before a single new primary school is built or a single new program is funded or a single new police officer, teacher or nurse is employed, the money has to be found to pay the interest bill. This government is struggling to meet its current commitments. The things it has on its books are already breaking the bank, so I do not know how any unfunded commitments from the last election will ever make it onto a future budget. I do not see how that will be possible, without going even more dramatically into debt and passing on the most phenomenally bad legacy to future generations.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Let us look at the other promises. This one crosses over to the police portfolio. I note that there are a lot of broken promises in Police, and I expect to take some of those up in with the minister in the estimates hearings next week. I mentioned this one in passing yesterday, but I do want to provide the detail and evidence for it. I apologise that in time I will be mentioning a press release of Mr Acting Speaker (Mr I.M. Britza).

I will start with a press release put out by Daniel Parasiliti—“Your local Liberal for Midland”—on 7 February 2013. This press release is headed “Building a better CCTV network in Midland”, and reads —

- \$13.5million for more CCTV cameras, establishment of a State CCTV Strategic Plan and centralised access, meaning more cameras in more places;
- Will allow better coordination of CCTV and possible police response in real time;
- Plan expands on the Liberals’ commitment to community safety.

Premier Colin Barnett said a Liberal Government, if re-elected, will fund additional CCTV cameras and introduce a coordinated State CCTV network, which will assist in targeting problem areas and ensure more effective police tasking in the Midland electorate.

“By funding additional CCTV cameras in crime hotspots and integrating the State CCTV network, the Liberal Government will provide a coordinated approach to CCTV use by police, local government and businesses,” he said.

Daniel Parasiliti said an important focus will be on areas with high pedestrian traffic and crime hot spots, particularly those outside train stations and bus depots, such as Midland Train Station, Woodbridge Train Station, East Guildford Train Station and Guildford Train Station.

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“It is as people leave train and bus stations and walk to their cars, homes, or businesses that they can feel unsafe—people are entitled to feel safe as they travel to and from their homes and this continues the Liberals’ commitment to community protection,” Daniel Parasiliti said.

Daniel Parasiliti said \$5million will be provided over four years towards an ongoing Crime Prevention Infrastructure Fund, with a focus on capital grants for CCTV infrastructure, and grants in high crime areas for the purchase and installation of new cameras.

“This funding will be on top of existing crime prevention funds currently available to local governments and the community,” Daniel Parasiliti said.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, members; your conversations are becoming a little loud.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The media release continues —

“We will also provide \$8.5million to enhance the existing police facility at Maylands to access live feeds from compatible CCTV systems and resource a dedicated police CCTV project team which will lead to better response times for police.

Police Minister Liza Harvey said a Liberal Government will work with local government, businesses and the community to develop and implement a new State CCTV Strategic Plan.

This press release, which was put out by my opponent, was put out in other electorates, too. For example, a press release dated 7 February 2013 was put out in the electorate of Morley with the heading “Building a better CCTV network in Morley”. It had the same bullet points as the previous media release, such as the one outlining \$13.5 million for more CCTV cameras, and carried the same line about Premier Colin Barnett saying that a Liberal government, if re-elected, would fund CCTV cameras. The press release states —

Ian Britza, State Member for Morley said an important focus will be on areas with high pedestrian traffic and crime hot spots, particularly those outside train stations and bus depots, such as Morley.

“It is as people leave train and bus stations and walk to their cars, homes, or businesses that they can feel unsafe —

Members get the drift; it is the same media statement as the one that went out in Midland.

It also stated —

Mr Britza said \$5million will be provided over four years towards an ongoing Crime Prevention Infrastructure Fund, with a focus on capital grants for CCTV infrastructure, and grants in high crime areas for the purchase and installation of new cameras.

“This funding will be on top of existing crime prevention funds currently available to local governments and the community,” Mr Britza said.

Members get the drift. I could produce more examples of this, because I have spoken to a number of my colleagues and the model press release went out in all electorates. This was a crass attempt to buy votes. In fact, I think it was a very appealing policy initiative. People responded to it. I have certainly spoken to people in my electorate about what they think about having more CCTV cameras in the Midland CBD around Midland Gate Shopping Centre, the courthouse and the town hall, and between them and the railway station, and people are 100 per cent behind it. The residents want it, local businesses want it and the shire wants to be part of it, too. The shire was certainly led to believe by the Premier, the Minister for Police and the local candidate’s press release that it would be able to apply for some grant money out of the \$5 million component for the purchase of cameras, but what do we find? This time last year I asked the Minister for Police why only \$200 000 was listed in the budget papers for this program and not the \$13.5 million that was promised during the election campaign. I asked her where were the CCTV cameras that would help make the community safer. The response of the minister was along the lines of the government needing to wait and see, and that the \$200 000 was needed to develop a strategic plan—basically, to work out what the government was going to do. I, of course, asked what kind of policy the Liberals went to the election with—one that was not thought out, not planned and had no science behind it? The government was making it up as it went along. Having made the promise the year before, it was now going to spend \$200 000 working out what it was actually going to do. The minister responded by saying that the government needed to spend the \$13.5 million responsibly, and that it needed to have a plan, which was why it was going to spend that \$200 000. Fast forward to this year’s budget papers and what is under the line item “CCTV Network” beneath the heading “Spending changes”? It shows that zero money was spent in 2013-14. The \$200 000 that the Minister for Police said during estimates last year would be spent on putting a strategic plan in place simply was not spent—the budget papers show that zero dollars was spent under that line

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item for 2013–14. Looking across to 2014–15, there is funding of \$1.3 million. No, the decimal point is not in the wrong spot—it is not \$13.5 million but \$1.3 million. The additional \$200 000 has disappeared and has been absorbed into the \$1.3 million. There is nothing at all in the out years—zip. In a crass, vote-buying exercise, the Premier and all his candidates went out and promised the community something that the government knew they wanted and supported. They lured them in, took out the pork barrel and said, “Vote for us and we’ll make your community safer. We’ll give you CCTV cameras so you can walk safely around your towns.” Whether people were in Midland, Morley or Cannington, the same promise was made, but the government has not delivered.

There is now \$1.3 million in the budget for this program, and that is to be shared between all the electorates in this state. In Midland we thought we might get a share perhaps of the \$5 million fund. Now we do not even know how much of the \$1.3 million will be spent on infrastructure and whether there will be any assistance for local government authorities. With some pea and thimble trick, the Minister for Police has come out with the great initiative of having cameras in hoon hotspots. It is a \$170 000 initiative, of which \$50 000 or \$60 000 at most—I do not have time to look up the figure—is in the budget this year. That \$170 000 is spread over four years. This year, about \$50 000 at most is listed in the budget papers. That is for all hoon hotspots and for the whole plan. We had a promise of \$13.5 million for crime hotspots; what we have got is \$1.3 million for crime hotspots and \$170 000 for hoon hotspots. That leaves us over \$12 million short. It is a con; it is a gross untruth. Politicians wonder why people are cynical about them and whether they can be believed. My view is simply this: if you make a commitment, you have to deliver. The government has not delivered.

There were other matters on which the Premier campaigned in my electorate. He chose to campaign in a small office in Centrepoint Shopping Centre in which the Yellowbird project was located. That project was running on the smell of an oily rag. It cost in the order of tens of thousands of dollars—it was not very big in the scheme of things—and enabled older people to get in touch with technology by finding out how to do things on computers such as send and receive emails, pay bills online and other things that people need to be able to do in this day and age. A by-product of the Yellowbird project has been to bring people in the community together and establish social networks, and it was generally very positively received all around. There were people who volunteered as part of that program, so there was extra value there. The Premier chose to visit Yellowbird before he launched the Liberal Party campaign, and there are photos of him there smiling, which appeared in the local paper. For the Premier to go out there to campaign and to then just withdraw the money shows a breach of faith.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [3.31 pm]: It is certainly not with any joy that I get up to speak to the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2014–15 Bill 2014 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2014–15 Bill 2014. This budget will have cost-of-living increases per average household of \$324 per annum, and since 2008, when the Barnett government was first elected, it represents an increase of more than \$2 500 per year. Those increases have not been matched with pay rises, especially in the lower end of the pay scales, and now we are facing cases of working poor. People come into my office on a regular basis these days seeking assistance to pay their bills, such as electricity and water. Yet, the government’s only way out is to sell the farm, privatising assets to reduce state debt. But that will not reduce costs for the average householder—let us be honest about that! It is only to get rid of the debt that the government has run up since it came to office. The debt was \$3.6 billion in 2008, and will blow out to nearly \$25 billion by 2014–15. In 2017–18, debt is expected to be \$29 billion—a huge increase. Although we understand that to keep up with growth at times we do have to borrow some money; we must be responsible, but this government certainly is not responsible. The government has gone out and said, “We’ll have this, regardless of the cost, and we’ll just slug the average person in the street. We’ll just go out there and lift the taxes.”

Every tax increase means another person will slide down the drain. People come into my office, talking about selling their houses to see whether they can get on to the Department of Housing waiting list, because they can no longer afford to be in their house. The government has moved the goalposts, and it will move these people out of their own homes into state housing. I believe that is why we have got a great big waiting list at the moment. It is quite obvious that the numbers on the waiting list have increased, due to not only immigration and people coming into the state, but also people selling their houses because they cannot afford to live in them any longer. Other people have been penalised by not being able to buy houses, because the goalposts have been moved again. The Premier today spoke about \$13 000 stamp duty for the purchase of a \$500 000 house not being much in the scheme of things—by gee! If we put it back to relativity, it was \$3 000 in my day, which was a lot. The amount of \$13 000 today is still a lot! It does not matter; it can be the breaking point of whether a person buys a home or not. We need to be realistic about the distance people have to travel to where they work. Not everyone can travel in to work from 60, 70 or maybe 100 kilometres out to the city where his or her job is. That limits a person’s ability to buy a house in the inner city area, and to travel to work on time and without a great deal of cost.

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Some of the problems I see in the budget are the choices the Premier has made on such things as Elizabeth Quay. If we asked people, I reckon about 75 per cent of people would question why the government did that first? Why did the government not can that project and look after the education budget, instead of having a cutback in education, which indirectly pays for Elizabeth Quay. It does not make sense. It does not matter which world we live in in political circles; it is about getting our priorities right. I believe that making cuts in education is certainly not getting our priorities right.

We heard today that royalties for regions has been one of the biggest con jobs that country people have experienced for many years. Country people welcome any money that comes into country areas, and I am sure my colleagues in the Pilbara and the Kimberley also welcome that money coming in. However, the government should not be deceptive about what it is doing with that money and how much money is coming in. We found out in recent times that royalties for regions never expended the \$1 billion a year it was allocated, although that is what we were told many times in this place. The other thing that is of concern because of the loss of our AAA credit rating is that we do not have a plan to fix it. We have a plan to retire some debt, but no plan that I have heard about in this house says that in five or seven years' time, we will have our AAA credit rating returned. I believe that is poor management and it needs to be addressed immediately. If a person does not have a plan, whether he or she is building a house or whether a government is doing a budget, there is no chance of having a good, finished product. That is what we need in this house.

We need honesty because people out in the general community are saying that it is not only Julia Gillard who may have told a few porkies, but also the Abbott and Barnett governments. It has gone right through all governments and it is impacting on members in this house to do their jobs because people do not believe us anymore. People say, "You're a politician, why would we believe you? I'd rather believe the taxidriver who gives me a good tip on the way to the races, and I know that they've just made it up on the way to keep me happy!" We need to get integrity back into this house. This government has not got it, and we need it. I honestly think that the only way for the Liberal Party to have any chance at the next election and to get some integrity back is to change its leader! He has been proven to be deceptive and arrogant, and that is where the problem lies. If the backbench of the Liberal Party does not revolt very shortly, I can guarantee eight or nine people will not be here after the next election. I will take money on that.

Mr J.E. McGrath interjected.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I will put a shilling or two on that with the member for South Perth! We should have a bet! I know some seven or nine people will not be here. I am not saying that the Labor Party will win, but between seven and nine government members will not be in this house who are here now, and it will not be through retirements; they will be gone.

Several members interjected.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I did not say we were going to win. I am saying that is how many people will be gone off that back bench. Members opposite have a lot of work to do in their caucus!

Let us look at broken promises. The first is about the increase in electricity, which was one of the lead stories in the Liberal Party's campaign. It promised to keep any increases to the inflation rate. I understand the inflation rate is 2.7 per cent. We now will be slugged a further 4.5 per cent for electricity. Water charges will increase by six per; public transport fares, four per cent; school bus fares, 20 per cent; and vehicle registration, three per cent. What about buses in our area? The government said, "No, you don't get them". The government took them off us; it pork-barrelled the *AvonLink*. It took our buses away to save money so that the National Party would look after its heartland. The *AvonLink* is running at a huge loss, but the subsidies are there, and I will go into that a bit later. Money for the south west is now being used to keep the *AvonLink* going.

People in our electorates are asking for help to pay their bills, and I am sure everyone in this room will have experienced this, but I have noticed that this year has been the worst ever. Everyday someone comes through the door looking for help one way or another. Of course, we do not have anything to give them as such, but we send them off to financial planning. We put them on to forward pay plans so that they do not get caught with a bill that comes along. People cannot pay their school fees any more. People are even struggling to pay for their kids' year 7 leavers school jackets; I think that is just appalling. The government cannot just keep raising taxes, because it is not equitable and will not help over the long term. We will have more people out of work.

As I have said previously, I am sure many of the backbenchers in the Liberal Party are already scanning the back pages of *The West Australian* looking for jobs because they know their time will be up if things do not change very quickly. The misdemeanours and the arrogance of the Premier in this house alone are beyond belief. Only one person has matched him today and that was the National Party's Acting Speaker, who was very rude to people in the gallery today. Again, it does not help. We have to remember that 12 months ago the former

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Treasurer was clapped for delivering the budget. When he presented his budget, everyone got up and clapped. In his caucus room just recently, he was also clapped. What was he clapped for? He was clapped for hooning and crashing his car—a car that was given to him by the government. He was out there crashing cars that belonged to the government, through our taxpayers, yet he was applauded. Not only that, he crashed into four other cars and then missed the gate! What a disgrace. Members have to remember that this same person would have formulated half the budget. There is no way that the new Treasurer has had time to adjust to the whole budgetary process. This person that I now regard as the village idiot was out formulating a budget. It has been picked up. How can we have confidence in that budget? I certainly do not. Remember, it is the same person—the village idiot—who members used to laugh with in here. Now he has to remember that people are laughing at him. He had plenty of fun when my misdemeanours were brought up in this house so I have no sorrow for him whatsoever. Not so long ago, “the pickled poacher from Collie” was one of the calls. I am just calling him the opposite—he is the village idiot. He is the one who is being laughed at but he still has the gall to come into this house. There is a difference between me and him—the difference is that I learnt from my mistakes. I did not make anywhere near as many as the former Treasurer. He has shown great mirth over many years in having a crack at me. There is the old saying, “If you wait, what goes around comes around”, but I would not have the audacity or the gall to come in here. If I was in the party room I would not have had the audacity to applaud him. In fact in my party room, they wanted me to go, but I stood my ground. My misdemeanour resulted in a \$100 fine and no loss of points for a 0.05 drinking offence, and I apologised. I actually paid a fine in my electorate towards road safety. The former Treasurer has not even done that. He has not admitted that he was wrong. Until he admits that he was wrong, until he admits that he was drink-driving on that night, no respect comes from this area here; none whatsoever. By gee, if ever he opens his mouth I will certainly have another crack at him.

What can I say about the budget? Looking at this budget, one has to ask whether the first half of the budget was done by a person who was stable. I do not think it was because of what happened. No matter who the Treasurer was at that time, in a very few weeks how can a year’s budget work be done in one hit? I do not see how. I see a new figurehead. I see a person who has picked up the reins. I feel sorry for the current Treasurer having to pick that up and cop the flak, because he has not had the time to adjust to pull the reins in. He has not had time to tell the Premier that he should pull his head in or tell different departments how to save money. He has not had that time but he is copping the flak. That is all because of the village idiot who was in the job before.

Mr M.H. Taylor: You have no idea of the process. The now Treasurer is on the ERC.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: But worse than that —

Mr M.H. Taylor: You have no idea about budget processes.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: You’ve been here five minutes. You have no idea about integrity; that is your problem!

But worse than that, the Premier will not rule out the member for Vasse coming back onto the front bench. That says it all. I would have had a lot more respect for the Premier if he had stood and said, “He will never be on my front bench.” But the Premier has gone out and backed this man, and so have his colleagues, like the one behind me, who applauded him in the caucus room.

Mr M.H. Taylor: You are right; I applauded him.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: A fool being applauded. Always remember the real point is that the man is now being treated as a fool. He is being laughed at, not with. There is a very big difference.

I will now talk about royalties for regions. We heard today from the new Leader of the National Party. Now I understand—I could never understand why the former leader left. He knew that along the way he would be exposed. He gave the biggest handball ever in the history of the National Party. He gave that handball out, and guess who took it? The new leader, Hon Terry Redman. He is copping a whack because he got the hospital pass. There is deception there. It was proven today that royalties for regions is not all it has been cracked up to be. We know that it was capped—that is fine; I do not have a problem with that—but it never reached that cap. It has never got there. That is very different from what the National Party told us. The way it has been used is very similar to the decision-making process that the Premier uses—the wrong process. We have to focus the money into areas of most need; not singing toilets, not plastic cows, but real infrastructure. We need infrastructure that creates jobs and infrastructure that helps the people who need help. That is the sort of stuff we need. This is one of the major problems. I support royalties for regions, if used properly; it has not been used properly.

I will tell members what has happened in my area. Over the last couple of years funds have been withdrawn from my electorate for the Donnybrook–Bridgetown road, \$10 million; the Greenbushes–Bunbury rail line,

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\$20 million; and the desalination plant in east Collie, \$35 million—a plant, that was to get fresh water into Wellington Dam. Not only was that \$35 million withdrawn, \$7 million had to be sent back to the federal government. Also, \$6 million was taken out of the coal future fund. That is a total of \$71 million. The National Party told me I should be happy about SuperTowns and it has given us \$5 million. Take \$75 million out and give \$5 million back! That is just beyond belief. I am supposed to sit here quietly and say I am happy to get the money when it was taken out. Twenty-five per cent of royalties to country areas is the biggest furphy; we really do know that.

Let us look at the Leader of the National Party. I went through the Auditor General's report. The Leader of the National Party has been criticised in nearly every area that he has worked—Minister for Training and Workforce Development; Forestry; Regional Development; State Development.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M.P. MURRAY: When he had the water portfolio, the water loss in 2013 was 10 billion litres above the Water Corporation's benchmark. That is costly and indefensible. We have seen pipes blow up all around town. Water leakage accounted for losses of between \$7 billion and \$8 billion. In country areas, the rate of leaks and bursts is worse than the rates in the metro area. The number of burst pipes rose from 20 to 21 per 100 kilometres, to 13 in the metro area. That is 21 burst pipes in 100 kilometres against 13 in the metro area. The Auditor General says in his report that this gap is expected to grow over the next few years. WA's water loss is high compared to that in other states. The amount of \$43 million was lost in 2012–13, including 13 billion litres that was unbilled. I repeat: 13 billion litres was unbilled. No wonder our prices are going up. The pipe replacement program has information supply problems. The age of some pipes is not known. Leakage and burst pipe information is not being effectively gathered. All this occurred under the former Minister for Water, the now Leader of the National Party.

On the Department of Agriculture and Food, the Leader of the National Party went in and sliced the heads off the leading people there and put five new management positions in, at a huge cost. Although WA is relatively free of pests and plant diseases, in recent times the department has dropped the ball. In my area in the south, cotton bush has absolutely gone rampant. Now I see it is the same in the Harvey area in the Murray–Wellington district. We do not have any checks and balances. We do not have people out there to say, "Fix the problem, otherwise you'll be fined." The department conceded it will just let it go. But no, "We better show something", so it put out \$600 000 for weed control, which the whole state can apply for. What a joke. It means it will be handballed over to local government authorities. I can tell members now that is hurting. It is hurting production because people have to spray, it takes times, and it ruins farms. That is only cotton bush, without all the other plants that have been growing and causing problems in that area.

I will move on to our former Minister for Forestry—again, the Leader of the National Party—and the supply and sale of Western Australia's native forest products. The operational harvest planning guidelines that the department started developing in 2008 have still not been finalised. This was in 2008 when the Leader of the National Party was the minister. No wonder he moves on, because it is slowly catching up with him. He is doing circle work. He is going to come back and find out that he is back where he started. Contract monitoring and compliance with contracts were failing, and there were no monitoring systems to ensure performance and compliance. There were breaches of environmental standards and a failure to optimise forest resources, placing forests under pressure. In the Forest Products Commission, there was a decline in competitive sales and no transparency in transactions. The industry was worth about \$40 million in 2011–12. Sixty per cent was sold under private treaty. There were secret deals, and the public was sceptical about whether the best price was obtained. There were also unfair allocations in the marketplace. All this was happening in the Forest Products Commission. The customer compliance and grievance system failed. Generally, all administrative systems were poor, as were record keeping, delivery schedules and contract management. The opinion of the Auditor General was that a decision by the Minister for Forestry not to provide information to Parliament was not reasonable and, therefore, was not appropriate. That was a finding by the Auditor General. These are the people who are leading the National Party today.

Because of the time, I will have to jump over a couple of issues. There were problems in training and workforce development. The audit report showed that there were management issues, financial control weaknesses and information technology problems. There were low liquidity levels at TAFEs and operating deficits. The Auditor General said that the financial performance needed to be closely monitored. That is part of another Auditor General's report—again while the Leader of the National Party was the responsible minister.

I will deal with audit reports on the Barnett government in general. Over the last three years, there has been a significant increase in demand for the patient assisted travel scheme. We heard that mentioned today in a speech

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by one of the members on the other side. I know that in some cases PATS is welcome, but the management of it is in absolute disarray. People who are eligible for PATS live 100 yards down the street from someone who cannot get it. That is because of the way in which the applications were processed. The system has been changed so that the doctors do not have as much say as they used to. However, the system is still failing, and many complaints are still coming through. But I do say that PATS is welcome in some cases. I think we have to look at the people who want to water their lawns. They go up to Exmouth, and then get on a plane to go down south to have a heart check-up. They water their lawns and then go back again. They are the sorts of people who are roting the system and taking money away from true country people. We must make sure that the patient assisted travel scheme is looked after, because the cost of it is blowing out, it is costly, and people are still missing out—that is, genuine country people, not people who are just on holidays.

I will deal with the rail freight network. The condition of the rail gauge lines that are used to carry grain—we heard some debate about that again today—has fallen away. From what I have seen, when these lines are leased, and the leases are not put in place properly, there is no maintenance and the lines are run down. This was Wesfarmers at its worst. It ran down the Greenbushes–Bunbury railway line—down, down—and then said, “Now we want \$8 million from the state government to fix it.” The government said, “But it’s your line. You’ve leased it”, and Wesfarmers said, “No, no, no. Okay; we’ll shut it down.” The trucks then went back onto the roads. This is what is happening in country areas. More trucks are on the roads because the government is leasing stuff out. The so-called “wonderland” privatising is not happening. The lines are being left. At the end of the lease, the taxpayer will have to pick up the shortfall. We know that there is a failure in that area. If the government is hell-bent on going down the road of privatisation, we must be careful that there is no comeback.

Have a look at nib Stadium and what a mess that was. It got \$8 million not to work. I have been looking for one of those contracts all my life—I cannot find one—whereby I can sign a contract and then say, “I don’t want to do that anymore. Give me the cheque.” I think my kids think I am on that sort of contract! They just say, “I don’t want to work, dad. Give us some money.” That is what happened at nib Stadium. That amount of \$8 million could have been put into sport and provided many, many things that are needed all over the state. When we look at that, we say, “What is this government doing? Is it asleep at the wheel? Is it looking at and auditing what it is doing, or are they thought bubbles that just go out—bang?” The government may say that it will do something, and later it finds out that the devil is in the detail, which costs it.

I will move on to my electorate. I have not got there yet and I had better be quick. The “fully costed, fully funded” logo appeared on all of the government’s advertising before the election. A huge amount of money was thrown around in advertising—in fact, until people just had enough, and probably too much, of it. One of the fully costed, fully funded promises was to provide \$7.5 million to upgrade Collie Senior High School. The principal was out there with his arm around the candidate. He was very happy to have his photo taken. I have not seen him since, because it is not in the budget; it is not there. I know his political alliance, and I do not mind him standing out there, but what I do disagree with is making false promises and not budgeting for that. I will watch that every year, and if the funding comes up in the next budget or the one after, I will applaud that, as I applaud the \$3 million that is going to the Eaton Boomers Football Club clubrooms and facilities for the general public in Eaton. I applaud that because the government honoured my election promise. I was first; the government came along second. I will take the money, and I am going to take the glory too because no-one got off their bum before the election to work it out. The government copied it. Why should it get the acknowledgement for that? It is great to have a person from the National Party ring me and say, “Thanks for getting that up because we now have football clubrooms.” I think it works a bit more like that in the country than in other areas. People will come out and say thank you. However, I did not like seeing him handing out the National Party how-to-vote cards. That was not very nice; I felt like belting him, but that is another story.

Money is missing for the Millbridge–Trendale crossover. There is a very small amount of money in the budget, and the crossover is supposed to be finished by 2016. I know the planning work has been done and there is a small amount of money for that, but we need to get a move on, otherwise that will not happen.

I spat the dummy the other day about Coalfields highway, but let us remember—I have it right here—that in 2008 there was a photograph of Colin Barnett standing with Steve Thomas. The Premier said that the Liberal Party would fix Coalfields highway. He promised \$20 million in 2008. In 2013, there was a photograph of Colin Barnett standing with the Liberal candidate, Jaimee Motion, and he made the same promise. The man thinks everyone in Collie is a fool. He went down there and was so embarrassed about being there that if he could have found a loose slab on the footpath, he would have hidden underneath it, but he could not do that. Again the Premier said, “You’re getting your money for Coalfields highway.” I wonder whether I can get three—three acres in the pack would not be too bad. I have been trying for that for a long time and have not got those either. I would like to table those papers so that everyone can say that I am not gilding the lily. I seek leave to table those papers for the rest of the day.

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[The paper was tabled for the information of members.]

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Let us look at what has happened recently. There was another disaster on Coalfields highway in exactly the same place and in the same situation as previously. A truck went on to the bridge, and the trailer detached and wiped out three cars and killed one person. That happened about five years previously. It is extremely disappointing that the work that has been done has not necessarily been in the most dangerous places. We have been waiting for ages for an excision of the national park down there. Again, I believe that the village idiot would not bring it in because he was playing politics, and that has cost lives down that way. Why did Main Roads make those decisions not to do work on those places? Today we heard from the Minister for Police about black spots and road funding. Why was work not done on the areas where the crosses were? Why was the problem not fixed? I do not understand that one bit and I will be seeking answers further down the line. On 1 April 2014, Dutton and Hames made a joint announcement to say that there would be \$6 million for pathology labs at the Bunbury, Narrogin and Collie hospitals. Guess what? That work had been done two years previously. People from Collie Hospital came running down to ask me, “What in the hell’s going on? Has there been a mistake?” No, there was no mistake; it had been done two years previously. This is government deception at its worst.

MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth — Parliamentary Secretary) [4.01 pm]: I will not speak for long, but I would like to begin my budget reply speech by acknowledging the state government’s contribution to a very important project in the electorate of South Perth: the replacement of the 50-year-old river walls on the foreshore at Mends Street, which are in a dreadful state of disrepair, as I have mentioned in this place a few times. I was delighted this week when the Minister for Environment, Minister Jacob, came down to South Perth to announce a further payment of \$500 000 from the state government towards the cost of renovating that section of river wall. The government provided \$500 000 last year and \$500 000 this week. The government made an election promise in 2013 that, if it won government, there would be \$1.35 million put towards those river walls, so there is \$350 000 to go and I am very hopeful that we will get that in next year’s budget.

I should point out that the City of South Perth has also put forward \$2 million of ratepayers’ money to complete this project, so the people of South Perth are also contributing to it. This is an area to which people from all over the metropolitan area and tourists come to recreate on the strip of foreshore along James Mitchell Park and in and around Mends Street, where passengers embark on and disembark from the Mends Street ferry. We think it is an important area to complement what is going to happen at Elizabeth Quay. It is not a very pretty sight for tourists visiting Perth when they get off the ferry and see a safety fence that has been erected by the South Perth council because of the state of disrepair of the river walls, but that is now going to be fixed, so that is great news and I really thank the minister for coming down.

Another issue is one that I have been raising in this place since I was elected in 2005, and that is the need for an on-ramp to Kwinana Freeway south from Manning Road. This is an old chestnut, but I first raised the issue with the former Minister for Planning and Infrastructure under the Gallop and Carpenter governments, Hon Alannah MacTiernan. At the time I first raised it, the costing of the project was \$10 million. In the first term of the current Liberal–National government, the former Treasurer and Minister for Transport started some preliminary work on it, and I think the latest costings are between \$30 million and \$35 million, which goes to show that the longer we delay doing projects, the more they end up costing. But this is very important because, with the opening of the Fiona Stanley Hospital, there is going to be a lot more traffic coming down Manning Road, with people wanting to head south on Kwinana Freeway. Currently, if they want to get onto the freeway at the end of Manning Road, they have to turn right, go along to Canning Bridge, go through two sets of lights, do a complete U-turn and then come back again to head south. That is not good traffic planning or good traffic management. I have spoken to the new Minister for Transport and I am happy to say that, because his electorate is on the other side of the river from mine, he fully understands this situation. I will be telling my electorate that I have not given up hope—I know there are a lot of transport issues out there—that this will happen.

I want to talk about another issue that has become prominent in the news since the budget was announced, and that is the privatisation of the TAB. A lot has been said since the Treasurer flagged the possible privatisation of the TAB in his budget address speech. As most members would know, since I was elected to this place in 2005, I have been a fairly consistent advocate of the racing industry, and I get a lot of calls from people in the racing industry when they have concerns or they think something should be done to support what we all know is a very important industry in Western Australia. I have had a number of calls from concerned stakeholders in the industry about privatisation and my advice to them has been: do not be spooked by misinformation. Yes, the Treasurer and the Premier have confirmed that privatisation of the TAB will be considered, but it is too early to start jumping to conclusions about possible impacts on the industry or building up defences against what might happen. Moreover, I believe there could be considerable benefits for the industry coming out of a privatised model.

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Please allow me to make some observations about the pros and cons of privatising our TAB. First, let me say that 10 years ago, I would not have been making this speech. Ten years ago the TAB was performing very well, and I was always a firm believer that the TAB remaining in government hands was a good thing. But since then, there have been some massive changes globally in wagering trends, which threaten the viability of traditional TAB operators. Wagering on sports has grown exponentially, while the racing product has struggled to maintain its market share. Giant betting agencies from overseas have invested heavily in the Australian market, offering all kinds of incentives to internet customers. Corporate bookmakers operating in the Northern Territory are doing the same, thanks to the low taxes they pay to the Northern Territory government. Last, but by no means least, there has also been the exponential growth in fixed-odds betting compared with the traditional parimutuel. The traditional parimutuel was always the lifeblood of racing, but now the punters are moving towards the fixed-odds model. Traditional totes have always been the providers of parimutuel. All of these factors have had an impact on reducing the value of the TAB, which is a government-owned asset. The government's concern—and I share that concern—is that, unless some action is taken, the asset will continue to be devalued.

The question the industry has to ask is: can our state-owned tote continue to compete with these major wagering conglomerates? Richard Burt, the chief executive officer of Racing and Wagering Western Australia, and his team have done a great job under the circumstances to provide about \$120 million a year in industry funding for prize money; but as it is a state-owned asset, I think the government has a responsibility to assess the viability of the TAB. In a broader sense, it probably also needs to look at whether a government should be in the business of running a gambling agency.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Last week I attended the Asian Racing Conference in Hong Kong with my very good friend the interjecting member for Collie–Preston. The message we got from every attending nation was the same: tote turnover is on the decline in the face of both corporate and offshore illegal bookmakers. Another theme was that racetrack crowds are also on the decline, and that racetrack infrastructure must be upgraded if the industry is to attract a new audience to its race meetings. The Hong Kong Jockey Club, an amazing club with massive turnover, identified these problems about six years ago and embarked on a campaign to attract new punters and racegoers. It has spent \$3.5 billion in, I think, Hong Kong dollars—I will stand corrected by the member for Collie–Preston—on doing up facilities at the Sha Tin and Happy Valley Racecourses. It did that because it wanted to attract a new demographic to race meetings.

I understand that we cannot compare the economies of scale in Hong Kong with those in Western Australia, but the challenges are still the same: the facilities at our two city tracks, Ascot and Belmont Park Racecourses, are old and tired, and badly in need of upgrading. Stake money alone will not improve crowd attendance. The recent crowd for Derby Day, when we had a \$400 000 race and a \$200 000 race—that is \$600 000 in prize money for two races—was one of the most disappointing Derby Day crowds I have ever seen. I am told that the crowd for opening day at Belmont Park Racecourse a couple of weeks ago was down 20 per cent on last year. The people at Perth Racing are scratching their head over where the racegoers have gone.

Across the road from Belmont Park—I have been involved in this project as a parliamentary secretary to the Premier—the state government is about to construct a state-of-the-art sports stadium. This stadium will have everything that opens and shuts for football and sports fans or concertgoers. In this modern day and age, we need to provide first-class facilities when people pay good dollars to go to sporting and entertainment events. They want comfort, and we have to provide that. Racing needs to provide its customers with similar levels of comfort. That is another challenge for our industry.

It concerns me that in recent times there has been a lot of misinformation and misapprehension in the racing industry when it comes to privatisation of the TAB. As I said before, my phone has been running hot with people making comments—I understand why people are asking these questions—such as: if the government sells off the TAB, where will the funding for racing come from? If a public company has to pay a dividend to its shareholders, surely it will not be able to provide the same revenue for the racing industry as Racing and Wagering Western Australia does at the moment. How do we know that the industry will get anything out of the proceeds of the sale? What about failed privatisations in South Australia, Tasmania and, to some extent, Queensland?

My advice to the industry is that the future funding of racing will never be under threat. The written contract between the government and a successful bidder for the TAB, if that happens, would include a guarantee of ongoing funding to the racing industry. That is how these contracts work. I would like to point out that in Victoria, Tabcorp is locked into a licence agreement with the state government to pay a percentage of every dollar of revenue it turns over on wagering. It also has a joint venture arrangement with the racing industry, which requires it to pay 50 per cent of its profits back to the industry. There are other fixed amounts that go into the industry. These arrangements are all set in place. People say to me that privatisation has not worked in

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New South Wales and Victoria. Last year my good friend the member for Collie–Preston and I were informed in Hong Kong that Tabcorp returned a combined \$657 million to the Victorian and New South Wales racing industries. On top of that, it paid \$225 million in state taxes. Admittedly, privatisation has not worked as well in South Australia and Tasmania and, as I said before, to some extent, Queensland. Those agreements were badly set up. If it heads down this path, the state government needs to take time to set up the right structure for Western Australia. I have great confidence that the government would never enter into any hasty sell-off without proper due diligence.

In closing, I believe that if these things happen, Western Australians will still be able to enjoy the benefits of privatisation while at the same time having a well-funded racing industry.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [4.15 pm]: I rise to speak to the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2014–15 Bill 2014 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2014–15 Bill 2014. First, I want to focus on one of the key issues for my electorate; that is, education and the quality of the school infrastructure in the Gosnells electorate. I have two excellent high schools in my electorate—Thornlie Senior High School and Southern River College. Both schools are fortunate enough to have the most dedicated of staff—teaching staff and non-teaching staff—students who have all kinds of abilities and aspirations, and growing school enrolments. I was particularly pleased when we went to the last state election in 2013 promising upgrades for the schools; in fact, we promised a \$30 million upgrade for Thornlie Senior High School. Then I noted that the Liberal Party put out “The Liberals’ Education Policy”. I suppose I was thinking that if we did not win, there was still something in this for the community because the Liberals made a promise. I have a copy of “The Liberals’ Education Policy”. Page 12 states —

The Liberals are committed to rebuilding our secondary schools in the next term of Government. A key focus will be on redeveloping those secondary schools built before the 1980s to make sure they can provide the best possible learning environments to cater for students’ education and social development needs.

I read that, thinking that even if we do not have a McGowan government following the March 2013 election, there would still be this refurbishment, this promise to redevelop the two secondary schools in my area. Thornlie Senior High School first opened in 1971. Southern River College was opened in 1967. They well and truly predate the 1980s, the date that was nominated in the Liberal Party policy as being the date that a school would become eligible for redevelopment. When I saw the budget, I thought that surely there will be some allocation of funds for the redevelopment of schools in my area. Members can imagine my disappointment—my disbelief, in fact—when I looked at this budget and I saw no mention of funds for Thornlie Senior High School or Southern River College.

I hear the Treasurer talk about other schools such as Willetton Senior High School and many other schools, which I am sure are perfectly deserving of money for refurbishment and investment. Why would the government make a commitment, a promise, to the people to redevelop schools that were built before the 1980s and then not include them in this state budget? They were not in the last state budget. I can understand that the government was still finding its way, getting back into office, but this time around, clearly the commitment was made in the election promises. We have three more years of this term of government, yet we have heard no mention of it honouring that commitment. It is very disappointing.

We could say that the plot thickens. I wrote to the Minister for Education asking about this, advising him of the problem, reminding him of the election commitment and indicating that the school populations, the school communities and the parents and citizens associations were all anxious to know what was going on and what happened to that Barnett government promise about the refurbishments and the upgrades to our schools. We were pretty well fobbed off in correspondence but through the freedom of information process, I was able to get some very important documents that the Department of Education had prepared through consultants that it had commissioned. A consultancy known as Ralph Beattie Bosworth Pty Ltd did a report into Thornlie Senior High School. It found that there should be an initial expenditure of about \$11.8 million for the redevelopment works and a further refurbishment bill of \$3.2 million. I asked the principal of the school whether he was aware of this document, and he was not. I was amazed that an important study into the redevelopment and infrastructure needs of the school had not been communicated to the school principal. That was extremely disappointing.

Through the freedom of information process I also received a similar report by another consultancy—Davson and Ward—on the refurbishment needs of Southern River College. The report contains figures of around \$9.1 million for the audit master planning upgrade, and I think there are some further refurbishment figures; again, it was a major amount. Again, I asked the principal of the school whether she was aware of this document, but, no, it had not been communicated to her. I think there are some big problems when it comes to honouring the commitment made for the redevelopment of high schools, and I think there are some even bigger problems with the communication of information held by the Department of Education to the people on the ground—those

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school principals who are really doing all the work. That is a matter of concern to me, and it is something I looked for in this budget. I was gravely disappointed to see that it is not there.

I move on to the issue of traffic congestion—another area that really concerns people in my electorate and affects many in this place; it is an issue our constituents raise with us frequently. Only a few weeks ago *The West Australian* had a front page photograph depicting a fairly typical scene on Nicholson Road just at the gateway to my electorate. Coming south from Perth, the evening traffic was so congested that people had actually gone onto the bike path and were using it as an extra lane. The level of traffic congestion saw people making an obviously poor driving decision—one that I hope the police will get on to. The extent of the congestion problem is such that people attempt to do that kind of thing. That highlights, yet again, the need for investment in good public transport. Members can only imagine my disappointment, after hearing vague hints at interest in the idea of a Nicholson Road train station and an extension of the Thornlie line through to the Mandurah line, when I saw that there had been no commitment to it at all. Of course, other projects such as MAX light rail have been put off into infinity, yet we hear talk of construction of roads like the Roe Highway stage 8 extension.

The answer to our traffic congestion problems lies far, far more with the construction of good public transport than it does with widening and extending freeways. We only have to look at the recent widening of the Nicholson Road area that I speak of. We only have to look at the sorts of traffic jams we see on the Mitchell and Kwinana Freeways, where, only recently, extra lanes were added. If we build more roads and add more road space, we immediately see an increase in the number of vehicles that use those roads and, consequently, traffic problems.

The issue of investment in public transport is absolutely crucial. I was astounded to hear, only yesterday or the day before, the Treasurer talking about public transport and the subsidy that goes into it. According to the Treasurer, the real cost of a two-zone trip in the metropolitan area is \$13.72. People actually pay \$4.40 out of their pockets to buy a two-zone ticket, or a bit less if they have their SmartRider handy, and then there is a \$9.32 taxpayer subsidy. The crudity with which the Treasurer calculates the extent of that subsidy is really indicative of some very backward economic thinking. Why would the Treasurer not be costing in the real cost of not providing good public transport? Why would he not be looking at things like the cost in terms of the time people spend in traffic jams if more and more cars were added to the road network? If we were to say to these people, “Sorry, you can’t go by public transport; you will drive to your place of work, study or recreation”—wherever—and force people to do that, what would be the cost to society? I think the Treasurer has it completely wrong when he talks about subsidisation of public transport. He does not get it. That shows that we have a problem with some serious backward thinking.

In my view, the purchase of a two-zone SmartRider ticket is actually quite expensive. We have seen dramatic increases in the cost of a ticket. I note that over the seven years of the Barnett government we have seen a 29.7 per cent increase in public transport costs—a dramatic increase. That is out of the pockets of people who are using public transport; they are keen to use it, they want to use it and they want and deserve good quality public transport. I think that level of increase in their costs is unfair, and it leads to perverse outcomes. It leads to people choosing to drive and be a part of the congestion problem; that is not a solution.

I also noted that in the Treasurer’s speech—this is fairly standard; we have seen it with previous Treasurers in this Barnett government—there was a strong reference to the gross state product figures that are reflective of, in the government’s view, how the state is going in economic terms. I think this issue has been raised in the past, but we really do need to look at indicators other than gross state product—gross domestic product—and leading economists around the world are now saying that we need much better, much more precise, more omniscient indicators that can really tell us how our society is progressing. We know, for example, that the state of Vermont in the United States does not use a gross state product indicator or a GDP-type indicator; instead, it uses a “genuine progress indicator”. A visiting professor at the University of New South Wales—the economist Michael Molitor—has talked about the need for this genuine progress indicator, because, as he stated during a lecture —

GDP measures everything and nothing that matters. It counts as positive the costs of automobile accidents, divorce, treating type II diabetes and any other negative welfare event that requires expenditure to correct.

I think the real message there is that GDP is another crude indicator; it is not one that we would expect to see in paragraph 4 of a Treasurer’s speech if he was really looking to express how this state is progressing.

While I am on the issue of some of the thinking of leading economists around the world, I note the work of the economist Thomas Piketty, who has been doing a lot of work on the issue of wealth distribution and the problem of a society that has a small handful of people doing incredibly well while many others really struggle. US Democrats Senator Elizabeth Warren summed up the fairly weighty tomes of Piketty’s work by saying that

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trickle down does not work and never did. That old 1980s thinking of Ronald Reagan and Milton Friedman that we should hope that our economy will prosper simply by waiting for the wealth of the very rich to trickle down is not working. Piketty's research points that out. That is an issue I would be happy to return to at a later date, as we could perhaps learn how Western Australia could develop an economy that does not rely just on the hope of trickle-down results.

In past years I recall Christian Porter as Treasurer telling us somewhat smugly that opposition members' budget reply speeches were poorly researched and contradictory in that we would say on one hand that we wanted more expenditure on some things, while on the other hand the government was blowing out debt. That sort of complaint was an easy shot.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The reality is that the expenditure of the state is a matter of good decision-making. We only have to think about some of the decisions and key projects of the Barnett government to know that some very poor choices have been made. A billion dollars will be spent on a football stadium. I do not know why a far more substantial contribution will not be made by the AFL towards that stadium. Famous football clubs—soccer clubs—around the world invariably build the stadiums; it is not the local taxpayers who have to invest in them. I understand that the AFL is kicking in about \$10 million of the overall budget of a billion dollars for the Burswood stadium. The major beneficiary of that stadium will be the AFL, so that seems extremely odd to me.

I want to turn to an issue relating to my portfolio. The Minister for Environment normally does me the honour of coming into the chamber for my budget reply speech, but he obviously has been detained somewhere today. We have debated through the media the issue of an offset fund, and it was discussed during question time last week as well. I want to make it very plain to the chamber that the minister and his predecessor, the now Minister for Mines and Petroleum, have signed off on some very important documents; that is, ministerial approval statements for various resource projects in the Pilbara. One of the key things to which the companies have agreed and to which the Minister for Environment has put his signature is the payment of funds into an offset fund. There is no denying that. I have copies of all the ministerial approval statements in question. I am looking at one for the Cloudbreak project entitled "Cloudbreak life of mine, Pilbara", which is statement 899. The environmental assessment process for this project revealed that a substantial area of the Fortescue marshes in the Pilbara would be definitively destroyed through the progress of that mine. No-one denies that. The government negotiated with Fortescue Metals Group that for some vegetation types, and the mulga vegetation type in particular, an amount of \$3 000 per hectare would be paid into this offset fund. The minister and the company signed off on that, so why is it not happening? Why has that money not been paid? I note elsewhere in my portfolio and in the state budget that the government is doing all kinds of things to extract money from my constituents and from constituents across the state, but here we have an extraordinary situation in which the minister and the company agreed that a certain amount would be paid but the government is incapable of receiving that money. I have done some calculations on how much money is involved. My best calculation is that it is about \$45 million at the moment, based on the nine approvals in question. These are just the approvals in the Pilbara. That \$45 million could have been in the state's coffers and applied to a strategic conservation fund in the Pilbara, which would then perhaps have enabled environment funding from consolidated revenue to be applied elsewhere and enabled other things to happen. But the minister has been incapable of setting up this fund to receive the money. I do not understand why that is. The minister accuses me of mixing things up and not understanding things, but it is as clear as day that this money is owed to the state. Actually, what has happened with Cloudbreak is that the minister has said that the government cannot take the money from the company yet, so it will give it an extension. In response to a question on notice, the minister also added some doubt about the progress of the whole concept of an offset fund for the Pilbara strategic conservation initiative. In answer to question on notice 1843, the minister said —

As yet, a strategic conservation fund has not been established and no funds have been provided by proponents pending further consideration by Government of the appropriateness of such a fund.

There it is. The minister has suddenly said that he is not sure whether it is appropriate to create this fund, yet he signed off that there would be a fund. The fact is that these ministerial approval statements come at the end of a lengthy community consultation process known as an environmental impact assessment, from which people make a decision about whether to exercise their right to appeal a particular project. They make that decision based on the commitments that a company might have made. It is quite possible that someone looked at the Cloudbreak project and thought it was terrible that we might lose thousands of hectares of the Fortescue marshes, but then saw that the minister and the company were prepared to commit to paying \$3 000 per hectare to an offset fund. They might have thought that that was not such a bad thing, so they could accept that the project would go ahead and that the best outcome would be achieved—that is, there would be the benefits of the Cloudbreak mine and of money being received into the offset fund. The total, I think, from Cloudbreak was to be

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\$14.5 million. People might have thought that, overall, that was the best outcome, yet now, at the end of it all, the minister, not the company, is backing away from receiving that money. As I said, it is not just happening with Cloudbreak; there are a number of other projects as well. My best calculation is that about \$45 million is owed to the state at the moment. Why are we not receiving that money? We know we have problems gaining enough revenue to provide all the services that we want to provide in this state, so why would the government turn up its nose at \$45 million and at the same time do something like increase the landfill levy? We know that the doubling of the landfill levy will be passed on to our constituents and will hurt their household budgets, because they will be paying more with their rate bills. That is just one example. I acknowledge the Minister for Environment has come into the chamber. Unfortunately he has missed my discussion of the importance of that offset fund, but I am sure he will be able to read it in *Hansard*. Perhaps at another time the minister can explain fully why the government is incapable of establishing that fund when he has signed off with the companies so that the offset fund will be established. Not receiving that money when we have such difficult financial circumstances in terms of revenue streams, I just do not understand the minister turning up his nose at receiving that money.

I move on to the environment issue of climate change. I note the Minister for Environment's interest in national parks and the conservation estate, and I applaud him for that. I was disappointed when I saw that the minister had been to the Kalbarri National Park, where the park officers pointed out to him the serious problem of vegetation loss, which is also in their report. There are a number of factors that cause vegetation loss. Declining annual rainfall and drought is the initial observation, but what is causing that? There is now so much evidence that vegetation stress in Western Australia is related to climate change, yet the minister's response to this situation is that we need to do more monitoring and research. The discussion about the consequences of a drying climate induced by climate change for Western Australia has gone on for so long, and I think rather than calling for more monitoring of declining vegetation in places like Kalbarri National Park, the minister should be doing everything to ensure that we have the most effective and cost-effective greenhouse gas emissions reduction scheme in place. I am sure I will come back to this at a later date.

I am concerned about the decline in staff numbers in key areas of the Department of Parks and Wildlife. I see that the department is losing key staff in wildlife management—there were 811 people working on important species recovery programs; there are now 780. That is an issue we can return to through the estimates process. Sticking with the issue of climate change, I hope the minister has seen the latest reporting on it. An article in the latest issue of *New Scientist* drawn from the journal *Nature Climate Change* talks about the Antarctic wind vortex, which has perhaps masked to some extent the impacts of climate on the Antarctic. It also relates directly to Western Australia, because the Antarctic wind vortex—winds blowing around faster in the Antarctic—directly impacts rainfall in the south west of Western Australia. Rainfall patterns are dragged away from the south west of Western Australia. That report was in *New Scientist* on 11 May. The journal reference is *Nature Climate Change*. I understand the minister has lost staff in the climate change area. There is a division called “Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change” in the budget papers, which has gone from 75 people down to 65. We can look at that in more detail during estimates, but it is an area of great concern. If the minister is unable to keep up with these reports, he needs staff who can give him advice on what the reports are saying and how he should respond.

There is much work to be done in the environment area, and through the budget estimates process I will talk about many other issues.

MS E. EVANGEL (Perth) [4.45 pm]: Mr Acting Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to respond to the government's budget in the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2014–15 Bill 2014 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2014–15 Bill 2014, and in doing so I will take the opportunity to highlight some of the projects and events in my electorate and the state of Western Australian.

The capital city electorate that I represent in this place is undergoing a once-in-a-lifetime transformation under the leadership of our Premier and this Liberal–National government.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton): Member for Girrawheen, if you are trying to whisper, you are not doing a very good job. If you want to have a conversation, take it outside the chamber, thank you.

MS E. EVANGEL: As the member for Perth—the capital city electorate—I attend many events and functions in the electorate and speak to many community and business leaders. I represented the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, Hon Dr Mike Nahan, at a function last Saturday night. I acknowledge the newly founded Australia China Youth Business Association led by Mr Joe Zhang and his committee. At the function, I chatted to a young investor who had spent the previous three months scanning the country for significant investment opportunities. He shared with me the observation, which I found interesting but not surprising, that in his eyes

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the Perth central business district is an area of choice for investment, because our city is on the move; opportunities are ripe and the atmosphere is dynamic. I wholeheartedly agree with my friend's views.

I have sat in this place for over a year and can confidently say that I spend most of my time in the chamber listening to the goings on. I am sure that my colleague the member for Churchlands will vouch for me on that one. There have been times when I have felt very inspired by conversations in this place, but unfortunately there have been other times when I have felt very down. Funnily enough, on analysing my mood swings, I have found that inspiration comes from this side of the house and the doom and gloom from members opposite. If I and every other Western Australian in this place were to believe all the doom and gloom spread by members opposite, I am sure that I would not be standing here today; I would have packed my family and moved to another state long ago. In reality it is a different story; Western Australians interestingly enough are not fleeing this great state. The opposite is happening; Western Australia is the fastest growing state in this nation. To the end of June 2013, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that the WA population is just over 2.5 million. That is a 3.3 per cent increase on the previous year, and well above the national growth rate, which is 1.8 per cent. Interestingly, the Australian Capital Territory's growth was next at 2.2 per cent, then Victoria and New South Wales at 1.9 per cent and 1.4 per cent respectively. As much as members opposite hate to hear it, the proof of the pudding is in the eating and under the leadership of this Liberal–National government, Western Australia continues to be Australia's strongest performing —

Point of Order

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am having trouble hearing the excellent speech of the member for Perth over the conversation on my left.

Debate Resumed

Ms E. EVANGEL: I appreciate that because I was actually struggling to hear myself too.

As much as members opposite hate to hear it, the Western Australian economy is performing well and is the fastest growing economy in the country. Constant population growth, which equated to around 1 500 people a week last year, requires critical infrastructure provisions, and this Liberal–National government has invested heavily in infrastructure renewal in the areas of health, education, sport, recreation, and the creative industries.

We have heard members on this side such as the Acting Speaker, the Member for Forrestfield, speak of education and health investment. This government holds its head up high when it comes to health and education. In education there is an additional \$188 million next year, which is an increase of 4.3 per cent on the 2013–14 state budget total and brings it to a total of \$4.58 billion. The average spend for each student is \$15 828, an increase of \$150, or one per cent, on 2013–14 figures. That is an extra 550 teachers a year and \$1.16 billion to 2017–18 for new schools and school upgrades and 16 new child and parent centres at a cost of \$22 million. This is a strong commitment from the Liberal–National government to education in this state.

I have six wonderful primary schools in my electorate. There are four state schools: Mount Hawthorn, North Perth, Kyilla and Highgate Primary Schools; and two private schools: Sacred Heart Primary School and Aranmore Catholic Primary. All of these schools have exceptional principals, teachers, parents and students. Aside from the overall budget commitments to education, I advise that in my electorate \$1.2 million was committed to Mount Hawthorn Primary School to fund an undercover area and resurfacing of bitumen on the playing fields. This project is on track and on time. It is terribly exciting for the Mt Hawthorn community that this initiative is being funded and delivered as per the Liberal Party's election promise.

As part of this Liberal–National government's road and safety community grants program, I am pleased to say that Mt Hawthorn received a grant of \$6 080 a few months ago. This will go towards addressing some of the speed issues around Mount Hawthorn Primary School. Two radar signs will be placed on poles on a semipermanent basis on Scarborough Beach Road between Dover and Killarney Streets. In addition, 200 bin stickers will be purchased and given to residents to place on their bins on all travel routes that lead towards Mount Hawthorn Primary School. This is a great achievement towards ensuring the safety of students.

Outside North Perth Primary School, I am pleased to advise that we have seen the installation of flashing 40-kilometre-an-hour speed signs on View Street and the fast-tracked installation of wigwag signs on Charles Street, which is another very busy street. Students from North Perth Primary School need to cross Charles Street to get to school. It is also good to see that flashing 40-kilometre-an-hour speed signs will be installed outside Highgate Primary School later this year. I am sure that community is anticipating that as well.

I would like to highlight some of the key infrastructure developments in the Perth electorate that are transforming our capital city into a city of international significance. At this point I would like to acknowledge our Premier, along with the Minister for Planning, Hon John Day, and thank our Treasurer, Hon Dr Mike Nahan,

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who have boldly moved forward with unprecedented foresight and, in doing so, are building a capital city for generations to come. Budget commitments include an additional \$249.3 million for Elizabeth Quay; \$249.34 million towards the Perth City Link; \$66.1 million for Riverside Drive in East Perth; and, of course, the \$225 million part commitment to the overall \$428 million for the new museum in the heart of our city's cultural centre. I will speak a little more on these projects later.

These efforts may not have been recognised by members opposite, but I am pleased to say that someone from *The New York Times* has more than noticed. I note the Acting Speaker (Mr N.W. Morton) also referred to this article. I am sure that members are aware that Perth made the top 10 of *The New York Times*' list of 52 places to go in 2014. That is a major acknowledgement. Perth was ranked number 9 and was the only Australian city to be included. Mt Lawley and Northbridge, both in the Perth electorate, were mentioned. They were described as "chock-a-block with cafes and vintage shops". The \$66.1 million Riverside Drive project, which I mentioned earlier, was described in *The New York Times* as a project that will infuse the eastern side of the city with parks, shops, houses and plazas. I believe this to be an international endorsement of this Liberal–National government's vision and foresight. The rest of the world can see it, but the Labor opposition remains blindsided by its own ignorance.

I will now refer to Elizabeth Quay. This project was talked about for over 30 years by previous governments. Elizabeth Quay is this Liberal–National government's flagship inner-city project that will return the city's focus to the iconic Swan River and enhance Perth's reputation as one of the most liveable cities in the world. A \$2.6 billion project, Elizabeth Quay is on time and on budget. It will provide an estimated 1 600 direct and indirect jobs. By early 2015, the Barrack Street jetty precinct will be complete after a \$20 million revitalisation that will include a new event space, a pedestrian bridge and a development site for a five-star hotel. People will enjoy promenades around the inlet, public parkland, and cafes and restaurants at Elizabeth Quay by 2015, which is literally just around the corner.

The Perth City Link is the biggest CBD project in Australia. It involves the undergrounding of rail and bus infrastructure, the creation of five new north–south pedestrian and vehicle connections, and the development of a new inner-city residential and commercial precinct. It represents approximately \$1.2 billion worth of government investment across federal, state and local government, and is expected to generate a further \$4 billion in private sector investment. As I mentioned earlier, the stage budget contributes \$249.4 million to that project. The development of land around City Link will continue. Three office towers are currently under construction on the former Perth Entertainment Centre site as part of City Square. The first concept images of City Square have been released, with the plan developed in response to more than 2 000 ideas received from the community. If that is not testament to this project being welcomed by the community, I do not know what is. The square will include a number of features and attractions, including the horseshoe marketplace, an urban rooftop garden, water features, kiosks, retail spaces, landscaped terraced walkways, play spaces, and striking Aboriginal art. City Square will be one of Perth's most significant public spaces, with tens of thousands of people expected to move throughout the area each and every day. The construction of City Square will commence in mid-2014 and is expected to be completed by late 2016. Eventually, City Link will be home to 3 000 residents, plus hotels, offices, shops, bars, restaurants and new public spaces.

Every great city has a museum, and this government is committed to delivering a new museum for the people of Western Australia. Expressions of interest for the contract for the construction of the building will be sought later this year. Famously referred to by the opposition leader as a place that houses woolly mammoths, I can assure members that the new museum is highly anticipated by the Western Australian community. The \$225 million commitment in this budget is welcomed by Western Australian Museum chief executive officer Mr Alec Coles, who I spoke to a couple of days ago. He is very excited about the prospect of the new museum. The Western Australian culture and arts community keeps feeding back to me how excited they are about a new museum. I am really pleased that we have our Minister for Culture and the Arts here at the moment. He has been the driving force behind our new museum. An integral part of this Liberal–National government's cultural centre renewal, an overall \$428.3 million investment into the new museum will be enjoyed by all Western Australians.

A couple of months ago I had the pleasure of visiting the Perth Fire Station in East Perth. I was taken on a tour by Mr Jon Broomhall and Mr Darren Martin. I thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to give me a tour of the station. I must admit that I was very impressed with the level of expertise and the quality of equipment and training techniques demonstrated to me while I was on site. It became very obvious to me not just from the visit, but also from our discussions that their resources are stretched. With a growing inner-city residential population and the population growth that we will see into the future, it was imperative that we acted quickly to improve these facilities. I am very pleased with the \$20.3 million budget commitment to a new Perth fire station on the western side of the city. It will be additional to the existing fire station in the eastern part of the city.

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I could go on for this long again in outlining this Liberal–National government’s commitment to our capital city and state, but I will conclude by repeating something I have often said in this place: a dollar spent in our state’s capital city is a dollar spent on all Western Australians. After listening to many of my colleagues praise our inner-city rejuvenation, I am pleased to see that this side of the house understands the economic, social and cultural benefits for all Western Australians, and indeed the rest of the world understands the significance of a thriving capital city. Here is hoping that perhaps one day opposition members may indeed pull their heads out of the sand and see it as well.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [4.58 pm]: It was great to hear the enthusiasm from the member for Perth. It is only a pity that she did not bring that enthusiasm and commitment to saving that very important bit of Greek heritage in her own electorate, in the Michelides building.

This week is National Volunteers Week, so I will begin by acknowledging Western Australian volunteers. One in three Western Australians are volunteers. It is estimated that 1.6 million people in this state volunteered over the last 12 months. In Western Australia, volunteers contribute more than 290 million hours annually, estimated to be worth in excess of \$9 billion to the Western Australian economy. Many of WA’s volunteers are retirees. In the future I think we may face challenges if the working age increases to 70, as these people will no longer be able to volunteer. We may need to make a concerted effort to encourage younger members of our community to engage as volunteers. I want to make special mention of the 27 000 fire and rescue, and bushfire volunteers. They work tirelessly and selflessly to protect our community.

As many members are aware, the government went to the state election peddling the lie that firefighter cancer laws—so-called presumptive legislation—would apply equally to volunteer firefighters and career firefighters. The Western Australian Liberal Party’s emergency services policy brought out before the election states —

A re-elected Liberal Government will introduce amendments to legislation which ensure a career or volunteer firefighter who developed one of 12 prescribed cancers recognised in similar Commonwealth Legislation would have a significantly simplified workers’ compensation consideration. These changes to legislation will provide cover for career and volunteer firefighters who predominantly undertake structural firefighting duties and retrospectively take into account past years of service.

As we know, those laws for career firefighters were passed last year, and we certainly welcome that. However, at no point has the commitment been honoured for volunteers. At the time the bill for career firefighters was being debated, the Minister for Emergency Services, Hon Joe Francis, said —

We made a commitment to consider the position of volunteers, and we will honour that commitment and address all the other firefighters in a separate round of legislation.

But earlier this year, Hon Samantha Rowe in the other place asked the Attorney General, who represents the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place —

Can the minister advise when measures will be taken in relation to the 2012 Liberal Party commitment to cover volunteer firefighters who contract cancer, presumed to have been acquired as a result of their firefighting activities?

The response was —

On behalf of the Minister for Emergency Services, I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The minister advises the preparation of the appropriate legislation is currently in progress.

There is no provision in this year’s budget for the introduction of those laws—they are obviously some time away—nor is there any mention of funds put aside for the implementation of the career firefighter cancer laws that have been passed. According to page 864 of last year’s budget paper No 2, volume 2, approximately \$1.5 million was expressly put aside over three years, commencing in this year, 2014–15. That amount has disappeared, and it would seem we can conclude that this money has been diverted elsewhere, which begs the question: when will the laws be implemented for career firefighters? I think that deserves an explanation and we will certainly be seeking one in the estimates hearings.

Whilst on the subject of emergency services, I am increasingly concerned that the number of career firefighters is not keeping up with the exponential population growth in the last few years. When we look at comparisons with other states, we can see that New South Wales, which has a population of 7.4 million, has one firefighter for every 2 152 people; Victoria has one for every 2 156 people; South Australia—my figures do not include the career firefighters from the Country Fire Authority—has one firefighter for 1 970 people; Tasmania has one for around 1 801 people; the ACT, one for 1 133; and the Northern Territory, one for 638 people. But in Western Australia, we are higher than all other jurisdictions with one firefighter per 2 282 people.

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I think some consideration needs to be given to significantly increasing the number of firefighters to cope with our growing population. It seems to me trite, if we are talking about expanding regional centres, including the construction of multistorey buildings, that consideration should be given to establishing career fire stations and even possibly on-site aerial appliances. It is just not reasonable to expect volunteers to attend fires and respond quickly to multilevel fires at a moment's notice with inadequate equipment, and have to be given permission to leave their employment to do that. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that the emergency services levy is being diverted to fund things such as corporate support, media and public relations staff and human resources. That is a far cry from the purpose of the ESL, which was to fund front-line career and volunteer personnel with equipment and training.

Another concern is that despite strong and unequivocal undertakings at the time the levy came into force that the government's contribution from consolidated revenue to emergency services would not decrease, it is obvious from the budget that the Barnett government is now looting the ESL. Yesterday in the Legislative Council Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, asked —

I refer to the ... Emergency Services Acts ...

The concept paper —

... which notes that proceeds from the emergency services levy funds some volunteer training, fire investigations, building inspections, community safety programs, emergency management planning and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services corporate support costs.

She asked —

- (1) What activities do corporate services include?
- (2) ... how much money was allocated to DFES corporate services?
- (3) What activities does emergency management planning include?

The answer from the minister was —

- (1) Corporate ... activities include asset planning and delivery services; business services; human resources; media and corporate communications; and information communication and technology services.
- (2) Operating costs allocated to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' corporate services for the 2012–13 financial year and the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 April 2014 are \$128 823 017 and \$108 618 605 respectively.

We can see that a vast amount of money from the emergency service levy is being hived off for what are core government services. The commitment given and the understanding always has been that funding to run the department would come out of consolidated revenue. Since 2008–09, using the standard representative household figures in the budget papers, the ESL has increased by 60.42 per cent; I repeat: 60.42 per cent since 2008–09. This levy is regressive because properties with the lowest gross rental values have increased proportionately more. For example, premises in Balga have increased by over 67 per cent during that period. In the corresponding period, and in stark contrast, the government's net contribution has increased by only 27 per cent.

In accordance with standing order 86, I seek leave to incorporate into *Hansard* an Excel flow sheet that sets out the charges over that period.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): If it is a graph, can I have a look at it?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It is an Excel flow sheet.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Perhaps I can have a look at it to see whether it can be incorporated, as graphs and spreadsheets are very difficult to incorporate into *Hansard*.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I can indicate to Hansard that I have got an electronic copy.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Then that should not be a problem.

Leave granted.

The following material was incorporated —

Extract from Hansard
[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 15 May 2014]
p3536f-3563a

Mr Nathan Morton; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr John McGrath; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Eleni Evangel; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Chris Hatton

Emergency Services Levy

Estimates from 'Standard Representative Household' in Budget Papers

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Annual Increase
Budget Year 2009/10	\$144.00	\$151.00						4.86%
Budget Year 2010/11		\$152.00	\$180.00					18.42%
Budget Year 2011/12			\$179.00	\$189.00				5.59%
Budget Year 2012/13				\$196.00	\$207.00			5.61%
Budget Year 2013/14					\$205.00	\$220.00		7.32%
Budget Year 2014/15						\$220.00	\$231.00	5.00%
INCREASE SINCE 2008/09 BUDGET (The last Labor Budget)								60.42%

Category 1, Residential	2008/09	2013/14	2014/15
Maximum ESL payable	\$215.00	\$310.00	?
INCREASE SINCE 2008/09 BUDGET		44.19%	

Homes with lower GRV have had a larger percentage increase in ESL levied.

Revenue from Emergency Services Levy

Headed: Regulatory Fees and Fines under Receipts

	2008/09 Actual	2014/15 Budget	Increase
ESL collected in \$million	157	289	84.1%

Expenditure on Fire & Emergency Services

\$ million	2008/09 Budget	2014/15 Budget	Change from 2008/09
Total Cost of Services	208.572	334.231	60.2%
Net amount appropriated to deliver services	27.997	31.911	14.0%
Capital Contribution	32.910	0.000	
Total Contribution from Consolidated Fund	60.907	31.911	-47.6%

\$ million	2008/09 Budget	2014/15 Budget	Change from 2008/09
Total Cost of Services	208.572	342.498	64.2%
Net amount appropriated to deliver services	27.997	36.783	31.4%
Capital Contribution	32.91	0	
Total Contribution from Consolidate	60.907	36.783	-39.6%

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. Following the theme of broken promises, the Liberal Party's heritage policy in 2013 committed the Liberals to —

- Allocate \$8million over the next four years to establish a Heritage Revolving Fund to activate underutilised or idle State or local government heritage property, through conservation and adaptive re-use.

The policy statement goes on to say —

The fund will be used to bring these buildings back to active community use. Buildings that have the potential to be used for vibrant community engagement purposes will be considered as a priority. This could include buildings to be used as bars, restaurants or art galleries.

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In last year's budget, there was no allocation whatsoever for the \$8 million heritage fund. Page 714 of this year's budget paper No 2 states —

The Government has an ownership interest in more than one third of the places listed in the State Register of Heritage Places. Many of these are well used, actively maintained and conserved, however, others sit idle. This Budget establishes a Heritage Revolving Fund ... with an initial commitment of \$4 million over two years.

It has gone from \$8 million over four years to \$4 million over two years, yet on the previous page a total of \$250 000 in 2014–15 and \$300 000 in 2015–16 is allocated under the heritage fund heading and nothing is allocated in the out years. Is it \$8 million over four years, \$4 million over two years or \$552 000 as set out in the budget papers? In any event, it is a broken promise and when questioned about this on radio, the Minister for Heritage spectacularly failed to concede that the promise had been broken.

I also note that a number of issues seniors had hoped would rate a mention in this budget are absent. I am pleased to see that the grand-carer allowance is included in the forward estimates, but, realistically, it is not enough. One additional concession that should be made available to grand-carers is the provision of legal aid when they need to make an application for custody of their grandchildren. I am advised that the Department for Child Protection and Family Support prefers that grandparents obtain formal custody rather than act as foster parents. As such, they forgo foster parent payments, which are greater than the grand-carer's allowance, but have to engage a lawyer at their own expense to obtain formal custody. There is currently a Senate inquiry into the status of grand-carers and I am confident that that may be a recommendation.

National Seniors WA made a pre-budget submission to the Western Australian government. It asked that consideration be given to: providing a subsidy for practical aids for older Western Australians to modify the family home consistent with ageing-in-place principles; making it mandatory for all existing and new aged-care facilities to be fitted with fire sprinklers; introducing a one-off concession on housing stamp duty for seniors with pensioner concession cards or Commonwealth Seniors Health Cards who were downsizing such as that which exists in New South Wales and Victoria; developing a strategic approach to mature age employment, aiming to remove barriers and improving employment opportunities for mature age workers; applying cost-of-living assistance payments to gas accounts to those with pensioner concession cards or Seniors Health Cards; ensuring equity of costs for non-reticulated gas users and people in rural areas with those in metropolitan areas; providing additional funding for seniors' oral health and increasing education in oral hygiene amongst aged-care staff and community care workers; providing an elder abuse helpline; and continuing to improve performance to reach targets across all clinical urgency categories for elective surgery waiting times and emergency access waiting times. Of these, the only claim that the government has acceded to is the elder abuse helpline. I very much welcome that and have lobbied for it for some time, but other support mechanisms need to be resourced for what is a hidden epidemic of elder abuse. I am also disappointed that the government did not reconsider its decision to charge \$43 for the photo identification card, which is anomalous given that licence renewals are free of charge for pensioners. Generally speaking, the budget will impact adversely on seniors, with increases in electricity, car registration, water and a range of other fees and charges. There is only so much elasticity in fixed incomes. Ominously, reference is made in budget paper 3 of the federal budget, released this week, to cuts to specific payments to the states for certain concessions for pensioners. The commonwealth has traditionally provided funding assistance to the states with the cost of funding concessions for all pensioner concession card holders for council land and water rates; utilities, including energy and sewerage; motor vehicle registration; and public transport. But in this week's budget the commonwealth cut \$24.5 million from its funding to Western Australia under this category. A question about this matter was asked in the upper house again this week and the response was that the state government is still assessing the impacts of the federal budget and the implications for state finances. But certainly nothing good can come from a cut of \$24.5 million. We will be watching this space closely, because I do not think it augurs well for future concessions for pensioners in Western Australia.

I now segue into certain issues affecting my electorate, more generally in the northern suburbs. The first of these is the allocation of funds in the budget for a number of primary schools. Although not listed in the budget, I have subsequently found that one of the schools earmarked is East Landsdale, scheduled to open in the 2017 year. Despite the lack of detail, I have ascertained that it will be located on a site in Kingsway and will be for K–6 and will accommodate 430 pupils. I have spoken about the pressing need for a school in the area on many occasions in this place.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have enthusiastically welcomed the decision and congratulate the many activists in the community, including the Landsdale Residents Association. I make special reference to the former president of

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the association, Jessica Stojkovski, who is a very vocal advocate for the need for another school in the area. It has been a long, hard struggle and, as I have said on many occasions, not a moment too soon given the exponential growth in the area. I am concerned, however, at the suggestion that it is planned that the school will share its playing grounds with the council as public open space and that that land is yet to be acquired. I would be concerned if that in any way delayed the construction of the school.

Next, as Fiona Stanley Hospital nears completion, the focus now needs to move once more to the rapidly expanding northern suburbs. It is clear that any extensions for greater capacity to the Joondalup Health Campus should be in the planning phase in the not-too-distant future. Negotiations are likely to take some time, but given population projections, they should conclude within five years so that additional capacity is in place within the decade when it will be sorely needed. More pressing is the need for a specialised stroke unit at Joondalup hospital. The Northern Suburbs Stroke Support Group is active and it says there is a great need for such a specialised unit in the northern suburbs. This need will become even more acute when the Shenton Park rehabilitation hospital closes down. The plan is that long-term stroke victims, especially younger patients, will be treated at Fiona Stanley Hospital. That will create considerable hardship on families living in the northern suburbs, who will have to travel considerable distances over many months to visit their loved ones.

I note that the Treasurer recently put out a press release claiming that \$3 billion was allocated to projects for the north metropolitan area. That claim is technically accurate but highly misleading. Many would equate the reference to northern metropolitan to the northern suburbs, but approximately half of the figure is either being spent in the central business district or in the western suburbs, and includes, as it does, the WA Institute of Sport, the undergrounding of the Perth rail line, the Museum and Elizabeth Quay.

Finally, I refer to a highly publicised joint police operation at Carabooda. I am conscious that charges have been laid, but I want to make general comments arising from what was found during the raids on various premises. Before I do so, I congratulate Western Australia Police, the Australian Federal Police and my former colleagues at the Australian Crime Commission for their efforts in a long and complex investigation, which, of course, is ongoing. An article on 6 May in *WAtoday* states —

Businesses have been warned to ensure their employees are allowed to work in Australia, following the discovery of dozens of illegal workers at a market garden at Carabooda.

WA police published an open letter on Tuesday as part of its four-year Project Tricord investigation, which has unravelled a sophisticated crime syndicate operating out of Perth's northern suburbs.

The letter said it is an employer's responsibility to hire legal workers "regardless of whether they are sourced directly or via a contractor, labour hire or by referral from another business entity."

"It is important that every level of Australian business assists to stop the exploitation of vulnerable foreign nationals and to ensure Australian produce and products are produced free from exploitation," the letter read.

Business owners who flout the laws face two years in prison and a fine of \$20,400 per illegal worker. Companies can be fined up to \$102,000 per illegal worker.

The multi-agency Project Tricord investigation continued in Perth on Tuesday, with police questioning the residents of two properties in Neerabup.

The Carabooda market garden, alleged to be owned by the leaders of the syndicate, was raided over the weekend. More illegal workers were identified during previous raids of properties in Wanneroo, Lancelin and Gingin.

Police described what they found during the raids as a 'human tragedy'.

So far, the operation has identified at least 130 'unlawful non-citizens'. Some have since been returned to their home countries, while others are being held at the Northam Detention Centre.

This investigation dealt with not only the employment of illegal workers, but also was concerned with links to organised crime and began as an investigation into money laundering.

Having heard about this investigation, I recalled an article that appeared in the *North Coast Times* in 2010, headed "Wanted: 300 fruit pickers", and featuring a photo of Mr Thang Le, now deceased, who was allegedly the principal of the Carabooda operation prior to his death. His two sons were amongst those arrested; they took over the company after Mr Le's death. Pictured with him in the photograph is the then Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, John Castrilli, and the member for Wanneroo, Paul Miles. The article reads —

WANNEROO market gardeners have hatched a plan to bring in seasonal workers from overseas to address a labour shortage.

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Vietnamese Farmers Association president Thang Le said growers needed up to 300 extra seasonal workers, mostly fruit pickers.

Last year he unsuccessfully petitioned Canberra to allow growers to bring workers in from Vietnam and China.

He said bringing in these workers would have eased pressure on growers who could not increase produce output without the extra hands.

Mr Le and VFA members raised the issue with Wanneroo MLA Paul Miles and Multicultural Interests Minister John Castrilli last week.

Mr Castrilli said many growers struggled to recruit and communicate with local labourers and as it was a Federal Government issue, he would speak with Immigration Minister Chris Evans.

Further along, the article quotes the member for Wanneroo —

Mr Miles added that “if we don’t get the workers in and don’t protect these farms, they are just going to go offshore”.

In light of subsequent events, I wondered how much due diligence the member for Wanneroo undertook before advancing the case to import more 457 visa workers on behalf of Mr Le. I wonder whether the member supports the conditions and manner in which those workers were treated. I wonder whether, for his efforts in getting the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests out to Wanneroo for a photo opportunity with Mr Le, or prior to that time, he, the Liberal Party or an associated entity received a campaign donation from Mr Le.

It is one thing to advocate for a constituent after having made independent inquiries on the constituent’s bona fides; it is quite another thing if that advocacy facilitates, however unwittingly, the sustained exploitation of foreign workers or even criminal enterprise. It is incumbent upon the member of Wanneroo to give a personal explanation.

MR C.D. HATTON (Balcatta) [5.24 pm]: I take this opportunity to contribute a response to the 2014–15 state budget. When I spoke to last year’s budget, I was able to express that a strong and responsible fiscal action plan was being implemented by the Liberal–National government. Budgets change to meet economic circumstances and this budget, in response to the current economic climate, builds responsibly on last year’s fiscal action plan. I congratulate the Treasurer for handing down a budget that continues to provide efficiencies across sectors, including well-measured and implemented reforms that allow for ongoing infrastructure and service delivery to Western Australians. This budget delivers what is necessary to keep this great state an attractive and viable place to live, raise families, work and enjoy. As was stated by the Treasurer, this budget is the right budget for its time.

Although Western Australia continues to be a strong economic driver across Australia, the economic drivers are shifting. The construction phase in mining displays marginal softening, but investment remains strong as long as the world markets continue to demand our minerals. We certainly do mining well in Western Australia; international markets respect our industry and its standards. However, competitive markets require competitive commodity prices, and royalty revenue is being affected by market fluctuations. State revenue inputs in Western Australia are largely affected by fluctuating iron ore royalty revenues. As has been pointed out in this chamber this week by number of members, an example of the impact of royalty fluctuations on budgets is the fact that a \$1 per tonne shift in the iron ore price can result in a \$60 million change in the budget bottom line. That impact is remarkable, and it is to be managed by good governance.

Our state revenue inputs are also greatly affected by the exchange rate. For example, a 1c change in the exchange rate can add to or subtract from the budget bottom line up to \$90 million. These examples of revenue volatility are what a strong government needs to measure and factor in, now and in the future. The Liberal–National government is doing exactly that. The government is also factoring into the budget the problem of declining GST revenue returns. Declining GST revenue from the commonwealth government means that this state budget has had to factor in new measures to secure revenue and savings. This government, this Premier and this Treasurer will, much to the disbelief of the opposition, fight for better GST equity for Western Australians. Currently, the Commonwealth Grants Commission is not returning what is necessary to our economy, and this problem will not go away; we must stick up for ourselves in Western Australia, and this government is the government to do that. However, unlike what the opposition proposes, this government, like this budget, will measure and factor in how to negotiate this into the future, but we will fight.

Two billion dollars of new measures have been incorporated into the 2014–15 budget to secure revenue and savings, building on last year’s fiscal action plan. Hard, but responsible, decisions have been made. We cannot just keep relying on the GST; that is obvious. To increase efficiencies across government agencies, measures are being applied through this budget to reduce non-essential procurements and to scrutinise asset investment

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programs. We have a responsibility to provide efficient and sustainable public service across all sectors. To offset the fluctuating royalties, exchange rates and declining GST, the Liberal–National government has adjusted some taxation thresholds, using a commonsense, measured approach that will have, in my reckoning, minimal negative impacts on most people, and potential benefits to others. Let me explain some of these. The payroll tax threshold, for one, has positively increased, to the benefit of businesses. This government continues to support, and always will, small and medium business growth and the employment opportunities that are gained to the benefit of individuals and families and the economy of Western Australia. Strong business growth is essential to our future prosperity. There is a high density of small, medium and large business in the suburbs around Balcatta. Quite a few family businesses are well established. I have always said, and continue to say here in this chamber and in the public domain, that I will encourage the reduction of constraints, red tape and regulatory burden on businesses. I am pleased that this government remains committed to improving the payroll tax burden to the benefit of businesses. However, I am sure that I will have many more fruitful and very good discussions, as I do, about regulatory burden and taxes with the local businesses in my area.

I turn to another threshold adjustment. Regarding land tax, threshold adjustments have been applied in this budget, with a 10 per cent increase in land tax—an increase that still places WA land tax as one of the lowest in Australia. A number of landowners in Balcatta have met with me on this issue, raising concerns about the amount of tax they have to pay and rising land taxes. I have listened to their stories, with respect, but it is important for me to let them know that, despite the increases in rates, Western Australia’s land tax rate will remain significantly below that of other jurisdictions for land with an unimproved value up to \$10 million. In addition, the majority of Western Australian property owners will not be affected by the increase, due to the application of exemptions and the fact that land tax is payable only once unimproved land values exceed \$300 000. Although a tax is a tax, it could be said that living in Western Australia is a benefit to landowners compared with living in other states. Land tax across other states is not just higher but very much higher in a lot of cases.

I turn now to transfer duty, another change that has taken place in this budget. Another comparative benefit to living in WA as opposed to other states is transfer duty on first home buyers, which has been facilitated by this government. Let me explain this. Although the transfer duty threshold has lowered from \$500 000 to \$430 000, it still remains comparatively low compared with that in other states. The charge applies only to existing homes. Stamp duty on land up to a value of \$300 000 and new houses remains unchanged. The state government’s \$10 000 first home buyer grant for new homes was not affected by the changes to the first home buyer duty exemption, nor was the \$3 000 grant for established homes. This is a positive budgeting measure that the government has applied. Let me explain why. It has applied this with an aim to boost the building industry and provide employment and affordable housing. This is also a good measure in this budget to help offset changing employment opportunities in the changing mining industry environment. I have often talked in this chamber about affordable housing and building approval processes. I am a very strong advocate of the building industry and the provision of housing in Western Australia. A considerable number of new houses are being built around Balcatta, mainly on smaller subdivided suburban lots, which seems to be the trend these days. I have no problem with that. It is clear that the government is demonstrating a welcome level of commitment to the housing sector. I again stress that employment is a key feature that this government recognises. If we have a strong housing industry, we have trades that are delivering and trades that are employed. Only last week a person in the building industry noted to me that up to 40 bricklayers advertised in the trade section of the weekend paper or the weekly paper. There is obviously a need for trades out there.

Up to now, I have clearly outlined how this government is making tough decisions to reduce unnecessary spending and to save money by improving efficiencies. It is true that Western Australia has a level of debt that needs reducing, and the measures taken in this budget will promote that. However, this debt has not been a product of reckless spending, as the opposition may stress and try to make us believe. It needs to be said again that Western Australia is regarded as a great place to live. We have world-class services and growing infrastructure to meet growing needs and demands. Since 2008, the Liberal–National government has met the challenge of a rapidly growing population, with significant increases in the priority areas of health, education, social services and law and order.

Health infrastructure investment has been a fantastic story for Western Australia since 2008. Let me explain why. The \$1.2 billion Perth Children’s Hospital, due to open in late 2015, will have 298 beds, 75 per cent of which will be single rooms. Fiona Stanley Hospital is due to be fully operational by 2015. It will have 29 paediatric beds. The \$360 million Midland public hospital, due to open by April 2015, will have 12 paediatric beds. Other hospitals are being developed in Joondalup, Karratha, Busselton and other regions. Regional Western Australians are also benefiting from massive hospital and medical infrastructure and servicing. New or upgraded hospitals or campuses are being delivered across this state. Health services and facilities in Western Australia are now, and have been for some time, some of the best in the world. This 2014–15 budget is

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a somewhat difficult budget, due to the necessity of debt reduction, but it still provides \$8 billion for the delivery of these health services—an increase of \$447 million, or 5.9 per cent, on 2013–2014. The additional expenditure in this budget will provide for 15 000 patients to stay and be treated in hospitals, 33 000 patients to be treated in emergency departments and over 60 000 patients to be treated as outpatients.

Like health, education remains well funded in Western Australia. Our public schools are amongst the best resourced in the nation, with higher per student funding than any other state. We have well-paid teachers, new schools are still being built and we are preparing for the transition of year 7 students into high schools in 2015. Recently, the Auditor General assessed and reported that this government is doing well to prepare for next year's year 7 transition into high school. Being a teacher for over 30 years, I fully understand that a cultural change will be needed in those schools. It will be challenging but the challenges should not come from a lack of funding.

The Auditor General has outlined that things are going pretty well in that area, if not very well. We can be proud of this government effecting that change. Sixteen new child and parent centres will be established between 2014 and 2016. These centres will be vital to families, children and schooling. Support in the early years through assessments and programs will provide great benefits. I commend this government for its support for early intervention. Under this budget, a total of \$4.6 billion will be provided for the delivery of education services in 2014–15, which is an increase of \$188 million, or 4.3 per cent, from 2013–14. Since 2007–08, recurrent expenditure on education has grown from \$2.8 billion to \$4.6 billion, which is an annual increase of almost \$1.8 billion. This government's debt has not been caused by reckless spending, as the opposition would have us believe. Western Australia is leading the nation in education. We held off implementing Gonski and the centralised model based on the good evidence that we had.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr C.D. HATTON: We are reforming our funding processes based on the Teese report of 2010 and the Gonski report. We are continuing to build schools and to fund them to meet growing needs. We have low teacher–pupil ratios—probably the best in Australia. We are supporting teaching by adopting the national curriculum, which has been adjusted to include some local content, commonly known as the Western Australian version, and we are leading the way with the highly successful independent public school innovation. I have been discussing educational issues with educators and parents and I am convinced that the current funding reform will be grounded in the near future.

This budget will provide \$1.3 billion for the delivery of police services in 2014–15, an increase of \$83.5 million, or 6.6 per cent, from 2013–14. This includes an allocation to refurbish ageing police stations and to upgrade the computer aided dispatch system for front-line 000 calls. This government is committed to providing law enforcement and safety to the people of Western Australia. We are certainly on track to recruit 100 police and auxiliary officers by June 2014, which includes an extra 83 officers as part of the commitment to boost officer numbers by 500 by the end of this term of government. I am pleased to say that suburbs in the Balcatta electorate are serviced by very professional policing from the Mirrabooka and Scarborough Police Stations, with Scarborough Police Station going through a major upgrade. My contact with both those police stations on behalf of residents is always highly responsive and professional; they serve the public well. Western Australians welcome the tougher sentencing laws that we are introducing for such crimes as home invasion and assaults on officers. People expect this.

I must mention the delight of school communities that are receiving the 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing light signs at school sites. This program ensures better safety for families and children. By 2017, this Liberal-led government aims to have flashing signs installed at all school sites, and I am sure that it will achieve this. I am working hard to ensure that all schools in the Balcatta area receive these flashing signs as soon as possible. Recently, flashing signs were installed at Glendale Primary School in Hamersley. Only last week I tabled a petition with over 800 signatures asking for flashing signs to be installed at another local school. I will be working hard with these communities to ensure that this program is implemented on time.

Opposition members would have us believe that this government is not compassionate to those in need. How wrong they are. Since 2008, this government has funded disability services by an incredible amount.

I would like to talk about my passion for sport and recreation, but I will leave most of that to the energetic Hon Terry Waldron, Minister for Sport and Recreation, who in my eyes does a great job in energising this state by assisting this government to provide world-class venues for games and to promote a healthy outlook on life. I must mention that at my local community level in Balcatta, the KidSport program is operating very successfully. Last year the minister attended an award ceremony at a local school with me, at which an award was presented to a teacher who engages children and the community with this program. The benefits are immense. As a matter of fact, this year's budget provides \$10 million over two years to support this and associated programs. I fully support it myself. We need only look at some of the world-class venues that we

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already have and will soon have under this government, including the new stadium and sports precinct, with funding of \$902 million, and the new state netball centre. These venues are not only for now, but also for future generations.

I want to talk about royalties for regions. The investment in royalties for regions since 2008 has been absolutely outstanding. This Liberal-led government has partnered to grow the state for all; the regions have not been forgotten. This budget, with its \$1 billion cap a year over four years, commits to projects across the state. This is \$4 billion in ongoing funding to 2017–18 for such projects as Pilbara Cities, the regional working centres and the midwest revitalisation—the list goes on. Over the term of this government, regional investment has been immense and well delivered. There is always more to be done and it will be done under this Liberal-led government, which delivers far more to the regions than the opposition ever did. I remind the chamber that Labor investment in regional WA does not have a good track record.

All these good things happening in Western Australia do not come without a cost. This government has spent widely and wisely to deliver to metropolitan and regional Western Australia. At this point I make it clear that since 2008, this government has focused hard on improving transport infrastructure and services and has increased public transport capacity and efficiency. Over successive budgets there has been an increased demand for road and rail funding. Massive infrastructure has been delivered and continues to be delivered. I am pleased to acknowledge that Perth's north metropolitan area, which is one of Perth's fastest growing areas and includes the Balcatta electorate, will benefit from a \$641.3 million investment in public transport and road infrastructure as part of a \$3 billion, four-year investment under the state budget. This is good news for people living in and going to and from suburbs in the Balcatta electorate. I particularly draw attention to a part of that \$3 billion investment in north metropolitan Perth—that is, the \$43 million commitment to turn Reid Highway, at the busy northern end of Balcatta, into a dual carriageway between Duffy and Erindale Roads. I am already in consultation with Main Roads on that project, and it will not be long before that project will be tendered and underway. The estimated completion date is 2015–16, which is not far away. Safety and travel times will be greatly improved as Reid Highway through Balcatta is made far more functional and safer. There have been a lot of terrible near misses and accidents on that road. People expect safety and security when they travel. Balcatta will soon have a safe, upgraded, fully functional dual-carriageway highway.

In Balcatta, the Cedric Street train station is a major public transport hub and since 2008, major road upgrades and extensive new parking facilities have enabled better travel in this area. In this budget, once again, more buses and railcars will be delivered to improve public transport. Again, commuters will benefit. For the nearby Osborne Park Hospital, I am pleased to say that \$3 million is set aside in this budget to allow additional parking. This was an election promise and it is being delivered. Overall, the electorate of Balcatta is not being forgotten in this budget. People will be able to drive more safely on local roads and have easy access to the local hospital. I think people in the local suburbs will be very pleased with that.

In closing, this budget is a responsible budget for the times. It continues to invest in infrastructure, hospitals, schools, roads and public transport. It recognises that there needs to be efficient delivery of quality services such as health, education and policing. It continues to support and protect communities—supporting mental health, resourcing and providing funding for disability services, and protecting through resourcing for adequate policing. This budget is structured to reduce debt to a more acceptable level for the future through debt-reduction measures. With full support to the Treasurer, I commend the bills to the house.

Questions put and passed.

Bills read a second time.

Pursuant to standing order 222, bills and estimates referred to Estimates Committees A and B.