

COST-OF-LIVING INCREASES — GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

Motion

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.01 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the McGowan Labor government for increases of \$850 per year to electricity prices, water prices and car registration while taxpayers' money is being wasted on travel rorts, ministerial double dipping, cosy union deals, talkfests and other ill-conceived government expenditure.

I will set the scene by going through the current cost-of-living increases that have been impacting Western Australians since the McGowan Labor government came into power. The government has basically slugged the people of Western Australia with increases to household charges of \$850 a year since it was elected. Despite its election promise of no new taxes, that outcome has not eventuated. Before going into government the Labor Party was very keen to make sure that the electorate knew that there would be no new taxes, but straightaway the charges of many utilities went up, to the extent that now increases for the average household are \$850 a year. Of particular concern, the McGowan Labor government has targeted vulnerable families with its cost increases, including the 10.9 per cent increase to the electricity supply charge in its very first budget. As everyone understands, this increase in the fixed charge disproportionately impacts low-energy users such as seniors and the vulnerable. The damage cannot be mitigated through reduced usage. I will give a recent example of a woman who came to see me. She had a house that did not have the electricity on. The house was in joint names. She is going through a divorce case and does not have a job. The couple going through the divorce had a property, which meant that she could not get any commonwealth funding to see her through. She had to fix up the house and put the power on. There is no-one living in the house, but just putting the power on left her with a \$300 bill. This is an example of the impact of the fixed costs.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: That is a connection cost.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Yes, that is the connection cost as well.

We all understand it is done because infrastructure is sitting there and we want a return on it, but the point I make is that it still has an impact that was not there when we were in government. It impacts on vulnerable people.

I move to water. Our shadow Minister for Water is right across the impact of water charges on families. In the government's second budget, it increased the cost of water consumption of over 500 kilolitres a year. Unfortunately, I am in that category because I have a large family. Charges increased by 40 per cent. I know that the Premier and the ministers try to portray this increase as targeting the rich; however, the data clearly shows that it targets large families, potentially multi-generational, with large properties in the outer suburbs. I guess a lot of those families are doing it the toughest. Large families use more water. A constituent of the member for Cottesloe said that a lot of the people in the wealthier suburbs have water bores, so they do not pay as much for water as people in other suburbs, and that is another thing.

This comes at a time when Western Australia has the second highest unemployment rate in the whole country, at 6.3 per cent seasonally adjusted. Tasmania is the only state with a higher employment rate, at 6.4 per cent. This is despite a so-called plan for jobs that was meant to deliver 50 000 jobs. Western Australian families are struggling with higher unemployment, little or no wage growth, falling house prices—this is right across the board—the highest negative equity in the country and higher levels of mortgage default. The number of electricity disconnections of people who cannot pay their bills has also reached a record 20 000. That is a record 20 000 disconnections under the Labor McGowan government. How did the Labor McGowan government respond? It cut the cost-of-living rebate for seniors and forced people in hardship to wait 180 days before they could receive hardship utility grant scheme payments. What sort of response is that? This government has the highest number of electricity disconnections on record and what does it do? It makes it harder for people to get the hardship utility grant. All the government's mean-spirited cost-of-living increases come at a time when it is receiving windfall gains from the Morrison government-led GST fix and the —

Mrs A.K. Hayden: Iron ore.

Mr W.R. MARMION: It is an amazing iron ore price. I did a calculation to convert the price of \$US108 to Australian dollars and it comes in at \$155, which is a terrific return for iron ore miners. I hope this continues, because I think it is good for Western Australia if we get a lot in a royalties windfall. It is good for the state.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: Only if they know how to use it.

Mr W.R. MARMION: It will eventually flow down, but that is right. The member makes a good point. Everyone across the board agrees that we need economic stimulus. We certainly need it in Western Australia. It is no use getting these windfall gains and not using them to stimulate the economy. We should also help those people who cannot help themselves. That is the scene we are in at the moment. People are doing it tough. There is a high cost

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of living. At the same time, lots of revenue is coming in from the GST and iron ore. As was mentioned in the previous debate, gold is hanging in very well. Gold prices are pretty close to a record level at the moment. That is also going along pretty well.

I have some examples of how the money has been wasted in the last two years. Firstly, I want to talk about the Minister for Agriculture and Food's visit to Doha for one day. The Minister for Agriculture and Food was under fire for a \$4 907 trip, as reported in *The West Australian* of 21 June. Apparently Minister MacTiernan flew to Doha, accompanied by her chief of staff, for one day of meetings that cost taxpayers \$4 907, before continuing on to a holiday in Europe. The minister effectively used taxpayers' money to subsidise her holiday to Europe while people struggle with the higher cost of living.

Dr D.J. Honey: While she's trying to shut down live shipping.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I think the member for Cottesloe will cover that in his comments. Shutting down live shipping does not help to stimulate the economy. That is a good interjection from the member. This is an example of a minister wasting taxpayers' money.

Another more recent example is the McGowan Labor government's offer to the Community and Public Sector Union–Civil Service Association of WA, which, according to the CPSU/CSA Union News website, was characterised in the following way —

Although it contains the \$1000 pay cap, the conditions achieved in this offer absolutely break Wages Policy.

As outlined on the union news website, the deal contains a range of benefits —

- 3 hours minimum engagement, recognition of increments and 25% loading for casuals
- Improvement on days of bereavement leave from 2 to 3
- Superannuation on up to 12 weeks unpaid parental Leave – A first for the public sector
- Two paid Union meetings a year
- Level 1 compaction; from 8 to 4 levels

We all know what that means. It continues —

- New public sector public holiday
- No increase to GROH for the life of the agreement
- Paid cultural and ceremonial leave for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders ...

The union news website again brags that this is a first for the public sector. It continues —

- Adult traineeship rates increased significantly
- Review for discounted public transport

It seems that a pretty good deal has been organised outside the supposed threshold of the \$1 000-a-year pay cap that the McGowan Labor government placed on its wages policy. The Minister for Commerce was on Gareth Parker's program yesterday and he clearly stated that this wage offer would not cost taxpayers any money. It does, obviously.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: He said it's affordable.

Mr W.R. MARMION: So the minister is saying that it was cheaper than going over the \$1 000 cap. It does change the wages policy because there is a cost to it.

I will go through some of the benefits. The extra day's leave alone will result in 30 000 days of additional leave across the public sector every year. Interestingly, when we do the calculation, that is equivalent to one public servant going on leave for 87 years, which is a long time. The point is that those positions will have to be backfilled or there will be cuts to public services. The truth is that the McGowan Labor government has a cosy deal with the CPSU. Because the union's former head, Toni Walkington, received a sweetheart deal for her silence on the introduction of the wages policy, she was parachuted into a \$300 000 a year job with the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

Dr A.D. Buti: I wouldn't go down there. How's Christian Porter's appointment going?

Mr W.R. MARMION: Member for Armadale, you can speak. I welcome the member's contribution.

An article written by Gary Adshead on May 7 states —

But this week, WA witnessed what was arguably the most hypocritical act of self-serving unionism in the State's history.

He uses quite flowery language. Perhaps I will give him credit for this. He does not always give me credit. The article continues —

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After the new Labor Government revealed it would gut the public service like never before, Ms Walkington called a press conference to respond to Premier McGowan's ominous statements.

With the cameras rolling, Ms Walkington somehow managed to keep a straight face as she fed her Labor mates big scoops of ice-cream without even a teaspoon of arsenic.

"It is not an easy process and there is some pain," she said. "There is no best or right way to do this. What's needed is consideration of the employees and identifying the priority services of the Government of the day."

Make that ice-cream with chocolate sprinkles on top.

Says the author of the article. It continues —

The Premier had just slashed the number of government departments from 41 to 25.

He had signalled to every one of Ms Walkington's members that no one's position was safe and that their workplaces would be turned upside down as his Government tried to find more than \$750 million in savings to manage WA's debt and deficit disaster.

I'm announcing the biggest reform to the public sector in WA in decades—and this is just the beginning," the Premier declared. "This is long overdue and I think the workforce and the unions understand that this was coming."

If the unions did know what to expect, Ms Walkington wasn't letting on when she told her members before March 11 that Mr Barnett was the one to fear.

She never once warned that Mr McGowan was in fact the Grim Reaper in waiting.

That article explained how Gary Adshead saw that particular deal. We do not begrudge public servants pay rises. The issue is that the Labor Party is giving preferential treatment to certain unions while hardworking police, nurses and teachers are not being given a commensurate offer. I would be interested if the Treasurer could explain the disparity. For example, the police receive a \$1 000 increase and their percentage increase is well below the consumer price index rate of 1.75 per cent. We have the data because of a press release on the dealings with the Western Australia Police Union. It explains the percentage increases on offer. For a senior constable, \$1 000 represents only a 1.08 per cent increase and a sergeant receives only a 0.97 per cent increase. This is in fact a pay cut in real terms for rank and file police officers. I have to ask the question: is this simply unfair, especially considering the Premier promised them a 1.5 per cent pay rise? It is unwinding at the moment because of the disparity between some unions. Indeed, the police union has a reasonable case to put forward because it missed out in the last round compared with some other professions and services.

The next example is a trip that the Premier made to New South Wales. An article in *The West Australian* that was published on 21 February reads —

Premier Mark McGowan was accused of stealing \$12,000 from taxpayers in Parliament today over a trip to Sydney to raise money for the NSW Labor Party.

... last November in Sydney NSW Labor was charging \$3000 a seat for an intimate dinner with the WA leader.

The Premier claimed that it was a state trip because he had a half hour meeting with the New South Wales transport minister. This is clearly a waste of taxpayers' money. The meeting with the transport minister could have easily been had on the phone or videoconference and it would have saved all that expenditure. But, no, he had to be there, of course, because of the Labor Party fundraiser at \$3 000 a seat.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: He was guest of honour, wasn't he?

Mr W.R. MARMION: I think he was. It would be interesting to know how many people went to the fundraiser. My understanding from what was reported in *The West Australian* of 25 February is that the Premier had half an hour. The Premier's excuse was that he also met with former Prime Minister Bob Hawke for an hour and looked at the bridge climb —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe —

Dr D.J. Honey: I'm looking for a reference in yesterday's paper. I am getting a reference.

The ACTING SPEAKER: You can do that, but not in your seat. It is a rule that you do not read newspapers in your seat.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I thought he was rustling for a lolly—members cannot eat in the house either!

The other reason he gave for the trip was —

I went and had a look at the bridge climb that NSW had because we are putting something similar in here," he said.

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There was an excuse; he went there for a reason but I do not know that it would pass the pub test. That is why I guess *The West Australian* included it.

The next issue I want to talk about is a trip that two ministers took to Sydney, New South Wales, on 12 April. An article of 3 June 2017, headed “One day in Sydney for two WA ministers ... a cost of \$30,000” states —

An overnight trip to Sydney involving two Western Australian Labor government ministers ...

Also present were Department of Education Director General Sharyn O’Neill, another bureaucrat and two ministerial staffers.

That is obviously why it cost \$30 000. I am not disputing the figure. The article also states —

Of the \$30,880 cost, the return flight to Sydney for six people cost more than \$28,000, with nearly \$3000 going on accommodation and food.

My understanding is that during that visit for one night, they did not even visit a school. Once again, we have to ask: Could this have been handled better? Could the government have saved \$30 000 by having a telephone or a videoconference with people around the room? Sometimes when a visit is about a school, a minister has to visit the school to see what it is like. We understand that, but if they did not visit a school, we have to ask: why did they not use videoconferencing? I think that is a legitimate question to ask members.

The next area I want to touch on is ministerial double dipping from the ministerial car and driver scheme just after the Labor government had won the election. Basically, cabinet ministers had access to a ministerial car and driver. They also receive motor vehicle allowances of between \$25 000 and \$42 000 a year. I understand that this was sorted out by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, but there was an obvious overlap when they were receiving both. I was surprised that they, technically, did not have to repay it. I have been in situations as a public servant in which an overpayment had been made and I was put in charge of telling people who had been overpaid that there had been a mistake in Main Roads and they had to repay the money. In some cases it was between \$3 000 and \$5 000. The public service was adamant that although it was a mistake by the government department, they had to repay it. We had to have a system that allowed people time to repay it if they had already spent it. Ironically, Main Roads—this is karma, is it not?—revisited the error and found out that three other people had also been overpaid and I was one of them. We had to repay it. It is very disappointing when that does not happen. It sends a bad message. Leadership starts from the top. A mistake was made and we all had to repay the money. Some people were not very happy about it but they all paid. If the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council does not do that, it sends a very bad message.

We had a lot of trouble finding out which ministers were involved. I am filling in for the member for Bateman, who could not be here because, unfortunately, he is at a funeral. I know the Treasurer would have preferred the member for Bateman to be speaking. Question on notice 1760 indicates that the ministers who double dipped were the Deputy Premier, the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, the Minister for Corrective Services, the Attorney General, the Minister for Commerce, the Minister for Transport, the Minister for Housing, the Minister for Water and the Minister for Child Protection. This information had to be secured through parliamentary questions because the Premier’s office refused to release the information. That is covered in the PerthNow article of 4 June 2017.

Getting back to the overarching theme, struggling Western Australians are slugged with massive costs of living. Everyone in Western Australia is struggling. Ministers are well paid; they had just received a massive pay rise having gone from opposition members to ministers. Of the ones I read out, some may have repaid the money and some went onto other schemes. It sets a bad example to other Western Australians and to politicians. We are trying to resurrect the image of politicians. I am in politics to try to resurrect the image of politicians from the bottom. I will not mention other professions politicians are compared with but we know what they are. This double dipping does not help; it is very disappointing.

I want to mention two other issues about which the opposition has some concern. Firstly, I refer to an issue that came out on Monday this week in *The West Australian* headed “McGowan Government forks out \$566,000 for a virtual ‘ideas box’” reported by Nick Butterly. This stunned me. I had to read this article two or three times because I thought: This can’t be right. When we were in government, people used to see us all the time about red tape. They complained that every time they wanted a decision made in government, it was taking ages. We therefore decided to set up a red-tape reduction committee. We got some ideas and even after we had made a few changes, we still got complaints. What did we do? We set up an internet portal so that if anyone had a complaint, they could log on to the website and make their complaint and we would deal with it. I was the Minister for Finance, I think, at the time and was the project manager for the same issue; namely, all ministers were to come up with half a dozen or 10 ideas every year to improve their efficiency. In the first year, from all 17 ministers, nearly 100 ideas came from departments, but 44 ideas were logged on to our portal from the general public. Once we gave people an opportunity to tell us what we should be doing, we did not get much. One very good one, which

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was very simple to solve, came from, I think, the valuers. They had to fill in three forms every year and include a photograph and a copy of their licence to three ministers. We changed the policy so they had to send the form to one minister and the licence could apply for three years. Governments can do very simple things. That idea came from someone grizzling, and the right minister hearing about it and just fixing it. To outsource to England a \$566 000 contract to come up with a virtual ideas box is astounding.

The Western Australia Jobs Act has been passed to make sure that as many jobs as possible are given to people who live in WA. Is the government saying that Western Australia does not have enough clever people with ideas? Very smart people come out of our universities. In fact, a lot of them have not even completed their degrees and they have highly successful start-ups. There are smart people out there who should have been given that opportunity. They probably would not need \$566 000 to come up with ideas. It will be interesting to see why the Premier had to outsource this ideas box and what he has been trying to do in-house. Surely, he would want to get policies from in-house rather than from overseas.

Lots of members want to talk on this topic so I will conclude with an issue that concerns everyone on this side, including the Nationals WA, and that is the bizarre Carnegie Albany wave farm situation. It is virtuous to come up with something that can generate energy at very low cost. That is what we are all trying to achieve—renewable energy at very low cost. At the moment, we have wind and solar energy, but both have deficiencies. As we know, with solar energy, when the sun is not shining, there is no energy; and with wind energy, when the wind is not blowing, there is no energy. Straightaway, 50 per cent of their efficiency is lost because they are not performing half of the time. Under a freedom of information application, we uncovered some very interesting information about this project. The Labor government negotiated a contract with Carnegie Clean Energy for one megawatt of energy for one year. One megawatt will power only about 200 homes. I know that the government will say that it was a research project, and I have some sympathy for that, but the government committed \$15.75 million of taxpayer funds to produce enough energy to power 200 homes a year. If I do the sums, that is the equivalent of \$78 750 per house. I regularly see solar panel systems advertised on television for about \$3 500, and when I get my roof fixed—I have been meaning to do this for years—I want to buy a five-kilowatt solar panel system. If 200 houses had five-kilowatt solar systems, they would produce exactly one megawatt of energy. Rather than spending \$78 750 per house, the same amount of energy could be produced by spending \$3 500 per house. In terms of productivity and efficiency, I would go with solar panels, rather than a wave farm. I think there is more to be found out about that wave farm.

In conclusion, it is very disappointing that people are struggling. The economy needs a stimulus. The government is getting windfall gains from the Morrison-led GST recovery, the GST floor and the massive price of iron ore at the moment. Western Australian taxpayers are struggling. The McGowan Labor government needs to lift its game, stimulate the economy and help the taxpayers of Western Australia who are struggling. I have given some examples and I am sure that my colleagues will raise other examples. The government is sending the wrong message. Ministers need to tighten their belts, set a good example and come up with better ideas that do not cost taxpayers money.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [4.32 pm]: I rise obviously to support this motion moved in the house this afternoon by our brand spanking new deputy leader. Some fundamental problems that are emerging with this government are becoming clearer and clearer as we hold debates in this place. There are two key issues about the government. The first is that it does not know how the economy works. That is really apparent from its surprise at the demise of our domestic economy based on it having its foot on the throat of the economy with these massive increases in charges. The second thing that is really surprising to me is that the government does not seem to be aware of the hardship in the community. It does not seem to look around and say, “Hang on; people are doing it tough.” I will deal with that second point first, because it has become very clear to me. I will go through a little of the article in *The West Australian* of 11 April headed “Homeless surviving at rock bottom in makeshift camp near Rockingham”, because it is clear that some members opposite are not aware of it despite the questions and other points that have been raised in this place. It states —

A shanty town hidden in bush in Perth’s south has become a makeshift community for the beaten down who can’t afford to live anywhere else.

The camp is just metres from a road linking the Kwinana industrial strip to suburban Rockingham in the electorate of Premier Mark McGowan.

This is in the Premier’s own electorate —

Scrub keeps them secret from passing motorists, and residents of the shanties yesterday described how they felt invisible to the outside world.

They certainly feel invisible to the Premier, and I will warm to that point a little bit —

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They said a rising cost of living, limited allowances and a lack of crisis accommodation in the city's south had left them homeless. Many grew up locally and sleeping rough in bush was their only way to stay in the area.

Some 17 adults have set up a makeshift camp. For the sake of brevity, I will not go through the rest of the article, but it is pretty clear that these guys are just trying to get by. They seem to be people with different issues, but by and large they are just trying to make a home; they just want a place to live.

What was surprising to me was that when questions were asked in this place about this issue—this camp has been there for a number of years—we heard in response that the Premier has never been there. The Premier has never visited the camp.

Mr W.R. Marmion: It's in his electorate.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is in his electorate. It is on the way from his house to Parliament. He could just drop in. I was stunned by that. I am happy for members to tell me otherwise and I am happy for the Premier to inform the house, but as far as I know, despite the excellent work by the member for Carine, who has been there and spoken to the people and tried to give them some solace and tried to understand their issues so that he can give help —

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is genuine, member for Fremantle.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range and minister!

Dr D.J. HONEY: As the member for Fremantle knows, I respect the fact that she cares about people in the same way that I respect the fact that the member for Carine has the same genuine care. We might have our moments in this place, but I know from speaking to the member that he was genuinely moved and upset by what occurred at that place.

The thing that surprises me is that, as far as I know, the Premier has not been there. One thing I know about local members, and I knew this before I came here as I had a bit of involvement in politics at the party level, is that it does not matter whether they are the Premier, the Treasurer, the Minister for Women's Interests or the member for Armadale—I know this point applies to the member for Armadale—they look after their electorate. They look after the people who are doing it tough. They visit all the institutions. I can tell members that I have. I have visited all the groups and I have doorknocked. When there is a problem, I go out there and have a look, because there is nothing that beats going and having a look. There is nothing that beats going out there and talking to those people and understanding. If I were the Premier of this state and people in my electorate were living in a shanty town, I would be going out and talking to them and understanding what their issues are. I would be doing everything I could to connect the relevant government services to those people. I know that the member for Armadale does that. I know that when people in the member for Armadale's electorate are doing it tough, he gets straight onto the government agencies. He is right on top of it. He helps those people. So we would have to think that the Premier—the person in charge of the state and the senior person in this house—does not care.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes, he has been a member for 23 years.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Member for Darling Range, we do not need you chirping in like some Greek chorus. Please desist.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: I take offence to that comment!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Hillarys. You know what I mean.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Either the Premier is not aware or he does not care that those people are doing it really tough. It is really a reflection of a much broader issue. I will dwell on that camp a little bit. I am not making political moment out of this. There was an enormous tragedy. One of the people in that camp died. I will not name the person; it is not appropriate to do that in this place. Nevertheless, we saw an article about that in *The West Australian* of 11 June, and it was just heartbreaking and touching. He seemed like a decent chap. This person had a little place set up, with a little room sectioned off and so on. These people are trying to get by, and one would think that the government would do everything it could to help and to make life better for those people.

Ms S.F. McGurk: The last government's contribution to homeless people was to turn on sprinklers in the CBD.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I can tell the minister that one of the advantages of being a new member in this place is that it is pretty hard to be held accountable for what the previous government did. To be frank, I am not so fussed, but the minister highlights a point: I have never heard more backward-looking discussion than from members of the opposition. I have never heard more in my life!

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Hear, hear!

Dr D.J. HONEY: I meant members opposite; members of the government. I have never heard more backward-talking speak in my life. I will tell members what: in my previous life, before I came into this place, I was working my way through the management ranks. Two and a half years into my job, if my boss came and said to me, “Things aren’t going too well, David”, and I said, “Don’t worry; it’s the fault of the guy who was the manager two and a half years ago. It’s not my fault. I’ve been here two and a half years. It was the guy two and a half years ago. Don’t blame me.”, do members know how long I would have lasted in my job? I would have lasted about five seconds—about long enough for him to shove me out the door and throw all my belongings after me. Do members know what? That is what the public of Western Australia is going to do to the government, unless it changes its game a whole lot in the near future.

That was not an isolated event. Things have become very bad in the city of Bunbury. Unfortunately, the member for Bunbury is not in the house at the moment. Things have got so bad there that the city has actually had to build a shelter for homeless people at the back of a car park. It has become an enormous problem. At least these poor people, these dear people who are struggling and doing it tough, get a lock-up Cyclone fence and a basic shelter. I think there are also toilets and somewhere for them to have a shower and clean themselves up.

That is the reality in Western Australia. I am now hesitant to go into Perth. My wife and children will not go into Perth at night because they are scared. I can tell the member for Fremantle that I am frightened to go down to Fremantle. I popped down to Freo today and it is almost wall-to-wall homeless people in the main street. This is under the government’s watch, and it is a problem that has become dramatically worse over the last two years. The City of Fremantle has actually had to put on a special patrol to try to deal with this and to maintain the businesses, but Fremantle is becoming a place that people do not want to go to because of homeless people. We talked about the economy earlier. This is happening in an economy that is accountable for 50 per cent of Australia’s export income. We have a government that is utterly flush with funds, yet this is what we are seeing.

We have an economy that is struggling, yet we have seen a 19 per cent increase in electricity charges and a 16.5 per cent increase in water charges. The cruel thing about these increases is that, in large part, they are on the base fees and connection fees—fees that people cannot avoid and have no choice but to pay. An older person in my electorate is just getting by. They have their place, but they are just getting by. They are saying, “I’ve just turned off basically every use of water that I have in my place because I’ve had this massive increase in water charges, but my water use charge is \$27.” All of the increases have been in the fixed-base charges, and people are really struggling to get by. That person is a pensioner and they are doing it tough.

What does all that do? It sucks money out of the domestic economy. I have heard the government’s justification. I know the Treasurer is a smart individual and that it must sometimes be hard for him to have to continue to push the party line, but it is backward looking to say, “Oh well, the guys before us put the charges up.” The government knows why the previous government put the charges up at the rate it did. It was because there was not cost reflectivity in those charges. Electricity charges had been fixed for a considerable time because of the decision of a previous Labor Premier to buy some votes by doing so, and it then caused great hardship for the previous government to balance the budget into the future.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Rubbish!

Dr D.J. HONEY: The Treasurer knows that that was the case, but looking back and saying, “You put it up; we’re not putting it up as much” is sort of like saying, “I’ve only killed two people; you’ve killed three people. Therefore, I didn’t do a bad thing because I haven’t killed quite as many people as you did.” That would not hold up in court, would it? Imagine going in and mounting that as a defence in court: “Your Honour, the fault isn’t really with me. I’m not really a problem because the other guy did more.” No, members opposite are the government. They are the guys who have their foot on the throat of this state economy. They are the guys who are killing business in Western Australia because of their decisions—crazy decisions.

The government decided to take Western Australia out of the regional migration scheme. It was a crazy decision to take us out of that. The government should know that that will kill students coming to Australia. The Leader of the Opposition went through this yesterday and in other debates. The government knows that when it stops students from being able to get jobs here and reduces the number of categories in which people can get jobs, it reduces student numbers and international visitor numbers, which has also been a problem for us in trying to grow the tourism industry. Now we see the government panicking and spending tens of millions of dollars in some desperate attempt to try to rebuild the tourism industry, when it was the government that killed it. It makes one decision to kill it and then spends tens of millions of taxpayers’ dollars to try to revive it. Again, I do not want to focus on the member for Fremantle, but I know that she could use that money to much better purpose for other things. She knows that she could help people who are really doing it tough if she had that money, but that money is not available to her because the government is desperately trying to resuscitate the tourism industry that it destroyed through its decisions when it came into power. Why did it make those decisions? Because it wanted to ingratiate

itself with its union mates. As a new government, it would have been a fair bet for a second term if it did half a job, but it is struggling to do even a quarter of a job at the moment, or any job at all. It could potentially have eight years, but it made a decision like that that cruelled the economy just to ingratiate itself with a few union mates.

We are seeing the impact on Foodbank. I just happened to glance at the “Foodbank Western Australia Annual Report 2018”. I will read a bit of it because members opposite clearly have not, so I feel it to be my duty to educate them on some of these social measures. According to its 2018 report, last year Foodbank distributed “6.1 million meals throughout the state, which is the largest number of meals provided in any given year in our 24 year history.” Of major concern is the massive growth in regional Western Australia. That is a story we do not see here, but if members drive down the main street of any country town, they will see massive shop closures. The main street of Northam is doing it incredibly tough. These guys are paying huge utility charges because they pay higher fees than we do in the city. The report continues —

Demand for our services has continued to grow with 94,000 West Australians seeking support from our charity partners every month, more than a third of whom are children.

This is on the government’s watch, in its second year, and those figures are a 44 per cent increase on the previous year. When the government is patting itself on the back about the things that other people have done and congratulating itself on how well things are going, it should just reflect on that 44 per cent increase on the previous year. One in five of those people are children and they are living in food insecure households, which means they have gone without food in the past year. One in five children are living in a house in which they miss out on meals because they are doing it tough. These are the people the government has been belting with this \$850 increase in fees and charges that people cannot avoid, especially if they have kids.

[Member’s time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to the Western Australian Council of Social Service’s “Cost of Living: 2018” report. They are not a bad bunch at WACOSS. I went down to see them and I have been to WACOSS functions. They are pretty sensible people and obviously extremely focused on people who need assistance. For the sake of brevity, I will not read the whole report, but the introduction poses a rhetorical question —

Has WA finally turned a corner since the end of the mining boom?

We hear reports that consumer confidence is high —

WACOSS must be listening to the government’s spin on this one. It continues —

the State’s credit rating is stable, a budget surplus is predicted for 2019/20, unemployment is down —

We will look at that one. It continues —

and speculation abounds that a lithium boom is on the horizon.

Hidden by these positive developments, however, is a very different story.

The report refers to the precariousness of employment and states that the unemployment rate for women has worsened. It continues —

More and more Western Australians are seeking assistance to pay their power bills and to put food on the table.

The reports refers to low wage growth exacerbating that situation. Under “Key findings of the 2018 Cost of Living Report”, the report highlights the significant impact of utility costs that have seen sizable increases. WACOSS knows what the problem is. I know that some members are close to WACOSS, but again it seems that although they are close to it and express interest in what it is saying, they are not listening. WACOSS is telling the government the problem and it is ignoring it.

A good article by Nathan Hondros on 5 June refers to the impact on the shopping strips of Perth that were once vibrant shopping areas. Why shops are closing down is not a mystery. The article highlights a number of issues, including the rising cost of living in Western Australia. It is not the rising cost of food; food prices, if anything, have gone down. It is not the rising cost of rent; rents have decreased. Do members know what the rising costs are? The rising costs are government fees and charges. Even the government’s good friend and keen supporter these days, Sandra Brewer, who is the WA executive director of the Property Council, can see that the economy is “pretty shaky” in her terms. She might be talking up the government and patting it on the back, but even she can see that the economy is very shaky. She highlighted the point that the negative equity in mortgages is adding to that.

I refer to my shadow portfolio of water. We have had a bit of byplay in this place on whether it is really cost reflective. In estimates hearings we went through some questions. I will go through it again because I think it is worthwhile to record it. I will talk about the money that is coming in from the Water Corporation because the Water Corporation is an independent corporation that funds all its own capital. It does not get any money out of Treasury. The government can play games with the net amount of the regional subsidy, but let us look at the cash

coming in over the forward estimates. In 2018–19, it is \$966 million; in 2019–20, it is \$981 million; in 2020–21, it is \$1.089 billion; in 2021–22, it will go up to \$1.178 billion; and in 2022–23, \$1.215 billion will come in. That is the money coming in. If we look at how that is justified, we see made-up things in the budget. Local government rates expenses are accounted for. The Water Corp does not pay any; it never has and never will. That is just cash coming into government. It is a way of hiding the dollars. Do members know how much income tax the Water Corporation pays? None. Funnily enough, being a government agency, none. The \$300 million to \$400 million over the forward estimates is just cash coming into government because the Water Corp does not pay any of that.

There is significant subsidisation of the regional water supplies. The government says that the Water Corp is not overcharging because the metropolitan users are covering the regional users. There is a bit of sort of agrarian socialism—sorry, Nationals WA members. It is a reasonable amount; it goes from \$400 million to \$500 million. We see this sleight of hand from the Treasurer and the government opposite. What is happening with that? Over the forward estimates, up to \$320 million of that will come out of royalties for regions. We have had a bit of byplay in this place about royalties for regions and so on, but what a fantastic program that was.

The Nationals obviously initiated that and we were good supporters and partners in that program. That program has helped to build this state. Karratha is a town in which people will want to live in the future. It is fantastic expenditure. It is probably the first time we have seen a genuine attempt in Western Australia to really develop our regional areas. I will tell members for free that if we are looking at the future of this state and ways to expand the economy in this state, developing the strength of the regional areas is the way to do it. We need to make regional areas places where people want to go with schools that people are confident are high-quality schools, good hospitals and safe and secure towns. That will grow our state economy. Royalties for regions is a fantastic program. We can argue about quantum and all those things, but the truth is that, overwhelmingly, the majority of that money has made the regions a better place to be and has helped to grow the state's economy. The members responsible for that deserve real congratulations.

Now we see this government sucking out the money into recurrent expenditure and into water. Over the forward estimates, that subsidy for regional water supplies will come out of royalties for regions money. Instead of developing critical infrastructure and schools and roads and making communities better, safer and nicer places to live where people want to take their families, it will go into that subsidy. The amount of money coming into Treasury from water users and the Water Corp will increase. In any case, net \$500 million is coming out of households and going into Treasury. Members can go through the budget papers and see that. The government can fiddle with it however it likes and call it whatever it likes. It can make up names for various things to try to hide the money.

As I said, the latest unemployment figure in Western Australia is 6.3 per cent, second only to that in Tasmania. Tasmania has an economy that struggles. It deliberately shut down its viable industries for green stupidity and now it is getting all its power from brown coal in Victoria and all its money from mining in Western Australia. Tasmania is struggling. We would have to say it is a basket case. We consider ourselves pretty good. Here we are with 6.3 per cent unemployment and we account for half of Australia's export income. What is going wrong? I will tell members what is going wrong. The Western Australian government does not understand how the economy works. It does not understand that its actions are crippling the economy. We saw this in stark focus yesterday. We had a debate in this place—I cannot believe we had the debate—in which the government said it would stop a major infrastructure project going ahead. It would have provided 4 000 jobs in this state, but the government will stop it. Why? Is it so that it can potentially get a struggling local member across the line at the next state election? It is mind-boggling. It is a \$1.2 billion investment. This government has come into this place with an urgent bill and kept us up to all hours of the morning. Members talk about treating people with disrespect. The bill can have no impact whatsoever until it is past the term of this government.

We have spent time in this place debating a bill that will stop a major project that would create thousands of jobs and reduce the cost of getting freight both out of and into this state. That would reduce the cost of goods and services for every person in this state. The government's stupidity in terminating a major freight route to Fremantle port, between a university, about 20 different medical institutes, a major emergency hospital and a major teaching hospital, is incomprehensible. I appreciated the contribution from my colleagues last night, because it gave us a good chance to elucidate our concerns. The government has said that it wants this state to move ahead. Nothing demonstrates the incompetence of this government more than that bill. I hope that bill goes somewhere else and disappears. That bill will cost jobs. It will put a burden on our state's economy. More people will become homeless. More people will struggle to pay their bills. The one in five households in which kids cannot get a meal because their parents are struggling will become two in five, or three in five. Is that what the government wants to happen?

I can tell the Treasurer that relying on existing mining operations is not a plan for the future. The simple fact is that the government is patting itself on the back for projects that it had nothing to do with, other than going through the normal approval process. The government says it is doing its job. Rubbish. The government is not doing anything. The government has put its foot on the throat of this economy. It is killing the domestic economy, with

Mr Bill Marmion; Dr David Honey; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti

stupid bills like the bill we dealt with in this place yesterday. We need a government that is serious about helping people. We need a government that is serious about a sensible use of the surplus. I understand that the government does not want to spend all the surplus because it recognises that some of that is ephemeral. However, we need a sensible use of the surplus. We do not need people to play politics and build a war chest for their last year of government. That is an important point. That will not help people who have lost their jobs, their homes and their families. It will not help the kids who go hungry at night because their parents cannot afford to feed them. Treasurer and members opposite, we need a sensible use of the surplus. We need the clever heads—there are clever heads on the other side—to think about how they can liberate the state economy and create jobs and employment so that this state is not the basket case of Australia, or the second basket case of Australia, but is leading Australia.

MRS A.K. HAYDEN (Darling Range) [5.02 pm]: I am delighted to support the motion moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and member for Nedlands —

That this house condemns the McGowan Labor government for increases of \$850 per year to electricity prices, water prices and car registration while taxpayers' money is being wasted on travel rorts, ministerial double dipping, cosy union deals, talkfests and other ill-conceived government expenditure.

The cost of living is front of mind for every Western Australian. It is the number one issue for every person across our state. Cost of living is front of mind for every fly in, fly out worker when they kiss their family goodbye, hop in a taxi to the airport, fly to work, and are away from their family and their home for one, two or three weeks, whatever their roster is. They are working to get the hard-earned cash that they need and that they sweat over to try to afford the mean-spirited cost increases that this Labor government has put on to every household in Western Australia. It is front of mind for every mother who, after dinner at night and when the kids have gone to bed, is trying to balance the chequebook to make sure she has enough money for school fees, to get her kids to sport—the government has also cut funding for the KidSport program—keep the power on, cover the car registration so that she can take her kids to school and to the doctor, and can feed her kids. We do not want a situation in which, as the member for Cottesloe said, Foodbank is feeding one in every five households because they cannot afford to put food on the table.

Mr W.J. Johnston: That's not what he said.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: I am talking about Foodbank. The minister might want to read the report.

Cost of living is front of mind for every Western Australian every night when they go to bed and every morning when they wake up. It is front of mind for our seniors. Our seniors are struggling. Their confidence has gone. They are being held hostage in their own home because they cannot afford to go out. They are not putting on the heater in winter because they cannot afford the electricity bill. It is front of mind for our young people. This state's youth unemployment rate is the second highest in the country. Young people cannot get jobs. Household fees and charges have increased by \$850 a year under the stewardship of the McGowan Labor government. The government has had three budgets in which it could have tried to assist Western Australian families. However, instead of doing that, it has chosen to hurt them. Western Australians leave their families every day to get hard-earned cash, only to have this government take it out of their back pockets through the increases in power and water charges and car registration fees. That is hurting vulnerable families, seniors and young people. We have spoken in this house about the 10.9 per cent increase in the electricity supply charge. That leaves families and households with no ability to reduce their power bill, even if they turn off the lights or the heater. The government is reaching straight into the handbags and wallets of Western Australians and taking their hard-earned cash.

The increase in water charges has been highlighted by the shadow Minister for Water, the member for Cottesloe. The rhetoric of the Premier and the WA Labor government is that they are attacking only the rich. For some reason, they hate the rich. Members opposite need to look at their own bank account, because they are actually in that category. It is not a tax on the rich. It affects vulnerable families. It particularly affects families who live on a large property. Many of those families live in my electorate of Darling Range. They have a large property, so of course their water usage will be higher.

Dr D.J. Honey: We also have large families.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: Yes. The reason many households have a large family is that children are moving back home with their parents and taking their kids with them, because they cannot afford the increases in household bills, so three generations are living in the same house. If three generations are living in the same house, of course their water bill will be higher. The government now wants to slug them again. They are not rich. They are hardworking, honest Western Australians who are just trying to make ends meet. If we listen to the Labor Party, it is all about the rich. It is not about hardworking Western Australians.

This state has the second highest unemployment rate in the country. This government went to the election promising jobs, jobs, jobs. Please! How many photos did we see of Labor candidates with their red "WA Labor Plan for Jobs" slogan, saying that is what they will deliver? Where is the government's promise to create 50 000 jobs? It has not been delivered. The government said there would be no new taxes and no new fees, and it would deliver

jobs. The government has delivered the wrong thing. The government did not deliver jobs, and it has increased taxes and fees.

Western Australian families are absolutely struggling. Government members are not listening to them. We just heard the member for Cottesloe quote the Western Australian Council of Social Service; the very community body that represents vulnerable people in our society. It reports a problem with the cost of living, but the government is not listening. Foodbank of Western Australia reported how hard it is to keep up with the demand of getting food out to families. Demands on Foodbank have gone through the roof.

Our voluntary charitable organisations have been put under extreme pressure because this government will not help our community. Instead, this government wants to take their money. I have been out and spoken to Vinnies, the Salvos and Foodbank. All of those organisations have seen a massive increase in demand and they are struggling to keep up with it. They are doing the government's job. Communities in Western Australia—our families, seniors and hardworking individuals—are struggling to find employment. If they have employment, they are being underemployed. The number of part-time jobs has increased. Instead of people having full-time jobs, they are now underemployed. These people are earning less money. Income is lower. The government keeps putting up the bills despite people receiving less income.

On top of all that, house prices are falling. People go to bed at night thinking about how they are going to pay their kids' school fees or buy footy boots for their son so he is not embarrassed when he goes out to play sport on Saturday because he wants to look like the rest of the crew, and now property values are dropping. That is the nest egg for every household. People in Western Australia put all their money into buying a home and then save like crazy to pay the mortgage. But when property values drop, the mortgage does not, and that causes a lot of panic, heartache and stress. Families are in financial and emotional stress. The pressure on families is enormous. This WA Labor government under Premier McGowan is ignoring them.

Western Australia also has the highest number of negatively geared properties in the country and high levels of mortgage default. People cannot keep up with their mortgage payments and are losing their homes. What happens when people lose homes? They move in with family if they can. What happens when they are hit with a high water bill or they end up living in their car? I have had conversations with a number of people in my electorate who are living in their car. They are extremely proud people. They are not advertising the fact that they are doing that. They are not knocking on doors saying, "Hey, I'm homeless. Add up your homeless stats." They just want to go under the radar, hoping they can get back on their feet by getting a job, saving money and finding a rental property to move into without anyone knowing that they have been homeless. These are the quiet, vulnerable individuals and families in the community whom everyone on the government side should be completely concerned about. If they are not, they should be completely embarrassed about the way they are conducting themselves as a so-called responsible government looking after the people of Western Australia.

The number of small businesses going bankrupt has gone up. Fees and charges have also increased. Those fees and charges do not just apply to families; they also apply to small business. Twenty thousand households had their power disconnected because people cannot pay their bills. Twenty thousand homes in Western Australia have lost power. Their lights are off, their heaters are off and their ovens are off because of this government's electricity increases. That is 20 000 homes! If government members are not embarrassed about that, they all need to walk out the door and find another job!

What is affecting families? What do they think about when they go to bed at night and when they wake up in the morning? They are scared that they are going to lose their home. Seniors are feeling vulnerable—there is no security net and no safety. They are hostages in their own home. They are not putting the heater on; they are just putting on another blanket, if they have one. They are cutting down on food because they are trying to make ends meet.

Fewer children are involved in sport. Cuts to the KidSport program have affected many families in my electorate of Darling Range. Cutting funding from cadets and Girl Guides has alienated a whole section of young people. Not everybody is a sportsman or sportswoman. Not everybody wants to kick a football or throw a netball. A huge number of people in my electorate like to go camping. They would like to become a cadet. They would also like to belong to the Scouts or Girl Guides. They are the very people who stand proud on Anzac Day. They stand overnight protecting the Anzac war memorial, proudly running our Anzac Day services, yet this mean-spirited WA Labor government is cutting funds that enable families to let their children participate in important programs like the cadets.

Members have just heard all the negatives about how families, individuals and seniors are feeling in Western Australia. How does this government respond? It cut the seniors rebate and put a cap on it. It then added a 180-day waiting list to the very program that is to assist people in hardship—the hardship utility grant scheme. The government is not supporting Foodbank. It is not listening to WACOSS. At the same time that it is taking money from hardworking Western Australians, it is receiving the biggest revenue it had ever expected to receive. The government got a massive windfall by gaining billions of dollars from the federal Liberal Morrison government,

with the GST fix. It is receiving millions of dollars from higher iron ore prices. On top of that, government members stand here slapping each other on the back saying, “Our best friend, Prime Minister Scott Morrison, has funded a whole pile of projects. We’re best friends with Prime Minister Scott Morrison”, as he hands over millions and millions of dollars to implement important road infrastructure. But what has the government done with it? It has put it in the bank, alongside money it has stolen from mums and dads, nannas and pops, and hardworking fly in, fly out workers. That money has been put in the bank. The government has stashed it away like squirrels waiting for winter! Like *Game of Thrones*, winter is here! It is not coming; it is here. It is time to put out the nuts. Stop squirrelling it away and start giving it to the community, which needs it. Stop taking money out of the pockets of hardworking Western Australians.

On top of that, what is the government doing with the money? While hardworking Western Australians are struggling to keep their electricity on, pay their mortgage, get their kids into sport, or pay the water bill, what else is the government spending its money on? I will tell members what it is spending its money on—jetsetting around the world, sipping champagne in business class, on hard-earned cash from Western Australians. On 21 June, the Minister for Agriculture and Food flew to Doha for a one-day meeting! She also flew her chief of staff so that, heaven forbid, she did not actually have to take notes herself! The minister took her chief of staff, and it cost \$4 907 of hard-earned dollars from Western Australians. Do members know what families could do with \$4 907? They could pay all their bills. Because they are good with their money, they would probably save some. Members, why did the minister have a one-day meeting in Doha? She was on her way to a European holiday. How wonderful for the minister to go on a European holiday paid for by taxpayers. Not just taxpayers—WA families. Mums and dads and nannas and pops paid for the minister’s European holiday. People in my electorate would only dream of going on a European holiday. I can only dream of going on a European holiday! Here we have ministers with their snout in the trough, sipping champagne in business class, travelling on the hard-earned cash of Western Australians. This is what they are doing with their money. The other thing is that all this expenditure has to be approved by someone. Guess who approves these trips? The Premier approves the spending by these ministers of Western Australians’ hard-earned cash. Back in February, the Premier himself spent \$12 000 on a 30-minute meeting.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: He was meeting with the New South Wales Liberal transport minister. The real reason he was there was to attend a fundraiser for the New South Wales Labor Party. Tickets were selling for \$3 000 to sit with the Premier, and the funds went to the New South Wales Labor Party. Western Australian families paid for the Premier to go over and raise money for New South Wales Labor. I am sure they will be really happy with that. They are wasting the hard-earned money of Western Australians on trips to go and fundraise for the Labor Party. I do not know whether the Premier has ever heard of a phone, or whether he is actually aware that there is a facility in Dumas House to enable videoconferencing with people who are not in this state, so the government can save \$12 000 on a 30-minute meeting. That is the whole point of having a videoconference. It is called modern technology. Welcome to the new age. Videoconference instead of \$12 000—I know what I would rather see, and I know what the Western Australian public would rather see.

At the same time, I believe that tomorrow three ministers will be out at a ministerial council. I am not quite sure where it is, but I know that it is interstate, so I am guessing that it will cost a business class airfare for each minister and a staffer or two —

Dr A.D. Buti: You are obviously saying that we should abolish them.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: No. Plus accommodation, plus food, plus flights when they have a videoconference in Dumas House where they can sit there and do that. They are missing Parliament, which is what people elect them to do and jet setting off on Western Australians’ hard-earned cash. This does not pass the pub test, and members who think it does are out of touch. I dare any member who is about to open their mouth to walk into their local pub or cafe and say, “Are you okay with my Premier spending \$12 000 on a 30-minute meeting?” I dare them to ask anyone; they will say no—absolutely not.

On top of that, we saw the member for West Swan and the Minister for Education and Training jet set off to Sydney for \$30 000 for a one-night trip on education, and guess what? They did not meet with or visit one school. It was an education trip, but schools—who needs those? They spent \$30 000 on an education trip, and they did not even visit a school. Again, hardworking Western Australians’ hard-earned cash is paying for them to go business class, sipping champagne; \$30 880 was spent on one night, to not visit one school—two ministers and four staff. Again, there is a phone and there is a videoconference centre that is set up in Dumas House to help the government save money. If members opposite do not know where it is, I am sure the member for Dawesville might be able to give them some guidance on how to find that videoconference centre on a map of Dumas House.

I know that other members want to speak, and I have gone over my time already, so I may leave the double dipping to someone else. However, I just cannot go past this without saying that, again, Western Australians’ hard-earned

cash has gone on those whom I call repeat offenders, who spent \$30 000 to go to Sydney. They also double dipped on their car allowance, getting paid a car allowance at the same time as having a ministerial car and a driver. Here cabinet ministers were receiving an allowance of between \$25 000 and \$42 000 a year, at the same time as being given a driver and a car. What did the Premier say? They do not need to pay it back. Not one cent was paid back. Do members know how many ministers double dipped, taking more hard-earned cash out of the pockets of hardworking Western Australians? They were the Deputy Premier, Hon Roger Cook; the Leader of the House in the Legislative Council, Hon Sue Ellery, who is a repeat offender; the Minister for Corrective Services, Hon Fran Logan; the Attorney General, Hon John Quigley; the former Minister for Commerce, back then, when he was double dipping, Hon Bill Johnston; the other repeat offender, the Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti; the Minister for Housing, Hon Peter Tinley; the Minister for Water, Hon Dave Kelly; and the Minister for Child Protection, Hon Simone McGurk. That is nine ministers who double dipped and did not pay back one cent. They should be absolutely ashamed, and they should never be able to stand up in this place and say, “We care about Western Australians’ hard-earned dollars; we care about every working Western Australia, and we’re there to look after them” because all they are doing is robbing them blind.

How did we get this information? Remember, members opposite went to the election on a promise of rolled gold transparency. The government would not give the information to the media when asked. We had to drill down and get this out of parliamentary questions. This is how we got the answers; the government was not forthcoming and would not talk to the media. Rolled gold transparency is out the window once again.

I am sure other members will talk about some other issues, such as the promise of increases in police pay.

Quorum

Ms L. METTAM: Madam Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Mr M.P. Murray: Thank goodness for that!

Several members interjected.

Mr M.P. Murray: I thought I would go and get a Disprin.

Mr W.J. Johnston: We didn’t want to hear it either.

[Quorum formed.]

Debate Resumed

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know the truth hurts, minister.

Mr W.J. Johnston: We didn’t call the quorum.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: The minister said that he did not like listening to the truth, and that is what is sad. He does not like listening to the truth that Western Australians are struggling, families are doing it tough and seniors are doing it tough. While they are doing it tough, the government is just slugging them with increased fees and taxes, and taking the money out of their pockets. Confidence has dropped. They are losing their homes. Homelessness is up and job security is down. The Western Australian community is not feeling proud, confident and comfortable right now. The government’s reaction is to cut the assistance programs. We have the second highest unemployment in the country, and the government is stopping projects such as Roe 8/9 that will deliver instant jobs. The Minister for Transport said the workers are already employed. A lot of people not employed are looking for work. There are a lot of unemployed people out there, willing and able to help the government build Roe 8 and Roe 9.

Mr M. Hughes: Did you fly business class last week?

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: On the CPA conference?

Mr M. Hughes: Oh, you did, did you? I wonder who paid for that—the Western Australian taxpayer?

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: Did your member go?

Mr M. Hughes: Well there you go—the pot calls itself black.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: Be very careful. With huge revenue flows for GST coming through, the government has done nothing. It has squirrelled it away. There is a huge income from iron ore revenue being squirrelled away, and huge revenue from the Liberal federal funding of infrastructure, which can produce massive amounts of jobs, being squirrelled away. There are power cuts—20 000 homes across Western Australia with their power off because they cannot afford the government’s increased bills. While Labor ministers have their snouts in the trough, they are hurting Western Australians every single day. This Labor government is hurting WA families, seniors, hardworking Western Australians, mums and dads, nannas and pops, fly in, fly out workers leaving their families every day. The government simply does not care, and does not give them a second thought when they are out there double dipping.

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MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [5.29 pm]: I am sad that the member for Darling Range sat down. I really should have given her an extension of time. There is a provision in the standing orders that would have given her an extension of time. What a ridiculous set of commentary! I will come back to her. I want to deal with the member for Cottesloe first.

The member for Cottesloe talked about the member for Carine's dedication to homelessness on behalf of the Liberal Party. I want to remind people here about the Liberal Party's attitude to homelessness. On 7 April 2011, we were in here discussing the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Special Powers) Bill—members might remember that. I asked what the government was going to do about dealing with the homeless people who were going to be caught in the net that was being created by the CHOGM bill. I had this to-and-fro with the Liberal Party's Minister for Police. In the end, I asked, "What arrangements are going to be made for homeless people?" He replied —

I will get a tent and a cushion—I mean, what a stupid question!

That is the Liberal Party's attitude to homelessness.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: Who said that?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Liberal Party Minister for Police.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: Who was it?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Liberal Party Minister for Police—that is who it was.

Several members interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I did not interject on these idiots; why are they interjecting on me?

Point of Order

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: I am not sure—I am seeking Madam Deputy Speaker's clarification—whether it is appropriate to call members of Parliament "idiots".

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. It has been used very often in this house before, as far as I can remember, but I take your point. I remind the minister to watch his language in the house, please.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Certainly, I will. I look forward to being heard in silence, in the same way as I made no interjections on members of the Liberal Party when they were wasting the Parliament's time by saying the same things over and over and over again. Just because a member says the same sentence for 30 minutes does not make it true. This is what happens. They get up; they have about five sentences; they say it, and then they say it again and again. It does not make it true. Let us get back to this. That is the Liberal Party's attitude to homelessness.

The member for Cottesloe talked about the member for Carine's dedication to homelessness, so I went downstairs and had a look at the member for Carine's speeches in *Hansard*. The member for Carine and I were elected on the same day; we have been in Parliament since 2008. I had a look at how many times he referred to homelessness. In 2008, he never referred to it. In 2009, never. In 2010, never. In 2011, he referred to it once, on 25 May, when he congratulated the government for sorting out homelessness in the Perth CBD. In 2012, never. In 2013, never. In 2014, never. In 2015, on 13 August, again, he congratulated the Liberal government for sorting out homelessness. In 2016, he referred to it once, when he gave a 90-second statement about a not-for-profit organisation. In 2017, never. In 2018, again, he referred to homelessness once, when he gave congratulations to a not-for-profit. Then, suddenly, in 2019, he becomes interested in homelessness. He has been in Parliament for 11 years and he never noticed homelessness—never objected when the Liberal Party was attacking homelessness in the CBD. I am really pleased that after 11 years in Parliament, he now understands that homelessness is a problem. I congratulate him. It has taken him only 11 years. That is disgraceful behaviour. It is not that he is trying to solve the problem—he is not actually doing that. He is not even going to homeless people in his own electorate, which would be helpful. He should go and see some of the homeless people who live in the bushland in his own electorate! He does not do that. He gets in a car, and for the first time in 20 years, he goes south of the river to Rockingham to meet a homeless person. How many thousands of homeless people did he pass to get to Rockingham? What a bloody disgrace. He and the member for Cottesloe expect us to take them seriously on homelessness. How many homeless people has the member for Cottesloe talked to in his own electorate, such as the people living rough along the beachfront there?

Dr D.J. Honey: Many.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What has he done about it? In eight and a half years, nothing. They did nothing. I can tell a story about a homeless person in my electorate who came to see me for help. At the same time as the Liberal Party was saying that it would get a tent and a cushion, I was helping him get his life back on track, because that is what happens. Unlike the Liberal Party, whose members have to drive for 35 kilometres to find a homeless person, past thousands of others, we respect people who have a hard life.

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One thing that the former government did that it should be congratulated for is build St Bartholomew's House. But let me make it clear: the reason my constituent could not go to St Bartholomew's House is that he had a pet. A homeless person cannot go into a shelter if they have a pet. He did not want to give up his dog. These are genuine issues. The member should not come in here and pretend that after 11 years in Parliament, he is prepared to drive 35 kilometres, past thousands of homeless people, to get to one in the Premier's electorate, and now he wants us to respect him. What a joke! Where was the member for Carine when Liberal Party members were standing in here saying that they would get him a tent and a cushion?

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: When Rob Johnson said that in Parliament.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, the Liberal Party. Will the member for Dawesville tell me whether he went in the private jet to Canberra with the former Premier?

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: No.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, he did not. One of the challenges that the Western Australian government now has is that the former Premier used to get in a private jet and fly to Canberra and then say that there was not enough money in Western Australia. Then there is the stupid line from the member for Darling Range that we are banking cash. We have a massive debt—\$40 billion of debt. We have to pay that back before we can put money in the bank. Guess what, member for Darling Range? When the Liberal Party won government in 2008, there were billions of dollars in the bank. The general government sector had financial assets. Let us get that understood. The government of Western Australia—not the government trading enterprises; the budget part, the general government sector—was in surplus to the extent that it had cash in the bank. The government at that time was paying for all its infrastructure, new roads and new schools with cash. It was not borrowing money. That was an extraordinary achievement. When income for the government of Western Australia went up by 50 per cent, it took that \$3 billion of cash and turned it into \$30 billion of debt. It is just bizarre. When the Liberal Party came to government, the ratio of debt between the government trading enterprises and the general government sector was that 100 per cent of the debt was with the GTEs. The former government drove that down to less than 20 per cent of the debt being with the GTEs—that means 80 per cent was being paid for by taxes. That is how debt service went from zero to \$1.2 billion. We spent \$1.5 billion on police. The former Liberal government drove the debt service figure up to \$1.2 billion. That is money that is just given away to foreign investors. For crying out loud! I pity the Liberal Party at the moment, because this is the quality of contribution from that side. There is no political debate in Western Australia. There is no political argument, because one side does not understand where to start the discussion. It is so economically illiterate that it does not even participate in the debate. It is extraordinary. The shadow Treasurer still does not understand that the debt held by the government trading enterprises does not form part of the government's debt service obligations. The government trading enterprise debt is paid for by the government trading enterprises out of their revenue. The debt service obligations are only in respect of the debt serviced by taxpayers, the general government sector. I have been trying to explain this to the member for Bateman for six years. He still does not understand it. How can we have a debate about economic activity and the economic performance of the government when the opposition does not even understand the budget papers? It is unbelievable that the opposition had a former minister lead off the debate when, apparently, despite all those years as a minister, he never read his own budget papers. He never read budget paper No 3 and never looked at the tables. He should look at the tables about the general government sector and the total public sector. It is all set out. There is even a little chart at the back of budget paper No 3 showing the relationship between the government trading enterprises and the general government sector. It is just a little chart showing the arrows going in and out.

Sorry, Deputy Speaker; I forgot to say that I was the lead speaker for the government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay; thank you.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am sorry; I did not realise.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I nearly stopped you to check.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: My apologies. The Treasurer was to be the lead speaker but was not able to because he is not available after dinner. Because the Liberal Party put up an extra speaker, he has been —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have full confidence that the situation is retrievable.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes; excellent. Thank you.

The member for Bateman does not even have to read the numbers. He can look at the little diagram and it explains how that works. Once he has done that, he can come and sit with me. I am happy to sit with him in the bar with the tables and explain stuff. There was no point in him coming in here and spending two hours of the Parliament's time without knowing what he was raising. It is just ridiculous.

I remember when the member for Carine accused me of double dipping because my wife is the President of the Legislative Council. It reminded me of when I was first elected to Parliament and Colin Barnett, as Premier, said that I should not get a car because my wife had a car. Because my wife and I both work, that is somehow double dipping!

Mr P. Papalia: New-age man.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is the same argument the member for Carine made. He argued that I should not get the salary that applies to my office because my wife gets a salary that applies to her office. In this chamber, members opposite described that as double dipping. That was not a question asked of me, because they were not brave enough to have a go at me; they asked the question of the Premier. They accused me and my wife of double dipping because we had both been elected to senior roles in society. I am not famous as a feminist, member for Morley, but I think it is a disgrace that a wife and a husband should be judged on the same criteria, as though she is my chattel. This double-dipping rubbish that comes up from the other side of Parliament is outrageous.

They are talking about what happened in December 2016 when Colin Barnett and the Liberal Party were in government and the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal changed the rules that applied to ministers. Quite frankly, I had no idea that was the case. When we came to government, I had a car and I was given a car. I still had my car, which I own and I pay for, and I was given a car. I had no idea that that would become an issue of controversy. When the Premier realised it, he wrote to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal and asked it to cancel the decision it had made for Colin Barnett when he was the Premier. That is what happened. The idea that there was double dipping is simply wrong. The reason no money was repaid was that there was no overpayment of entitlements. That was the entitlement that the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal applied. We asked for it to be reduced.

It is interesting that, at the same time, the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal also changed the way our imprest travel allowance is treated. As it happens, I have used every cent of my imprest travel allowance to go on an overseas tour. I went to Harvard University and did a week-long program called strategic management of regulatory affairs. It was presented by an outstanding professor. Professor Sparrow is considered the leading person on regulatory issues in the world. Because I was the Minister for Commerce and, at that time, Minister for Mines and Petroleum, which has a regulatory function, I thought it was valuable for me to do that course. In accordance with the rules applied to imprest travel allowances—we can pay for course fees as well as travel—I did the course. It was a very expensive course. If I did not have the imprest allowance, I would not have done it. But that is what the imprest allowance is for. I have now declared what I did with my travel.

In 2017, the member for Dawesville asked me in estimates whether I would take him to Asia when I was the Minister for Asian Engagement, and I suggested he use his imprest travel allowance to do that.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: We don't have imprest travel.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, opposition members do. It is in their allowance.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Okay, but the point I am making is that I look forward to hearing what the member for Dawesville learnt on his travel.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: It is a travel allowance. They are not imprest allowances.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is the same thing.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: They're not called the same thing; it's called a travel allowance.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, it is. The member for Dawesville should go and look at the decision; it is still called "imprest travel".

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: We have to declare imprest, though.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is still imprest travel. Again, it is one of those things that former Premier Colin Barnett wanted done. They were the two changes that were made when the Liberal Party was in government.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: It took effect from March 2017.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, I know, but the point is that none of us on this side of the chamber was involved in any of those decisions. We found there was an issue about the car I own and my car allowance, because I own a car and I was given a car that I use occasionally, which is the ministerial car. Let me make it clear: I still get a driver. It is bizarre, but I have my own car, which I pay for, and I have to have a driver to drive my car. It is really strange. I like driving—as people may know, I am a revhead—and I have to sit in my little hot hatch and have a government driver drive it. It is strange, but that is the way it works now. I walk to a lot of places in the city so I do not use the driver all the time. Last year, when I was still just Minister for Mines and Petroleum, I went to Collie to see the coalmines and went to Alcoa on the way back. I drove myself, because, heck, getting to drive

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those country roads was fun. Why would I want a government driver to do that? The point is that all we get is exactly what the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal said we should get. That was a bizarre attack.

For the member for Darling Range to tell ministers not to go to the dinner before the Council of Australian Governments meetings shows her inexperience. The business is done at the dinner. All former ministers would tell us not to miss the dinner. If we miss the dinner, we have been done over. They are private dinners. I would, but I cannot, tell some really interesting stories that we hear at the dinner. Her argument was that we could do it via Skype. How ridiculous! That would result in us being cut out of the real deals that are done on the night before COAG. It is one of the challenges of living in Western Australia, because it is hard to get from here to the east coast in time for a six o'clock dinner. We have to leave at lunchtime, which is one of the complaints of the member for Darling Range, because ministers miss question time on Thursday. Yes, we do, because if we do not, we get done over at COAG and Western Australia is not properly represented. Every former minister on that side of the chamber can tell us that. The member for Darling Range was a member of the executive of the former government as a parliamentary secretary. It is embarrassing that she is prepared to come in here and say stupid things like that. Then she asks us to take her seriously. For crying out loud, if the member did not act silly, she would be taken seriously.

It is unacceptable behaviour from these people. Where is the apology? Unlike the Liberal Party, which is already claiming victory, I do not know what the result of the next election will be. As I have said before to the Liberal Party, I do not see its pathway to victory without an apology. It is like when we talk about \$40 billion of debt. The member for Bateman says, "No, it's only \$34 billion of debt." That is his defence? Apologise and move on.

Now there is this silly thing. I want to make it clear that the Community and Public Sector Union—Civil Service Association of WA, the union representing state public servants, is not an affiliate of the Labor Party and never has been. This idea that it is a Labor Party mate is ridiculous. It is not an affiliate. In fact, at the 2008 election it ran campaigns against us. It ran ads against Alan Carpenter and helped Colin Barnett get elected. I remember going to see the secretary and the assistant secretary of the union and giving them a copy of the bloody Labor Party internal polling and saying, "You're wasting your money. We're not going to win; Colin Barnett is going to win. Change your ads." The idea that it is a Labor mate is factually wrong.

The next thing is this idea of a cosy union deal. Last week the Leader of the Opposition said that we should give an extra \$800 million in salaries to the members of the unions that we are negotiating with and then this week she criticised us for making small adjustments around the edge of entitlements. So \$800 million is good, but a small amount of money is bad. That is what members opposite are saying. It is just ridiculous. As I say, they have to get their line and length right and then go on that attack. There is no cosy union deal. We are desperate to keep our wages policy in order because it is a cornerstone of the recovery of the finances of the state. It is not because we want to say no to trade unions. It is because we need to say no to trade unions. The hardest thing in government is to say no to friends, and that is what we are doing. We are saying no to the police union because it wants a six per cent wage rise. We cannot afford that. I am still not quite sure whether the opposition wants us to give that six per cent wage rise to the police. It is crazy stuff. When it acts seriously, it will be taken seriously.

It is not true that 20 000 houses are currently without power. It is just incorrect. It is not based on fact. The idea that 40 per cent of families sought food assistance in Western Australia is not true. That is not in the report that was referred to by the member for Cottesloe. The member for Darling Range said that 40 per cent of Western Australian families had sought food assistance. That is not true. Nowhere is that statistic present in the report that was referred to by the member for Cottesloe. It is just a made-up statistic.

Mr R.R. Whitby interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: Let's talk about what happened in Baldivis.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Let us talk about what happened in Dawesville, the safe Liberal seat that was nearly lost even though the Labor Party did not even run a campaign. That is how good the member for Dawesville is!

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We ran a candidate with a very small set of resources because we could not spread ourselves too thinly, and she nearly won. She nearly beat him. The Liberal Party ran third in Baldivis. Let us understand that. The member for Dawesville is crowing about getting less than 15 per cent of the vote. That was the great success of the Liberal Party at the 2017 election! The member is criticising the member for Baldivis, who got two and a half times the number of votes of the Liberal Party in that seat.

Mr R.R. Whitby: At least, or more.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am talking about primary votes.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup interjected.

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Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member for Dawesville raised it. He interjected. He leads with his chin all the time. As he gets more experience, he will get better.

Members have also referred to ill-considered government expenditure. We have not heard one comment about what they are referring to. Are they saying that the widening of the Kwinana Freeway was ill-considered? Are they saying that the extension of the freeway to the north was ill-considered?

Mr R.R. Whitby interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: They did not fund it. They did not care about it.

Mr P. Papalia: Dualling Armadale Road.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Dualling Armadale Road, fixing the bridges across the freeway at Cockburn, building new train stations and the whole Metronet scheme are all things that they are saying were ill-conceived government expenditure. The Karratha–Tom Price road was something the Liberals never did in government.

Mr P. Papalia: The Albany ring-road.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Albany ring-road and the Bunbury Outer Ring Road are things that the Liberal Party is opposed to. Members opposite are saying that these expenditures were ill-conceived. It is ridiculous.

The member for Darling Range made some great play about the fact that we have increased the fixed daily charge for electricity supply. I make the point that that was the plan of the Liberal Party. Lyndon Rowe was the highest paid chair of any government agency in Western Australia. I think he was getting about \$600 000 as chair of Synergy. It might have been a little bit more or a little bit less, but it was a heck of a lot of money for a part-time job. I will quote his comments made on ABC radio on 1 December 2015 —

“The basic problem we have is that of the electricity that’s delivered to the home, about 80 per cent of it is fixed cost, about 20 per cent is variable,” Mr Rowe said.

“On the other hand, the tariff you pay—about 20 per cent is related to the fixed charge and about 80 per cent is variable, so it’s the reverse.

“What that means is that there are a number of cross subsidies in the tariff structure, so either people being subsidised by other users or people being subsidised by taxpayers.”

The point I am making is that that is the exact issue that the former government said that it wanted to address. When the member for Riverton was the Minister for Energy, he talked about bill reform on a number of occasions. As the shadow minister, I used to say that I would not support something that was unfair on low-income earners. What I am saying and make clear is that as long as low-income earners are looked after, bill restructuring has many advantages. When was the last time anybody in this room paid for a phone call on their mobile phone? Nobody pays for phone calls on their mobile phone. People pay a subscription charge to use the phone and then they use data and the phone. There might be some cap, but I do not know anybody who ever reaches the cap on their calls. That is a new approach to charging.

The government has been trialling that approach to electricity billing with 100 Horizon Power customers. This system has been widely received. Those consumers agree in advance on how much electricity they will use as a peak load and they pay a fee based on that level of draw on the system and then they pay 10¢ a unit for the use of the electricity. The overwhelming majority of the customers on that trial program have received lower bills and they have more control over their costs because they can agree in advance on their costs. That is just a trial. We will examine what we can do with that trial in the future. As I say, it applies only to Horizon because Horizon has advanced metering infrastructure and therefore can accommodate the needs of that more complicated charging system. We are not going to roll it out across the state until we know that it will provide a benefit to consumers. Let me make it clear that that work builds on the Solar Cities project run by the former government in 2012 in the suburb of Bassendean. It is not like it has just fallen out of the sky. These issues have been looked at and discussed, because there are a lot of advantages in people being able to control their electricity bill. If there is a more modern charging structure, people do not get bill shock because they can control how much they have to pay to use electricity. That is another example of the way this government is approaching the electricity system.

One in four people in Western Australia now have solar panels. I note that the member for Nedlands talked about the cost of solar panels. Interestingly, the reason that the cost of solar panels in Australia is so low is that there is a green subsidy that is paid for by the commonwealth government. It is called the Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme. The total value of the carbon abatement for the installation of solar panels for the life of the solar panels is paid to the installer when they install the panels on the roof. The member for Swan Hills, with her strong background in the energy sector, can probably tell members a lot more about this issue than I can. The point is that it is amusing that members of the Liberal Party are complaining about green subsidies, but they do not even realise

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that the reason that solar panels are so cheap is the green subsidies. How can we give more people access to solar panels? Again, it is a live issue for the government.

These are genuine issues. Instead of just coming in here and screaming the same six sentences over and over again for half an hour, members opposite should go away and do a bit of work. The Premier is right; this is the laziest opposition in the state's history. There they are sit, doing no work, having no idea —

Ms A. Sanderson: Making the same speech.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: — and stating the same speech. It is not only the same speech, member for Morley. The problem is that it is the same set of sentences over and over again. There is no content. Even in the one speech, it is just the same thing. Just because members say it loudly does not make it true.

I get how hard it is to raise a family because I have done it.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Welcome back, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr S.J. Price)! I am sure you have had an enjoyable day, working hard on behalf of the people of Forrestfield.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I certainly have been!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Excellent.

As I was just getting warmed up before the dinner break, I want to continue to make some remarks on this motion moved by the opposition. Unfortunately, the member for Dawesville is on parliamentary duties elsewhere in the building, and —

Dr D.J. Honey: We'll pass it on to him!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am sure he will read *Hansard*! I am always amused when Liberal Party members say that it has always been the leader in social reform. I want to provide just one example of the things that used to get talked about. On 27 November 2002, the former member for Cottesloe was talking about the then Gallop government, and he said —

This Government is more interested in gay pride than it is in state pride.

I think that shows the truth, and I hope the member for Dawesville takes account of those comments.

I was interested to hear the current member for Cottesloe's contribution in respect of the water portfolio. The Minister for Water has on a number of occasions pointed out to the member for Cottesloe that the Water Corporation has always been a profitable state-owned enterprise for the people of this state. I remind the member that the 2019–20 budget is the first in Western Australia in five years to show a surplus, and contained the lowest increase in average household water bills in more than a decade. That just shows that a government can be cognisant of cost pressures on families while still delivering a state budget surplus. The idea that governments cannot do both is wrong.

Water charges in 2019–20 will increase by 2.5 per cent, and I am sure there is nobody who welcomes that 2.5 per cent increase; I do not. The point I am making is that that is considerably lower than the rate of increase under the former government. For example, in 2011–12 the previous government increased water charges by 8.5 per cent. Governments can deliver low price increases to households in acknowledgement of the cost pressures they face, while still prioritising spending in key service delivery areas; building job-creating infrastructure, as the government is with its record infrastructure spend in Western Australia; and maintaining responsible financial management.

It is interesting that over the period of the former Liberal–National government, water charges went up by 61 per cent. Of course, had the last government won the 2017 election, it would have increased water charges by six per cent over the last two years. The McGowan government has worked hard to reduce the expected increases the former government had left in the budget while at the same time restraining growth in debt. We all understand the dangers of uncontrolled debt in this state. Remember that former Premier Barnett, the former member for Cottesloe, said that debt should not be allowed go past \$20 billion. Of course, the former government actually planned to double that amount. That was the challenge left to us by the last government's budget management. We are doing our best to try to keep costs down. We acknowledge that all cost increases are difficult for all families and pensioners in this state, but we are not going to return to the last government's profligate ways that required such massive increases in water charges.

I also note that the Minister for Water has been working very hard with the Water Corporation to find new ways to assist people in financial difficulty to pay their water bills. The Water Corp has a financial inclusion action plan designed to assist people on low incomes to cope with the financial situation that they may confront. Under the member for Bassendean, as Minister for Water, in this first term of the McGowan government, the Water Corporation now has three new programs—medical assist, start over and time assist—to help those in need. The minister is to be congratulated for the hard work he is doing in finding solutions to the challenges of the Water Corporation, and

the community, in dealing with their cost pressures across everything that they do in the community. I think we all understand that the consumer price index does not always reflect the costs faced by individual families in this state. Even though the CPI figure is very low at the moment, we know that cost pressures on families are actually higher than that and we want to restrain our costs, and we are doing our best to do that. We are always looking for other ways that we can take pressure off families, pensioners and others in our community because we understand, often from our own personal experiences, the needs of ordinary people in Western Australia.

It is remarkable that over 200 families a month were being disconnected from the water system during the period of the former government. That number has been much reduced by the hard work of the Minister for Water during the period of the current government. I know that the Minister for Water will continue to show his dedication, on behalf of the community, to do his best to assist families and others to deal with their water bills.

I note that the shadow minister's plan is to adopt the Economic Regulation Authority's proposal for drainage and sewerage charges that would see a reduction in charges for people living in the western suburbs, like those he represents in the Parliament, but an increase in charges for those of us who represent communities in the eastern suburbs.

I know the agenda that the member for Cottesloe, the shadow minister, brings to this area whereby he wants to see costs on high-value properties decreased and costs on low-value properties increased.

Dr D.J. Honey: Where did you get that interesting fact from?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is from the Economic Regulation Authority report that the member keeps endorsing.

Dr D.J. Honey: Words I have never used.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member has used it on a number of occasions.

Dr D.J. Honey: That specific assertion has never crossed my lips.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have heard the member challenge the Minister for Water in question time on a number of occasions about evidence that he has discovered in the ERA report about what he has called the "overcharging" of people for drainage and sewerage costs. The member has referred to that ERA report on at least a dozen occasions in here. That is exactly —

Dr D.J. Honey: I have never endorsed their conclusions on charges.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is a bit confusing then, member for Cottesloe. If the member is saying that the conclusions of the ERA are wrong, but the report is correct, what does that say about the member? This is the problem for the member for Cottesloe. He needs to choose which side of the street he is on. Is he on the side of the street of ordinary working people in this state or the side of the ERA? On which side of the street does he belong? Does he support theoretical economic attitudes or does he want sensible outcomes for families and pensioners across the state? That is the challenge for the member. It is like his attack on the government's support for the subsidy for regional Western Australian's water costs. We all know that, just like in electricity, the cost of servicing regional Western Australia with water is much, much higher than in the metropolitan area. I remember the former member for Cottesloe, Hon Colin Barnett, tried to get rid of the uniform tariff policy for small business electricity consumers. It was the hue and cry led by the Labor Party that led to the Court government changing its mind on that issue. We remember. That is the problem for the member for Cottesloe; the Labor Party remembers the actual behaviour of the Liberal Party. When it has the levers, we know the people whom the Liberal Party drives over in its bulldozer. That is the member's problem. He said in his speech earlier that he cannot be held accountable for the Liberal Party's performance in government. That is nice and convenient. He still has not apologised for the Liberal Party's performance in government.

Dr D.J. Honey: It's not original sin.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, the member is quite right that it is not original sin, because original sin is the sin we are born with. It is deliberate bad behaviour of a political party that was reckless with the finances of the state and did not govern in the interests of Western Australians. I remind everybody that the former Liberal government introduced a future fund while it was borrowing money. Let me make it clear: every dollar in the Western Australian Future Fund is borrowed money. Future funds are quite interesting. There is an international organisation for future funds and sovereign wealth funds that publishes reports about the performance of sovereign wealth funds and guidelines for them. An organisation in New York called the Natural Resource Governance Institute publishes guidelines for state entities that are establishing wealth funds based on mineral resources. They all publish guidelines. There is also a book written by a Norwegian economist whose name I cannot recall, but it is considered the principal work on sovereign wealth funds. A Western Australian guy at Curtin University by the name of Jason Hart wrote a master's thesis on sovereign wealth funds. Members can review plenty of academic research to see the suggestions for the management of the future fund. This is directly related to the issues that are being raised by the member for Nedlands.

These are all issues about how to manage a sovereign wealth fund. The former Liberal government broke every suggestion for the proper management of a future fund. One of the comments from Mr Hart in his master's thesis is that before we establish a future fund, we must pay off our debt first. I remember during debate on the Western Australian Future Fund, I pointed out to Hon John Day, who was the author of the Liberal Party's policy on that idea when he was in opposition and wrote a paper about it, that future generations of Western Australians will not thank the member if he leaves them \$40 billion of debt and a \$1.5 billion future fund. That is why the Liberal Party never talks about the future fund. I look forward to the Liberal Party supporting the government when it moves to reform the future fund to make it a sensible, proper process. I want to contrast the Western Australian Future Fund with the federal government's Future Fund. The federal Future Fund was established for a specific purpose—that is, to cover the unfunded costs of superannuation for commonwealth public servants. That is why it has a purpose, as opposed to the future fund in Western Australia. It is not just a random bit of money in the bank; it should cover a specific liability. That liability will eventually crystallise, which is why the creation of that Future Fund was justified even though the government was continuing to borrow money, but the creation of a future fund for only future revenue cannot be justified while the government continues to borrow money. All that proper research—the PhD thesis by that Norwegian economist whose name I forget, the master's thesis by Jason Hart, the work of the organisation that represents sovereign wealth funds, and the resources of the Natural Resource Governance Institute—sets out how to manage these things. All of them were ignored by the Liberal Party when it was in government, and that is one of the problems.

The Liberal Party criticises this side of the chamber for coming at these things with an academic approach. I remember being criticised because we were too interested in planning and business cases. The former government used to just go and do things, and that is how we ended up, for example, in the CBD with three competing projects—Northbridge Link, Waterbank and Elizabeth Quay—all being done by the government at the same time, competing with each other. How crazy were they! A land developer usually develops one project, and when that project is completed, they move on to the next one; and when that project is completed, they move on to the third one. It is not a good idea to do them all at the same time.

I remind members that Elizabeth Quay is supposed to be complete with all its buildings by 2022. It is highly unlikely that will happen. The Chevron building is being done, because of the good work of the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Lands, by Brookfield, a Canadian investment fund. That is a logical outcome. The idea that it would be done by an oil and gas company is just not credible. Property development is done by property developers, so why would we plan on having things done by somebody else? It does not make any sense.

When I was the Minister for Asian Engagement, I attended a number of different Asian-related functions at Elizabeth Quay. A number of those groups said what a fabulous venue it is. But when I pointed out to them that the venue, the actual land that they were standing on, will soon be underneath an office tower, they wondered what I was talking about. People think that Elizabeth Quay is in its final form now. But, of course, the whole intention is that all those blocks of land will have high-rise buildings on them. One reason it was so outrageously expensive is that there had to be enough strength built into the infrastructure to take the weight of 30 and 40-storey towers. That meant more had to be spent on the public realm, and because so much of the land has been sold to build apartments, just like at the Swan Brewery, it will limit public access in the public realm because noise complaints will inevitably come from the residents of the towers. As we know, the first tower is subject to serious criticism about the quality of the build. It could have been so much better.

I have never objected to Elizabeth Quay on the basis of the inlet. What I have always said is that for \$440 million we could have done so much better. If it had been done as a staged project, and we got bits that worked and then did the next piece, it could have been so much better. I wish the former government had not decided to cut Riverside Drive. As a person who lives in and represents the eastern suburbs, I understand how bad that has been for traffic flow between the eastern suburbs and the city. Everybody says we can use the tunnel. Firstly, that is a much longer journey. Secondly, the tunnel only gets us to Thomas Street. Try to use Thomas Street in the morning. It is ridiculous. People want to get to West Perth, Sir Charlie Gairdner's or the University of Western Australia—West Perth for employment, Charlie Gairdner's for health care, and the University of Western Australia for education. It is now a significant challenge for people in the eastern suburbs to get to those locations. Labouchere Road in South Perth and Manning Road through Manning are now much more congested in the mornings. What the Labor Party predicted about traffic flows is exactly what has occurred. That highlights the fragility of our transport system. It used to be very easy to get from West Perth to the eastern suburbs, because we could go around the end of the freeway and Riverside Drive. Now we have to go down the one lane in St Georges Terrace.

What the former government did was crazy. That was all because it had a short-sighted plan for Elizabeth Quay. On the very day that the former government launched Elizabeth Quay, the then Minister for Transport acknowledged that in the future, at very great cost, there will need to be a tunnel to take traffic underneath Elizabeth Quay. If the former government had done a cut-and-cover tunnel at the same time as it did the infrastructure, it would have cost a relatively small amount of money in the grand scheme of things. It will

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massively increase the cost and complexity if, in the future, we need to do a deep dive underneath all that infrastructure and the water of the inlet.

As I pointed out at the time, the former government has also prevented a future administration from building a circle rail line in the city. I am not saying that would happen in the next 20 years, but some time beyond that, when more apartments are built and enough people are living in the city to justify it. That city circuit will now be massively more expensive, because trains will not be able to use the existing Esplanade Train Station to make a left turn. Therefore, a new rail line will need to be built underneath the existing rail line so that trains can turn left and go underneath the inlet and the infrastructure build.

Once again, all the former government had to do was stop, think and do some planning. Members opposite made the complaint last night that the whole of the Hepburn–Stephenson plan related to a highway in the southern suburbs. No. The Hepburn–Stephenson plan included a bridge from Stock Road to Nedlands. Do not forget that. That was the plan. That was rejected by the Liberal government in the 1960s, and of course it will never be built.

Mr R.R. Whitby interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If the former government was so dedicated to the Hepburn–Stephenson plan, why did it not build that first? According to the Hepburn–Stephenson plan, Stephenson Avenue would have gone north through Herdsman Lake. Let us understand this. The Liberal Party argues that it is transport vandalism not to bulldoze the Beeliar wetlands. It says we must bulldoze the Beeliar wetlands, but it will not countenance putting a road through Herdsman Lake. Personally, I am against both projects. The Hepburn–Stephenson plan is a remarkable achievement of two engineers who, 55 years ago, were able to come up with a plan that worked for over half a century. But times have changed and we need to get on and build a modern city. We are so lucky to have the member for West Swan as the Minister for Transport; Planning. She is getting on with the job of creating that new integrated future for our city.

Let us not criticise the Hepburn–Stephenson plan as the Liberal Party does. It says we should not put a highway through Herdsman Lake. I agree with the Liberal Party. I say let us not be wedded to only little bits of the Hepburn–Stephenson plan that happen to suit us on any given day. Let us get on with having a proper plan so that we can see a genuine future for Western Australia.

The member for Nedlands' motion is without merit. We know it is without merit because Liberal members did not even come into the chamber in support of the motion. I noticed during the matter of public interest today how few conservatives there were in the chamber. They do not show any dedication to the issues they raise in this building. It again goes to the laziness of the opposition, and the fact they do not do any work and they do not understand the things they are saying out loud. They do not read the budget papers. They do not understand the difference between total public sector net debt and general government net debt. They actually do not understand that. Because they do not understand the difference between those two things, they therefore argue incorrectly. The shadow Treasurer and Minister for Energy said in the chamber that the interest on Western Power's debt is paid for out of taxes. That is simply not true. It is 100 per cent wrong. If a high school student answered that way in an economics test, they would fail. It is wrong; it is not true.

Let me make it clear again: the debt of government trading enterprises is paid for out of their own revenues. Their interaction with the budget is in the dividends and other payments they make to the government because they are included in the general government sector. If any capital flows back the other way, that is included. Of course they affect total net debt. We cannot have net debt completely out of control, and I am not suggesting that can occur. The \$40 billion in net debt left to us by the former Liberal–National government includes the net debt of the GTEs. I am not saying that is not true, but I am making the point that that is not included in the debt service figure in the budget. The debt service figure in the budget is the general government sector net debt, not the net debt of the GTEs.

I have been through this ridiculous comment about cosy union deals. Last week, the Liberal Party said that we should give \$800 million extra to the unions. This week, it said that making some small, but important, concessions on conditions is wrong. It shows how the Liberal Party cannot work out which side of the debate it is on.

The double dipping was a ridiculous thing. There has never been double dipping—never.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: Are you sure?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: When did I double dip?

Mrs A.K. Hayden: A car.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have been through this. Unfortunately the member had left the chamber to attend to urgent business elsewhere in the building.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: That is right.

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Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The only money I ever got paid was the money that the tribunal said I should be paid. That decision was made when Colin Barnett was the Premier of the state.

By the way, how many Council of Australian Governments' meetings did the member for Darling Range go to when she was a parliamentary secretary? How many was that?

Mr R.R. Whitby: She does not want to answer. She is strangely quiet.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: She does not want to answer! She criticised ministers attending COAG meetings but she used to go as a parliamentary secretary! This is the thing about the Liberal Party: do not worry about what it says; check out what it does! These people on the other side are sneaky. I would say that is another Liberal lie. That is the way it is. The Liberal Party equals lies. Every day of the week the Liberal Party lies. That is what happens, ever since Menzies. They referred to travel rorts. While they are talking about travel rorts, she is attending COAG meetings! Their plan is for the government of Western Australia not to attend the COAG dinners at which decisions are made. No wonder she was never made a minister. No wonder that person was never trusted with the reins of power!

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range, that is enough.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: All the member for Darling Range was able to do was to be given the briefcase and be sent to the COAG meeting, but she was not allowed to make a decision. I do not blame Colin Barnett for not trusting the member for Darling Range with important jobs. I would not trust her with an important job. He got one thing right when he did not make the member for Darling Range a minister, because he did not trust her and I understand why he did not trust her.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Here she is—cannot cop the truth.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [7.29 pm]: I join with the opposition in speaking to this motion this evening condemning the McGowan Labor government for its increases of \$850 a year to electricity prices, water prices and car registration, while taxpayers' money is being wasted on travel rorts, ministerial double dipping, cosy union deals, talkfests and other ill-conceived government expenditure. It is a very good motion. It is a shame more members of the government backbench are not here to hear the debate, but I suppose they realise —

Mrs A.K. Hayden: They are in denial.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The member for Darling Range is absolutely right; they are in denial about what has happened.

Mr M. Hughes interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: By percentage, there are far more of us here than there are on the member for Kalamunda's side. I suspect that the member for Kalamunda should enjoy the time he has in his seat while he has it, because he will not be there very much longer. In 627 days' time—count it down—he will be out of here. We will get to that shortly. We will get to that very soon.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I enjoy the ramp-up, member for Bunbury.

As a number of members have canvassed this evening, the McGowan Labor government broke a central promise it made to the people of Western Australia at the last election, which was that there would be no increases to fees and charges and no new taxes.

Mr W.J. Johnston: When did we say we wouldn't increase fees and charges?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It was a promise made a number of times. I remember it being made on 23 February 2017. I think that was my thirtieth birthday, and the promise was made by the then Leader of the Opposition, the now thirtieth Premier of Western Australia. I know the member for Cannington suggested that was not said, but I will do my best to track it down and we will talk about it behind the Chair. I am confident that the McGowan Labor government made such a promise. We know that since that central promise was made during the campaign and the Labor government was elected, Western Australians have all had to bear the pain of an extra \$850 a year. That is probably the minimum for some people. The McGowan Labor government broke an absolutely central promise to the people of Western Australia. They were deceived. They were effectively sold a pup. The Labor Party said one thing to get itself elected and then did another. I believe it is a deceitful policy decision to increase fees and charges by \$850 a year.

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Members on this side of the house like to talk about the member for Darling Range. She holds one of the two seats we managed to win in a by-election, the other being that of the good member for Cottesloe. Of course, there was not quite the heated contest in that seat compared with Darling Range, for which the Labor Party had to field a number of candidates. There was a lot of attention in Darling Range. The Premier was front and centre there. What happened in the seat of Darling Range? It was revealed that the Premier was not particularly popular there, and we saw a significant swing to the Liberal Party and the now member for Darling Range elected. It was a great outcome.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: He is quite an asset, the Premier!

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: He is. I think the current Premier of Western Australia is probably the best thing that could happen to the Liberal Party, because if the Labor Party decides to keep him, I suspect that in 627 short days there will be a significant judgement!

Mrs A.K. Hayden: And “the Blues” on the weekend!

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: That is right!

There will be a significant judgement by the people of Western Australia on this Premier’s record, which I think has been pretty dismal thus far.

We like to talk about vulnerable families, because we recognise they often need to be spoken about in this place. The member for Darling Range does a great job doing that, but all of us in opposition recognise that a number of people right throughout Western Australia are not being treated well by this government. There are a number of vulnerable communities that are simply not being heard and are not really being cared for. This government has decided to turn its back on what most people would consider its base—its core voters. We are talking about people who are battlers. The Labor Party likes to position itself as the party for battlers, but we all know that it is nothing but a party made up of union hacks. The Labor Party tries to parade that it cares about those working people, but the reality is that it does not, because if it cared about working people, it would not have increased fees and charges by such a significant amount. We have seen electricity supply charges increase by 10.9 per cent. That hurts people in all our communities. It hurts people in marginal communities, where people are on the precipice of significant mortgage stress. They cannot keep their jobs, and underemployment is going through the roof. The electorate of Baldivis is certainly hurting. The postcode of Baldivis is one of the most mortgage stressed in Western Australia. Another community is mine, in Mandurah, which has massive unemployment issues. Unemployment is between seven and eight per cent, with 20 to 22 per cent youth unemployment. That is a really big concern for a regional area. Mandurah needs much more economic diversification, and it is not getting it from this government. Mandurah is not being delivered the jobs that the Premier promised when he went to the election. What the Premier promised before the election and what he delivered after the election are two completely different things. They were binary opposites. Western Australia has the second-highest unemployment rate in the country. I think we are second, in seasonally adjusted terms, to Tasmania. By any measure, that is a very difficult circumstance for many people across our state, and it is contrary to the jobs boom that Labor promised when in opposition.

That affects people in my own family. I could talk about that at length. My own father has been a tradesman in civil construction since he was a teenager, and he is now in the longest stretch of unemployment, that I am aware of, in his life. There are no jobs going, in civil construction in particular. These jobs rely on massive engineering and infrastructure projects—projects that were delivered under the previous government, for example. He has no work. I think he goes week to week, almost. To be perfectly frank, it distresses me, but I do not know how my own family survives at times. It is really concerning. My mother has worked in retail in the electorate of the member for Forrestfield, in the same pharmacy, for 34 or 35 years. Her wages are not going up, that is for sure. Inflation is not such an issue at the moment, and thankfully interest rates are not as high as they used to be.

Mr M. Hughes: Weekend penalty rates have gone down.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I do not believe she was affected by that; she works Monday to Friday, but I will tell my 56-year-old mother, who has very little superannuation, that the member for Kalamunda thinks that she should work on weekends.

Dr A.D. Buti: Labor brought in compulsory superannuation.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: That is great, member for Armadale, but how long ago was that? I am trying to talk about my own family here, but I appreciate interjections.

Dr A.D. Buti: Yes, but we brought it in.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: That is great, and I am glad, because regardless of whichever party we come from, many initiatives have helped working people. I suspect that working people have benefited more from the Liberal Party being in office, than the Labor Party.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: We saw the response in the last federal election. That is quite right, member for Cottesloe.

Dr D.J. Honey: Every tradie in the box at Cannington voted for us.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: We will go through that very shortly, the member for Cottesloe will be interested to know.

My own family is a really good example. They come from a trade background. Both my parents did not get beyond year 10. My mother was an immigrant from New Zealand. They are going from week to week at the moment, and they are reflective of many people in our community. The reality is that, when we hear the Treasurer and the Premier of Western Australia suggest that things have never been better in WA, it is as if they are blind to everything that is happening outside this chamber. I am really surprised about that. All we need to do is to go down Great Eastern Highway and then down Kalamunda Road, to the electorate of the Acting Speaker (Mr S.J. Price), and see what is happening there. All we need to do is to go down the freeway to Baldivis and see what is happening there. All we need to do is to go to the northern suburbs at Burns Beach, out to the eastern suburbs at Kalamunda and right across the electorates in this chamber, and we would know that things are very marginal for a lot of people. When I say marginal, I mean that they are struggling. They are working week to week just trying to survive. That is the point that I think is lost on many members of the government. It is absolutely grating when government members, ministers in particular, come into this place and suggest that everything is going well. Ministers opposite say to us that we need to apologise for the debt and things like that that we left behind. The government should apologise to the people of Western Australia for selling them a pup, and making them believe and hope that there would be a bright future in the state of Western Australia, because at the moment, that is not occurring. They are not reaping any rewards whatsoever from this government being in office; in fact, they are being penalised to the tune of \$850-plus a year. That is the penalty that people across Western Australia are paying because this government is now in office, and that is contrary to everything that they were promised in the first instance at the last election. More than that, when we talk about the attitudes of some ministers in this place, everything is okay, as if the streets are paved with gold. That is fundamentally untrue. I see it with members of my family, absolutely. Members on this side of the house are aware of it and attuned to it. We talk about the concerns of all Western Australians in this place because members opposite do not dare speak out about what is happening in their communities. They are either —

Dr D.J. Honey: They're whipped.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Whipped, member for Cottesloe! They are whipped into subordination. They want to follow the party and government line that everything is well. If we ask government members, everything is fine and dandy. I have no interest whatsoever in talking down the economy, but we need to be realistic about what is occurring out there. We have the second-highest unemployment rate in the country. That has had an impact on people, including members of my family, which is extremely upsetting. On 21 February, two days before my thirtieth birthday, Labor made a pledge to impose no new taxes and no tax increases, but the absolute opposite has occurred. The people of Western Australia are bearing the burden of a Labor government, and that is a real shame. Is it any surprise to members of this place or anyone who observes what happens in politics that there has been such a fundamental shift in the vote against the Western Australian Labor Party? We saw it in the seat of Darling Range and at the federal election. I do not quite grasp the concept of a government that has a plan that promises 50 000 jobs but delivers the second-highest unemployment rate in the country. How on earth is that an achievement? How the government can crow about that is a fascinating exercise of absolute spin. Government members are either ignorant of what is happening in their communities or so possessed with a desire to sit on the front bench that they turn their backs on their own communities. That is not what members of this place were elected to do. They were elected to represent all Western Australians, and the majority of members on the other side of the house are not doing that. They are not facing the facts about what is happening in their communities.

I encourage members to talk about the difficult circumstances that the government must face. We should talk about the vulnerable communities, such as the people who used to be on the hardship utility grant scheme, the rebate, which has been cut. We should be talking about that and encouraging government backbenchers to talk about that, because they are a large voice in this house. There are a limited number of ministers in this place; government backbenchers make up the majority of government members and they have an opportunity to force their ministers' hands if they so choose. I suspect that many of them do not want to do that because they have a naked ambition, as it were, to become a parliamentary secretary or a minister, or they do not believe that they have an individual voice. Perhaps they have been forced to a point at which they cannot have a voice. I am surprised by the lack of independently minded individuals on the government benches. It is very fascinating to me, because opposite us sit some very intelligent people from a wide range of experiences and backgrounds and we never hear from them. They are muted by the Labor Party and the government. It is a real shame, because there are people in their constituencies whose voices are not being heard. In fact, similar to what is occurring with members of my family, people out there are absolutely hurting and their voices are not being heard in this place.

If we ask the ministers, and particularly those with economic portfolios, we are told that things could not be better for Western Australia. That is a real shame, and it is an absolute disappointment when we think about the government's role. The member for Rockingham promised that he would govern for all Western Australians once he was elected.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Except Dawesville.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Possibly except Dawesville. I will get onto that very soon. That is why the minister is here. I appreciate the Minister for Water being here now. What about Dawesville? The Minister for Water has come into the chamber at the right time. I appreciate his interjection, “What about Dawesville?” Quite right. When the last budget came down, I asked people in my district what they thought of it. Once again, they felt the pain of increased living costs—electricity, water and car registration. I sent an email on my social media saying, “Give me your feedback to pass on.”

Mrs A.K. Hayden: You’re listening.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: That is what we do. We listen and we talk about the experiences of people in our community. I have some replies from people across the electorate who let me know what they think of the last state budget because, of course, what we are talking about in this motion is the increase in the cost of living as we have seen orchestrated in the last three state budgets. I will quote some examples from some important people who have got in touch with me to let me know what they think of the budget and who wanted to send a message to the Premier. This quote is from Judith at Erskine, who was not using his title, obviously. She said —

Come on, Mark., Help us out ... we deserve better.

Bob from Halls Head said —

Mr Premier, what happened to all the talk about money for things in Mandurah?

Nothing is happening in Mandurah, as we know. I will get to that very soon. Anita from Dawesville says —

Remember Mandurah is growing very quickly and we need government to keep with infrastructure.

That is not happening in my district whatsoever. In fact, it is not happening in the district of Mandurah at all.

Dr A.D. Buti: Are you working hard enough?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I am doing my darnedest, member for Armadale, let me tell you that. We are working very, very hard to make sure we hold the government to account for its ignorance of our community. The reality is that I think the people in the good districts of Dawesville and Mandurah know they are being ignored by this government because we are not a marginal seat. I think that is problem we have, or the Premier’s attention is not with us because he thinks things are fine. Things are not fine.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: That is right. He has enough of a problem just trying to hold onto the seats he has at this point of time, I suspect. Mike from Dudley Park said —

Your budget in a Nutshell is just “SMOKE and MIRRORS”

I could not agree more.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Good on you Mike! Keith from Dudley Park said —

Unbelievably “bad” budget for the people of Mandurah! Simply an inconsiderate “don’t give a stuff” approach! Just wait until the next State Election and we’ll return the favour! In spades!

That was an outstanding contribution from Keith from Dudley Park.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: He is very angry. People are angry are they not, member for Darling Range? This member is out there each and every day listening to the community. She knows how much anger exists towards the Labor Party. It is a party that has fundamentally ignored the people of Western Australia now that it is in government. It is possessed with what we used to call in Canberra “blue carpet fever”. They just want to be in government for the sake of governing. There is no view to help the vulnerable in our community any more. There is no view to help affected families.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Since I was in school shorts, Minister for Water.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Talk about blue carpet fever.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It has been since Woodlupine Primary School in Forrestfield. That is right. It is an awful dream to have out there if one wants to end up in this place.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Just because you came from a working class area, does it make it okay that you have blue carpet fever?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: No. The whole point is that the minister does. He is possessed with —

Mr D.J. Kelly: It’s the pot calling the kettle black.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Dawesville, speak to me. Minister for Water!

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: He is possessed to the point of just trying to govern for the sake of governing not because he wants to do anything to help the people of Western Australia.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: As the member for Vasse rightly pointed out, there is no vision at all from this government; no care or concern for those vulnerable in our community. We see those comments echoed again. Peter from Dawesville says —

Not happy with this government and will never get my vote again

I could not agree with Peter more, obviously. I hope I have managed to bring him over to my side, the Liberal Party side, to make sure that in 627 days, he will vote for me.

Selby from Halls Head says —

Roll on the State election.

Roll on the state election, indeed, Selby. I cannot wait for 627 days' time.

Dr D.J. Honey: Bring it forward.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: That is right; bring it forward. If only the twenty-ninth Premier had not called an election so abruptly, we would not have fixed-term elections; we could hold one now. We are ready to rumble right now are we not, member for Cottesloe? We wait with bated breath now for the next state election. We cannot wait. At the last federal election, which is the most recent poll when people got to choose between the Labor and the Liberal Party, there was quite a fundamental swing towards the Liberal Party. It won seats the Labor was suggesting it would win, such as the seat of Canning.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It was arrogance, I think, member for Darling Range. The Labor Party said it would win five seats in the state of Western Australia. It did not win one. In fact, the seat of Cowan became a lot more marginal, I believe.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: To be fair, Minister for Water, I have not seen it since the third declaration, but it was certainly very close to that at the very least. It was definitely very close at the start.

Mr D.J. Kelly: It was always close.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Sure, it was always close. What does that mean?

Mr D.J. Kelly: At the last election, it was close. You said it became more marginal. It didn't.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I believe it would have. That is fine, I appreciate the minister's interjection. Thank you very much.

Mr D.J. Kelly: It was slightly the other way.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It went slightly the other way. There we go. What I do know, though, is that if those federal results occurred in a number of state seats, they would not be so close any more and would not be so marginal for the Labor Party and would not be so safe for the Labor Party any more. In fact, if we look at the federal overlay of state seats —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Water!

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Some 20-odd seats would have come towards the Liberal Party. We can go through them.

Mr M. Hughes interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: We can go through them. I am very glad the member for Kalamunda is here because I believe he holds his seat at the moment by 2.5 per cent. If we look at Ken Wyatt's result, once the exceptional Liberal Party candidate for Kalamunda is found, that seat will be a Liberal Party-held seat by 9.4 per cent—from 2.5 per cent the member for Kalamunda's way to 9.4 per cent our way. That is a fundamentally big swing, if members ask me.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr Bill Marmion; Dr David Honey; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: On the federal results, the seat of Belmont would still be held by the member for Belmont. I am sure that the Liberal Party will put a very strong candidate in there. On the federal results, the seat of Belmont goes from 11.4 per cent down to a very marginal 1.4 per cent for the Labor Party, but we will get there, especially after the TAB result. I look forward to the Liberal Party candidate talking about the TAB result and the convictions that the member had when she was a candidate and how she ignored those constituents and her own convictions after she was elected. The seat of Bunbury would also be ours. The seat of Bunbury looks like a very nice seat. The member holds it by 10 per cent now. On the federal election results, it is 9.8 per cent our way. That is an outstanding result.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The seat of Kingsley would be ours to the tune of 7.3 per cent, the seat of Jandakot would be ours to the tune of 5.2 per cent and the seat of Murray–Wellington, after the results of Andrew Hastie, the federal Liberal member for Canning, which was so significantly targeted by GetUp! and the left to try to topple him —

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: His bus was tried to be set on fire. There was a fundamental, on-the-ground campaign to try to tilt Andrew Hastie out of that seat. The seat of Murray–Wellington, which the Labor Party now holds by 1.4 per cent, would be the Liberal Party's to the tune of 14.5 per cent. I think that is the more natural border of where we will sit now in Murray–Wellington. I look forward to the double-digit swing that we will get in Murray–Wellington.

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: What we know, member for Bunbury, and what is important to read from these results is that this shows an intent in Labor members' communities for people to vote for the Liberal Party. If we put together the right team, with the right candidates, and have the right priorities in place, people will be more willing to vote for the Liberal Party. Their seats are no longer safe seats.

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I look forward to the seat of Bunbury coming across to the Liberal Party. The member for Bunbury will be a very small footnote in the history of that seat, which would have been well served by Liberal Party members.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S.J. Price): Members! I am having trouble hearing this, so I am pretty sure that Hansard has no chance.

Several members interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The member for Kalgoorlie talked about the seat of Forrestfield, which I think you, Mr Acting Speaker, hold by 9.4 per cent. Ken Wyatt's results in that district show that that seat would be ours to the tune of 3.4 per cent. I had the opportunity to go to a primary school in the seat of Forrestfield, so I know how aspirational those areas are that you represent, Mr Acting Speaker. I know how those people are struggling. A number of my family friends live in Maida Vale, Forrestfield and High Wycombe. They are absolutely aspirational Western Australians. I am certain that you know in your heart of hearts, Mr Acting Speaker, that the impact of your vote to increase fees and charges by \$850 is hurting those families, and I suspect that they will repay the favour of that hurt at the ballot box in 627 days' time.

If we look at the intention of people to vote for the Liberal Party right across Western Australia at the last federal election, we can see that the reality is that 20 seats for the Labor Party would be at risk. We can shave off five or six of those as an outline result, but that is still competitive in 11, 12 or 13 of those seats. That is an absolute big deal. That should put all members on notice. They should be very concerned about the impact that their support for this government is having on their communities. As I said at the start of my contribution this evening, they are absolutely ignoring their own communities, which are now hurting to the tune of \$850. That is the penalty they are now paying because Labor members, as representatives of the government in Parliament, have ignored their communities. They have turned their back on them. They are now hurting them to the tune of \$850. That is absolutely having an impact. In 627 days' time, members will likely have to face those communities and tell them that they are proud of that. We have seen what happens when members do not stand up. They let these fees and charges go through. I have spoken at length in this place about the member for Baldvis. Unfortunately, the seat of Baldvis is not on here, as I could not do an Independent versus Labor Party contest and overlay the federal results, but we know that places like Baldvis are hurting as well. No area of Western Australia is untouched by this government's hurtful conduct. I expect more from members opposite who sit on the backbench and who, if we look at the federal election, we now know will lose their seats. They should be warned that that is coming for them.

They should take a stand and join with the opposition to condemn this government in this motion. More than that, they should stand up to their cabinet colleagues and say that they no longer want to put up with the fees and charges that have been increased and the hurt that has been orchestrated in their communities. If they do not stand up, in 627 days' time they will be sure to lose their seats. To be perfectly frank, we look forward to it because in that case, we will be in government again. We will make sure that we govern for all Western Australians, which is contrary to what this Premier does.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [7.55 pm]: Listening to the member for Dawesville is very interesting because he reminds me of his former boss, the former Premier, Hon Colin Barnett. Just after the federal Senate by-election of 2014, when we got a primary vote of about 21 or 22 per cent and only returned one senator, the then Premier stood up in the Premier's spot and said that on the basis of that federal election, we would lose many seats. He said we would even lose Armadale, Thornlie, Cannington and Vic Park et cetera. That was 2014, but what happened in 2017? I believe that in March 2017, less than three years later, we had our most historic victory. The member for Dawesville does this all the time. It is pointless and he knows it is. The member knows that it does not make sense to try to transpose federal figures onto a state election.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: We should let him live in it. I should not be trying to help the member for Dawesville. If he wants to live with that false sense of security and arrogance and try to transpose federal election results onto the state boundaries, he is in lulu land. He knows he is. The former Premier stood up after the federal by-election of 2014, when we recorded a primary vote of about 21.5 per cent, and reeled off a number of state seats that he said the Liberal Party would pick up from Labor. But less than three years later, the Labor Party had its most historic victory. That points to the stupidity of this idea. In nearly every speech, when he has the opportunity, he says that this seat or that seat is going to go. Does the member for Dawesville know what the difference is?

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: What's that, member?

Dr A.D. BUTI: We have outstanding local members. As the member for Dawesville knows very well, people vote for good local members before they even vote for the party. We have outstanding local members.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member can go on about the Andrew Hasties of the world and the seats that they transverse. Apart from the member for Darling Range, I think all the other seats in the federal seat of Canning are held by Labor members—and the member himself. I do not know which state seat Boddington is in; it might be Roe. Nearly all the seats in the seat of Canning are held by Labor members who are doing an outstanding —

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: What about me?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I said “nearly”. The member should listen! He should be in Labor, based on his record!

If the member wants to live in lulu land and think that because the Liberal Party did so well in the federal election, the same will happen in the 2021 election, he can go ahead. I can tell the member that he will be the one waking up on the second Sunday of March 2021 wondering what went wrong if he thinks that because Andrew Hastie won the federal election back in 2019 that the Liberal Party was going to win in 2021 based on state issues. As the people of Western Australia know, it is Labor governments that provide the services that give them a good quality of life. It is the Labor Party, and as the member for Dawesville very well knows, in federal politics over the last 25 years the conservatives have held government, but in Western Australia it has basically been 50–50. Once again, that puts paid to the opposition's stupidity in continually comparing federal results with state results. They are completely different. Actually, there is a similarity; a reasonably popular Prime Minister went to the federal election against an unpopular Leader of the Opposition. It is the same at state level—we have a popular Premier against an unpopular Leader of the Opposition.

Member for Dawesville and member for Darling Range, in 2021 we will see the Premier debate the Leader of the Opposition in the election debate, in front of the glare of the television cameras. She will actually have to know her policies and will have to answer questions without referring to her briefing notes or looking at her advisers' messages on her iPhone. We will see how the Leader of the Opposition goes then.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.