

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — FRONTLINE SERVICES

Motion

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition) [4.11 pm]: I give notice that at this sitting of the house I will move —

That this house condemns the McGowan government's budget cuts to frontline services and the associated impact on critical service delivery to the people of Western Australia.

This is an important issue. We can go back if members wish to before the election when —

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member said that he is giving notice of a motion. That means he is not debating it.

Dr M.D. Nahan: I gave notice.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You gave notice earlier. I think we are going to —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sorry, can I just clarify: is he moving it or giving notice?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Quite understood, member. We will clarify that. Would you like to try again, Leader of the Opposition?

Debate Resumed

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I move —

That this house condemns the McGowan government's budget cuts to frontline services and the associated impact on critical service delivery to the people of Western Australia.

Going back to the year before the last election, the McGowan opposition was ferocious in tackling the then Barnett government for any apparent or otherwise reduction in spending on frontline services in education and health and on police numbers. Any indication of a slowing rate of expenditure was treated as cuts to frontline services. Any indication of pulling back on commitments to, let us say, the growth of frontline services, even though some growth was still there, was treated as a travesty. Even though we were under immense fiscal pressure, the opposition was the epitome of fiscal wreckers and the defenders of continued expenditure on frontline services. The McGowan opposition went into that election and won it in part on the basis that it was committed to repairing the cuts of the previous government and enhancing expenditure on frontline services across the board. That happened in the run-up to the election when the McGowan opposition made various commitments. Coming into government, it clearly knew what the fiscal position was. It enunciated it hundreds of times. It was apparent in the budget papers. The previous government faced a significant fiscal challenge, and the new government inherited it with very limited capacity for additional expenditure. The McGowan government has come in here and done two things. One is that the Treasurer has gone out and said that he is the only fiscal conservative in power—I heard him say this repeatedly, and he is getting a great deal of credit for that—and he is also saying that his policies are reducing expenditure in the public sector, and they are. That is what is happening at a macro level. On a micro level in here and out there, he is denying any cuts to frontline services. Indeed, the Premier does the same thing in this house. I asked him a question yesterday on education funding based on reading the budget papers, and I think I can read them. The education portfolio received \$280 million in cuts from the McGowan government's first budget of 2017 to its second budget of 2018 and over the remaining three years. He denied that there are any cuts to education and said that the education budget is going up—and the Treasurer agrees. On the macro level, the Treasurer and others are saying, "We have cut spending. Aren't we great for doing that?", but when it comes to a micro level and frontline services, they are denying their own budget papers.

What is the evidence here? I will do what I did last week and go back to the 2017–18 budget paper No 2, volume 1. I refer to page 159, "Appropriations, Expenses and Cash Assets" for the education portfolio, which comes under the Minister for Education and Training. It has the appropriation figures for 2017–18, 2018–19, 2019–20 and 2020–21. The budget is all about appropriations. There are other sorts of revenue that come in, but it is about what we appropriate to various departments. This table shows a significant reduction of \$68 million in education expenditure in 2018–19, 2019–20 and 2020–21. It goes down; it is negative and there is no growth. It moves from \$4.11 billion to \$4.043 billion—a cut of \$68 million. The next year it receives a cut of \$97 million, and it has a cut of \$117 million the year after. That is a total reduction in the education budget of \$282 million over the three years. The Treasurer admits that outside when he talks to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia. He brags about it—and in here he denies it. Out there, not in the CCI but in the schools, they are feeling it. The same issue relates to another portfolio—health. The health budget has been cut over those same three years by \$200 million. Today, the Premier denied it again: there are no cuts to health. The Minister for Health said, "There are no cuts to health. Health is going up." However, the budget shows the opposite.

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We are here today to hold this government to account for doing what the Treasurer says it is doing outside this house—cutting frontline services. We are here today to point out in this house that this government is not doing what it said it would do—enhance frontline services—and that its denials here are not supported by its own budget papers. The evidence besides that found in the budget papers is overwhelming. One of the major issues that has particularly confronted this government over the last year is the number of its backflips on the Department of Education. We have seen one backflip after another. We have seen the government denying, drawing a line in the sand, and then backflipping off that line with one backflip after another. The Minister for Education and Training in the other house is honest. She has said this in the other house: yes; the McGowan government has over the three years from 2018–19 cut \$281 million out of the education budget.

Mr W.J. Johnston: When did she say that?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: You go check *Hansard*, mate.

Mr W.J. Johnston: He has just invented it; it's not true.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: This is the truth. This is government members denying facts.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Tell us the date; show us the proper *Hansard* reference.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The truth hurts. Listen to him squeal.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Show us the truth.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The truth hurts. Listen to him squeal. You poke the pig, the pig squeals.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The Premier denies it and the Treasurer denies it. The budget says it.

Mr W.J. Johnston: What date was it said?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am not taking interjections from a man of your ilk.

Mr W.J. Johnston: I am the only person in this chamber who has been proved to be telling the truth.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Oh, yes. Come on! Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not want this to descend into comedy.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Then sit down.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The man—the bastion of truth over there.

Mr W.J. Johnston: That is right and you know it.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yeah, right!

Let me go through some of the cuts as a starting point, just to remind members opposite.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Camp school funding cuts remain. The government has contracted them out to some non-profit organisations but it made it quite clear that it is going to save in the vicinity of \$3 million in those cuts. Moora Residential College was saved by the commonwealth. VacSwim fees were increased by 100 per cent and the increases remain. Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre was eliminated from government funding and the cuts remain. Tuart College is a very important college that allows young people who drop out of high school before they finish year 12 to go back aged in their 20s or otherwise to attend and finish high school. The government eliminated that program. Thankfully the government backflipped on Schools of the Air. Cuts to KidSport remain. Twenty per cent was removed from the agricultural college trust fund. This is a doozy. Agricultural colleges go out and they farm. They sell the produce and use those proceeds in the main to fund the school. It is a really good idea. The government grabbed 20 per cent of the trust funds—not much, but some. The government is still working on Landsdale Farm School. The Perth Modern School policy was the dumbest of it all. That started when the Labor Party committed to it before the election. It was basically a mechanism to attack the one single public selective school in Western Australia and move it, as much as possible, to the City of Perth so that the member for Perth could grandstand on having an inner-city high school. That was dumb and the government backflipped. It took on too many. Cuts to Bunbury Baptist College and level 3 teacher intakes were backflipped. The government was going to attack the gifted and talented program, which is really essential to increase the number of kids in our large secondary schools. What a dumb move. It backflipped on Northam Residential College and the student-centred funding model was trimmed. It backflipped on community resource centres. The cut of \$110 000 to the Law Society education program and the enrolment threshold increase to community kindergartens remain. Those are all cuts—\$60-odd million. We have had many arguments. According to the government, they are not

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cuts—they do not exist. They are bad decisions. Virtually every one of those cuts was bowled up to us when we were in government and it took us five seconds to say, “You must be joking! You come to us with those and basically we will impose our cuts upon you without the education department having any input into it.” And they did not; they heard the word.

I like the comment made yesterday when I asked questions about the \$280 million in cuts in education. Firstly, the Premier said that the cuts were ours. It was about both police and education. He said that the cuts that are imposed were inherited from us. The Premier said, “We inherited a whole range of efficiencies from the previous government and those are coming through now.” I am really confused. We hear both the Premier and Treasurer going at us on a daily basis for poor fiscal management—for spending too much. Then when we point out their reductions in expenditure, they say, “Those are your reductions. All we are doing is implementing your reductions.” They are trying to criticise us for spending too much, and then also for spending too little. They are a mixed-up lot. The essence is that they refuse to be accountable for what they say before, during and after the election. The government refuses to come clean about what it is going to do and has done. That is the essence. The government has made major cuts to frontline services in education and elsewhere. That is in the budget and that is what the Treasurer talks to the business sector about. It is reducing the expenditure, and the largest reductions in expenditure are in fact in the major areas of police, education, health and communities. A lot of the community ones are in the shifting to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I am not sure how much is there, but that is a different one because cuts and expenditure are also being met with moving the NDIS to the commonwealth—so I will leave that out. But there are major cuts to these areas. The evidence is overwhelming and we will go through it in this private members’ business. I have gone through some of it before. The shadow Minister for Police will go through that today.

We heard over and over from the Minister for Police and others that cuts are not to frontline services; they are to the backroom officers, to the bureaucrats, in “Silver City” and elsewhere in health and police. It is cutting the number of backroom people, and some of those positions are reduced. The problem with that is that when I was Treasurer, we reduced over 5 500 people from the backroom, but at the same time we increased frontline services. Take the question on 14 August 2018 from Hon Tjorn Sibma to Michelle Roberts, the Minister for Police. We asked about the implementation of the voluntary separation scheme under the minister’s control, asking the minister to outline the number of positions, the title of positions, the substantive level and the value of the separation. We asked all those questions. The minister listed all the people from the department.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You got a very complete answer, didn’t you?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes. It was complete and it is accurate. Thirty-one officers were made redundant.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: They are all being replaced.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Really? The government says it has not cut any expenditures, and it has 31 frontline police officers out the door. This was from her own answer. Then today when I asked the Minister for Health questions about the Western Australian emergency access target performance, he kept saying that the growing queues at our hospitals are due to flu. To my knowledge, flu has been around for a while. Every year there has been a flu. Maybe flu obscures his vision of the data he sees, but we cannot blame flu as there has been a flu every year at about the same time. If it affects last year, it affects this year. A bad flu is going around, but it is not the flu; it is the minister. The question I asked was on Fiona Stanley Hospital—I think our largest hospital, but definitely the largest emergency department.

A member: Built by who?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It was built by us, of course—an excellent thing. The data provided by the minister shows that the number of emergency department attendances—people showing up to the emergency room—in Fiona Stanley from July 2017, during the flu season, through to July 2018, in the flu season, grew by 1.1 per cent. Flu or no flu, it was a 1.1 per cent growth in attendance, which is about what was forecast. The number of people who attended the emergency department at Fiona Stanley Hospital and were met within four hours declined from 73.2 per cent—a low figure—to 61.9 per cent, which is an 11.3 per cent decline in meeting its major target. The Minister for Health blames it on the flu, but it is obvious that it is not the flu. Fifty per cent of hospitals in the public system are not meeting their targets or, more importantly, the level by which they are meeting their targets declined from July 2017 to July 2018, flu or no flu. When I asked the minister, he denied it. He said that there was no decline and that the government was doing an excellent job. He said flu was causing this. The government is denying its own data.

Our task is to remind members opposite that they are in government. They made certain claims and have produced two budgets that they own, and each of them cut substantial expenditure. Members opposite have to stand and defend those cuts and the results of those cuts, such as an increasing number of people waiting for more than four hours to get into the emergency department at our largest hospital. The government tells people it is just the flu, but it does

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not take long for the people in the queue to know that it is not flu. That is what we are here for—to hold the government to account for those activities. This is not just health or education; it is many areas across the board.

In private members' business last week we debated the government's misreading of the economy. I will not go through that. The economy is thankfully improving in certain areas and I hope it does recover, but the Treasurer is believing his own blue sky if he thinks that everything is fine. We will leave it to him. That is his problem. We have also had many debates about the government's propensity to tax, which is very large, with massive taxes. That contrasts with the then Leader of the Opposition, right before he became the Premier, saying that under a government he leads there would be no new taxes or tax increases because taxes destroy jobs.

Mr W.J. Johnston: That's just not true. It's an invention.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, it is an invention!

Mr W.J. Johnston: What date did he say it?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: On 24 February.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Read out the quote.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: You find it. You are a dirt digger. Get in the ditch!

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Light entertainment over there!

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a noise on the other side that I am not encouraging.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I do not need to get to my feet again. No yelling across the chamber!

Would the Leader of the Opposition want to take an interjection from the minister?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No, not from him.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is quite clear. Thank you.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, double dipper!

We are here to go through that and I will hand over to my colleagues to continue the discussion of how the government has broken its promises.

MR P.A. KATSAMBANIS (Hillarys) [4.33 pm]: I rise to support this motion. As I have often said, I would rather not rise to speak on these motions. I would prefer to be in a position of not having to speak on these motions because the government of the day delivered on its promises and delivered good government to the people of Western Australia. However, that is not the case. We have a series of promises broken by this government and a series of failures, which are impacting on frontline services and on the health and wellbeing of every Western Australian. That is why I am on my feet today. I will concentrate primarily on the police and law and order in our state. I will leave it for my colleagues to follow on from the Leader of the Opposition's great contribution to highlight the failures of this government and call on the government to take a step back from its rhetoric and start delivering what it promised it could and would deliver to the people of Western Australia.

In this place on 9 August 2017—very early on in the new government—I asked the Premier a question in good faith. I asked him to make a commitment to make no cuts to frontline police services, because law and order is critical and that having a strong and well-funded, well-equipped and well-motivated police force is a key to maintaining law and order in our society and keeping the public of Western Australia safe. In his response, the Premier said —

... under Labor there will be a stronger, better-resourced police force—police service—dealing with the issues that matter to the people of Western Australia.

The Premier said that the police force would be stronger, better resourced and able to deal with all the issues we are confronting as a society in Western Australia. That is a good thing. I support that and would have welcomed it if he had done it. What has happened since then? A series of cuts, broken promises and attacks on our hardworking police officers has led to a complete and utter destruction of morale in our police force, which is the front line that keeps us safe from criminality and gives our community reassurance that the police have control of our streets, not the criminals.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 19 September 2018]

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One month after the Premier gave that answer and said that he would provide better resources to the police, his government's first budget cut \$250 million from the police budget. The amount of \$250 million was stripped from the forward estimates! The Premier, the Minister for Police and the Treasurer play these backflips! They play these tricks! It is just like during the election campaign. They looked the public of Western Australia in the eye and said that there would be no new taxes or increases in taxes, and that they would deliver all this great stuff. It was magic pudding economics then and it is magic pudding economics now. They come up with bizarre justifications and take their lead from the member for Cannington. They do not come up with any reasons. They just say, "No, you're wrong! No, you're wrong!" They repeat it enough times and convince themselves that it is true. They hope to goodness that the public of Western Australia does not see through them and believes their spin. It is just spin!

I will move on from the budget that stripped money from the police budget. The police requested important protective safety equipment. The police wanted stab-proof vests issued to all frontline police officers. It is an occupational safety and health issue and a proper resourcing issue. The minister and the government initially said no. After public outcry, the government has implemented this current review. We will see the fruits of that review eventually. I am hoping to see some additional funding in the midyear review. I hope it will not be left to the following year's budget because that is not good enough. The police need that protective equipment now.

In December, we witnessed the absolute sham of this government renegeing on its promise before the election to give members of our police force a fair and reasonable pay increase. An increase of one and a half per cent per annum for three years was promised by the previous government. During the election campaign, the then opposition, through the current Premier, confirmed that it would do exactly the same thing. Mark McGowan, the Premier, was quite dismissive, saying, "Of course we're going to do that." He entered into no correspondence on it. He let people think that it is one of those things to which both parties have a bipartisan approach. Come the pay negotiations after coming to government, the Labor Party renegeed on that promise of a one and a half per cent wage offer to our police—a clear and total broken promise. The WA Police Union is reported as saying—I am quoting from an article on 18 December 2017—that one officer told them —

this is the worst offer I have seen in over 20 years of policing.

The president of the police union, George Tilbury, was quoted in the same article as saying —

"The government has treated police officers and their families with the utmost contempt ... police officers do a unique job for the communities of WA and it is about time the government realises the worth of their police."

Unfortunately, between December last year when these comments were made and now, things have not got any better; in fact, they are even worse. We saw the issue of Government Regional Officers' Housing and the payment that police officers make to rent appropriate housing in regional areas where they have been stationed. There are a lot of reasons GROH needs to be provided to police officers to make it attractive to go to these regional areas, particularly because of the nature of the job and how very quickly police can be redeployed. Breaking leases and the like would cost a lot of money. Police rely on having access to the GROH regime in order to relocate to regional areas and provide an effective police presence in those areas. In the May budget, this government increased the cost of GROH by \$30 a week for each police family living in one of those houses.

Mr P.C. Tinley: That's not true. Be accurate. Not every police officer or family paid that. You know that. Read the brief.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I am talking about those people who pay for it. I am being very clear. I know that there are some officers in extraordinarily remote locations to whom this does not apply. The majority of police officers stationed in regional areas outside the large urban centres are paying this. Hundreds of police officers are involved. They are paying an extra \$30 a week. Over a two-year period, they will get a \$2 000 salary increase and they will have to pay \$3 120 in increased rent. That is on top of the taxes and fee increases imposed on every Western Australian family by this government—that is, increases in the price of electricity, water, motor vehicle registration, public transport fees and everything else that this government has increased. It amounts to about \$700 or \$800 a year for every single family in Western Australia, which includes families of police officers. They will have to cop that on top of having to pay more rent and being worse off in their salary deal.

In relation to the regional officers, is it any wonder that my colleague the member for Kalgoorlie asked the rhetorical question in this chamber in June: why is this government destroying morale and making it less attractive for police officers to work in regional Western Australia, in places such as Kalgoorlie? That is a very fair question that still has not been answered by this government. Instead, its members come in here and spin about how they are doing a good job. We should ask the police on the ground—I will get to that in a minute—whether they think this government is doing a good job.

It gets worse, unfortunately. We have the issue of body cameras. Most police forces across Australia are being issued with personal body cameras—lapel cameras, if you like—so there is an objective recording of any interaction that the police officer has with the public. The Western Australian Commissioner of Police has

expressed the view that he sees them as an important part of modern-day policing. They are a protective mechanism for the police officers themselves and for the people that they interact with, and they provide very strong corroborative evidence if needed later in any type of proceedings. The police commissioner thought they were a good idea. He sought funds. The government said, “No, we’re not funding that; fund it from your operational budget”, as though there is a pile of money in the police budget sitting around unused. The commissioner can say, “Here’s this pile of money that Treasury has not discovered. Despite its best forensic efforts, it has not discovered it; it has not clawed it back. I’m not using it for anything else; I’ll apply it to body cameras.”

Mr J.E. McGrath: There’s that magic pudding again!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: That is sophistry of the highest order. Forget about the magic pudding; I think we can liken that to some sort of magic carpet ride up in the clouds! It is absolutely unbelievable that the government has come up with that justification. The police commissioner has been forced to prioritise. Like me, like the opposition and like the public of Western Australia, he recognises that these body cameras are an important priority for police officers. He has cut in other areas and funded those body cameras. Good on the commissioner but shame on this government—it was not prepared to provide appropriate additional funding so that other areas of policing were not cut. The government chose not to do it. It is shameful that that is the case.

Then we get to the area of workers’ compensation. Big promises were made by the government and the minister before the election. The previous government made an attempt and this government said that it was so easy. It kept badgering about doing something about it. No preparation work was done. It was all about politics and nothing about policy and preparation for government. Eighteen months down the track, we are no wiser as to where the compensation scheme is. We still have not seen a redress scheme for medically retired police officers, who have fallen through the cracks of the system for far too long. All governments over the past 20 to nearly 25 years are to blame for that outcome. This government said that it would fix it. It still has not fixed it. We have seen rallies on the front steps of Parliament House. This mob talks a really good game. When it comes to delivering, there is very, very little delivery. It is like a football player—a West Coast Eagles player, a Fremantle Dockers player or a Collingwood player—at a Thursday afternoon press conference talking up a big game. The deliveries on the ground on Friday, Saturday or Sunday when they walk out onto the ground and play four quarters of football are the same as in these four years of government. The government can talk big and talk tough but it should start delivering.

Sadly, what has all of that done to morale in the police force? We saw the recent police union survey. Only 2.8 per cent of police officers who were surveyed felt that they were appropriately resourced. They have no faith or confidence in this government. The overwhelming majority of police officers do not believe that they are a priority of the government. They do not believe that law and order is a priority of this government. This government has smashed morale in the police force and caused difficulties for existing police. Imagine what that does to people who are thinking of becoming police recruits. Why would they undertake a dangerous and often thankless job? Why would they walk into danger to protect the community when other people are running away, and be treated in this absolutely shameful and disrespectful way by the government?

But it is not just police; it is also the public. In the recent Darling Range by-election, when I and other members of the opposition were campaigning with the then Liberal candidate—the new member for Darling Range; a great member, Alyssa Hayden—we doorknocked, walked around shopping centres and talked to people. One of the major issues raised by the public was law and order. Crime was increasing in Mundaring, Serpentine and Kelmscott, but during the by-election the government would not rule out cuts to operational staff at Mundijong Police Station. The public was concerned at the cavalier and blasé attitude of this government. It has to get serious about supporting police in Darling Range and making our community safe.

I do not have a lot of time today, so I will not mention too much about the 24-hour police stations that the government imposed on police command. The government is great at saying, “Oh, they’re all operational matters”, but it imposed its election commitment on police command. In its editorial of 14 April, *The West Australian* said there might be a feel-good factor in having 24-hour police stations, but asked the obvious question about whether that was an effective use of police resources. Clearly, the Western Australian Police Union of Workers does not think so. Seriously, is having police behind desks the best way to enable them to respond to serious incidents across our community? No. Police are not bureaucrats. People do not sign up to be police officers to become bureaucrats; they want to go out and protect our community. They do not want to push pens across desks. The best protection is to have more police on the street, not stuck behind desks in police stations.

The government politicised this issue. Because the Premier and Minister for Police made an election commitment, they forced police command to take police off the streets and put them behind desks. It is not good enough. The Premier is the leader of the government; he needs to take responsibility. His minister has to step up, and if the minister cannot step up then she can step down and let someone else have a go. But the Premier needs to be held to account, and the government needs to actually respond and do the right thing.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 19 September 2018]

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Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Zak Kirkup; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Dr David Honey; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Papalia

There have been almost two years of this government. It is not good enough to blame other people, particularly given what the Labor Party said in opposition. It said it had a plan to deliver. Like Chairman Mao, the Premier ran around with a little red book under his arm saying that he had a plan. Yes, he had a plan—he had no plan at all! It is not good enough. The government has failed our police force and community. It should turn back from the direction it is going. It should properly resource police, help to increase police morale and help to keep our community safe, because I tell you what—the general public is not feeling that safe at the moment.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [4.53 pm]: I rise to join the opposition in condemning the McGowan government's budget cuts to frontline services, and the associated impact on critical service delivery to the people of Western Australia, following the excellent contributions of the member for Hillarys and the Leader of the Opposition.

There was commentary in question time today about the investment the government has made into Peel Health Campus—\$5 million. Before I talk about the real issue at Peel Health Campus, I will talk about health more generally speaking. We are talking about the associated impact of budget cuts to critical service delivery, but in a community like the Peel region—Mandurah in particular—the budget cuts of the McGowan government could not be more evident. There have been massive blowouts in the four-hour rule in that hospital, there are significant issues with respect to ramping, and even maintenance could not be covered, so the government has had to put in some money for maintenance as part of its commitment to expanding the hospital car park that was announced in the state budget. There is a real issue there, as the Minister for Health noted in his question time contribution. I absolutely welcome that investment. There is a need and it is a good start, but significantly more work needs to be done. I look forward to joining with the community to make sure that we get the hospital we deserve.

When we talk about health it is important to recognise that \$201 million has been cut from the state's health budget. That will have a significant impact on our health system. I find it fascinating. I recall in my high school years, when I was at Governor Stirling Senior High School, going into the school library each morning to read in the paper how there was significant health crisis under a former health minister, Hon Jim McGinty. There were massive, massive issues around the state of the Western Australian health system. I remember that during the election campaign —

Mrs A.K. Hayden: People were lining up.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: That is right. People were outside hospitals for hours, stuck in the back of ambulances.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: In hallways.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: In hallways—that is right, member for Darling Range. The bed block was going through the roof.

I also distinctly remember during the 2008 state campaign when the then government went out in a last-ditch bid to sort of show that it was putting in some effort, because health had become such a problem. It went out to make it seem like it was doing something with Fiona Stanley Hospital. It said that work had commenced on Fiona Stanley Hospital.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: It did nothing.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It did absolutely nothing.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: Nothing.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: There was a bulldozer going back and forth over the same area.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: It talked about the plans for years.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It talked about it for so long.

Dr M.D. Nahan: What about that sign?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The sign was put out. It was great at putting up signs, Leader of the Opposition.

Once again, as per the comments of the Leader of the Opposition, it was great at the talk but very lacking in delivery. That is what happened under the last Labor government, and we are seeing history repeat itself with this government.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: After we fixed all the hospitals.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: After we fixed all the hospitals, member for Darling Range.

This government could not have inherited a better health system, could it? There had been record operating budget funding in health. In 2016–17, \$8.6 billion was spent—an increase from \$4.8 billion in 2008–09, when we first came to office. That was a substantial increase to the state's health budget.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: We created hundreds of jobs.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Zak Kirkup; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Dr David Honey; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Papalia

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: We created hundreds of jobs.

That meant, of course, more people—more inpatient episodes of care, more treatments in emergency, and significant visitations to outpatient clinics—and that was entirely made possible because of the previous Liberal–National government’s efforts to invest in health in our community.

I cannot imagine that situation with the current health minister, who is going through a systemic cutting and gutting of our state’s health system. He inherited hospitals like Fiona Stanley—to all intents and purposes the best hospital in the Southern Hemisphere. It is amazing. We made significant investment right through most of the major hospitals in the metropolitan area to provide a world-class health system.

I was at the opening of Albany Health Campus while working for the former Premier of Western Australia. It had been promised by successive Labor governments that once again promised it during elections but put it off, put it off and put it off. I think the then opposition leader put up a sign at Albany, but did nothing. I think \$170 million was needed for Albany Health Campus, which we opened in 2013—a great achievement of the former government.

Beyond that, it was not only major tertiary hospitals that we invested in. Services right through Western Australia were funded. A substantial amount of critically important Aboriginal health clinics got record levels of investment under the previous government. The North West Health Initiative was allocated \$150 million over five years to improve health and aged-care facilities right through the north west region—a very difficult area to deliver health services. There was record investment by the previous government. There was investment in the Southern Inland Health Initiative and future health —

Mrs A.K. Hayden: Midland hospital.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Of course, Midland hospital. There was a substantial impact there. These were all amazing investments by the previous government. There was a record level of investment by the previous government. Importantly, our legislative agenda was on track, which is completely unlike this government; its legislative agenda is whatever government members throw a dart at. The government cannot even manage the house properly to keep us here according to the hours we are meant to be here. The previous government undertook one of the biggest and most substantial redrafts of the Health Act in the state’s history. The Health Act was first passed by this house in 1911. It was completely out of date for the modern health system in Western Australia and not at all a reflection of the world-class health service that is delivered now.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: It was built for the horse and cart.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: That is right; it was built for the horse and cart. It did not at all reflect the state’s world-class health system, which was built by the former Liberal–National government. The Public Health Act was passed in 2016. Once again, it was an outstanding achievement of the previous government. We had all those achievements. All members of this place know them well and the significant benefits of them. We can contrast what was inherited by the Minister for Health with what we have now. He provides so little leadership that he cannot even stand up for his portfolio. We have seen systemic cutting and gutting of the health portfolio. The flow-on effects are already starting to impact our community.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: He blames the flu.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The minister blames the flu. The Leader of the Opposition went through and broke down that argument. It is absolutely baseless; there is nothing to that whatsoever. The reality is that it is not the flu; it is the minister’s complete gutting of the state’s health portfolio—\$200 million has been ripped out of the health budget—that is going to have an impact on patients and our health system, which it is doing right now. Going through some of the points made by the member for Churchlands in his capacity as the shadow Minister for Health, we can see that a lot of the key indicators on which one would judge the merit and ability of any health system have blown out. I will go through them in some detail. Wait times for elective surgery specialist appointments have blown out. The opposition leader pointed out during question time today and subsequently in his contribution to this debate that the four-hour wait times in emergency departments has blown out. That is not good enough. That four-hour wait time was introduced by the previous Liberal–National government. The former health minister, Kim Hames, the fifteenth Deputy Premier of Western Australia, knew the importance of making sure that there was rigour.

Several members interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: He was a great former member for Dawesville, I have to say. He is not as good looking as the current member for Dawesville, but we will get there.

Mr W.J. Johnston: He was much more attractive than you.

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Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It is all subjective, member for Cannington. The former Minister for Health knew the importance of rigorous reporting and standards when it came to admitting people to our state's emergency departments. Patients need to be triaged according to the severity of their case, and in each case they need to be seen, treated and discharged within specified prescribed times. The four-hour rule is vitally important. It was part of a UK initiative that, as I understand, was transferred to Western Australia and was, for all intents and purposes, relatively revolutionary in terms of the operations of our emergency departments.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: It needs a strong minister.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The member for Darling Range is quite right: it needs a strong minister. The only way we can stay on top of this, much like any key performance indicator in any situation, is for the KPIs to be enforced by agency heads and ultimately, in this place, by ministers. The Minister for Health is not doing that; he is absolutely blind to it. He is not paying any attention to the indicators because he is too busy ripping money out of the state's health system rather than investing in it and in our communities. The four-hour rule is continuing to blow out and he is not doing anything about it. More than that, the wait-time performances of the emergency departments at Royal Perth Hospital, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and Fiona Stanley Hospital went back 5.6 per cent, 8.3 per cent and 9.3 per cent respectively between March 2017 and March 2018. That is a shameful result. It is a shame to see those wait-time performances deteriorating so significantly. Is it any wonder that these blowouts continue to occur when the government is ripping \$201 million from the health portfolio? That should be expected. If the government rips money out, the system will suffer and those key indicators suffer. Much like what the member for Hillarys said in his contribution when talking about things like law and order, these things impact on people's lives. There is a very real impact on the health of Western Australians.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It is a vital service, as the member for Darling Range rightly points out. We are seeing problems not just at the emergency end, but also with elective surgery wait times. Wait times for elective surgery have also increased. They went way over the maximum recommended waiting time between June 2017 and June 2018. There are now more than 23 000 people on the waitlist for elective surgery. The data is showing that the time people are waiting to see a specialist if they need surgery has blown out by nearly 20 per cent. I cannot understand a situation in which a minister can inherit what is basically a Rolls Royce and end up turning it into some sort of Datsun. That is what has happened under this minister. The waitlists continue to blow out. The four-hour rule has deteriorated to one of the worst points we have seen in some time. Wait-time performances have blown out significantly. The elective surgery waitlist has now blown out by nearly 20 per cent. There are 23 000 Western Australians on the waitlist, and they are waiting way beyond the recommended wait time for elective surgery. That is absolutely unacceptable. I find it fascinating that every time the opposition holds the Minister for Health to account, all we hear from him is that there is nothing to see here and that we do not need to worry about it. It is a very unusual attitude for a minister who is in charge of a multibillion-dollar portfolio spend and, most importantly, the lives of Western Australians. That is not an attitude we want from a Minister for Health. We want someone who is absolutely investing every single hour of the day in making sure that we are extracting the best possible outcomes in that sector. That is not happening. It will not happen so long as we have a government that is complicit in ripping out \$201 million from the state's health budget. That is not good enough at all.

The shadow Minister for Health, the member for Churchlands, spoke in question time earlier this week and in subsequent contributions about the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce and the calls that are going unanswered to the helpline. A quarter of all calls are not being answered. The government cannot point to a solution like that and say that this is what it is doing to respond to a problem and then not actually deliver. It is typical of a Labor government: they roll out a bulldozer and put out a sign; they do not really do a whole lot. Nearly a quarter of calls are not being picked up and responded to in times of crisis. Once again, it is a hallmark of this government that it cannot keep up. It does not have any leadership in vitally important areas like health, emergency services and elective surgery waitlists. We are now seeing it happening with the meth helpline—25 per cent or thereabouts of all calls are going unanswered.

Another issue is ambulance ramping. We have seen some of the worst results for ambulance ramping in seven or eight years. In August alone, there were 168.7 hours of ambulance ramping. In the following week, it was more than 180 hours. These are the worst results in seven or eight years. That is absolutely unacceptable in the state of Western Australia. Members opposite have managed to grind into the ground a billion-dollar health system, billion-dollar hospitals and our world-class health system. We are so lucky to have such exceptional clinicians, doctors, nurses, administration staff and facilities staff to keep the health system running. If it was up to the Labor Party and members opposite, they would be ground into the ground. The government has ripped out \$201 million from the health system. That is going to have an impact. We see that impact when ambulance ramping times blow out so significantly.

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Something else that often goes unaddressed is the cuts to external providers. These are people who provide important health services, typically in a not-for-profit fashion, right out into the community. There have been significant cuts to these external providers right across Western Australia.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! I ask members to allow the member on his feet to continue.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate your protection, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr P. Papalia: Sorry; no-one was listening!

The ACTING SPEAKER: It is a very good contribution; I am just trying to hear it.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: In the response to Legislative Assembly question on notice 3307 asked by the member for Churchlands to the Minister for Health on the cuts to external providers, we see that very important not-for-profit community organisations that provide important services have had their funding reduced or cut entirely. That is not good enough. The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia was developing a short course on sexual health and blood-borne viruses for Aboriginal health workers but there is no further funding for that. That is not good enough. I would have thought that was a relatively important external health priority. I would have thought that there would be some funding for that. What have we seen happen to important health awareness campaigns and grants? There was a grant that was paying for a GP down south, in my case, to operate a mobile health service that went right out into the Peel region. It would typically be a general practitioner; in some cases it was a nurse and in some other cases counselling services would be run out of that van. The previous government funded that service—\$200 000 a year or thereabouts was allocated for that van to go into the Peel region. The Peel region is often exploited by the government because it thinks it is close to Perth. If members were to ask me, I would say that it is important that the Peel receives services that are delivered and governed within the Peel region. I find it fascinating that a mobile health van that is run by a GP down south has had its funding of \$200 000 or thereabouts a year cut. That has a real impact on the community. That van will not longer be able to service towns like Boddington, where people cannot access services because they do not have transport to get to hospital or major medical centres or even access treatment or doctors in Perth. That van went to them. It was a vitally important service. Again, that is similar to all those external health providers who have had their funding cut or not renewed.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Funding for those external health providers is not being renewed or is just being cut altogether. I do not understand how members opposite can grandstand about their commitments to those vulnerable members of the community in remote and regional Western Australia, those people in, say, the Peel region in this case, because it is something that I know well. Those vitally important services are being cut entirely. I will go through some of the funding that will not be continued. It includes funding for a number of Aboriginal medical services right across Western Australia; Silver Chain; the Neurological Council of WA; some shires that, from the looks of it, delivered important health projects in the Kojonup health precinct; and Alzheimer's Western Australia, which was developing a delivery program in regional Western Australia. Funding is being cut to services at Edith Cowan University, the Heart Foundation and the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia. I do not understand how members opposite can suggest that somehow they are investing in the health of Western Australians, that somehow everything is going okay, when everything quite clearly points out that that is not the case. The government cannot continue to gut the Western Australian health system in the order of \$201 million and expect that everything will be okay. The government inherited an outstanding health system.

Dr D.J. Honey: World class.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It was a world-class health system. I would have thought that the government would have wanted to run it to its fullest capacity so that it could be the best that it could possibly be. What we see, in fact, is the reverse. We see a government intent on stripping out money. It does not seem to think its priority should be to put in money to adequately fund the health system. External health providers are a good example. The government does not seem to think that there is an issue with ambulance ramping, four-hour rule blowouts, the elective surgery waitlists and people not being able to see specialists within a certain time. I do not understand how they do not think —

Mrs A.K. Hayden: Because they do not seem to think.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: They do not seem to think; they do not seem to care perhaps, member for Darling Range. Every time the opposition tries to hold the government to account on this, it says, "There is nothing to see here; don't worry about that at all." I do not think that is good enough. The opposition quite rightly today, in moving this motion, absolutely and forcefully is condemning this government. The cuts it is making to its budget are having an impact on frontline services and the delivery of services to the people of Western Australia. There is not a more obvious example of that than in health. There is not a more obvious example of that than when people are on the elective surgery waiting list way beyond the maximum recommended time. That is not good enough from anyone's perspective. I do not understand. The Minister for Health comes in here and does his best to make it look like he

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is being up-front and is telling the truth, when in fact all he is doing is papering over the cracks. He is not providing new stewardship or leadership. That is having a very real impact on our community. We see that lack of leadership every time the opposition and the member for Churchlands ask questions of the Minister for Health. We expect full and frank answers. We expect a full and frank account of what is happening when it comes to the lives and wellbeing of the people of Western Australia. We do not expect the farce that we get in question time from the Minister for Health, who does this show and says, “There’s nothing to see here, folks; just keep moving along.” Today the Leader of the Opposition asked a question about emergency department attendances and the four-hour rule blowouts. What did we see? It is the flu. I appreciate that the flu will have an impact on the health system, and apparently it does so every winter, so we would think that that but that agency would be well prepared and well versed to manage that situation. However, that apparently warrants the four-hour rule blowout. Quite rightly, the Leader of the Opposition blew a hole right through that argument. That is not what is happening at all. It is due to the lack of investment by a government that inherited a world-class health system. In fact, all this government has done is strip money out of the health system. This is not good enough. The health sector desperately needs more leadership from the government and the Minister for Health needs to stand up, take some responsibility and fight for his portfolio. Instead, \$200 million is pulled out and communities and external health providers are suffering. That has a very real impact on the people of Western Australia, and it is one of the reasons the opposition has moved this critical motion in private members’ business this afternoon. A number of other members will make a contribution this afternoon but, all in all, we see the consistent theme of this government that fails to act and fails to deliver desperately needed critical frontline services because it is intent on cutting the state’s budget.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland — Minister for Police) [5.16 pm]: “Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.” Words written by Sir Walter Scott in 1808 come to mind today. I have heard a lot of deceit in this house in speeches over time, but never more than those contained in, for over an hour, the last three opposition members’ speeches. Their contributions have been deceitful and hypocritical and they have failed to take any responsibility whatsoever for the financial state that they left Western Australia in. The first person to speak in this debate to complain about funding cuts here or there was the Leader of the Opposition. He is the one who effectively caused the problem.

I had a stint as acting shadow Treasurer in 2010. During that time state debt was at about \$14 billion or \$15 billion, from my recollection—maybe slightly less. At that time I put a question to the then Premier, Hon Colin Barnett. I asked, “What cap will you put on debt?” He did not want to answer that. I eventually asked him pretty directly, “Well, can you just give a figure that you will not go beyond? How about \$20 billion?” He responded back in 2010 by saying, “There is no way we will go to anything like \$20 billion.” The truth is they put us on a trajectory to \$40 billion. That is what they did. They talk about cuts to budgets. They try to pretend that our government is cutting a lot of money out of core services. They fail to mention even once the cuts that the former government made in its midyear review, just a couple of months before the election. Having listened to a lot of hyperbole from those opposite, a lot of deceitful arguments, I want to put some facts on the table about the police budget. Let us compare the facts. When we compare the former government’s last four years in office with the period 2017–18 to 2020–21, this government will have increased the police budget by \$495 million, or nine per cent. If we compare the previous government’s forward estimates from 2017–18, we see that our government has increased the police budget by \$143 million. Let us not forget that the previous government cut about \$350 million out of the police budget between its last forward estimates and the midyear review. When members opposite talk about cuts, these are the cuts that the previous government put in place. When the member for Hillarys talks about the Government Regional Officers’ Housing increases, he should take some responsibility for them, because the previous government not only blew the budget and put us about \$40 billion in debt, but also slashed key budget areas like police before it ever left office. It put it all in its midyear review. Embedded in its budget was a \$30 a week rent increase for regional police officers for years into the future. It was not put there by us. It was not our idea after the election. It was put there by the member for Riverton when he was Treasurer of this state. Take some responsibility. Now members are bleating that we have not removed it. They have put us \$40 billion in debt and they embedded these increases in rent for police officers in this state, yet they ask us why we have not removed them. Take some responsibility. Those embedded cuts that the previous government put in its forward estimates and its midyear review cannot be removed without blowing the budget further. We are not irresponsible. We are taking responsibility. Unfortunately, we have to take responsibility for the irresponsible financial management that was in place for eight and a half years under the Liberal–National government.

Let us go through the police budget line by line. In the previous government’s forward estimates for 2018–19 in the midyear review in the month before the election, it was \$1 385.5 million. We increased that in our last budget to \$1 474.6 million. In the previous government’s forward estimates for 2019–20 in the midyear review, it was \$1 390.9 million. We have increased that to \$1 420.5 million. In the previous government’s forward estimates for 2020–21 in the midyear review, it was listed as \$1 399.9 million. We have listed it in the forward estimates as \$1 425.8 million. They are all increases; they are not cuts to what the previous government had in its midyear

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review months before the election. It is a complete nonsense. We can see the fallacious argument put by the member for Hillarys and the Liberal Party. They are trying to say that there has been \$250 million worth of cuts to the police budget and, by the way, as a direct result, the crime rate has gone up. Both things are untrue. Firstly, the police budget has gone up; it has not gone down. Secondly, the crime rate has gone down; it has not gone up. As I said in question time, the figures from the last completed financial year show that the crime rate is at a 10-year low and for some categories of crime these are the best results in years. I congratulate our police officers and the police force of this state for the excellent job that they have been doing in recent times.

I also note, as I partly did during question time, that we have given the police additional resources. All we have done is add to the police budget since we have come to government. We have been delivering on our election commitments. We could see methamphetamine use getting out of control in this state. The opposition says that the rate of use is still going up. The last wastewater test results showed the opposite. Again, it is deceit. Opposition members have not let the facts or the truth get in the way of these phoney arguments that they keep putting forward. They want to keep scaremongering. They want to keep saying that the crime rate is going up. They want to say that meth use is going up. But the facts tell us a very different story. The crime rate is not going up and the best figures that we have on meth use show that use is going down. The most recent wastewater test results show a positive trend. I do not see that as any reason for complacency, because it is a shocking problem in our community and one that we have to be vigilant on. That is why we have committed record funds to this issue. We have provided \$83.5 million over four years to deliver our meth border force and to boost police enforcement activities in the area of drug control to target the supply and distribution of drugs into our community, particularly meth. One hundred additional police officers and 20 specialist police staff are being recruited and deployed. Those police officers will increase our tactical, intelligence and covert capacity. They will also target known distribution points in both the metropolitan area and regional Western Australia.

As I have advised the house previously, in the last financial year our police seized a record amount of drugs—1.43 tonnes of crystal meth. They charged 185 vendors, they charged 21 offenders with related money-laundering offences, they seized approximately \$11.26 million in cash and they deconstructed 15 clandestine drug-manufacturing laboratories. We are also equipping the police force with some state-of-the-art technology to deal with methamphetamine and other drugs in the community. Last year I launched a meth truck. As I have told the house previously, it is a mobile truck that can be sent to the meth distribution routes in regional areas. It has what looks like the X-ray equipment that people might see at an airport that can scan packages, parcels, cases, bags—whatever—for drugs. It means that the police can create a roadblock and then unload the contents of vehicles and put them through the scanner and, sometimes in conjunction with the use of drug dogs, very quickly identify whether a vehicle has drugs in it and deal with the offenders as appropriate. They can also take the meth truck to a mail distribution centre, because, unfortunately, a lot of drug distribution takes place through the mail in the form of parcel post. It is not just potentially Australia Post; as people would know, lots of other commercial entities offer mail and parcel delivery services. We can send the meth truck, our officers and our drug dogs to those centres, and that is proving to be very effective. We want to target criminal syndicates. We want police to have the resources to target those people who are peddling this shocking drug in our community, which is absolutely ruining hundreds of lives across our state on a too-frequent basis.

We have also recently equipped police with a device called TruNarc. This is a very useful electronic device. It can scan and detect suspected illicit substances that are contained in packages. I saw a demonstration of this recently. The drugs might be in a plastic bag, a glass jar or some other container. It is simply a matter of holding this hand-held device up to the container and within about a minute, there is a reading to determine whether there is an illicit substance in it. The substance is identified out of a whole range of substances. This is fantastic because it helps police very quickly identify whether someone has an illegal substance or something that is harmless. Police can identify what the substance is, but also very importantly this is a safety measure as well, because some substances—some have been in use in America—have proved to be hazardous to the officers who have located them. If the substances are inhaled or touched by police officers, there can be devastating consequences, up to and including death, so not having to open packages, glass jars, plastic bags and the like to be able to identify drugs in the first place is very important. Of course, subsequently, having identified that the substance is methamphetamine or heroin, for example, it can then go off to a laboratory for full and appropriate testing.

We have also added 25 police officers to the regional enforcement unit. Unfortunately, our regional members knew that, sadly, far too many people are killed on our regional roads. Primarily, most of the regional fatalities occur on those major regional roads within a couple of hundred kilometres of Perth. Many of them are drive-off-the-road deaths, either head-on into oncoming traffic or off the side of the road. We suspect that many of those accidents involve fatigue, but a lot of them involve people speeding and also people under the influence of drugs or alcohol, which is why we have significantly increased the amount of alcohol and drug testing we are doing and added 25 additional officers to the regional enforcement unit. We are deploying those officers on those major roads to

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have that visible police presence that had been lacking under the former government. These police officers are not there to replace the traffic enforcement strategies of regional police stations and districts; they are there to complement and enhance them. They are additional to the officers who would be tasked to do traffic in those regional areas.

I thought some of the nonsense that the member for Hillarys came up with was interesting. Quite apart from his furphy over the Government Regional Officers' Housing, when he asked us to remove the rent increases that the former government had put in place and embedded in the government, he also talked about a number of other things that the former government had failed to do in its time in government. The former government had eight and a half years to put in place a redress scheme and a workers' compensation scheme for police and to equip them all with stab-proof vests, but it did not. Not only did the former government blow the overall budget, it blew the police budget, embedded costs in it and left us with lots of gaping holes for expenditure. No money was put in the forward estimates for vests so they would be ready for this year or next year. Two years ago, the former government did not say, "Let's put some money on the forward estimates for body cameras and vests." All these things take a long time to procure. We have to work out exactly what we want to roll out. There is not much point in choosing a vest and rolling it out to everyone and then finding out that it is not actually fit for purpose, so procurement processes necessarily take a while. First, we need to determine what the best equipment is and what we want. What body camera do we want? What systems will we need? What stab-proof vest is ideal for our circumstances in Western Australia? What works in Tasmania is not necessarily the best vest for WA. It is all very well to choose something that is maybe heavy and dark for use on a routine basis in Tasmania, but is that same vest appropriate for the north west of Western Australia? Is that same vest appropriate for our cops who ride bicycles around Northbridge? Many of them probably do not want to wear the kinds of vests that are worn by officers in Tasmania. Very productively, the Commissioner of Police and senior police have been working with the union and I understand that they have a short list of appropriate vests and that that matter will be resolved relatively shortly.

Similarly, nonsense and more deceit was perpetrated by the member for Hillarys when he said that the Commissioner of Police had made a submission to government for money for body cameras. No, he did not; he just did not do it. The member for Hillarys has simply made that up. The Commissioner of Police and I support the use of body cameras. The actual purchase of the cameras is not a major cost; the real issue is the storage and retrieval of images taken from those body cameras, because any of that data can be sought by defendants when they appear in court and it would have to be retrieved. Imagine the situation if they cannot find or retrieve that information; a lot of protocols need to be put in place. It has even been suggested to me that legislation might need to be put in place to govern the rules around when body cameras are used. There are circumstances when police officers go into people's homes where tragic circumstances have occurred and there are real questions about whether some of those things should be filmed, so decisions have to be made about those kinds of things. These are complex matters, and, again, we see an opposition that takes the cheap shot, but takes no responsibility. Did the former government develop any legislation for using body cameras? No, it did not. Was the former government proactive on the issue? No, it was not. Other states have moved ahead, but this state did nothing—no preparation—under the former government's term.

The member for Hillarys now asks why we have not done everything in our first year in office. It is a disgrace that we have not put in place the redress scheme and the workers' compensation scheme, fitted every police officer with body cameras and vests, and reduced the rents embedded into the budget by the former government—it is absolutely incredible stuff! No wonder the former government was thrown out of office in the way that it was and why there is an amazing majority on this side of the house. We will not take that majority for granted; we understand that we have to work hard to earn the respect of the people of Western Australia and we have to deliver for them, and we will. In our four-year period in office, where we have made election commitments, we will deliver on all those commitments. I am delighted that we have already delivered a number of commitments in the police portfolio. We have already upped the penalty for people who deal in meth. If a person is caught dealing with 28 grams or more of methamphetamine, they now face a life sentence. That was put in place in the very early period of our government. We promised the people of Western Australia, in particular the RAC and Western Australian Police Union, that we would put in place so-called "slow MO" laws—the slow down, move over laws—and we have done that. We did that very early on. We also made a commitment to cyclists on the one-metre passing laws. That is something that the former government procrastinated on for years while they ran trials in Queensland and other places. Nothing happened here, the former government was absolutely opposed to the law. I speak to cyclists who have welcomed the law. Has it alleviated all potential for harm? No, it has not. None of us really expected that it would. But the general feedback that I get is —

Mr C.J. Tallentire: It's made a big difference.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As the member for Gosnells has reinforced, it has made a big difference. Cyclists tell me that they feel that most vehicles are making an extra effort to give them that bit of space. If it happens in a zone

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that is less than 60 kilometres an hour, that space is one metre, and if the zone is more than 60 kilometres an hour, it is one and a half metres. I see motorists giving cyclists a lot more space than that, and of course we have said that a motorist can cross a double white line if it is safe to do so and the motorist has very clear vision. When compared with motor vehicles, cyclists generally travel more slowly, so less passing distance is required and a motorist can make that judgement about whether it is safe to pass. We have also delivered on our Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce, our regional enforcement unit and our 24-hour police stations, something that the opposition continues to criticise us for. It is kind of curious, is it not? We are criticised for actually delivering what the community wants. Those opposite were saying only yesterday that they want answers to their questions, but there are some questions that opposition members will not answer. For example, if they were in office, would they get rid of the three additional 24-hour police stations? Would they say, “Sorry people of Ellenbrook; you will go back to a police station that closes at four o’clock in the afternoon. Sorry people around Cockburn; your police station was open for 24 hours, but it’s going back to closing at four in the afternoon.” The biggest travesty of all is imagining opposition members saying to people of the Armadale region, “Your police station is going back to closing at four in the afternoon. There’s no more 24-hour police station. It’s back to the 4.00 pm closure and your nearest 24-hour police station is in Cannington.” Of course, the Armadale Police Station now services a thriving region that is densely populated. Yes, it is an outer metropolitan location, but it is densely populated and the station services that surrounding region going out towards Byford and beyond. If we closed Armadale after 4.00 pm and those people wanted to attend a police station or needed police assistance after that time, they would have to hike into Cannington as well. Opposition members say, “Where would you rather have police officers—behind desks or out on the road?” The fact of the matter is that, firstly, it does not require very many police officers to keep the station open. Secondly, if we follow the logic of their argument, why should we have any 24-hour police stations at all? Perhaps the member for Mandurah would like his police station to close at four in the afternoon. The member for Dawesville was complaining about services in the Peel region. We actually keep his police station open 24/7. If I had a look at the statistics, I would find that very few people actually attend the Mandurah Police Station in the early hours of the morning. Probably very few attend the Joondalup Police Station or even the Fremantle Police Station at that time. Perhaps some of the members who have been complaining would be happy to see Mirrabooka Police Station close at four in the afternoon rather than stay open for 24 hours. There is a bit of hypocrisy here.

Mr P. Papalia: They do not have any north of the river.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They have a couple north of the river. I think the members for Hillarys and Scarborough might be a little concerned if we said, “In the early hours of the morning, there’s only a handful of people over the course of a month who go to Mirrabooka Police Station. How ’bout we close that at four in the afternoon and put a couple of extra officers on the road?” Opposition members will say that they want to keep those three additional 24-hour police stations open, but what commitment do they really have to the seven existing 24-hour police stations if their principle is to not bother having officers in stations and to put them all out on the road? Is the opposition’s real plan to close Mirrabooka, Joondalup, Fremantle and Cannington Police Stations?

Mr P. Papalia: That is their plan.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Maybe it is. I see that the member for Dawesville has returned to the house. I wonder whether the member for Dawesville enjoys having his police station open beyond four o’clock in the afternoon and having a 24/7 police station? I think he might.

This opposition is all over the shop. It is full of contradictory arguments. On the one hand it is against spending, but on the other hand, it is for spending. It wants us to spend money that it cut out of the budget. It makes up a variety of false claims. It is just a nonsense. The member for Hillarys asked why the police did not get their one and a half per cent pay increase and why was it the same as everyone else. Mr Acting Speaker, I and I know that the Premier and others have said time and time again that we would all love to be able to pay our police officers more. We appreciate the job that they do. Personally, I would like to see nurses and teachers paid more. These people all do very important jobs in our community, but there is no limitless amount of money. The money has to come from somewhere. As a government, we have had to make some hard decisions. We have had to be responsible. Why? It is because those sitting opposite were so irresponsible when they were in government. When the last Labor government left office, under Treasurer Eric Ripper, state debt stood at \$3.6 billion. That figure now seems to us to be incredible—\$3.6 billion! Imagine the position we would be in now if state debt had remained at \$3.6 billion. In fact, imagine the position even if it had tripled to \$10 billion. This state would be in a fantastic position. But the mess left by those opposite has meant that a responsible government has had to make some very hard decisions. We are making those hard decisions on behalf of the community of Western Australia. We will not make decisions at the expense of frontline services. That is certainly our commitment to policing as I know it is in other portfolio areas. Our Commissioner of Police has had to restructure police so that he can deliver a better service to the community of Western Australia. His changes to the districts have already been making a significant

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difference. If the member for Hillarys were honest and were to speak of those discussions he has had with police officers, he would tell us that they are saying that, frankly, they love the new model. They are so pleased to see the back of the failed model implemented by the former government.

Mr P. Papalia: It's true.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, it is true. The former government put in place a model that had just four metropolitan districts. We had police officers from Wembley responding to the hills and to Ellenbrook. There was so much evidence of police officers having to cover vast areas.

Mr M.J. Folkard: From Cottesloe to Two Rocks.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes—from Cottesloe to Two Rocks. I gave my quote from the top of the east metropolitan area because they are the areas that I principally represent in Parliament. But, yes, they were responding to calls from Cottesloe to Two Rocks. What a nonsense! These were the distances being travelled to respond. In April this year, the Commissioner of Police announced that significant operational restructure. It has not been in place for very long, but it has already been welcomed. It gives us eight much more responsive, smaller districts. It gives Armadale a district of its own for the first time, and that is certainly warranted on not only a population basis, but also a police call-out and crime basis. These new districts are easily identified in the major centres where they are located: Perth, Midland, Mirrabooka, Joondalup, Armadale, Cannington, Mandurah and Fremantle. Each district is run by a superintendent and three inspectors. Two commanders are in charge of north and south under one assistant commissioner for the metropolitan region. We have given special resourcing consideration to busy nightlife areas such as Perth and Fremantle to recognise the challenges that police have in policing those entertainment precincts. More officers are based at local police stations. This has been achieved by amalgamating what were known as the LPTs—the local policing teams—and the response teams into one stream, which are now described as patrol or inquiry officers. Officers in charge of police stations have ownership and control of their policing resources. They will decide how patrol and inquiry officers are deployed and respond to issues in the local community. These teams will work across the whole subdistrict.

In fulfilment of our commitment to deal with the scourge of domestic violence, we have put in place family and domestic violence response teams. Members will remember that this was an area that was cut by the former government very early on after it won office in 2008. Members may also remember that it got rid of the domestic violence courts which, again, was a scandalous decision. We are significantly increasing the number of officers dedicated to family and domestic violence in each of the districts.

We are also increasing numbers of officers in our regional operations groups. These officers can respond to out-of-control parties or other major incidents and can complement those people who are already in place in the districts. We have established a central ROG at Warwick Police Station. That is being established from September to complement our north metro and south metro ROGs. We have gone from two ROGs to three ROGs and from 98 officers to 120 officers. We recognise that people need to know that if there is an incident such as an out-of-control party, we have specially equipped and specially trained officers ready, willing and able to respond.

Finally, I put on the record that crimes against the person have decreased by four per cent since 2015–16, the last full year of the previous government. Crimes against property have decreased since 2015–16. Family assaults have decreased by eight per cent, robberies by nine per cent, and burglaries by 14 per cent. Motor vehicle theft has decreased by 19 per cent, which is the lowest level in a decade. Stealing has decreased by 10 per cent and property damage has decreased by 19 per cent. That is also the lowest level in a decade.

Our police are getting some outstanding results. Frankly, I am getting pretty tired of the member for Hillarys and the opposition rubbishing the efforts of our police and running furrphies and irresponsible things about the crime statistics and making out that our police are not on top of the issue. Our commissioner and our police officers are doing a sterling job. They are utilising the resources given to them by government in the most effective way. We have not reduced the police budget. That is just a furrphy that has been put out by the opposition. The police budget has increased.

I started my comments with reference to the deceit of members opposite. During their time in office, police response times blew out considerably. I am happy to report to the house that these times are improving across nearly every district. In fact, I was recently in Ellenbrook—the member for Swan Hills' electorate—and the local police affirmed that they are now able to respond to calls for assistance much more quickly because of the change in resourcing and the new police model.

I really have to laugh at some of the points made by the member for Dawesville. He tried to take credit for the Midland hospital initiative. It is a bit rich of the member for Dawesville to try that on while I am in the room. Midland hospital is in existence because of the Reid review under the former Minister for Health, Hon Jim McGinty. Hon Jim McGinty —

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Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Sorry, I would like to be heard.

Hon Jim McGinty had the option presented to him of either dramatically improving and extending the existing Swan District Hospital or building a new hospital on a greenfield site. The decision was made, not by the Carpenter government, but by the Gallop government, quite some time ago to identify a site for that hospital. We identified that site at the Midland railway workshop site and committed to it. We also committed funding and secured federal funding for it. My recollection is that it was in the order of \$160 million from both state and federal governments. That was all signed and sealed well before 2008. It is a nonsense to say anything else. The key difference is that we committed to building a public hospital —

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Sorry. There is some weird whingeing coming from that corner—some ignorant whingeing coming from the corner. I advise the member not to bother trying to interject.

Members opposite do not like to hear it. They want to take credit for all our initiatives.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Members opposite made a difference when they came to government. They delayed our hospital by a full three years. I have all the original documents and original commitments. Members opposite will not want to hear it, but former Premier, Hon Colin Barnett, promised the children's hospital at that election, which was a very noble and good thing to promise. But the government funded the children's hospital over the next three years and Midland went on the back burner.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It tried to work out how the state would make the financial contribution it committed to with the commonwealth. It could not get it to add up so it went for a private-sector model and put out for expressions of interest. It managed to keep that expressions of interest process going for about a year before putting out the tender. It managed to delay the hospital's construction by a full three years. The money was on budget. The federal money had been secured, but the state money for the next three years went into the children's hospital. I do not begrudge the children's hospital, but that is the decision that the former government made. When in office, the Liberal Party always neglects the eastern suburbs and puts our projects on the back burner. It was apparent from the Reid report that Swan District Hospital was unsustainable. The government either had to make major improvements to it or build a new greenfield hospital. That was the commitment and the decision that was made by the Gallop government a full three years before members opposite came to office. The financial commitment by the commonwealth was made well before they came to office and the money was put in the forward estimates in the state budget before they ever came to office. All they ever did was delay building our hospital and privatise our hospital. As a result, as many members have put on the record, there are procedures that my constituents and people in the eastern region cannot have at our hospital. More expense has to be outlaid to provide a separate day clinic so that people can have the procedures that St John of God hospital provides. It was laughable when the former Premier stood in this place and said that he did not realise that a Catholic hospital would not provide those reproductive services. At the time, I asked him what rock he was hiding under. Who knew—just about everybody—that Catholic hospitals do not provide that broad suite of reproductive services that people availed themselves of at Swan District Hospital? There have been consequences of that decision to privatise the hospital. Having said that, and given the services that it is contracted by government to provide, St John of God hospital does an excellent job, and I applaud it for that. It is not a criticism at all of St John of God; it is fairly and squarely a criticism of the former government.

The members for Riverton, Hillarys and Dawesville have stood in this house and said that there has been a long list of deceit and failure to take responsibility. We are a government that is delivering. The former government never even committed to a redress scheme for police at the election. We will deliver on that and we will deliver on workers' compensation, just as we have delivered on all the other commitments that I have outlined this afternoon.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [6.01 pm]: I wish to add to the excellent debate kicked off by the Leader of the Opposition and joined by my fellow excellent members on this side of the house. One of the problems with the cuts that have occurred to frontline services is that they come on top of a raft of increases in charges hitting Western Australian families. We on this side of the house—unlike on the other side of the house, it appears—actually care about people who are doing it tough. We care about families. We do not sit around blithely and say,

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“Oh, it is just \$730 worth of increased charges. That does not really matter. Oh, we are increasing the electricity charges. We are increasing water.”

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Members opposite do not care. It is a joke to them. They are laughing about it. It is not a joke.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, so I can provide the protection of the Chair, do you seek to take interjections this evening?

Dr D.J. HONEY: No, I do not, Mr Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, please allow the member to continue his remarks.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is not a joke —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, I will ask you to speak through the Chair.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am speaking through the Chair.

These increased charges are not a joke to those families who are doing it tough. We are concerned that the McGowan Labor government, as it seems to be titled these days—it sounds very presidential, does it not; it is a new system—has hit families in Western Australia with an average of \$730 in increases in charges at a time of record unemployment. I pulled out the latest figures. We have those figures here: 93 000 Western Australians are unemployed, sitting at 6.4 per cent, seasonally adjusted, which is near record high unemployment. This is at a time when the Labor Party has increased debt by a further \$5 billion through its unfunded election promises and its commitments. Those increases in rates are 13 times the rate of inflation when wages have not gone up at all. We have seen these increases in the budget: electricity, up 18 per cent; water, up 11.5 per cent; motor vehicle registrations, up 7.6 per cent; and public transport, which we figure would hit the poorest people in the community, by and large, is up 12.6 per cent. The government is hurting families. Most importantly, these increases are hurting families on lower incomes—the families that the Labor Party claims to represent.

We have seen the government dragged kicking and screaming to reverse a range of cruel cuts, particularly in education and other frontline services. I went to Moora last weekend. I have never felt more popular attending any town. Boy, those residents will punish the government all the way to the next election. The cut to Moora Residential College was a disgraceful cut that it was forced to reverse; it was shamed into reversing it by the federal Liberal government providing additional funds. Those cuts should never have been made.

In the first six months of 2017–18, the hardship utility grant scheme—the subsidy scheme for people who cannot meet their utility payments—was \$25 million before it was suspended for six months, so no-one could get support for six months. The budget has allocated only \$16 million, further slashing it to \$10 million the following year over the next two years. Furthermore—I think this is really devious—we now see that those payments are being hidden inside the agencies. The government is trying to disguise the extent of that by hiding those costs and saying to the agencies, “You just take care of it, however you are going to take care of it.” It is Labor at its hypocritical worst. It is punishing those people who are struggling and all those people who do not have a mainstream voice.

During the last election, we saw the McGowan government promising a plan for jobs and a plan for economic diversification. We have seen what happened with jobs with near-record unemployment in the state. In fact, those were just words that it used. It did not really mean it. As we have said in this place a number of times, the Labor Party had a plan to get elected but it did not have a plan to govern. As I said, near 93 000 Western Australians are unemployed.

The budget provides no direction and no economic leadership for the tourism and space industries. In relation to the space industry, basically, the government just surrendered and said, “We’ll just get what we can get.” There was no coordinated effort by this government to get the considerable millions of dollars that would have come in if there had been a coordinated effort. In agriculture and housing, we have seen a reversion to the good old-fashioned principle of slugging families, business and industry with taxes, plus increases to operating and household costs, while cutting out growth industries such as GM crops, uranium mining and inland gas development.

It is bad enough that the Labor government does not have a plan for jobs. This budget really highlighted the fact that the McGowan government has no plan for debt. The McGowan Labor government did inherit some significant debt from the previous government. Let us analyse this a little and look at what it is. During the last two terms of the previous government, the population of Western Australia increased by 500 000 people. That is the population of Tasmania—two and a half times the population of Hobart. In that time, the government had to provide services for all those people. That is net migration to this state of 50 000 people a year. Do members know what has happened under this government? In fact, we have had net migration out of the state by way of interstate migration and we have seen a growth of around 13 000 people over a year and a half. People stopped coming to

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Western Australia under the Labor government. The Liberal government had to cope with 500 000 people coming into the state. They needed to be provided with a range of services. We hear a lot of complaining and bleating on the other side about the debt that was inherited. We do not hear complaints about the services that were provided; the \$56.6 billion invested in the state's asset investment program; the 91 000 direct jobs that were created; and the state's asset base, growing by 54 per cent to \$190 billion. We saw upgrading of essential services and essential infrastructure. We saw private sector investment. We hear little snippets that this and that is happening. Let us talk about the term of the last government—\$480 billion of private sector investment in the state. Between October 2008 and March 2017, the number of people employed was 152 000, and average weekly earnings rose from \$997 to \$1 323. That is what we get —

Mr P. Papalia: What's the substance —

Dr D.J. HONEY: No, member; this is what we get when 500 000 people come into the state and the government has to provide services. Part of the debate on the other side is that it inherited all this debt and had to increase charges to cover it. I am pointing out to members opposite that it was useful debt. I will go through that in some more detail, because clearly members opposite are interested.

The gross domestic product of the state was substantially higher than the rest of the economy. In fact, in real terms, the size of the economy increased by around 40 per cent over the last six years of the former government—a substantial increase. The Liberal government diversified the state economy, unlike the current government. The Tourism Commission invested \$686 million, \$2.2 billion was invested in agriculture, almost \$400 million was invested in science and innovation and \$1.3 billion was invested in the Department of Mines and Petroleum to encourage the exploration and development of mines that this government is now enjoying. We rebuilt the health system. There were \$7 billion worth of health programs. Members opposite clearly hate that, because they did not want the debt. They did not want it to happen. There was \$7 billion invested in the asset program, funding 61 hospitals and health facilities. But members opposite hate that. We should not have had that, should we? The 500 000 people should not have had hospitals or schools to go to; they should not have had anything else to go to.

The government hates all the other things. It hates the Perth Stadium, does it not? It hates it! That is why members opposite all turned up to the opening and their free seats in the corporate boxes. But they hate that! We should not have done that. They hate Elizabeth Quay, too. They hate it all. They hate the new Museum that is being built. Perth Children's Hospital was stopped from opening for a completely bogus reason that we will talk about further in this house at another time. The government completely held up the commissioning of that for a completely bogus reason. Members opposite hate that! They hated it so much that they all turned up at the opening, and this government did not have a seat for the previous Premier of the state; he had to find a seat for himself up the back.

There was the royalties for regions funding that provided greater access to health—\$7.1 billion was invested in that. I could go on—56 new schools were built by the former government. Members opposite hate it all! This government knows why we had that debt. Ninety per cent of that debt went into critical services and critical infrastructure for the state to cope with the historic massive increase in population, but this government hates all that, does it not? That is all bad. It likes turning up to the openings, but it hates all that.

Ms J.J. Shaw: This is so bad.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I will carry on.

So that is why we have debt. Furthermore, what has this government done in 18 months? Debt was \$32 billion when it came into power. In a year and a half, it has been increased by \$7 billion. You guys are over-achieving by any measure. It is just a whole con job by the Labor Party. The fact is that this government has substantial unfunded election commitments, and it is trying to blame the previous government for that. It will increase that debt even further. The government has not even been clear on the debt of the Metronet project. We hear absolutely nothing about it. There is nothing in the forward estimates from the Labor Party on how much that will increase debt by, because it is all on the never-never; it is all something that will come in the future.

We have seen cuts to frontline services such as in the health budget. This is from the budget. It is not fantasy. It is not some imagined number. The health budget has been cut by \$197.5 million. Here it is. Members opposite like to see tables. If we go to division 8 and look at the budget allocation, we see that in 2018–19, it has gone from \$4.98 billion to \$4.94 billion—a \$37 million cut. In 2019–20, it is \$5.06 billion down to \$4.98 billion—a cut of \$74 million. In the 2020–21 forward estimates, it is \$5.15 billion down to \$5.06 billion—a cut of \$90.45 million. We have been told that the education budget will not be cut; let us look at the facts. We were told by the minister opposite to look at the facts, so let us go to part 5. Under the portfolio of the Minister for Education and Training, in 2018–19, it is \$4.11 billion down to \$4.043 billion—a cut of about \$68 million. In 2019–20, it is \$4.12 billion

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down to \$4.02 billion—a \$97 million cut. For 2020–21, the original forward estimate was \$4.203 billion, but now it is down to \$4.086 billion, which is a \$117 million cut. Those are the facts that members opposite want. Those are the cuts to those frontline services.

The police budget will be cut by \$27 million, with a cut of 218 police officers and staff. It is little wonder that it takes the police so long to respond to incidents in my own area, where there is a significant issue with crime. When someone tries to break into someone's house, the emergency response group takes an hour and a half to get there. I have said before in this place that they are getting there in time to draw chalk marks on the floor, and certainly not in time to help the people suffering a break-in by people trying to smash their front door down. Our leader talked about the cuts to the communities budget, but that is a little confused.

I have had the opportunity to talk about water a number of times in this place. This Labor government has increased water charges by 5.5 per cent in this budget, following a six per cent increase last year. That is 11.5 per cent in two years, despite this government knowing it is substantially overcharging and over-recovering for water. I will go through this in a bit of detail because sometimes we hear a lot of gobbledegook from the other side: "No, this isn't really happening. It's all okay; it's all just balanced out." Let us have a look at it. The truth is that it is a tax on water users. The Economic Regulation Authority analysed this and said that the government is overcharging households by, on average, \$400 a year. How does the government say that this is balanced? We can see it in the budget papers; it is very clear. Page 248 of the 2018–19 *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*—again, for the minister who likes references to everything—shows that the gross coming in is \$831 million this year, \$986 million next year, \$1.07 billion the year after, \$1.139 billion the year after and \$1.204 billion the year after that. Page 246 of the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* shows that of the \$831 million, operating subsidies—so that is all the subsidies we hear about—are \$409 million, other subsidies are \$13.7 million, and the net cash into government coffers is \$408 million.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: That simply goes up year on year to over \$500 million net. The Minister for Water has said in this place, "No; the modelling indicates that that is not the case." So let us analyse this in a little more detail. There is a model that has depreciation, amortisation and return on capital built into it. Let us analyse the detail of that a little. The Water Corporation completely internally funds its own capital. It does not go to Treasury for capital; it completely internally funds. So water users are paying for all the capital that is in the Water Corporation. How can the government make up a return on capital when the water users are paying for all the capital that the Water Corporation requires? It is a myth to say that there has to be some return on capital. This is some made-up number to try to justify the fact that the government has a net tax on households in Western Australia of \$400 million. It is a massive tax on the people of Western Australia. It is a tax that will only get greater and greater. People have no choice. As I demonstrated in this place before, under the Water Corporation's own figures, a family of four using the average amount of water will be so-called water guzzlers—evil people! A family of four using an average amount of water are water guzzlers. Those are the people this government has to punish. The truth is that it is a sham and it is simply a tax on the public of Western Australia. It is a tax particularly on large families in Western Australia. The Water Corporation is simply a cash cow. Over \$4.4 billion will be recouped in tax and dividends over the forward estimates.

Another matter which we have not spoken about for a while and which is a real cut to services for our regions is the royalties for regions cut. We have seen a trick. The Premier said —

Let me be clear: the royalties for regions program will continue under this government. It will continue with a cap of \$1 billion.

What have we actually seen? It is a pea-and-thimble trick. What has actually happened is that the larger part of that money has been sequestered for general recurrent expenditure. It is not going to provide additional services for regional people; it will simply fund services that are already provided for by government. I will go further with the issue of water. We can look at how ridiculous this water tax is. It is not just a \$400 million tax; it is a \$700 million tax. Over the forward estimates, up to \$320 million of the \$1 billion will go into covering the regional water subsidy. Any ruse that the overcharging of metropolitan users is to cover the costs and the subsidy for regional users is completely blown away, because the forward estimates show that \$320 million from royalties for regions—that is, a third of the \$1 billion—will be used to cover the regional water subsidies. That really makes it a \$700 million tax. Royalties for regions funding is also going into regional TAFE subsidies. We can look further: funding is going to the emergency and acute workforce; \$243 million is going to digital innovation and transport; \$13.3 million is going to Aboriginal and Islander education officers; \$7.7 million is going to improving teacher quality; and funding is going to independent learning coordinators and the like. As I said, what we are really seeing is funding that would normally have come from the recurrent expenditure of the government being

taken out of royalties for regions. What does that actually mean? It means that that money is not being used for the programs for which it was used in the past.

Since my election I have had a good opportunity to get out and see the excellent facilities that have been built in the regions. I know some members opposite have a little fun with some things, but the reality is that the overwhelming majority of the royalties for regions money has simply been used to close the gap between the quality of services provided to communities in regional areas and those that people expect as the norm in the metropolitan area. When I visited Dowerin field days, I saw that royalties for regions had paid for toilet blocks for that showground. It no longer has toilets that were built in the 1960s, as is the case in most regional places. When I went to Corrigin a year ago, I saw the recreation centre. It is a proper recreation centre where they can play basketball indoors. They are excellent facilities and excellent amenities that people in Perth take as normal but for the large part have been denied to people in the bush. They are the things that will not be built. They are frontline services. They are services to communities in the regions that they simply will not get because of this little pea-and-thimble trick of the government of using royalties for regions money to pay for recurrent expenditure. More than 55 per cent of that money will go into recurrent expenditure across the forward estimates. That is denying people in the bush facilities that they should enjoy.

In conclusion, there have been many cuts to frontline services and large increases in fees and charges. The sad part is that people who are struggling are the people who have been hit. It really is the sad part, because there are poor people in every electorate. It is not the top end of town or the wealthy people who we keep hearing are being hit; it is the families who are on the margins and whose mortgage is now 20 to 25 per cent greater than the value of their house who are struggling and who are the ones who have been hit by the reduction in services and the increase in fees. The Labor Party should stand condemned for the cuts it has made to frontline services, and more so for doing it in a way that hurts struggling families.

MR A. KRSTICEVIC (Carine) [6.25 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to say a few words on this motion. I say at the outset that members opposite, especially those on the backbench, should pay attention to this debate and all debates during private members' business. We are not making things up. We are not telling members things that are not factual. We are trying to share with members opposite what we are hearing in the community and every day on the streets; we are trying to make them a better government that delivers better results and understands these things—we are doing it for them! Those on the backbench should listen more than anybody else, because if they allow their ministers and executive to continue to do what they are doing, they will not be here at the next election. By all means they should sit there and be the cheer squad and cry out the government's praises, but they need to understand that they will not be here if they continue to do that. Members of the backbench need to hold the executive to account. Members of the executive are not their friends—they are marching to a different beat. They are the executive; they are the government. Backbenchers in the Labor Party are not part of government. That is something they need to understand.

When we try to talk about the pain that the government is inflicting on the community, backbenchers should listen. They should listen to the result in Darling Range. That was a very strong message for them from the community. The community spoke. Can the member for Pilbara afford a 9.3 per cent swing against him in his seat? Would he be here if he got a 9.3 per cent swing against him? That is what happened in Darling Range. Will he be here if he gets a five per cent swing or a three per cent swing against him? The government has to listen to the electors of Darling Range. They sent a message nice and early that the government is not doing the right thing as far as frontline services go and as far as the community is concerned. Government members can ignore them and say, "That is all rubbish. They don't know what they're talking about. That election was not real. It didn't happen. A swing of 9.3 per cent was just a fabrication. We'll just keep living in wonderland and keep moving forward as we are", or they can learn from that. Backbenchers can try to hold the Premier and ministers to account; they can tell them that they need to deliver better outcomes and to listen to the people of Western Australia. They need to stop playing games in government and start governing for everybody, and to start doing things with integrity and honesty. Listening to the Minister for Police, one would have thought she was going to get a sainthood! She said that everything is wonderful and beautiful, and that the government is doing a great job. She said that the member for Hillarys was making it all up. She said, "Trust me; I'm telling you the truth. Police services are not being affected. It is all going wonderfully. Crime is going down." The member for Cockburn wants to let all the prisoners out of jail, because all of a sudden they are singing in harmony. That will give the police something to do once the minister has let all the criminals out! Luckily, that is not happening. According to the Minister for Police and the Minister for Corrective Services, they could work together to try to keep those statistics at a comfortable level.

I will refer to some other people who shared messages. I always say that it is fantastic for us to talk in this Parliament and to argue across the chamber and try to prove who is wrong, but I like to listen to people out in the community. I like to listen to people who have credibility and who know what is happening in their particular area.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 19 September 2018]

p6294b-6318a

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Zak Kirkup; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Dr David Honey; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Papalia

Just look at the budget cuts for police. We just have to look at an article by Gabrielle Knowles, chief crime reporter, in *The West Australian* of 11 April 2018—not that long ago—titled “Budget cut puts heat on policing resources”. What did Gabrielle have to say? The article states —

Police Commissioner Chris Dawson —

That is a good start. He is someone who is very credible. He is someone we can believe —

concedes looming budget cuts imposed by the State Government will make it “difficult” to maintain the same level of policing across the State.

That is a pretty strong statement. It already contradicts what the minister said and leans towards what the member for Hillarys said. It continues —

In an exclusive interview with *The Weekend West* to mark one year as WA’s top cop, Mr Dawson said he needed more money to “modernise” the force, highlighted by WA’s frontline officers being the only ones in Australia without hand-held smartphone-computer devices.

Instead, he continues to grapple with an order—issued when he took the helm in August last year—to slash \$250 million from his budget over five years.

The minister has said that the budget keeps increasing—it keeps getting bigger and bigger. Obviously, the Commissioner of Police does not know how to read his own budget; that is what the minister is saying: the police commissioner does not understand what he has been given because he has been given more, not less. It continues —

Mr Dawson said he and his team had managed to save \$30 million last financial year, despite overhauling metropolitan policing operations, by “tightening their belts” and offering voluntary redundancies to officers and public servants.

What did the government do? It offered voluntary redundancies. That means fewer police and fewer support staff for the police. There are not more police; there are fewer police—at least that is what the police commissioner is saying. Again, if government members do not want to believe the police commissioner, that is entirely up to them. They can stand up in Parliament and say, “You know what? The police commissioner does not know what he is talking about. He is making it up. I believe the police minister. She is telling the truth and everybody else is fabricating everything.” But I know who I believe—I believe the police commissioner. The article continues —

Experienced officers who take redundancies will be replaced by recruits but departing public servants will not be replaced.

Experienced and trained police officers, who have resources funding a huge amount of investment in their capabilities, are leaving and we are getting recruits off the street—brand-new people who have no idea, apart from what they are taught from day one, and they have to build up that experience. All that knowledge and experience is disappearing. The government is not only cutting the budget and reducing services available to the community, but also reducing the capacity of those people—the experienced people, the ones who know what is going on, who have been there and done the hard yards. We know we cannot replace experience with someone who is brand new. It just cannot happen. It does not work. We know from every aspect of our lives that when someone walks in off the street, it takes a long time for them to build up their capacity and capability. We always say, “I wish the person who was there with all that knowledge and experience hadn’t left, that they were still here and we could learn from them.” The government is not only doing that, but also reducing that capacity. The government and Treasury allowed police to roll savings into the current year’s budget, but they still need to find those savings.

We then heard the Minister for Police talking about the 24-hour police stations, how wonderful they are and what a great job they are doing. The member for Burns Beach talked about what a disgrace the last model was because police officers had to come from afar to deal with issues—they were not in the immediate vicinity. But under this new structure, that has all been fixed up. Let me refer to another article. Let us hear from another person who should know what is going on. On 7 September 2018, an article appeared in *The West Australian*, again by Gabrielle Knowles, who seems to be on the money, titled “24/7 police stations a public risk”. What does Gabrielle say? The article states —

A LABOR election pledge to keep more police stations open to the public around the clock is putting lives at risk, the WA Police Union claims.

I thought that the Labor Party would have listened to the union—the WA Police Union. The article continues —

Union president George Tilbury highlighted the case of a teenage girl who he said almost died in Perth’s south-east this week, claiming she waited longer for police help because of the Government’s policy that “chained” officers to stations.

Two officers manning a 24/7 station were allegedly told they could not go to help the girl threatening self-harm despite being the closest available.

“A car from Belmont had to travel more than 60km to assist the girl because all cars aligned to the Armadale district were tied up with other jobs,” he said.

Further down, the article states —

But police analysis obtained by *The West Australian* in April revealed that on most nights, no-one went to the new stations after midnight. Mr Tilbury said that had not changed.

“The Government’s policy is a waste of precious resources and it nearly had blood on its hands,” Mr Tilbury said. “This policy, thought up by politicians not police officers, is taking important decisions away from the front line.”

He wants the officers who keep front counters open 24/7 out on the road—or 500 more police officers employed.

We have heard from the commissioner and from the president of the police union. The story they are telling us is completely different from the story that the Minister for Police is telling us. Are they living in parallel universes? It is not enough for backbench members to listen to their ministers and to walk behind like minions and just nod their heads. They are in this Parliament to make decisions, to stand up for their communities and to listen to the people in their communities. If they do not do that, they will not be here. I like the member for Balcatta; I would like him to come back in March 2021. But he will not come back in March 2021 —

Mr D.R. Michael interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: No, he cannot. The only way that is going to happen is if he starts to stand up for his community. The member for Balcatta knows that. He knows that he needs to stand up for his community and do what is right. He knows that frontline services and resources are being redirected and that misinformation is being spread in this Parliament about the effectiveness of the government. There are 905 days to go until the next election—March 2021. The Darling Range electorate has spoken. The rest of Western Australia, unfortunately—because we introduced fixed terms—has to wait until March 2021 to get rid of this incompetent government that does not care about the people of Western Australia, that does not listen to the police commissioner, that does not listen to the president of the police union, that does not listen to the officers, but makes decisions and statements based on political expediency rather than what is important on the ground. I think there is a very important lesson for government members here. Unfortunately, they are probably going to learn the lesson too late. By the time they wake up, they will be saying, “Oh! I missed that bus. I should have been listening back then when the member for Carine was speaking. He was trying to help me out. He was giving me some good advice.” I have seen it happen on this side. I have seen people not necessarily pay attention as much as they could have. We learn from our experiences. We learn from things that happen around us and, being the sort of person I am, I like to share that knowledge. I would like to give government members the opportunity to learn so they do not make those mistakes and so they deliver a better outcome for the people of Western Australia. I do not want them to have to suffer until March 2021. I do not want to have to wait until we come in again to fix up everything. I would prefer the government fix it up now so I can stand in this Parliament and say, “You know what, the Labor Party is listening. It is doing a great job. There is no smoke and mirrors going on. There is not all this ducking and weaving and all this fabrication of information taking place.” People out there do listen and pay attention, believe it or not. We all get emails from time to time—I know I do—saying, “I read this in Parliament. I read that in Parliament. It’s not exactly what I wanted to hear” or “Yes, you’re doing the right thing.” People are out there listening. These messages do get out there. It is very, very important for us to listen. Unfortunately, that is not happening. We know that at the moment people are struggling. Things are difficult, and that is not because of the fees and charges or the cuts to services. There is mortgage pain. People are struggling to pay their bills and mortgages. As the member for Cottesloe so rightly said, it is the poorest who are struggling the most to pay their water bills. They are being hit the hardest by excessive bills. Again, do not believe me; look at *The West Australian* of 30 April 2018 and read Daniel Mercer’s story in which he talks about Matthew and Catherine Hendry and their son Hayden who live in Byford. Read their story about how difficult their lives are. They are not rich or wealthy; they are a struggling family. They are being hit by excessive water hikes because they have to use the amount of water that they have to use. They cannot cut back. They have to use more than 500 000 litres a year and, therefore, they are paying excessive charges.

Members opposite should not sit here and think, “It’s just those rich people who use more water. They seem to have more showers. They seem to like to be cleaner than everybody else. They seem to drink more water than everybody else.” We all use water. It is a necessity of life. The government should not penalise people if they have to use more. Nobody should waste water. It is a precious resource; we know that. But the government should not penalise people for doing that. It needs to start listening.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 19 September 2018]

p6294b-6318a

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Zak Kirkup; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Dr David Honey; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Papalia

Interestingly, the Minister for Police also said that the government was going to keep all its election promises. I am not sure how she could say that, because the government has already broken a whole heap of them. The first promise it broke from day one was that there would be no increases in taxes and no new taxes. When she stood and said that the government would keep all its election promises, straightaway I could tell that the rest of the speech was going to go downhill from there. If that was her opening line, she really had nowhere to go from there; she could only go downhill.

I know that the member for Cannington is very big on references and asks us where we get our information from, so I thought I would put a couple of quick references on the record for him so that at least that aspect is covered. An article on ABC news on 21 February 2017 headed “WA election: Labor pledges no new taxes, Premier still looking for action on GST floor” states —

WA Labor has pledged not to impose any new taxes or tax increases on West Australians if it wins government in next month’s state election.

Labor leader Mark McGowan made the commitment just 24 hours after announcing a tax hike on foreign investors buying property in the state.

Mr McGowan said Labor would release all of its revenue-raising measures before polling day, but stressed people in WA were already paying enough tax.

They were already paying enough, so the then opposition said that it would release all its measures before polling day: “Trust me; I’m not related to Pinocchio at all.” It continues —

“There will be no new taxes on West Australians, full stop. If we are elected, there will be no new taxes on West Australians or increases in taxes on West Australians. If we’re elected, full stop,” ...

He said that multiple times. Of course, there are other articles but I will not read them all. There was another article on PerthNow on 21 February and there is the famous one on 30 May 2017 headed “Premier McGowan promised ‘no new taxes’ but fees and charges fair game”. It states —

During the election campaign in February, Mark McGowan promised: “If we’re elected, there will be no new taxes or increases on taxes on West Australians, full stop.”

But on Tuesday, the premier refused to repeat that statement and gave only a qualified commitment.

“We stand by our commitments we made at the election,” he told ABC radio in Albany.

“It’s difficult, I must say, because the financial situation is so catastrophic and so dire.

...

WA treasurer Ben Wyatt on Monday also refused to guarantee the election promise was still in Labor’s plan, telling reporters the government had to respond to financial circumstances.

Of course, for those who do not like to read, they can go to Twitter and see a nice video of the Premier giving an interview on 21 February 2017 in which he also said the same thing: “There’ll be no new taxes and no increases in taxes. Trust me. It’s all aboveboard” et cetera. The member for Cannington says, “Tell me where it is. Prove it; don’t just make it up.” I am happy to prove it. I am happy to make sure that when I speak, I refer to facts and figures and information, rather than just making it up.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: How can there not be a cut to frontline services if the government offers 3 000 redundancies as soon as it is elected? Who wants a redundancy? There are no requirements to assess capability, ability, knowledge or skills. It is just for whoever wants it. The first person who sticks their hand up gets it. That is the silliest thing in the world. All those experienced, intelligent, capable people are going to leave in droves and go into the private sector or retire, because they will be getting nice payouts. We are losing all that experience and knowledge in the workforce. That is the way the government starts off: “Let’s get rid of 3 000 of the best and brightest and let’s start up these megadepartments, so instead of having 41, we’ll go down to 25; it sounds like a nice number. We’ll amalgamate the whole thing and get rid of all the experienced directors general and we’ll put new people in. If anybody out there is criticising us, we’ll give them a job or we’ll sack them—one of the two. We’ll sort it out. One way or the other, we can make sure that people fall into line.” It is quite disappointing that those things have been done without thinking things through. I mean there is no way in the world 41 departments can be amalgamated into 25, with a department reporting to five or six ministers, and have that knowledge capability and expertise. I think we are seeing the effects of that amalgamation across many different areas. If something like this is going to be done, people need to sit down and work it out carefully, planning and going through quite a rigorous process; it is

not something that can be done overnight. It is not the same as combining a couple of superannuation policies into one—some simple little task like that, which, mind you, a lot of people find difficult to do, because it is not always that simple. Trying to change the structure of government and the way things look, and then also looking for frank and fearless advice—a minister should not be scared that a public servant will say, “Do you know what? I think you’re getting it wrong.” That is great. That is good; that is what we want. Ministers do not want to sit there like characters in *Yes Minister* just nodding their heads while bureaucrats tell them what they want to hear while something else is going on in the background. Ministers want to make sure that they are being told the honest truth about what is going on, how the delivery of services is being affected and the morale of people working in the departments. I know from talking to people at the grassroots that the morale is not very good from the top all the way through to the bottom. Not only is this government slashing services and cutting back, but it is also putting people in a very bad place. People are not passionate about what they are doing, because they do not trust this government. They do not trust the direction in which the government is heading and they have no faith in it or that it cares about the community and the people whom they are there to help. All that they can see around them is slash and burn—slash and burn and she will be right. People are being told to keep doing what the government says and to hold on for the ride, because it does not really matter what else happens. I think that is very, very disappointing. It is extremely disappointing that the public service’s morale and its commitment to what it is doing has been decimated.

As a starting point, there have been 3 000 redundancies; let us not talk about all the knowledge and capability that has gone. The government is impacting the community in many different ways. People talk about the main focus on health, education and law and order. That is true; they are the big-ticket items, but a lot is going on behind the scenes. There are impacts and ripple effects in all the layers underneath, and I think those ripple effects are having a greater impact than some of those bigger agencies that we focus on. A lot is going on behind the scenes and sometimes we just need to scratch the surface to see that it is bad. As soon as we scratch below the surface, we realise how bad it really is.

Mr P. Papalia: You did say a short extension.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Yes, it is only two minutes so far.

It is important to note that when we scratch below the surface, there are impacts in all my portfolios of local government, heritage, culture and the arts, and citizenship and multicultural interest—some are worse than others—that are having an effect. If we look at local government, for example, which is the third tier of government and very important for so much service delivery, it is a sector that is now obviously going through a reform process, which I strongly support. I think it is very important to make sure that reform process continues and that we build better capability because I do not think that will be a bad thing at all, but the mega-department of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries that has been created—it has racing and gaming, liquor, sport and recreation and God knows what else stuck in there behind the scenes—is a small government department that has a huge responsibility.

I just want to touch base on one point so that members can see how well the department is going. I asked question on notice 3412—for those who want to refer back to it—to get some details about authorised inquiries currently being undertaken by the department. There are a number of inquiries and one would think that an authorised inquiry with a local government—the resources are there—would be done relatively quickly. Looking at the authorised inquiries, an inquiry into the Shire of Wiluna started on 25 October 2016. It is an active investigation. An inquiry into the City of Mandurah started on 1 November 2017. I would have thought that the Leader of the House, as the Minister for Local Government, would be interested in that one being done a bit quicker. But, no, that inquiry into the City of Mandurah is an active investigation that is ongoing.

One started in the City of Melville on 14 November 2017; that is an active investigation. On 18 December 2017, one started in the Shire of Carnarvon; it is still happening. On 18 December 2017, one started in the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku—hopefully, I said that properly. On 18 December, one started in the Shire of Perenjori. On 7 January 2018, one started in the City of Joondalup, and on 18 April 2018, one started in the Town of Cambridge. They all have active investigations going on that started way back in 2016. I am not sure what they are looking for, but I am sure they would have found it by now if anybody in the department was actually doing any work. It would not have taken much of an effort in over two years to say, “You know what? The Shire of Wiluna is not that big. I’m sure we can check with a couple of people and sort this out relatively quickly.” That is an impact right there and the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries cannot even get some simple, authorised inquiries completed. It causes mayhem and confusion in the local government sector. The government needs to get these things done and cleared up quickly for the community so that it knows that their local government is working well, that the department is dealing with the issues effectively and that they can get the support of the local government department. That is obviously not happening. The

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Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety recently put out a progress report about the lack of swimming pool inspections and how many are overdue. I noted in that report that the inspection of a lot of swimming pools is overdue. Again, I assume that local governments are not on top of doing those inspections because the department has cut resources. Specifically, the City of Cockburn has 1 463 overdue swimming pool inspections. Now that is pretty dangerous.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Do they collect money for it?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: They have collected the money, but they have not done the inspections. That is a lot of inspections—1 463. Across a range of local governments, only 3 632 inspections are outstanding, so the City of Cockburn has nearly half of them. The City of Stirling is doing a fantastic job with zero outstanding inspections. It is doing a great job.

Mr D.R. Michael: One of my many legacies.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: That is great. It is very disappointing that those things again are neglected. That is an important frontline service. A frontline service is making sure that pools are safe.

Mr P. Papalia: Do you realise that is local government?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I know it is local government. The Department of Local Government has a state —

Mr P. Papalia: Has the member made the link from state to local?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: The local government department looks after local government. It sets the regulations, it sets the act and it does a range of things. It is a cut to frontline services. I think that is very important. I am bringing some of these things back to my shadow portfolios. I know that people do not like these portfolios and the cuts, but it is important. Culture and the arts is important. Most members may not think it is important, but when they talk about tourism, Minister for Tourism, if we have no culture and the arts, what are we going to show people? If we did not have Elizabeth Quay, a stadium or all these facilities and assets, what would people come here for? Would it be to see the minister? They do not come here to see him because he is flying over there to see them. He is always somewhere overseas. Tourism is going on; it is just one way, but I am sure that some of it will come back as well. These things are important.

There have been a number of reports in the paper recently about the Art Gallery of Western Australia. Again, it has had cuts to services, facilities and the asset. The storage of \$300 million worth of art work is not being done properly. Resources are being cut in the arts, donations are at a record low and nobody is looking after this area properly. It is just floating around by itself in space while everyone is busy worrying about all these other things. But this area is important and critical to the future of tourism in this state and the future of culture and arts. People will look back at this period and say, “What was going on back then?” This beautiful \$300 million worth of state art is deteriorating. It is not in proper storage, it has not been catalogued properly and no-one cares. The government is not providing the resources to look after it. I could go on about the cuts in the arts space. In 2016 there used to be 77 volunteer gallery guides and in 2017 there were only 57—the government has even lost them. It cannot even find enough capacity to look after the volunteers.

We are not only cutting our frontline services, but also decimating our volunteers. We are not offering them any support, training or desire to want to do these things. I do not know what is going on. It just amazes me when I look at that. Many articles have been written about the State Records Office of Western Australia heading towards the WA Inc-type environment in which it has gone under the State Library of Western Australia. There have been a number of articles, and again other experts—not me. Do not listen to me, listen to the experts in this field. They have put things in writing, raised their concerns and said that this is not good. The state is going down the toilet. Read those articles. Like I said, members do not need to listen to me, I am just repeating words that come through other avenues that are available to everybody here and are important to listen to. Listen to the experts, the presidents and the leaders in our community in all of these areas. They have something to say.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Tourism) [6.55 pm]: I rise to speak to address the ridiculous motion that states —

That this house condemns the McGowan government’s budget cuts to frontline services and the associated impact on critical service delivery to the people of Western Australia.

I would draw Madam Acting Speaker’s (Ms S.E. Winton) attention to the liberal and generous nature with which that motion was interpreted and the compliance or noncompliance with the need to remain on subject. I would expect that the generous treatment, by both yourself and previous Acting Speakers, that was afforded to the opposition during their contribution would be the same towards my contribution, which, unfortunately, will only be short, but I think can cover all that is needed on behalf of the government in response to this ridiculous motion.

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Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you members, let us be fair.

[Quorum formed.]

Mr P. PAPALIA: What we confirmed from the contributions this evening from the opposition is the absolute paucity of talent available to the Liberal Party in Western Australia and the bereft nature of its capacity to compile an argument and convey it in Parliament. It is a sad truth that we saw confirmation that the current Leader of the Opposition will undoubtedly be the Leader of the Opposition at the next election because there is no-one else. No-one else is as incapable, inept and incompetent as he is as a Leader of the Opposition.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Mr P. PAPALIA: He stands head and shoulders above all other members of the opposition.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you to order.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is extraordinary that, given so much time to prepare, to the extent that they can write their speeches and read them with tags —

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Point of Order

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Carine is interjecting incessantly. I ask you to acknowledge that and call him to order again.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Further to the point of order, members on the opposite side are also creating the same sort of mischief.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton): Thank you, members. Both are not points of order, but member for Carine, I have warned you; please let the minister finish his speech.

Debate Resumed

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is nice to see a member of the Nationals WA in the chamber for a change!

That aside, we have confirmed —

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is true that the Leader of the Opposition is safe. He is at the front of the train that is heading over the cliff. Everyone in the back of the train is quite comfortable to stay there. None of them are capable of making their way forward —

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, minister. Member for Carine, I am going to call you to order for the third time. I am having fun with you. Are you going to test me?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That was quite possibly the worst private members' contribution from the opposition that I have witnessed. That is saying something because in my 11 and a half years in this place it is easily the most incompetent batch of members that I have ever witnessed. They are attempting to criticise the Minister for Police, who has fixed policing in this state and is striving to drag policing back from the precipice and the terrible policing system that the Liberal Party imposed on the state.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.