

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

*Motion*

Resumed from 13 June on the following motion moved by Hon Sally Talbot —

That the following address be presented to Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor in and over the state of Western Australia and its dependencies in the commonwealth of Australia —

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

**HON COLIN HOLT (South West)** [3.22 pm]: I will just finish from where I left off last night when Hon Adele Farina and I were in furious agreement on the Busselton–Margaret River airport project and the great benefits that will bring to the south west, and I will also talk about some other things today.

I listened with great intent last night to the contribution made by Hon Tim Clifford in his maiden speech when he talked about housing affordability and homelessness. Having been the Minister for Housing, I thought I would share with him some of my insights and thinking behind providing housing to those most in need. Indeed, we should provide resources at the state government level to meet the needs of people who are most vulnerable, especially those who are escaping domestic violence. The real pinch point is how we manage that. Often we leave the perpetrator at home and take mum and kids away, and for good reasons. We can take them away to a secure location that is unknown to the perpetrator so we can keep them safe. But what happens to them after we have gotten them away from immediate danger? We should absolutely try to do more for them in that space. Hon Tim Clifford also talked about the housing waiting list. It is a cautionary tale to measure housing affordability, or the lack of affordability, by the housing waiting list. When a person gets a house from the Housing Authority, they often consider they have won the golden ticket. It is not necessarily the people who are homeless and most vulnerable from the lower extreme who are on the waiting list. There are people on that waiting list who just want to win the golden ticket and be looked after with a cheap rental to make the most of that opportunity. That is where the dilemma and challenge lies. A lot of people go on the waiting list just for that reason. About 18 000 people are on the waiting list at the moment; it has been much higher in the past and sometimes lower. However, some of the people on the waiting list are not in the category of requiring emergency shelter. That is the challenge when working with the housing list, having seen it and having tried to pick it apart. That is where the problem lies.

In recognition of that, the previous government talked about a continuum in housing, comprising people with the most need requiring emergency shelter all the way to home ownership. The previous government did a lot of work on that. The affordable housing strategy was based on investment along that continuum to try to get people into not only their own home but also social housing. In 2010, the former government set itself a target of providing 20 000 more affordable homes, which it met in 2015. It then set a new target for 2020 of providing 30 000 new homes. During that period, when I was the Minister for Housing in the previous government, we committed \$560 million to build 1 000 more social housing units. That program recognised the need in that middle part, between emergency shelter and home ownership of some description—either shared equity, a Keystart loan or home ownership in the sense that most people understand. There is always plenty to do in that space. When I was in the chair overseeing that area, we created some partnerships across the state, including a really successful one with the Yawuru people of Broome working with Keystart. The Yawuru people brought land to the proposition, and Keystart lent the Yawuru people some money to build homes on that land. These people had been on the social housing spectrum their entire life. When we think about the history of those places up north, there was very little home ownership and it was mostly government-owned housing. The Yawuru people in Broome had been caught in this situation, yet Keystart and the Yawuru people were able to work together to create partnership in which the Yawuru corporation brought the land into the equation and Keystart, knowing there was equity in the land, lent them money to build houses. I have heard many great stories of people—young families and young mothers—moving out of a social housing situation into home ownership. This was a great model that proved things could be done differently, especially in some of the regional areas where it is a real challenge.

In East Kimberley, the former government established the transitional housing project based on taking people out of a difficult housing situation and giving them a rental arrangement that reflected a mortgage repayment and some real support around income management. They had to send their kids to school to qualify for transitional housing. In that way, and with the right support, they got the hang of moving out of social housing into their own building so they could look at home ownership. The success of the program was measured by school attendance.

I may not have this quite right, but in some of those communities the district average school attendance rate was 65 per cent. The attendance rate went up to 95 per cent for people in the transitional housing program. It gave those people an incentive to participate in the program and to send their kids to school. They were fantastic programs, and I hope that the new government continues to invest in them. The only way to start that transition on the housing continuum is to invest in all sections of it.

When I first became the Minister for Housing, I became aware of a policy that was implemented by a previous government so that a social housing tenant who turned 100 and had lived in a Housing Authority home, would get free rent from that point on. There is nothing wrong with that. They are 100 years old and it is a great reward. I remember going out to meet a woman who turned 100 and was getting free rent. She and her husband had lived in a Housing Authority, Homeswest or Department of Housing—all its iterations—home for over 60 years from when they were a young married couple. They raised their family in a Homeswest house and she was now living out her last days in a Homeswest house. I wondered why their family had not had the aspiration for home ownership. What did we not do right? We took on a young family who may have been quite capable of funding their own home through various mechanisms, such as shared equity or Keystart loans. What happened in the interim so they never progressed out of social housing? In my mind, if, under different policy settings, we had encouraged them, we would have moved that family. I do not know their individual circumstances, but there are circumstances in which we could have moved that family out of that Homeswest home, or they could have bought it. That would allow people from the housing waiting list who are most in need, way down this end of the continuum, an opportunity to get a roof over their heads. We started that process back in 2010. We made some great inroads into it and the program is well worth considering and continuing; it wraps the right supports around them.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** We agree with you, member.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** Thank you. That is good to hear. The Housing Authority has made some massive shifts in the way it does business. It used to be about building a house, collecting rent and maybe trying to keep people from doing too much damage to the house, but now it is much more about how to assist people to move along the continuum from homelessness to a stable social housing environment, maybe shared equity, a Keystart loan and home ownership. That has to be the way that we continue to do it. Therefore, it worried me a little to read in today's paper about the potential of the first home owner grant being cut back yet more. There was \$15 000 for the first home owner grant and the boost of \$5 000 has been reduced six months ahead of schedule. I hope that the government will maintain the existing \$10 000 first home owner grant, because in my mind it is a critical component to get people to move along that continuum out of social housing. If we do not have that grant to assist people to make that leap, we will have more people taking up social housing spots.

**Hon Rick Mazza:** Get it for established homes too.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** That was only for builds.

**Hon Rick Mazza:** It should be for established homes.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** That is part of the policy mix; we have to look at all those sorts of things. The real estate industry wants existing homes to be included in the first home owner grant. The building industry does not; it only wants first home owner grants on new homes because it assists its business. It is undeniable that we need more houses. Maybe it has come off a bit now that some of the dynamics in Western Australia have changed, but five to eight years ago we did not have enough homes. I hope that the government maintains the first home owner grant. We need it. Housing is not only a social issue but also an economic issue, and the grant should be retained. It will be encouraging to see that the Housing Authority's approach to the housing continuum continues to be supported through the new government.

I want to thank Hon Tim Clifford for raising those issues and I just wanted to give him my viewpoint about them and to caution around judging housing waiting lists, as it can be a means of not getting it quite right. When I was the minister, the waiting list did not change too much—from 22 000 to 24 000 people. It was estimated that if we wanted to get everyone off the waiting list, we would have to invest about \$7 billion to build new social housing. I could almost guarantee members that next week there would be 18 000 people back on it, because everyone wants that golden ticket to get into social housing, if they are at that end of the spectrum.

The previous government also did a large number of asset transfers to the community housing sector. It is a model that has not matured to the extent it needs to in Western Australia. It works well over east. There is some difference between the community housing sector and the state housing provider, but in the right mix they can work very well together. I was very encouraged about what the community housing sector was doing and the way it was wrapping extra support services around the people it was trying to work with. The government should continue to invest in and look at asset transfers to that sector as well to see what it can do from a not-for-profit business point of view to invest in the housing affordability strategy. Some of those community housing organisations are now looking at trying to attract superannuation funds to be partners with them to build more social housing. We should absolutely be doing that because it is a long-term stable return on investment. We

need to continue to work in that space as a state. We can learn a lot from the eastern states and I hope the government will continue to work in that space.

Since Parliament has come back, we have talked a lot about education and it has always been centred on Education Central. Hon Simon O'Brien encouraged contribution from the Nationals in the last debate. I thought I would leave my comments until now. We have had a lot of debate about Education Central, gifted and talented programs and specialist schools in central Perth. I can tell members now—the Minister for Education and Training will know this very soon—that there are a great many challenges for educational outcomes in regional Western Australia. We have not done enough work on it. The Nationals, through royalties for regions, has implemented some programs. We went to the Department of Education with some money on the table to try to implement changes in the way that we delivered education to regional Western Australia, to ensure it was not a two-tiered system. I was pretty disappointed with how the education department responded. It did not really understand what we were trying to achieve as the Nationals and I do not know whether it ever thought about how it was going to do business differently. It needs to do business differently in some of the regional areas because of population dynamics and the quality and number of teachers that we get in regional Western Australia to meet those educational needs, from not only a student and family viewpoint, but also a community viewpoint.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** Maybe it was the problem with the minister you had at the time.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** I will not comment on that. All I can do is put forward my views and I do not think that the education department did not really grapple with the solution. That difficulty still exists. We will see how the new minister addresses some of those issues and she might bring about some change.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** You will be pleased.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** Let us judge it on the actions not the words and we will see.

The debate today was around specialist schools. Members will be aware that I have spoken in this place about the only gifted and talented education school outside metropolitan Perth. It only offers the academic stream. It is in Bunbury and has been going for only three years now. There is no other gifted and talented education stream school in regional Western Australia. I would have thought there is a great opportunity for gifted and talented education through arts, drama and music, as well as academic streams, in many of our regional areas. The proposal we put forward that was never really taken up was to centre some of those schools on the areas that have hostel accommodation for visiting students. In my mind, Broome is a great example. It has a hostel and a great school. If the government made it a gifted and talented education school, maybe in the field of visual arts, it might just keep Kimberley kids in school and in their region. It provides another avenue of engagement at a school level. I would certainly like to see the new government progress those opportunities for regional students. It is well known that in some areas in regional Western Australia, kids get to school generally two years behind their counterparts in the city. They then have to catch up those two years when they are at school, and they never do.

Generally, they never catch up. Support mechanisms are not available in the schools and sometimes graduate teachers, who are still learning their trade, do not know how to accelerate students' learning so those students can never catch up. When those students leave school, they are not well equipped to take up opportunities in higher education or at university. Even if they want go on to higher education, they have to go to Perth and that creates challenges around renting and being supported away from home. I would like the new minister to progress some of those issues and to work to change those outcomes for regional students.

The last topic I want to talk about is the Western Australian Totalisator Agency Board. As a minister who did a lot of work in this area, I absolutely believe that it is time to test the market to see what the WA TAB can deliver for the industry. The biggest mistake is to think—this has come from all sides of politics—that the TAB is a government asset to sell. It is not a government asset; it is an industry asset. The TAB is part of the mix that funds the industry. There is no government investment in the WA TAB. The TAB has been built and maintained by the industry itself, through the punting dollar. It is time for a change. The WA TAB is under pressure from corporate bookmakers and different wagering market businesses. If members have watched any television in the past 10 years, they will have noticed that in the last four years the amount of advertising by corporate bookmakers and alternative wagering websites has increased, and they are competing for the WA TAB market. It is absolutely time to test that market. I would love to have done it when I was in government so that the outcomes went to the industry. I could not get my partners in government to do that. I wanted them to test the market so that we could ensure that the benefits went back to the industry, because it is the industry's asset. It is time that the new government, through its leadership, took up the mantle and tested the market.

I read through some of the *Hansard* debate from 2015 when this matter was a hot issue and the then Leader of the Opposition was basically saying that no-one wanted to sell the TAB and that even people like Fred Kersley did not want to sell it. I have been working with the Western Australian Racing Representative

Group for about 18 months and Fred Kersley is a member of that group. I can tell members that he would be the first to say to the new government that it is time to test the market and see what our WA TAB can return to the industry. There are ways of doing that that will deliver a good outcome to the racing industry. The racing industry has a backlog of infrastructure projects worth probably \$150 million that need to be done now, but the current funding model will never deliver anywhere near the surplus cash to carry out any of those projects. We have a fantastic racecourse at Ascot but a dog of a racecourse at Belmont. It needs upgrading because it is located in what will be a world-class entertainment precinct. There is no way that those groups are able to afford those upgrades with their existing industry funds. The WA TAB is barely returning to the industry now. Members are not able to see the figures, but if they are interested in this issue—there probably are not too many, except for maybe Hon Samantha Rowe and the member for Belmont—I am more than happy to share my knowledge on this issue with them.

**Hon Samantha Rowe:** Honourable member, would you take an interjection?

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** Of course, if it is a good one.

**Hon Samantha Rowe:** Yes, it is. The group that you have been consulting with, with your knowledge, have they actually consulted with the local industry, and the trainers and everyone that actually operates in that space at Ascot? It is my understanding that they haven't.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** I will explain to Hon Samantha Rowe how that group came about. When I first got into my position, an industry forum was called for and run by Racing and Wagering Western Australia. I went to that forum and I said to the 150 people from across the industry who were present that this matter would not go away and that they needed to get together as an industry so that if the TAB was sold, they could get what they wanted out of that sale. I asked them what they would need to ensure the sustainability and life of an industry that is important to regional Western Australia in particular. The racing industry has between 33 000 and 36 000 direct employees and has huge economic benefits for the regions and the people who participate in it. It is an industry with specific and unique skills that are hard to transfer. The industry is important. I set those people a challenge in that forum to find a way to go to government and to speak in a united voice about what they think are the main issues for the industry going forward. After that meeting, the Western Australian Racing Representative Group was established. It is a representative group by name and by nature in my view. Plenty of people are working on the sidelines who are trying to undermine that group's credibility, including RWWA itself. I was absolutely convinced that those groups had to get together. That racing group includes representatives from harness racing, greyhound racing, horse racing and breeders, owners, trainers—the whole lot. I am convinced that the industry is endorsed in the right way to represent the views of the industry.

Also, there are 35 eligible bodies under the RWWA system. I have been to meetings of representatives from all those bodies and it has been unanimously agreed that it is time to test the market to see what a potential sale could deliver to the industry. They are the representative groups of the industry. They are the guys charged with talking with trainers and participants in the industry. I consulted around the state and made sure that I put myself in front of as many industry participants as I could. In the early days I probably did not know what I was bloody talking about—or talking about, I should say—but I learnt pretty quickly to make sure that I was informed. By the time I had been from one extreme to the other, the industry, in my view, really shifted to the view that it had to test the market.

That probably does not answer Hon Samantha Rowe's question, because I do not know what the group did—that is a good question for it—but I am still convinced that it is a representative group of the racing industry and can put forward its views.

**Hon Colin Tincknell:** The question I ask is: does anyone know what the TAB now returns to the government annually?

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** It is probably \$42 million in tax.

**Hon Colin Tincknell:** When you say "test the market", are you talking about a complete or partial sale?

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** There are a number of segments in the racing industry. The TAB is a funding mechanism for the racing industry, so I am talking about the sale or the giving or the leasing of the licence for the WA TAB itself. There are a lot of figures in the RWWA annual report. I encourage the member to look at that. He would need to interrogate them, and I am happy to help him. However, there is still a return to government from a wagering income perspective, because it is set on wagering turnovers, but it is diminishing every day. The returns to the industry are being propped up by something known as race field fees—that is, a product fee that the industry gets from putting on a race. For example, if the Bunbury Trotting Club puts on race 5, it will get a return for putting on that event, and the money comes back to the industry. That is not funded by the TAB; it is completely separate. What I am asking for is how to actualise the value of the WA TAB to continue to not only give ongoing returns to the industry, but also get a cash sum that provides the opportunity for the industry to

address the infrastructure backlog. There is a lot of pressure on that return through taxes by state government. Western Australia is now the highest taxing state in Australia on wagering, and Racing and Wagering Western Australia will be the first to come knocking on the new government's door to say, "Can you please reduce that so we can remain competitive?" I can guarantee that RWWA has probably already done that; maybe I should ask a question about it. It will need to reduce that to remain competitive because it is losing the fight against the corporate bookies.

There is still some value in the Western Australian TAB because of its exclusivity in Western Australia. Of Western Australian punters, 65 per cent still walk through a TAB and put a bet on, but that percentage is diminishing every day. We need to grasp this opportunity now so we can get the most value out of it for the industry. As I said at the beginning, it is not a government asset, in my view; it is an industry asset. If the industry is saying that it is time to go and see what that asset can do for the industry, we should be doing it. I encourage the government to take that up now to ensure that the opportunity is not lost.

The industry is asking for it. The commentary I have heard lately from the Premier and the Minister for Racing and Gaming is that if the industry comes to them and says it wants to test it, then they will go and do it. Well, the industry has. It has met with the Premier and the minister and it wants to do it, so get on with it.

**Hon Samantha Rowe:** I'm not convinced that that's the case, if you're happy for me to interject. When we were out campaigning and knocking on doors and phoning people in Ascot, where there are numerous trainers et cetera, they were totally opposed to it, so I'm just not convinced that that's the case.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** The member should have come to one of my sessions at which I talk to the industry directly. A lot of those guys do not understand the wagering business. They understand the racing industry, but they do not understand the wagering business and how it works at all. They would not know how much money their industry is investing into the WA TAB to prop it up. They are inventing new systems every day and it is costing them millions to make the TAB competitive. It is only five to seven per cent of the wagering market across Australia and it is getting belted up by the big boys on the block. I am saying to the member that I understand their viewpoint, but they have appointed a racing representative group to investigate and show leadership in the industry. Fred Kersley, Ron Sayers and Kevin Jeavons—all the guys who have been appointed by those industries to take forward their views as an industry—are saying it. I can go to Collie and meet the person in the racing industry who is the most vehemently opposed to the Western Australian TAB; they absolutely are out there, but they are not the leadership of the industry, which is asking to pursue this opportunity.

I understand where the member is coming from, but I say to her that the government has to do something for the industry before it is too late and the WA TAB no longer meets its needs, because it is diminishing now. That is where the leadership comes from, and the government, through the Minister for Racing and Gaming, should show leadership by saying, "This industry is way too important not to go and investigate fully, and to listen to the industry's representative group, which is asking for it." The government absolutely should be showing leadership on this issue. If the member wants to play that role for her constituency, she should make an appointment with the Minister for Racing and Gaming and ask him, "What are we doing about this?" It is absolutely too important for that industry, across the length and breadth of Western Australia, not to have a resolution around this and to ensure its funding mechanism goes on into the future, because at the moment it is under a lot of pressure. I have spoken to the minister and clearly given him my views in a bipartisan way. I stand here today to talk about the WA TAB because I want to see the best outcome for the industry. I am convinced of that; I am not trying to do anything except that, and I am absolutely convinced that it is time to go and test the market for the sake of the industry.

I thank members for their questions and interjections and I am more than happy to talk about it in further detail if anyone wants to. I have a motion on the notice paper coming up for debate, so that will give the government an opportunity to clearly spell out its intentions for a very important industry in Western Australia.

Mr Deputy President, I will conclude my remarks there. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Address-in-Reply. I look forward to continuing interesting debates in this house on a number of important issues, especially with regard to regional Western Australia.

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan)** [3.54 pm]: I am also very pleased to speak in support of the motion moved by Hon Dr Sally Talbot with respect to the speech delivered by the Governor, Hon Kerry Sanderson, AC, at the opening of Parliament. I think I join all members in this place when I say that our Governor is an outstanding Governor. In her current role and in other roles she has held, she has provided outstanding service to Western Australia and the people of Western Australia. I also recognise her for her particular expertise and interest across a range of areas. I think it was Hon Peter Collier who mentioned science; I know that is one particular area that is dear to her heart.

As has already been mentioned by other members, she is also the first female Governor appointed in this state, and I think she is a wonderful role model to many young women and girls across our state. I can certainly say that my little daughter, Claire, is particularly fond of Her Excellency the Governor, so if she were to emulate her, I would be delighted.

**Hon Peter Collier:** What about Harry?

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Harry has not met Her Excellency yet, but certainly my daughter has had the pleasure of meeting her on a couple of occasions and she thinks she is wonderful.

Before I commence my response to the motion, I want to acknowledge something that is obviously not happening here in Western Australia; it is many miles away, but I want to reflect on the distressing scenes we have seen in London today, with respect to a huge fire that has engulfed a 27-storey block of flats. I have seen some quite distressing scenes, as I am sure other members have, through the media. It has been indicated that there have been a number of fatalities already, and firefighters are trying to battle the blaze. I am sure all members will agree with me that we put our heartfelt thoughts out to those who are part of this tragedy that continues to unfold in London. The fact that it occurred at 1.00 am when everyone would have been asleep is just terrible in the extreme. We will be watching this very sad news continue to unfold over the coming hours.

Today I want to raise a number of matters of relevance to my electorate and across a range of portfolio areas. This is my first opportunity to speak in the new, fortieth Parliament. As a local member, I of course want to thank the East Metropolitan Region for enabling me to serve in this Parliament for another four years as a representative for this wonderful community. I came into this place in 2005 and 12 years later I am still here, and every day is just a wonderful reminder of the unique and privileged position that I and, indeed, all of us have in serving our respective electorates in this house and hopefully making a difference in each of the regions we represent. I am sure all members share the same perspective and are in agreement.

Before I make some general comments with respect to my electorate and portfolio areas, I want to place on record the contributions made by a number of former members who have departed this house or the other place as a result of the recent election or their retirement. Quite clearly, the election result in the East Metropolitan Region was devastating for the Liberal Party. The fact that I am now the only East Metropolitan Region Liberal member across 14 lower house seats and, indeed, the upper house, clearly demonstrates this. Albeit, I warn the government that although there might be only one state Liberal member across all those seats, I will continue to advocate very strongly on behalf of the East Metropolitan Region, both within the walls of Parliament and outside, and to hold this government to account on all its various election policies—there were a lot—announced throughout the campaign. I can say that, particularly in the East Metropolitan Region, the variety of announcements made by candidates and members of the Labor Party were plentiful in the extreme. Some were about very large projects but many were about very small projects. Some members on the other side have referred to some of them. It will be interesting to see where the money will come from for them. The government does not seem to have detailed that yet. Labor members were handing out grants left right and centre. We will follow that very closely because they made those commitments and they will have to deliver them. If they do not, it will not only be me who will follow them very strongly.

**Hon Samantha Rowe** interjected.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Members opposite said they could not spend anything, yet there are hundreds of —

**Hon Peter Collier:** You woke them up.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** They did not like that, did they? Plenty of announcements were made by the Labor Party.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order! Hon Donna Faragher has the call.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Thank you, Mr Deputy President. Many announcements, both large and small, were made by members opposite not only in the electorate of East Metropolitan Region, but right across Western Australia. We will watch very closely even the little ones of \$5 000 here and \$1 000 there to make sure the government delivers them.

I want to record the contributions of some past members.

**Hon Peter Collier** interjected.

**Hon Samantha Rowe:** He is always interjecting on you. It's rude.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** He is, but he is a good interjector. I always love dealing with Hon Peter Collier's interjections.

Several members interjected.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Have you both finished?

I will go back to what I was saying previously. A number of really hardworking and outstanding members of Parliament who lost their seats have made an enormous contribution to the state, the Parliament and, most importantly, the electorates they represented. In the East Metropolitan Region I particularly recognise Hon John Day, former member for Kalamunda; Hon Tony Simpson, former member for Darling Range; Hon Michael Sutherland, former member for Mount Lawley; Frank Alban, former member for Swan Hills; Nathan Morton, former member for Forrestfield; Glenys Godfrey, former member for Belmont; and Ian Britza, former member for Morley. I also recognise a number of members in this place who are no longer with us. I think Hon Simon O'Brien, Mr Deputy President, correctly said we, certainly on this side of the house, miss them greatly. I acknowledge my former colleagues in the East Metropolitan Region, Hon Alyssa Hayden and Hon Helen Morton. I worked with Hon Alyssa Hayden for eight years and, of course, Hon Helen Morton and I came in together in 2005 and were colleagues for 12 years. I want to put on the record the significant contributions they both made to not only the East Metropolitan Region. Certainly Hon Helen Morton, in her role as a minister in the former government for over four years, drove many initiatives that will have a lasting benefit for the people of Western Australia, particularly in the areas of mental health and disability services. I think members who know Hon Alyssa Hayden would all agree that she was a vibrant and committed member who put the East Metropolitan Region at the forefront of all her work. I record my thanks to them for being such great colleagues. I also recognise Hon Brian Ellis, Hon Mark Lewis and my good friend whom I have known for many years—she might be listening today—Hon Liz Behjat, as well as Hon Phil Edman and Hon Robyn McSweeney. All those members made an enormous contribution in this place. Hon Robyn McSweeney, fondly known as Auntie Robyn to my family, is one member whom I will really miss.

Our former President Hon Barry House, who retired after 30 years of distinguished service in this place, is one who deserves special mention. Hon Barry House was particularly supportive of me when I came into this place 12 years ago. Indeed, I sat with him around where Hon Colin Tincknell now sits, although we sat behind different benches then. I often tell Hon Barry House that he taught me all I know in this place. It is fair to say that he always had a lot of good humour and had very wise words and advice, particularly in the early days when, as a new member, I was trying to find my feet. He was always knowledgeable on all things procedural. Sometimes when I was not quite sure about something, I knew I could always turn to him. Hon George Cash sat on the other side, so if he happened to be out of the chamber on urgent parliamentary business, I had two very good mentors to help me in the early days of opposition. I think we would all agree that Hon Barry House was an outstanding President in this house for eight years and a great ambassador for the Legislative Council. He always held this place in the highest regard and advocated very strongly for this house both within the walls of Parliament and outside.

In a general sense, despite the heavy loss of seats in the East Metropolitan Region, there remains much for the Liberal Party to be proud of. It is the largest of the three upper house regions. I acknowledge and congratulate members on all sides of the house who have been either elected for the first time or re-elected to represent the East Metropolitan Region. I think the other five members of the East Metropolitan Region would probably agree with me that it is the best region.

**Hon Samantha Rowe:** I totally agree with you.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** There we go; the honourable member totally agrees. It is a very diverse region in many ways. There are the very city-centred parts to it and then there is the semi-rural part, to the rural parts. Some of the issues can be incredibly diverse and some particular issues might attract different perspectives depending on where people live within the region. Prescribed burning is an example. Quite a bit has been said about that in recent weeks. I have to say to the Minister for Environment that although we all recognise that the smoke causes significant concern to some Western Australians, the importance of prescribed burning, particularly in the East Metropolitan Region, cannot be underestimated. We have seen serious fires in our region. I remember when I came into this place in 2005 the terrible Perth hills fires that had occurred a couple of months beforehand. As a local member and when I held the position of environment minister, I did not have to be convinced about the importance of prescribed burning. I say to the minister, thank you for continuing that program; it is vital to not only our community but many others.

As I say, the East Metropolitan Region is a large region and, under our government, there were projects both large and small that really had an enormous benefit to the community within that region. There is always more work to be done—there is obviously no doubt about that—but some of our really large projects were Gateway WA, the Gngangara Road upgrade, and the not so new, but still new, Midland Public Hospital, which of course was the first new hospital in the Swan region for over 60 years. Members in this place would know, because I have said it a couple of times, that I was born at Swan District Hospital—a great hospital, but it had had its day. Now we have a state-of-the-art hospital right in the centre of Midland providing more services, that

is closer to people and has better access to transport—all those sorts of things. That was delivered under our government. We have seen a regeneration of Midland particularly in and around the old Midland railway workshops. It was fantastic work undertaken by the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority in concert with the City of Swan. It is fantastic work that is continuing to evolve and develop. We have seen interchanges at incredibly dangerous intersections. It is fair to say that some of the worst intersections have been in the East Metropolitan Region. Indeed, Mr Deputy President, as a former transport minister, knows this all too well, and he was part of a number of very good decisions that saw a number of those fixed—intersections like Malaga Drive–Reid Highway, fixed effectively overnight, and Great Eastern Highway–Roe Highway. I remember talking about that particular section when we were in opposition, because it really was not going anywhere. Anyone who uses that section of road, that link, knows that the work is unbelievably fantastic in improving safety and the flow of traffic, so I want to recognise the Deputy President for his former role in relation to that and many other initiatives.

The former Minister for Education is in this house and, of course, there were schools redeveloped, built and refurbished right across the East Metropolitan Region—from one end to the other. That was a key initiative—I will say a bit more about education in a moment—that was followed through by this government and is part of the ongoing legacy that we will hold in education in this state. As I say, although I have mentioned some initiatives and projects that have been completed, there are still a number under construction that commenced under the former Liberal–National government. I note that already the now government—it has not taken long—is seeking to rewrite history on some of those projects. I will give a couple of examples. First, there is NorthLink WA, and Mr Deputy President is nodding because he knows this project well. It is very pleasing to see that the central section of this massive project is now underway, and that is principally between Morley and Ellenbrook. Once completed, NorthLink WA will provide a new, faster and, importantly, safer road transport link from Morley, but probably, to put it back a step, from the Perth Airport area to Muchea. It is a \$1 billion infrastructure project funded by both the state and commonwealth governments and it commenced under the previous government. Indeed, the initial work started in the middle of last year. Yet in the minister’s press statement from last week, is there any recognition of the former Liberal–National government and its role in getting those works underway? Of course not. Is there any recognition that the \$200 million-plus committed by the state government was an investment by the former Liberal–National government? Of course not. It does not say that in the press release. What about the Forrestfield–Airport Link project? Hon Samantha Rowe would know this one well because her electorate office is in the Belmont area. I think Hon Samantha Rowe would agree with me that it is very pleasing that this landmark \$1.86 billion rail project, again jointly funded by the state and commonwealth governments, is continuing to progress and that works are commencing near Perth Airport.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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