

## LOAN BILL 2017

### *Second Reading*

Resumed from 21 June.

**HON DIANE EVERS (South West)** [11.15 am]: I appreciate the opportunity to continue my remarks on the Loan Bill 2017. I will not waste members' time with recapping everything that I said yesterday. I will continue where I left off with the forests. Forests are very important to me. I recognise that we have been logging in the native forest and it has been producing a deficit for the state. I hope that that will be addressed in the next budget. Following on from my contribution to the earlier debate, the other issue for the forest is wildfire. We need to look at how we can control fires in our forests before they get started. We need to look at other options, to manage the forests and somehow remove some of that fuel. We need to somehow manage the forests in a way that maybe we have not worked out yet so that the cost of addressing the wildfires is not as great as it has been. There are other options that we can look at and I hope that we do look at them to find a better way of managing our state forests.

Another way we can look at saving money in the budget is by increasing the use of onshore processing. Recently, Alcoa was given the right to ship bauxite without processing it onshore and this is taking away jobs and opportunities for the state. We need to address this and look at other ways that the raw materials created here can be processed. Our agricultural area produces a lot of food crops that we could add value to in the state and sell overseas for a much higher price, meanwhile providing jobs here as well. We need to be putting the focus into increasing those value-adding activities.

Education is an important matter. We have all talked about it; we all know that it is important. We believe we are doing the right thing, yet in the last term of government, TAFE fees were increased by up to 1 000 per cent. What sort of incentive is this to our youth to continue getting an education so they can find jobs and be contributing members to our society? We need to look at our education system and redress what we are doing because we are not doing it anywhere nearly as well as we could. Starting with early childhood, we need to get kids involved and get them motivated and interested. Again, I do not have the answers, but there are many things we can do to keep people involved in education and make it possible for them to continue through high school, whether it is with work experience and TAFE-type opportunities, or whether it is up into the tertiary level where universities are made, ideally, free. Other countries are figuring out that this is a good idea. This is a federal issue, but still we have to be thinking for the future. We need an educated population so we can produce the things we want to produce to maintain small business activity and industry and develop what we can do in Western Australia.

Our universities are wonderful institutions with lots of good people studying, learning and developing ideas. We need to encourage this. We need to use our universities for research. We need to invest in the universities so that they can come up with new ways to do things that eventually save us money or give us more opportunities to do bigger and greater things. One area of research that has lost a lot over the past few years is our Department of Agriculture and Food. Although the agriculture department's funding has not decreased terribly over the years, it is now coming from royalties for regions. Royalties for regions was meant to be on top of normal funding for these areas, yet our ag department is now hanging onto projects and trying to apply for funding from one year to the next. This is really the base of our agricultural institutions and industries in Western Australia. Our ag department should be very well funded so that it can go out there and find the new things we can do—the innovations that are going around in other parts of the world—so that we can invest in them and develop our enterprises here, rather than rely on an agricultural system based on what happened hundreds of years ago.

We could be doing the new things. Ten or 15 years ago I asked the chief executive officer of the Great Southern Development Commission why we were not growing quinoa; it was the new fad food for everyone around the world. I understand that we are now growing it, and quite a lot of it, but 10 or 15 years ago, it was a case of, "What is it? What will we do with it?" We have to try new things and new crops. People around the world are looking for things other than just wheat all the time. There are opportunities out there and there is no reason we have to stick to the old ways; we can always develop some new things, and this budget can provide more funding for our agriculture department.

I turn now to regional support. I am nearly through with these ideas; I know everybody else in this chamber probably has lots of ideas about how we can make it possible to not have to borrow so much money. My last idea is regional support to attract and keep people in the regions. We need people in the regions. I have been going over in my head what will happen if we do not and if everybody were to just move to the metropolitan area and leave our regions depleted of human resources, and that is not a pretty picture. We need to keep people, jobs and opportunities there, and the regions have to be supported. They are not looking for the same opportunities as people have in the metro region; they are looking for equity so that they have opportunities in education, health care and transport that are as good as those in the metro area. At the same time, it would stop the urban sprawl that Perth is

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experiencing. If we can encourage people to live in the south and north and other places, there would be fewer problems for Perth with having to deal with the spread of new people there.

Another thing that has occurred to me is that all of us in this chamber are quite privileged to be here. We all have responsibility for quite a lot of funds, for our electorate offices and our own needs and things that we do. We are role models; just as we expect the heads of departments to be role models for their staff, we are role models for the community. We can look at ways of saving money by becoming more sustainable and by taking up opportunities to reduce our own energy consumption. This is something I remember hearing 40 years ago—turn off the lights when we leave a room, and things like that—but we are role models and we can try to be more sustainable in how we do things. Rather than printing every single sheet of paper we have to look at, sometimes only to glance at for a couple of seconds or less, maybe we need to develop technologies so that we do not have to do that. Maybe we can reduce the amount of paper printed and look at the equipment needs and the refits of all the offices. I am still in an office that has not been refitted and it is not really a great concern, but I am hoping that it does not have to be a \$100 000 refit and that we can just make it safe, usable and reasonable.

I turn to the changes we are making to the departments. Gee, that hurts. I know it is a good idea and I have great expectations for the restructure of the departments, but how many times has a government come in and wanted to change things by changing the name of a department? There is a cost associated with that, and it goes on and on. It just makes no sense. We have to look at how we consume stuff overall and really pull back. If we ask the departments to model that, other people will figure it out, and it will flow from there. One area in which we can invest is waste. We talk about recycling but we have to go into the closed-loop response to the things we purchase, such as the single-use plastic that Hon Robin Chapple mentioned yesterday. Single-use plastic has no place in our society. We have to start putting it to other uses by reusing it or reconstructing it into other things we need. A lot of advances are being made in waste. Back in 2000 we were talking about the idea of zero waste by 2020. Sure, it is out of the question now, but we can still aim for that. The fewer things we are putting in the rubbish, the less money we are throwing away. It is really disappointing when I hear that 15 per cent of everything purchased in Western Australia is never used; it is thrown away before it is used even once. These are some of the things we need to look at.

We have heard that there is to be an inquiry into spending over the past eight years, and I am really looking forward to that because I am hoping to learn when we could have put the brakes on. What were the things that maybe we did not have to do? Earlier yesterday a member was speaking about how that money had to be spent, how the government did not waste any of it and that it was all used for what was necessary, but I remember a \$300 million refurbishment of Muja power station. That power station is to be closed down, but that refurbishment was done less than 10 years ago. At that time we knew that we did not need it because we knew that renewables were coming, yet we spent \$300 million, just like that. In addition, there was Roe 8, the speed with which Beelihar wetlands were destroyed and the amount of money that was thrown into it for no purpose whatsoever. The former government knew it would not go ahead and it could have been saved. As beautiful as it is, was Elizabeth Quay necessary? Was it one of those pretty things that maybe we could have put off for a few years? Then there is Perth Stadium. I am not against the stadium, but \$1.5 billion? Who was involved in that decision? Does it really cost \$1.5 billion to build a stadium to the standards we need? I think not. I believe we had quotes for less than that.

As I said, I am interested in the restructuring of departments. I think we really need to look at how services are provided to make sure that everybody is treated equitably. I have high expectations for it, and I hope we see good things come out of that. I should go back to specifically relate this to the Loan Bill, which is for \$11 billion. Just as an aside, I want members to consider this: if we did not have to go through this process of agreeing to the Loan Bill and we just agreed to budgets and things as they happened, we would start saying, “Oh, yeah, you can spend \$20 million there, \$100 million here in the \$30 billion budget”, and it would slowly roll out as we kept borrowing more until finally it would maybe come out in the newspapers, “What is this debt?” Maybe our ratings would decrease and we would suddenly realise that going from AAA to AA is another couple of hundred million dollars in interest costs. That is the only check on the system; this Loan Bill is a check on the system and a reminder to us that we have to go out there and say, “Yes, we agree to this amount”, but when we get close to that amount, we should know about it. We should know about it all along, but we should know, so that then we can say, “Wait a second; you’ve had the \$11 billion—that’s it.” That is how we have to work within it. All of us in this chamber have to live within our means. In our own lives we can do what we like, but in here, we really have to pull it in. We are responsible for the whole state of Western Australia.

In the forthcoming budget and in future budgets over the next four years, I would really like to see money going back into services, not the big infrastructure things. I am not going to leave out some of the Greens’ higher priorities with public transport. We know that that has been on for a long time, but we need our services looked after. Health in particular is one of our biggest areas of expenditure. I am sure there is waste that we might be able to trim back, but we need to have our health services for physical and mental health. We need to have early intervention and preventive things. We want to keep people out of hospitals; that is the idea. We want them to stay healthy. We want to close the gap for Indigenous people—for their health care, their life expectancy and their rates

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of imprisonment. We need to look at mental health and make sure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex people are looked after. They are important, contributing members of our society and we should not allow mental health issues to diminish the ability of different sorts of people to contribute. I also expect to see support for education in the budget. We really need to keep people educated. There is no point in having a population without good education, as people will be much less able to contribute to society.

Support for small business in the south west and, I imagine, throughout the metropolitan area is vital. With the current situation of late payments, I understand from the Auditor General's report that the government is no longer the late payer to small business. It seems we are really pulling ourselves up on that. Late payment from larger construction industries and mining industries is pitiful. It is putting a lot of our small businesses out of business, which is not fair. A code of practice has come in, but nobody has high expectations for it. Something has to be done. We need to support small business. Future jobs will come from small business. We can try to involve large industry, but it cannot be counted on. If people start up a small business, they will stick with it. If they can keep going, they will stick with it for 50 years and pass on the business to their kids, who will pass it on from there. If each small business is able to employ one more person, we will see growth in jobs. I would like to see more of that.

Again in the south west, I am looking at agritourism and ecotourism. Tourism is important in the south west and it has so much potential for growth. We need to invest in that area so that more people will come to the state. They will come here for the things they are looking for, including the clean, natural environment. We can show them how their food is grown and where the forests are that clean our air and provide us with rainfall. We can support that area. Support for small farms and innovation on family farms is also important. I do not mind corporatised farms. They seem to work quite well. However, small family farms are innovative and they are where people will try new crops, new ideas and new methods. We have to support small farms because, again, that is where our growth is. No matter what happens in the world, we will always need food. Western Australia can produce quite a lot of food. Value adding to farm produce and thinking about quality rather than quantity is important. So often we talk about production quantities, but really, we need to be looking at quality, including nutritional quality. That is what I would like to see.

As I said earlier, renewable industries are also important. We have to address climate change. Addressing climate change now will reduce our costs in the future. With the way we are going, the future will be catastrophic for humans. Is it okay with everybody that the planet continues but we just cannot be here in another 100 or 200 years? It is not my choice. I would not do that. I want to address climate change now to make sure that my children, grandchildren and so forth can stay here. The costs of addressing the issues that climate change will cause will be phenomenal. We will be unable to manage them. We have to look at the issues now and we need to encourage other states and the federal government to acknowledge climate change and do something now.

I am getting close to winding up here, which I am sure a lot of members will be pleased with. We have to keep an eye on how our investment now can reduce costs in the future. If we have happy, healthy, educated, motivated and contributing people in our society, it will benefit us all. There will be more jobs because people will create their own industries. There will be less of a burden on the health system. It will be a better place—believe me!

In closing, I will give a bit of a recap. The financial issues are money in, money out. We have to weigh that up. If we spend more than we get, we get more debt and that is not good. Our credit rating will drop, we will have to borrow more, our interest bill will rise and we will have to borrow more. I would like to just get on with it. This bill is just about the loan. It is just to say, "Okay; here it is. This is your choice for the next four years." I know the games that are played here; whoever is in government seems to put up the ideas and right now, so many things have been done that we are in a really bad state. We have infrastructure, which is wonderful, but we are in a bad state. We know that we will have to spend \$8 billion to \$10 billion over the next two to three years. Why would we want to come back and do this all over again? Why would we want to come back and discuss another loan bill?

Over the last week or two, I have heard so many comments to the effect of "Labor's been in government now since March; why hasn't it done something!" I have to remind people we have had three sitting weeks. I think it is a little bit outrageous to assume that Labor would be able to clean up the mess from the last eight years in three weeks. I believe we should give Labor the chance to at least address the *Pre-election Financial Projections Statement* and cover the costs that we know we will have. It does not give the government free rein; it is not an open chequebook. We are saying, "It is \$11 billion over the next four years; don't come back for more." Let us see something really good in the budget and we will be able to pass that when it comes forward.

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan)** [11.35 am]: I, too, rise to make a few short comments on the Loan Bill 2017. I want to echo a number of previous comments, particularly those made by members on this side of the house. Although I listened with interest to the previous member's speech, I do not necessarily agree with all elements to it. Nonetheless, our lead speaker certainly went through the opposition's key concerns in great detail in his contribution—it was an excellent contribution, Mr Acting President—as did other speakers on this side of the house.

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As we have already heard, and as outlined in the second reading speech, this bill seeks authority for the consolidated account to borrow a further \$11 billion. As has been reflected in everyone's speeches thus far, this is the largest loan act authorisation on record. I think we would all agree that \$11 billion is an absolutely staggering figure. We all know that bills of this nature are not new and that governments of both persuasions have introduced such bills when required. The central difference with this bill compared with the others previously introduced is not only the size of the request—I will say it again; it is \$11 billion!—but also its timing. Loan bills traditionally follow the handing down of the annual state budget. As I understand it, there have only ever been a couple of exceptions to that tradition. The last Loan Bill was introduced in Parliament in 2016, and it is an example. However, that bill was introduced to ensure that there was a buffer, albeit not insignificant, for any unexpected changes in borrowing needs that would occur prior to 30 June 2017. Equally, that bill was introduced following the 2016 state budget. I want to refer to the *Hansard*. On 22 September 2016, the then Attorney General, who represented the Treasurer in this house, stated —

I remind the house that loan bills are administrative in nature. The borrowings authorised by the current bill were reflected in the 2016–17 budget, and there are no additional costs in excess of the approved forward estimates associated with the passage of this authority. In accordance with clause 4 of the bill, the proceeds of all loans raised under this authority must be paid into the consolidated account. The moneys will then be advanced to agencies as required by appropriations in the budget.

This is the key point —

Details of consolidated account appropriations are laid out in the budget papers that have been tabled in this house and examined in detail by members through the estimates hearings process, with the third reading of the 2016–17 budget appropriation bills dealt with by this house on 25 August 2016.

Set against those comments and the previous Loan Bill, the Loan Bill 2017 is different. The second reading speech on the bill before the house does not justify or outline where the funds will be spent. It is not tied to a budget because, as has been indicated by other members, the budget will not be delivered until September and therefore we cannot tie it to policies that will sit behind that budget. We do not have clear costings of all the promises made by the Labor Party at the time of the March election. I expect we will see all of them delivered in the September budget! If not, we will be following that very closely. We also do not have a clear plan articulated by the government on how it intends to reduce debt. During the election period, and even now, members opposite failed to articulate how they intended to reduce debt. Rather, this bill requests an unprecedented amount of money that is apparently needed. The government has indicated that it will be called upon only if required and it will not necessarily call on the entire \$11 billion, but it is still an unprecedented request put forward by this government. It is apparently needed, and the second reading speech states —

... until the government can start to implement much-needed fiscal repair as part of the coming budget, it is essential that the Parliament approve this increase in the central borrowing limit to ensure adequate access to the funds required to continue to provide public services and infrastructure investment.

Obviously, all sides of the house want to ensure that public services continue to be provided, but I am concerned with the comment, “until the government can start to implement much-needed fiscal repair”. I have questions that other members have also put to the minister, who has the joy of listening to all our speeches.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** It is an absolute joy, member.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I am sure that it is. What is the government's fiscal repair plan and why does it require an \$11 billion authorisation? Why does this request not cover only the next one to two years with a different figure? Why does it cover the estimated borrowing requirements of the consolidated account up until 30 June 2021? These questions need to be answered, along with all the other questions put by members on this side of the house. I indicated I will give only a short contribution to this debate.

**Hon Jim Chown:** It is a very good one.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I appreciate that. That is because I raised a number of matters just last week in my contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate on my electorate and more broadly. However, I want to raise one particular issue today. I take a little liberty here, given the minister responsible for taking this bill through the house is also the Minister for Disability Services, to say a little more about that portfolio and then on another matter, on which I am sure the minister will agree with me, that covers disability and education. I want to say a little more about the National Disability Insurance Scheme because I have the minister's undivided attention. It is fair to say that Hon Simon O'Brien and Hon Peter Collier also took the opportunity in this debate to make some remarks about the NDIS. Members may recall that when I was giving my contribution last week I talked a little

about the NDIS, essentially in response to a ministerial statement earlier in the day about the current situation with the NDIS. I absolutely recognise that the minister responsible has a very important decision to make about the NDIS. As I said in my contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate last week, and I say again today, it is not my intention to be partisan on this issue; indeed, the NDIS and the disability services portfolio are far too important for that. Members across the chamber would agree with that. I raise the NDIS in the context of the bill before us in which money is the subject.

Much was said about the bilateral agreement signed with the commonwealth earlier this year, particularly around the cost of delivering the Western Australian NDIS, principally the focus on the administrative costs and how they would impact as additional costs on the state. I find it interesting that we often hear arguments about not enough money being put in disability services or the social services sector, but when we invest more we are criticised for that. I go back to the issue of the administrative costs and the additional costs that the former government was prepared to invest. As the then government, we were prepared to invest money to ensure that the NDIS could be effectively rolled out across our state. Western Australia has a very strong background and history delivering individualised funding and local service delivery—I know another former Minister for Disability Services, Hon Simon O'Brien, touched on this in his contribution to the Loan Bill. The former government felt that that very strong focus should continue to involve what were local area coordinators but are now known as local coordinators. We took account of not only WA's strong background and history in delivering very good services—not perfect but very strong services—in the disability services sector, but also various reports and surveys undertaken throughout the trial period of the two models, the commonwealth and the state-based NDIS. Through all of that and in the consultation that had been undertaken in which I spoke to many people, both in metropolitan Perth and regional and remote parts of Western Australia, the former government felt WA NDIS was the most appropriate model. Indeed, the independent review that had been undertaken, on which there has been some commentary, stated very clearly that, based on all the analysis it had done, WA NDIS was the closest fit to the key features of an effective model for WA. Figures used during the election campaign, particularly by those who were opposed to the former state government's decision, including Jenny Macklin and Bruce Bonyhady, were wrong; in fact, they exaggerated the cost to the state. I said on radio at the time, when Mr Bonyhady decided to enter the election fray, that his comments were designed to cause unnecessary alarm to people with disability, and their families and carers, particularly when they were claiming that thousands of people with disability in Western Australia would not be able to access the NDIS. I felt those were inaccurate and unhelpful comments that were designed to cause alarm. I said that on 6PR, and I was very cross about that, because they were just wrong. The fact is that over time the additional investment would eventually even out across the state.

I also have to say that there was always a focus on administrative costs, but it was not entirely that in isolation. It is recognised—the minister can correct me if I am wrong—that around 26 000 people with disability access some form of support in the state. The former government estimated that, effectively, at full scheme around 39 000 people—the minister is nodding so my figures are right—would be eligible to participate and to access support through the NDIS. We had estimated that we would do that over a three-year transition period, notwithstanding that, obviously, people were already in the scheme, but new people would be entering the scheme. There will be a massive influx of people and, therefore, obviously, a massive increase in costs to both the state and commonwealth. It should be remembered that, at the end of the day, around 60 per cent of funds come from the state and around 40 per cent come from the commonwealth. There are other elements to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Often in discussions about the NDIS, people talk about it as a commonwealth scheme. Yes, it is a commonwealth scheme that covers all states and territories and is through agreement with the states and territories, but that does not deny the significant financial contribution that states quite willingly put into that scheme. I am quite sure the minister is finding this as well. Sometimes there is a lot of conversation about it being a commonwealth scheme. We are the major contributors to the NDIS. We have a say, and we should have a say, about how it is delivered in this state. Notwithstanding that, I will refer to some of the concerns that were raised about the NDIS.

We probably could have made the models clearer earlier. We had previously called the WA National Disability Insurance Scheme the My Way trial. The minister would know from when he was shadow minister that very soon after I came in, I changed it to the WA NDIS because I think that better reflects what it is. Ultimately, at the very beginning of the process, there would have been clearer differences between the models. But over time, as we learnt and amended and improved the scheme, at both a commonwealth and state level, we needed to be very clear that the WA NDIS was and is the NDIS but delivered locally. That remains the fact, albeit people have argued on that. I am taking the time today to talk about this issue a little more because during election periods information perhaps does not get out the way it should. I am sorry that some information was not getting out in the midst of the election campaign, which was focusing on a range of things. But in the bilateral agreement with the commonwealth that we had agreed to, the WA NDIS would be nationally consistent, guaranteeing lifetime

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coverage for reasonable and necessary supports, and choice and control over those supports for those eligible to participate in the scheme. State legislation would be prepared and it would mirror all the key provisions of the commonwealth act, including, as I have just mentioned, reasonable and necessary supports, choice and control, and eligibility requirements.

I continue to hear people incorrectly say that under the WA NDIS the scheme would not be portable. Whether someone moves from Perth to Queensland or anywhere in between, full portability is an absolute requirement. We were going to have a joint board, which would have included representatives from the state and the commonwealth and, importantly, for discussions on co-design, people with disability would also have been represented. We were very clear about that. That board would have also provided oversight on the performance of the WA NDIS. That is very much the same as would be the case if the commonwealth model were in this state. Our reporting requirements would be consistent with the reporting requirements of the commonwealth scheme. We had already discussed issues surrounding quality and safety. I presume the framework that sits behind that is still being developed by the states and territories, but we were already participating in the development and implementation of that. The appeal processes would be the same. There would be access through a normal complaints and appeals process to the commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal. It was not just dreamt up overnight. This agreement took significant effort and commitment by government officers within the Disability Services Commission. I recognise the director general, Dr Ron Chalmers, who worked incredibly hard with his very small team in DSC. I also recognise officers from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and Treasury and the work that was undertaken by the federal minister, Christian Porter, and his commonwealth officials.

But I want to go back to the situation at hand. Given that the Minister for Disability Services is now in the chamber—I think he may have been out on urgent parliamentary business when I raised this matter last time—I want to reflect on the part of his ministerial statement in which he said —

These considerations include the specific challenges for people living in rural and remote parts of Western Australia; ensuring scheme design meets the needs of people who require exceptionally high support; the importance of localised decision-making contact points and genuine choice and control; and the need to safeguard and develop WA's disability sector workforce.

I raise that again today with the minister in the house because, as I said last week, to me those are the exact reasons that we should have a WA NDIS. I say that very sincerely. I talked last week about rural and remote parts of Western Australia. The minister knows that we are a diverse state; we are a large state with small and large communities. For people with disability, no matter where they live, whether it be the remotest part of Western Australia to inner-city Perth, they should be able to access this scheme and speak to the people whom they need to and for those people to understand their specific circumstances. I met with a number of families in rural WA who very much relied on the local coordinators. I am not saying that the WA NDIS model is perfect. Neither model is perfect. With such a massive reform as the NDIS, we cannot expect everything to be perfect with either a commonwealth or state model. That is in part why it was good to have the trials. I see the minister nodding in agreement. But in small communities with local coordinators who know the community and the family and, most importantly, the person with the disability, they know what supports are available and what opportunities there might be, and that is incredibly important. We cannot get that by calling a 1800 phone number. We just cannot buy that. I think sometimes that that is lost in the debate.

I also want to touch on the comment about ensuring the scheme design meets the needs of people who require exceptionally high support. That is absolutely correct. I want to encourage the minister, when he has time and he is no longer dealing with this bill in this house —

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Will that ever happen?

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** — whenever that might be, to listen to an interview with Geoff Hutchison on 30 March; I went back to double-check the date. People were calling in about the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Two mums called up. I will say that one was not supportive of a Western Australian NDIS. I did not quite agree with all the elements she raised, and, again, I think it was that confusion that sometimes occurs; she raised issues about portability—we had agreed to that—and other matters. I fully appreciate that over time some people will have really great experiences with the Disability Services Commission, sometimes not or somewhere in between. I encourage the minister to listen to both interviews, but particularly to the second interview in the context of what I have been saying about people with very complex needs. I will not go through the details of the person, but the minister knows who that person is.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** I think I have met with them.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** She talked about her son and the significant issues she and her family continue to work through. She talked about exceptionally challenging behaviours, and the importance of local governance.

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She talked about the fact that she could go and meet her local member and about how she could meet with Dr Chalmers. She said she could meet with the then shadow Minister for Disability Services and the Minister for Disability Services. The minister is nodding; I think he knows where am heading on this.

When I heard that interview it resonated very strongly with me and raised concerns. If there is a problem under the commonwealth model, who can she call? Who can she go to? Minister, that is why we need the WA NDIS. I will accept the decision the minister makes—he has it all in front of him—but, quite genuinely, I really hope that decisions are not clouded by timings of when an announcement was made on a bilateral agreement. As the minister knows, that had been discussed for more than a year, certainly when I was minister, and I am not going to go into where we were heading on that. Not everyone will agree with me on this matter—there is a divergence of views—but certainly it is about the individual and their ability to speak to somebody who knows them. It will not always be perfect and they will not always get it right, but do not remove the opportunity for people to have local input. It is so important, particularly for parents who struggle day by day, and, I will say, struggle more than any of us in this place; I am not making this a global statement. I cannot even imagine what it would be like to work through some of the issues I have mentioned. In my view, those are the reasons that a WA NDIS is the best model. I encourage the minister to please, as I said to him outside this chamber, make the right decision.

I want to talk about something I had not intended to raise, but it again relates to disability services. I will reflect for a moment on the issue of inclusiveness in our schools. I had not intended to raise this today, but given the somewhat unhelpful, unnecessary and very hurtful comments made in the federal Senate yesterday, I have to raise this matter. Again in the context of this Loan Bill, members know that last year the Liberal–National government invested an additional \$46 million in the education system for children with disability, of which around \$32 million—the former minister will correct me—was specifically targeted towards autism spectrum disorder. I think that initiative was welcomed across the entire chamber.

We know that children with disability have for many years been part of mainstream schooling. I was speaking to former Minister for Education Hon Colin Barnett earlier today, and he said that when the School Education Bill went through both houses of Parliament in 1997, the specific issue of children with disability in mainstream schooling was dealt with. For many, many years now children with a variety of disabilities across an entire spectrum have been able to participate in mainstream schooling from kindy to year 12, much like any other child in Western Australia so I was a bit surprised to read comments in the press this morning on a contribution made by Senator Pauline Hanson in the federal Senate yesterday during, I think, the debate on the Gonski reform. I thank the Parliamentary Library, if the librarians are listening, for getting me a copy of the, I presume, uncorrected *Hansard* of the Senate. They got it for me at very short notice, and I appreciate that. The senator said —

There is another thing that we need to address, and I will go back to the classrooms again. I hear so many times from parents and teachers whose time is taken up with children—whether they have a disability or whether they are autistic—who are taking up the teacher’s time in the classroom. These kids have a right to an education, by all means, but, if there are a number of them, these children should go into a special classroom and be looked after and given that special attention. Because most of the time the teacher spends so much time on them they forget about the child who is straining at the bit and wants to go ahead in leaps and bounds in their education. That child is held back by those others, because the teachers spend time with them. I am not denying them.

Interesting words. She continues —

If it were one of my children I would love all the time given to them to give them those opportunities. But it is about the loss for our other kids. I think that we have more autistic children, yet we are not providing the special classrooms or the schools for these autistic children. When they are available, they are at a huge expense to parents. I think we need to take that into consideration. We need to look at this.

Here is the clanger —

It is no good saying that we have to allow these kids to feel good about themselves and that we do not want to upset them and make them feel hurt.

Several members interjected.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I am flabbergasted by those statements; I really am. Again, I get cross sometimes—I am cross with that! Segregating students—that is what she is putting forward here—is, to use the words of the federal Minister for Social Services, Christian Porter, today, archaic. Everyone should recognise that there is a spectrum of disorder and disability. Obviously, for some children, simply by virtue of the degree and complexity of their disability, mainstream schooling may not be possible. For some, mainstream schooling might be undertaken part of the time and there may be special support programs for others. The funding I referred to earlier certainly delivered on that. But many children—not just children with an autism spectrum disorder, but other

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disabilities—participate fully in mainstream classes. I know that Senator Hanson is not going to listen to my speech, but it is not one size fits all. Let us have some compassion, let us have some empathy and let us actually remember that we are a diverse community and society and that we should in fact celebrate people with differences. We should recognise that it is great that children with disability can be part of mainstream schooling. It is a benefit for not just them but also their peers. It is just normal.

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

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** That is the society I thought we were in in 2017. I actually hope that in some way the comments that were made—which apparently have been taken out of context or something, but I have read the *Hansard* and I think everyone agrees with me that it is pretty clear—will actually galvanise support for people and children with disability and will be far more positive than the comments themselves. I know that I got on to a bit of a hobbyhorse there —

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** It's a very important hobbyhorse.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** — but I am just really cross that those sorts of things can be said and that people can think that is appropriate. For all those parents and children who are rightly upset about what has been said, good on them! I am pleased that they are coming out and saying so, because comments like that should not go unchecked. I have heard the comments of the Minister for Disability Services and other members on the other side of the house in support of the comments I have made, and I am quite sure that the minister will in due course, if he has not already, be saying something in a similar vein to me. I urge Senator Hanson to apologise. If she did not mean it or it was not the way she meant it, she should apologise, because it is not appropriate.

I have lost my train of thought now!

**Hon Samantha Rowe:** You said it was going to be short.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** So much for a short speech!

I just want to go back to the bill before us. Obviously, as I have indicated, members on this side of the house and those on the crossbenches have raised some significant concerns about this bill. The government has failed to articulate why and how the \$11 billion has been arrived at. There is a complete lack of transparency. We cannot argue it against a budget because the budget has not yet been delivered. In my view, there is a lack of transparency and accountability by this government. There are a number of questions that the minister needs to be able to answer in his summing up and no doubt during the committee stage—I see that there is a supplementary notice paper; minister, you could be here for a while! On behalf of the government and through you, Mr Acting President, the minister does need to respond to the quite significant concerns that have been raised by members in this place.

**HON MICHAEL MISCHIN (North Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [12.13 pm]: I rise to make a few remarks on the Loan Bill 2017. I am well aware of the constraints that are placed upon this place regarding money bills. Of course, they are there for a good purpose. However, I have to say that under any other circumstances, this is a bill that ought not to pass. It is a bill that lacks specificity in the announcement of its policy as presented by the second reading speech, the explanatory memorandum and any of the other material that has been brought before this chamber on what the money that is being sought will be spent on. I will start by referring to the second reading speech itself. Having regard to the extraordinary nature of what is being sought, one would have hoped that there would have been greater detail and greater specificity to explain the rationale for it. Part of the problem, of course, is endemic in the nature of the result of the last election, in that the other place has such an overwhelming majority of members supporting the government. With respect to many of them, they are new members necessarily, who may not be aware of the processes of the Parliament, who may not have been inculcated with the traditions of Parliament and its function, and who are bound, of course, by their party platforms and the decisions made by their caucus, which allows for no dissent once a decision is made. Of course, they would routinely support what is being put forward and would do so, I suspect, uncritically. I will develop that theme in a moment.

I wish to refer to the second reading speech itself, which has been provided as the justification for this particular extraordinary bill. I feel it necessary to quote one of the paragraphs towards the end of the second reading speech, where it states —

Members of this house who were here during the last Parliament will recall that the previous government's last Loan Bill, now the Loan Act 2016, sought a \$1.7 billion increase in the cumulative loan limit applying to the consolidated account.

I digress to repeat: \$1.7 billion. There was much criticism at the time and there has been much criticism over the years whenever our government introduced loan bills for the significant amounts sought. They were in the billions or part thereof. There was an enormous amount of lengthy criticism that occupied a great deal of the time of this

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house in debating the merits of what was being sought and being critical of the government's excessiveness, its profligacy in spending, the budgetary measures that were being sought to be funded by those increases in the credit limit for the state, and the borrowings that were being sought. Returning to the second reading speech, it continues —

That authorisation was expected to provide sufficient financing of the deterioration in revenue —

I stress: revenue —

detailed in the 2016–17 midyear review and be sufficient to cover borrowing requirements to 30 June 2017.

So it was modest in that respect. The speech goes on —

It included a \$1.2 billion buffer for any further deterioration in central revenue that may emerge during 2016–17.

Again, it was focused on a particular purpose and for the projections that were available at that time. It goes on —

As expected, the \$1.2 billion buffer is all that will remain available by the end of this financial year. It is expected that this residual borrowing will be utilised during July, exhausting the remaining loan authorisation.

Accordingly, it is essential that the Loan Bill 2017 be passed without delay and by no later than the end of this financial year to provide sufficient lead time to meet borrowing requirements in August and beyond. In this regard, the bill cannot be left to pass beyond 30 June 2017 as both houses will be in recess for the month of July.

One can understand all that and the need for some expedition in the passage of this bill so that we do not end up with the unfortunate circumstances of places such as the United States, where public servants were left without remuneration for their efforts and services had to lapse and the like. Bear in mind that although particular agencies of government have the ability to borrow on their own account, we are talking about government itself. It is made plain in the second reading speech that this is for government as opposed to being for the borrowings of particular agencies. The second reading speech goes on to state —

For that reason, Madam President, members in the other place suspended so much of that chamber's standing orders as was necessary to facilitate the expeditious debate and passage of the bill and give the Legislative Council time to deal with the bill by 29 June 2017.

The urgent nature of this bill should not be a surprise to the house and is consistent with the observation made by the then shadow Treasurer on 15 September last year when he noted that as that bill was expected to carry the consolidated account through to 30 June 2017, and I quote —

It is clear that whoever forms government after the 2017 election ... one of the very first things that government will do is to bring in yet another loan bill, subject to the movements in our revenue that happen from time to time. Bear in mind that this loan bill will get us through to 30 June 2017, and a new government, regardless of its political colour, will turn its mind to this in 2017.

We accept all that. That was foreshadowed; that was understood; that was not unreasonable. The then Treasurer, Hon Mike Nahan, fully understood that and did not wish to bind any future government one way or the other. He fully understood that another Loan Bill would be necessary, whether it was a Liberal, Labor or any other form of government elected, and that further funds would need to be sought. It is also pointed out in the second reading speech —

As with all previous Loan Act authorisations, any unused borrowing authority not drawn during the period for which it is expected to apply will remain available for borrowing requirements into the future.

That is one of the concerns about the manner in which this bill has been brought to this place, and the motivations behind it. We are being asked to extend the credit limit for the government, not by a projected amount based on the performance of the government—I use that term without any political colouration at all—but over the next four years and potentially beyond. We have nothing that we can judge that proposed spending against. If one were to go to the bank and ask for an extension on one's credit limit on one's credit card, not to the point of a few thousand dollars or to simply double what their existing credit limit may have been on the last extension, but in the order of something like eight to 10 times, that bank would ask some serious questions. It would look at what the money has been spent on until that time. It would look at the justification for the extension by that significant amount and it would do its due diligence to ensure that there was a program in place to manage that extension of one's credit limit. I mean that not only in the course of credit cards of course, but also if it were a business to be

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able to access properly and rationally those funds, using its due diligence about what is intended for those funds. As Hon Donna Faragher pointed out in the past, loan bills and our last one were done on the basis of the projections for the succeeding, reasonable, foreseeable future. Budget projections—budget forecasts—are, of their very nature, a form of crystal ball gazing. They are projections. We have heard much over the years about how there is nothing in the forward estimates about X, Y or Z, or the forward estimates state a particular figure. But those are estimates. As each government every year comes to consider the financial position of the state, as it has emerged as a historical fact until that time, it works from the projections into the future based on Treasury estimates and evidence of the trends at the time that the budget is being prepared, considers the priorities for future spending and has to forgo some of those things that were considered to be important at the time in order to cut its cloth according to what is available and what looks like will happen in the future—to the extent that the future is foreseeable—a loan bill is prepared to fund that. I am sure that Hon Ken Travers, who was very vocal at length in this place over the last several years, almost eight years —

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Ken who?

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** Yes; how soon they forget. I am sure that if he were on the other side of this chamber, on the Treasury benches, he would be the first to get up and make these observations and be critical of this particular bill. He was a man of principle in that regard.

**Hon Alanna Clohesy:** With all respect in the world, you are not Hon Ken Travers.

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** I do not pretend to be Hon Ken Travers. There are elements of him that I very much admire, including his ability to talk the leg off an iron stool. I am sure he was vaccinated with a gramophone needle when he was young! But the sorts of comments that he made about every one of the then government's Loan Bills would, if he had carried those principles over to the present day, drive him apoplectic at seeing this particular bill, and for good reason. Even the second reading speech foreshadows the dangers that this bill presents. For reasons that I touched upon in my contribution to the Address-in-Reply to Her Excellency the Governor's speech the other day, the signs are not good that this government can be trusted to be open, accountable and subject to a high level of scrutiny, as was professed in the lead-up to the election and since, about the way it is going to use this money in the future. I go back to the second reading speech to make those points. It states —

Borrowing for general public purposes, as distinct from borrowing by statutory authorities with borrowing powers in their enabling acts, ...

I interrupt to say that that is another source of income for those authorities. Sure enough, during estimates hearings, we may be able to examine in retrospect what those authorities have done with that money to fund particular operations, or, perchance, some of the extravagant \$5 billion worth—query plus—of promises that were made by this government before the election. But government borrowing for general public purposes must be authorised by loan acts—to wit, the Loan Bill 2017. This bill seeks a new Loan Act authorisation of \$11 billion—far in excess of what had been sought by our government over successive years, for which we were roundly and at length criticised—to, as stated in the second reading speech —

... meet the estimated borrowing requirements of the Consolidated Account until 30 June 2021.

Firstly, there is no guarantee in any of this—not even a hint—that further loan bills will not be brought before this place by a government-dominated Assembly, asking us to simply pass them because we cannot do anything about it, given the nature of such bills. There is no guarantee that the government will not next year, as a result of some new government policy that has been hatched in the meanwhile, seek another \$11 billion for that particular pet project. The second reading speech refers to “until 30 June 2021”. By happy coincidence, the next state general election will be in March 2021. This bill is calculated to cover not only the immediate period before the budget, until we are able to consider what this government is actually spending money on and to consider what economy measures the government will take, such as what the Premier has indicated many times—that is, paying off the terrible debt as he would do a mortgage, whatever the hell that means. I suppose it means as opposed to paying off a credit card or a car, presumably. It is also theoretically intended to cover the government's expenditure on paying off debt; providing essential services; meeting current commitments that it has inherited from the previous government; funding its election commitments, which were poorly calculated, were not subject to any scrutiny and have been estimated to be in the area of \$5 billion; and anything else the government may wish to come up with over the next four years, until the next election. There has not even been an assurance—not that it would be justiciable in any way—or a hint that this is the last we will see of loan bills in this place.

The second reading speech continues —

The large authorisation reflects the financial estimates for Consolidated Account borrowing under the policy settings of the previous Government, consistent with the financial forecasts detailed in

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the *Pre-election Financial Projections Statement* released on 9 February 2017, with an allowance added for likely borrowings in 2020-21.

As I have just mentioned, there will be an election in March 2021. What is going to be borrowed in 2020–21 that could justify us approving a credit limit of \$11 billion now? Is there a list of those projected borrowings? I am sure that when we get into Committee of the Whole on this bill, we will be assured, “Oh, look, it’s too early to tell. All sorts of possibilities might arise in three and a half years’ time.” I am sure they will.

It is conceded in the second reading speech —

This will be the largest Loan Act authorisation on record —

Yes—special *Mastermind* prize there for the bleeding obvious! —

and reflects the state of the books inherited from the previous government.

No, it does not. The state of the books of the previous government will have been made plain in the Treasury reports that come out quarterly; the state of the books of the previous government will be made plain when the budget is finally formulated and issued, and that is not due until September. Although the opposition concedes—because it was expected—that there was bound to be another loan bill to cover things until at least the next budget, we do not have a bill for doing that; quite the contrary. This bill is not to cover the state of the books inherited from the previous government. This bill is to cover spending beyond any budget that this government will present this year. This bill, as stated in the second reading speech, will also —

... meet the estimated borrowing requirements of the consolidated account until 30 June 2021.

I look forward to hearing what those estimates are and how they have been formulated, and to seeing some rigour in the way in which those figures have been arrived at.

The second reading speech continues —

This Bill seeks the authority for the consolidated account to borrow a further \$11 billion to meet the financing needs of the previous government’s policy settings.

That should not be hard to give us; the estimated financing needs of the previous government’s policy settings were \$4.5 billion. There is no mention in this bill of the queried \$5 billion plus of the Labor Party’s promises in the lead-up to the 2017 election. Will we get an undertaking from a responsible minister that none of this money will be spent on meeting the Labor Party’s election commitments and will be used only to satisfy the policy settings and financial commitments incurred by the previous government? I look forward to a responsible minister giving that undertaking, in accordance with what has been put forward to us as the second reading policy announcement underlying and underpinning this bill.

It is all very well to say, as is claimed in the second reading speech, that we will have an opportunity to analyse all this during the estimates hearings. We all know that the estimates hearings conducted by this place and the other place look at things in retrospect. We might see that the money has been squandered on some pet project, but there is not much we will be able to do about it, having committed the public of Western Australia to a credit limit of \$11 billion—an open cheque to the tune of \$11 billion of borrowing. Where is that borrowing coming from? What checks and balances are there as to where this money is coming from? It is the usual formula.

I can see Hon Stephen Dawson is getting all tired and emotional about this over there! Would he like some more tissues?

**Hon Alanna Clohesy:** Your speech is so boring it’s reduced him to tears!

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** He is still here!

Clause 3 of the Loan Bill 2017 provides —

The Treasurer may borrow for public purposes, from the Western Australian Treasury Corporation or elsewhere, sums of money not exceeding \$11 000 000 000 in the aggregate.

I wish I had that sort of credit limit from the bank, but there we go. It states “or elsewhere”. It is the usual form of words. Our borrowings have always been accounted for. We know that, in the past, some Labor governments have cast about for other sources of revenue; the name Khemlani springs to mind.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Before my time!

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** Hopefully, Hon Stephen Dawson will not have it in his time!

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I trust that they will be legitimate sources of revenue. Again, there is nothing we can do about it in advance because we are being asked to say to this government, “For the next four years, you can borrow up to \$11 billion to add to state debt.” Although we might ask the government what it will do with it, there is nothing we can do about it. If by happy chance this government does not last after the March 2021 election, whatever government comes into power then will be saddled with the debts that may have been incurred as part of an election splurge by this crew in the 2020–21 financial year in order to garner support for a second term.

This is the most outrageous attempt in history to fund an election campaign. It is a disgrace. It is an insult to Parliament and the people of Western Australia to put forward an expectation based on the numbers that the government holds in the Legislative Assembly to borrow, for the next four years at least, up to \$11 billion. I would have some confidence in being able to accept this sort of thing if we had a track record, to date, of a government that was open, accountable and amenable to higher level scrutiny, but we do not. I touched on many of those things in my contribution to the Address-in-Reply to the Governor. Hon Peter Collier expanded on certain issues. When we ask a question, particularly of ministers in the other place, we get platitudes and advertisements and the now standard form criticism that blames the last government for all the woes that this government encounters. It is the usual political pointscoring. So be it; we can live with that. We do not get detailed answers. To see this, one has to only look at the sort of answers that are being proffered by some of the ministers in this place on their portfolios, and, disturbingly, even from ministers in the other place, and, even more disturbingly, from the Premier. I have asked, on a number of occasions, questions that seek specific answers and have been told that I will be given something in the future or to let some other minister answer the question, or I have not been given any specificity at all. I mean that not as a criticism of all the ministers in this place. I think Hon Stephen Dawson—I give credit where it is due—has a respect for parliamentary process and has done his best with the material that he has been given from the other place. Hon Sue Ellery, what I find disturbing is the lack of respect for the parliamentary process, the lack of accountability and the lack of openness. I find a lack of respect for not only this Parliament, but also the people of Western Australia because although high standards were professed and emphasised, they were forgone within a matter of months that this government has been in office. That does not bode well. If we are going to get the quality of answers that we have had so far, even at estimates hearings, we are going down the track of a disaster, yet we are being invited—we do not have much choice—to approve a bill for an increase in the credit limit to this government over the next four years, at the very least, without other loan bills being introduced in the meanwhile, to the tune of \$11 billion, which is something like one-third of the current state debt, and this is without even the slightest hint about what that money will be spent on.

We have heard constant criticisms of the way that the Liberal–National government spent money. I take issue with Hon Aaron Stonehouse’s comments about vanity projects. I do not regard spending \$150 million to rebuild courts, police stations and justice complexes in the country as being vanity projects. They were falling apart under the previous Labor government. I do not regard providing a permanent, or at least a long-term, fit-for-purpose home for the Supreme Court—there have been complaints about it for the last quarter of a century or more—as being a vanity project. I do not regard the Northbridge Link as a vanity project. It may not be full of businesses at the moment but, once completed—build it; they will come. Jobs were created as part of the exercise. Without that project, a lot of construction workers would not have had employment. It is also a legacy for the future. The buildings will eventually be occupied and opportunities will be used. It will be a vibrant, essential part of Perth into the future. The only wonder is that it took over a hundred years to get around to it. It is likewise for Elizabeth Quay. In due course, apart from the jobs that were created there, other buildings will be built, which will create more jobs that would not have otherwise been available. Eventually, businesses will occupy the area. Perth Children’s Hospital is not a white elephant; it is essential. It has problems, but nowhere near the problems that were encountered when Perth Arena was being built. It blew out more than three and a half times its initial cost because of tinkering by an incompetent government. The arena is being used every day. Was that a vanity project by the previous government? I think not. Perth Stadium, or whatever it will be called when the government rattles off the name, is not a vanity project. It was well overdue and it will now provide a world-class sporting venue that will attract business over time. The 30 000 jobs that the stadium will provide for people in Western Australia were mentioned in *The Sunday Times* a few weeks ago. I accept many of them will be casual jobs, but 30 000 job opportunities that were not otherwise there is not a vanity project.

**Hon Aaron Stonehouse:** Where’d the money come from—the payroll tax?

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** The money had to come from somewhere but these projects are investments in the future. I hear members talking about debt. It is as though no-one in this place has had a mortgage. If a person takes out a mortgage, they go into debt and they pay it off. Sometimes, if people rely on two incomes to service the mortgage and someone loses their job or gets a pay decrease, they will struggle for a while. They may have to sell some of the assets that they accumulated during the good times. No; the government seems to have a philosophy that once it owns something, it should never get rid of it. Some people think, “We have a holiday home somewhere as well as the mortgage on our house. Do we really need the holiday home? No; we will flog it off in order to

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reduce our debt and use the money for something else. Perhaps we'll pay off the mortgage or buy something else we might need, like a second car." No; certain members in this place seem to think that they need to hang onto everything they have ever had and they do not reinvest.

**Hon Tjorn Sibma:** Hoarders!

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** They are hoarders, yes. I have a hoard of books at home that my partner wants me to get rid of, but that is another matter.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** I wish you had hoarded some money in the last few years.

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** It is called prudent investment and yes, we have had a decrease in revenue. Some households lose one income. It is called a decrease in revenue. Allowances are made for that and people cope with it. Times get better, as they always have in this state. At some point our GST share will increase and the mining industry will pick up. I make one other observation to Hon Diane Evers about the wealth of mining companies: most of the high-paid jobs in this state that come from the mining industry—Mr Acting President will understand this—come during the construction phase. It takes about 12 people to build a mine and only one person to operate it. The whole point of building a mine is to get into the operation stage. Vast salaries are paid and great job opportunities are created during the construction stage of a mine, which is why we need to try to encourage more construction stages. Those companies, wealthy as they are, do not make a cent in the many years that they are building those projects. They have a risk, but they do not make a cent until the first tonne of ore is dug out of the ground. To simply say that they are wealthy and have no risk is nonsense. We have seen several mines having to go into mothballs because of the world market. Of course, if our iron ore is more expensive than it is anywhere else in the world, why on earth would anyone want it? They can go to Africa or South America. That might be a good thing for some: we can grow trees instead of mines, but we will not get any income out of it or any jobs. I digress.

I am concerned about what this money will be spent on. The push towards making more job opportunities in Western Australia is a very good one and is to be encouraged. There was a report in today's paper about the much-maligned footbridge to the stadium. I will not go into the detail and it may be that that job should have been kept in Western Australia, but it would have cost at least \$3.5 million more. Will we see public projects being funded by this government that are not to the benefit of the public on a cost-effectiveness basis, simply to provide jobs at an exorbitant amount to appease the unions that support this government. I am all for keeping jobs in Western Australia and providing industries in Western Australia with opportunities, but not at the expense of the taxpayer if they are not providing competitive services. We have had instances in other states in which, because of extravagant spending on certain public projects, the taxpayer ended up forking out up to 33 per cent more than if there had been more stringent financial management. Is there a need for stringent financial management when we allow a credit limit of \$11 billion so that we can monitor how the government is going and we can try to put a brake on it? It is not just until next year—no, this is \$11 billion at least over the next four years. This is a bad bill. This is a dangerous precedent. If this government comes into office again in March 2021—heaven forbid!—will we get another loan bill to cover its spending spree for the next four years? This is a precedent. Will members opposite complain if we are in government in four years and we decide to take one out over four years? Will they complain about that if we say that it is because of what the last government did? Will they complain if they want any detail, and we say, "No, it's all the previous government's fault"?

**Hon Diane Evers:** You took out \$23 billion in two terms, so by my reckoning that's more than \$11 billion in one term. Just because you did it over two shots!

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** It came before this house and it had to be accounted for, and it was after a budget. Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Robin Chapple):** Members! Excuse me, members, we are entering into conversation. I would love to hear from you.

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** I take the point and I shall avoid doing that, Mr Acting President. That was the whole point: it was after a budget and this house had the opportunity to see what it was going to be spent on and to critique it. Perhaps it could not do anything about it here, like blocking it, but this house had the opportunity to critique it and to hold us to account for it. It was done by increments. We are being asked to provide a blank cheque for up to \$11 billion for four years.

**Hon Diane Evers** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Members!

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** It is simply outrageous that we should be asked to do this. It is unprecedented that we are being asked to do this. We would not have been asked to do this had it not been for the arrogance of too

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many people in the government in the other place feeling that they can ride roughshod over this Parliament and over the interests of Western Australians. It will be a very sad day when we pass that bill—a very sad day, indeed.

**HON COLIN HOLT (South West)** [12.55 pm]: I want to make some comments on the Loan Bill 2017. My first comment is wow! We are being asked for \$11 billion more, if this bill is passed, and with a complete lack of transparency, it has to be said. The government has no plan and no budget, yet it is asking for \$11 billion. Members in this house who were here in the last term of government will well and truly remember that the most popular catchphrase from the opposition benches was “fully costed, fully funded”. We know that, with this bill, the new government’s plans will be fully funded, but they will not be fully costed. Maybe our catchphrase will be “fully funded, not costed”! We have had no plans from the government and it has not articulated what it will spend this \$11 billion on. We are being asked to approve a bill of this magnitude with no budget, and with the budget being pushed back another three months from when we could have expected it. We are being asked to approve a large amount without being able to ask the right questions about what it will be spent on. We know some of it will be spent on Labor’s \$5 billion-plus of commitments made during the election campaign. That is its will. It will say that it won the election based on those promises and it has the mandate to deliver on those promises. Now the government is asking for funding to deliver on those promises. That was never mentioned in any election campaign or in any election material that I saw. We heard a lot of promises, but the government has no way to pay for them. Members opposite stood on their economic credibility to say that they have a plan to address the state’s economic position. I can tell members that it must be a small plan, because I cannot remember reading too much about it. It is a very small plan and a very small target. Members opposite never talked much about how they would right the economic position they believed the state was in. In the election campaign they promoted promises to the electorate. Now we find that the only plan they had at the time was to come back to the Parliament to ask for another \$11 billion. We have had no outline about how that \$11 billion will be spent, what the time frame is or how it will benefit the people of regional Western Australia, who will be saddled with another \$11 billion worth of debt.

The National Party said during the election campaign that people should beware because there was no plan from the now government. The Labor Party had no plan to address the economic situation. We said to people in regional Western Australia that we knew where some of the money would come from. We could guarantee them that it would come out of royalties for regions to fund some of the Labor Party’s election commitments. By far and away, the biggest commitments were given to metropolitan Perth. The commitment to Metronet is the best example. Metronet has been an election commitment for at least two elections and now it has to be funded. The government will redirect some royalties for regions funding to Metronet, and we now know that the other way it will pay for it is with an \$11 billion loan that it wants this Parliament to approve.

*Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm*

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** I was talking before the lunch break about this outrageously disgraceful Loan Bill for \$11 billion.

**Hon Simon O’Brien:** You’re not beating about the bush!

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** No, I am not beating about the bush. I learnt that phrase from one of the best operators in this house during the last term of government.

To get back to more serious matters, this is a large amount of debt to saddle future generations with, and I know that many members have made that point in their responses to this Loan Bill. While we were speaking, the government made some announcements about increases in household fees and charges. I do not have the official release from the government, but I am sure that the minister responding to the Loan Bill debate might be able to enlighten the house in a more official way. As was predicted in the election campaign and soon afterwards, even though there was a commitment not to raise fees and charges, there will indeed be increases in fees and charges for households. While we are debating an \$11 billion loan, I thought that perhaps the government needed this money to avoid putting too much pain on households in its first year and its first budget, but apparently not. As well as asking for \$11 billion, the government is asking for an average of \$438 per annum per household from families and small businesses to contribute to what it says will fix the budget.

The plan now includes a 10.9 per cent increase in the fixed charge component of electricity bills. Maybe the minister responsible can confirm some of these things, because I have them second-hand; I have not yet seen an official release from the government. A 10.9 per cent increase seems extraordinary. The consumer price index in this state is 1.2 per cent, and yet we have a 10.9 per cent increase in the fixed component of electricity bills, which is extraordinary. There will be a six per cent increase in water, sewerage and drainage charges. That is five times the CPI. Public transport has not been missed.

**Hon Simon O’Brien:** You’d think government members would be up in arms about that.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** One would think so. I remember the criticism the previous government attracted for raising student fares from 50c to 60c. Now it will be 70c for each ride. I am not sure what that means in percentage terms, but it would be about 18 per cent, I would assume, for those students catching public transport with SmartRiders. Vehicle charges will increase by 5.5 per cent, along with insurance and drivers' licences. Another one I have here is a 3.35 per cent increase in the emergency services levy, which I find intriguing. I hope the Minister for Emergency Services is not on the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee, given his propensity to pluck figures out of the air about expenses in his portfolio. I hope there is some science behind that 3.35 per cent increase in the emergency services levy. Maybe when we get to see the budget in September, we might get to see what that 3.35 per cent increase in the emergency services levy will pay for. It obviously goes into that fund, and I would hazard a guess that the community has great expectations that it will be spent in the area of emergency services. We have not seen a plan for what that will do, but it should not surprise members here or people in the broader community that, just as this government had no plan before the election to address the economic state, it has no plan in government to address the economic state, except, of course, an \$11 billion loan bill and increases in fees and charges to households.

Members will not be surprised to hear that, as a Nationals member, I will talk briefly about our plan. While members may argue that it was rejected by the community, which did not vote for asking the big miners, BHP and Rio Tinto, to update a 50-year-old levy, I remind members that our vote actually went up in many places. Although we lost the member for Pilbara, the member for Kalgoorlie retired and we lost a member for the Mining and Pastoral Region, in other areas our vote went up. We got a fair bit of support for that notion. After the statement about what the Treasurer has in store for households around the state is released today, people may well be asking when we will update and upgrade that 25c levy on BHP and Rio. And so they should ask. The Nationals have been asking, especially in the other place, what the government's attitude is to that. The government is saying that it will not be changing the levy unilaterally, but if the miners come to the government and suggest that they might like to pay a bit more, the government will definitely consider it. I am not sure that the miners are ever going to do that. They did not like the idea that the Nationals put forward, so they mounted the most incredible campaign against a political party in my memory. It involved quite extraordinary expenditure, and a political campaign by a non-political group is quite incredible. Serious questions should be raised about how the mining companies played that role in that election. I remember sitting down with one of the lobbyists, or corporate affairs managers, from Rio Tinto and talking about it. She said something like, "It's nothing against you guys." I said that it actually was; it was a political campaign against the Nationals' policy. She said that it was not a political campaign, so then I asked her what outcome she wanted to see. She replied, "Fewer Nationals in the Parliament." I said that therefore I think it is a political campaign, and that is exactly how it unfolded.

That is a side story, and we will move on from that. The point is that that revenue measure would raise, by our estimates, about \$7.2 billion over the next four years, if we went to \$5.00 a tonne rather than 25c. That would be very useful for the government's coffers about now, and maybe there would be some relief for households. Our intention was always to make sure that those miners that can afford to pay—they are making multibillion-dollar profits while we are increasing charges on households—could pay their fair share to help us with our budget and economic situation. This is exactly what the Treasurer is saying: everyone has to do more to address where we are at. However, it seems that miners like BHP and Rio do not have to worry about that. They only have to worry about it if they agree to pay more. They will not agree, and guess what? We are back to an \$11 billion Loan Bill and increases in household fees and charges, which were not part of the plan before the election, but now are. It will be interesting to see whether the idea of updating the 50-year-old special lease rental from 25c picks up more momentum. We will continue to talk about it in the community.

I would also like to talk briefly about the notion that the royalties for regions program has contributed to state debt and that it has been a wasted expenditure. I would like to start by taking members back pre-2008. Members living in the regions at that time would know what it was like. It is very clear in my mind that there was a time before the Liberal-National "royalties for regions" government came in and after, which addressed some of the deficiencies that existed in regional Western Australia. Those who lived in regional Western Australia know exactly what I am talking about. Services had degraded, and funding and investment in regional Western Australia had been either cancelled or dramatically reduced to the point that people living in those communities out there had no way of funding projects to cover the basic needs that everyone in metropolitan Perth expects. I remember once looking at the former Labor government's investment in the regions between 2001 and 2007, which came from a \$20 million regional investment fund. If someone had wanted to implement a plan outside normal government expenditure and had tried to get a grant to help invest in a community or to drive some economic development, \$20 million was it. That is why we gained momentum and strength from our idea that 25 per cent of royalties revenue be quarantined for regional expenditure. The story is well documented and we often speak about it in here. Nearly \$7 billion was injected into regional Western Australia over 3 500 projects. Someone made

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a comment in this chamber about what a waste of money those projects were, but I guarantee members that those projects were absolutely outstanding and critical.

Recently I saw a television report about telehealth. A guy had burnt his leg and he was sitting in a room in Albany having in a telehealth consultation with Fiona Wood who was sitting in a room in Perth. She said that to get a man with an injured leg to drive for five hours from Albany to a hospital in Perth or to even put him on a plane would have been bad news for his recovery. The investment of royalties for regions in telehealth has meant that that man can have a consultation with Fiona Wood, and she could see his injuries and his wounds, and she could talk to him and consult on the administration of medicines on that video link over the phone. It is those sorts of investments that are important to regional Western Australians. There is no way members will get me to stand up here and not defend that expenditure when it means so much to regional Western Australians. We are not the ones asking for \$11 billion. Those programs have been funded from royalties revenue that we get year in and year out. Every three months, 25 per cent of royalties was put into that fund for expenditure. It was not borrowed; it was the first thing collected from mining companies. The money was in the bank and was being spent, which was the then government's intention. Remember, 75 per cent of all royalties remained at the largesse of the government, and it could spend that money where it wished, and it did so on a number of projects around the state and the city to ensure that our community and state continued to grow.

It has been very interesting listening to some of the commentary coming from other states recently. This year, New South Wales will have a budget surplus of \$4.4 billion. It is complaining about a potential loss of GST revenue, down to 78c in the dollar, yet it is going to run a budget surplus this year.

I have been listening very intently to the debate on Gonski and federal government investment in state education. The spokesperson for the federal opposition has said that the Tasmanian budget will be \$68 million worse off because of those changes. Tasmania has been living off the federal government and the other states for a long time. It is probably still running a surplus budget off the back of GST revenue it receives from Western Australia, and it is time that it thought about how it and its people can contribute to its economic position. That is what we are doing here today. We are asking Western Australians to pick up an \$11 billion tab because of the woeful situation that the federal government was complicit in by ensuring that other states gather our hard work and our GST dollar. It will be very interesting to see how the Productivity Commission review announced by the federal government will be implemented and what findings will arise from that. Will it drive economic change in the other states to take more of the load or will it fall flat and be a promise like every other review? It will be very interesting to see what happens. To my mind, one of the ways to reduce the \$11 billion Loan Bill debt is to fix the GST issue, but I have not seen anyone fix it yet. No doubt that has played a role in the economic position this state has found itself in.

That is not the only thing that is being played out here. Everyone will know—it has been spoken about in this house—that between 450 000 and 500 000 people moved to Western Australia to participate in the economic boom. That drove up rent, property prices and increased the cost of living in Western Australia. We heard stories about the price of hotel rooms and takeaway coffee going through the roof. We had to cope with all those things. We had to build many more new schools and upgrade hospitals. One of the greatest achievements of royalties for regions is the upgrade of regional hospitals in Western Australia—again, a project that previously had not been touched. Members understand that government definitely has a role to play in making that expenditure to deliver services no matter where they live in Western Australia. WA is a massive state, the biggest in the world, with a very diverse, spread-out population—some in very small communities. I think that everyone who lives in those communities understands those limitations and their expectations are tempered somewhat by that remoteness and distance from services. However, at the same time, the government should be doing everything it can to make sure that people's service needs are met. I know there are some economic rationalists in this house who believe that we should only deliver services where people are because that makes economic sense. However, that does not work in a state like Western Australia, because we have to spend money without expecting a great return on that spending in an economic sense.

We have invested to ensure that this state is ready for the next boom. We have invested so that we can ensure that if we have another mining boom and people want to live and work in our regions, some of the services are there to meet their needs. We know that education and health services are a key part of that. Often people do not need good roads to go into and out of a town, but to stay in those towns they need good schools, hospitals and doctors. That has always been the aim—to make sure that those services are there for people who want to go there.

Employment is a big challenge in this regard, and people understand that. I recently saw a television report on the Nambeelup industrial estate in the Peel, which will benefit from a \$50 million investment from royalties for regions. I am sure it will go ahead because I heard the Minister for Regional Development speaking about it on a news report, but there is a great opportunity that that investment in that project will potentially result in 30 000 to 33 000 jobs. I think the unemployment rate in the Peel region is around 11.9 per cent, and the youth unemployment

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rate is even higher. We must continue to invest in the region. The debate should not be all about cost savings, no expansion and the consolidation of government departments so that we can save a job here and there, because I can almost guarantee that when we do that, the consolidation and job losses will come from regional Western Australia. At some point, the government needs a plan to spend money to increase our economic drive and our economic output and create jobs. Again, this ties back to the budget that we have not seen—it is still coming; it is under review—and the government continually asking for \$11 billion by way of the Loan Bill, along with the increase in fees and charges that were announced today. It will be interesting to see the community's reaction to those increases. Will it say that it knew the government had no plan but it is happy to go along with it because it understands the government is in terrible trouble or will it ask whether we can gather some revenue from other places, which is exactly what the Nationals asked during the election campaign, ensuring that this state continues to invest in what is needed to create jobs and deliver services from a government perspective? That is what we are talking about. If we do not have a new revenue source—there is no identified new revenue source, except to increase fees and charges—at some point, we will have to consolidate expenditure to pay back the debt, which the government is asking us to increase by \$11 billion through this Loan Bill.

Finally, I wish to talk more about the GST. Let us think of this issue in a bipartisan way, which is what often occurred in this house in previous debates. We talked about having a bipartisan approach. Everyone agrees that we are getting a raw deal under the GST. Motions have often been moved in this house that were agreed to by all and sundry, yet they seem to make no real difference when addressing the issue. We have had a review and a top-up of funds here and there, which increased the take from 34 cents in the dollar to 38 cents in the dollar, which is way short of the expectations of other states. Although we talk about the GST, there has been some discussion about uranium mining and the government's approval of uranium mines in the last week or so, which has caused a lot of angst in the community. I am sure that members of the Greens will have something to say about that in due course. It begs the question: why do we continue to promote those opportunities on behalf of Western Australians? I know that jobs are created from these projects. Although income tax revenue from these projects goes over east, we collect some payroll tax but there are lots of arguments around reducing payroll tax to stimulate small business. Why do we continue to promote the use of our resources across the board when the returns to the Western Australian people and the Western Australian government are limited? We collect mining royalties, about 88 per cent of which now goes east. We can assume that 88 per cent of royalties from any new iron ore or uranium mine or anything from which we collect royalties will benefit other states until the formula changes and the horizontal fiscal equalisation changes as well.

Why do we continue to take those risks when few other states do? We know that Victoria banned onshore fracking, I am not sure whether Tasmania carries out any mining and there has been a political debate around coal seam gas in New South Wales. We know that our state is built on resources and we continue to make use of those resources for the benefit of the country, yet when it comes to the GST argument and the recognition that we facilitate the expansion of iron ore mines, gas and petroleum production or uranium mining, we get very little recognition for the role that the state government plays. That has been one of the big problems with our mining situation. We continue to provide the services of government because people need and demand them, and we continue to build hospitals and schools. We recently debated the expansion of schools in the western suburbs. We continue to have those debates and make those investments because it is the right thing for the government to do. We facilitate population growth, employment growth and our resource expansion, yet when we do we get the rewards for doing that from the federal government and all the other states in this Federation? If we are doing the heavy lifting, when do we get the assistance to make sure that we are not alone in this game? That was on the former government's table during its two terms. It will be on this government's table during this term. I cannot see it cracking the walnut yet and solving that problem. I do not think it has a plan to solve the GST problem. It is crossing its fingers and hoping. We know that a lot needs to be done.

Households will continue to pay for not only that pitifully outrageous GST equation, but also the \$11 billion Loan Bill that this government will use to complete its election promises and continue to deliver services to our communities. At some point the community will say, "That is enough. We thought you had a plan. We have not seen you bring a plan to the table yet. We have not seen a budget." The community should be asking itself—as representatives of the community in this place, that is exactly what we are asking—how that \$11 billion will be spent. How will the money collected through increasing fees and charges be spent? How will the funds collected through the increase in the emergency services levy be spent? That is all unclear. The government is basically saying that it needs the money so we had better approve it. It will be a long road. I have sat in this place during many Loan Bill debates that went for many hours, and rightly so because the government has to outline its reasons for needing money through the Loan Bill. Three or four Loan Bills were introduced in the last term of government, and we listened to all the arguments about all the poor decisions of government and why it needed so much money and when it was going to address the debt and deficit. Now we are on this side of the house and the government is asking for 10 times as much as was asked for in the last Loan Bill, yet we have seen no detail or no plan. The

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government has just said, “Give us \$11 billion and, by the way, we are going to increase fees and charges by about \$500 for every household in the state.” It is asking us and the community to do that without any budget or outlining what it will do. Those debates will continue. The government will probably not come back to this house with another loan bill during this term because it should have enough money. We will wait and see what the budget presents. I am sure these issues will arise again once the budget is handed down. I am keen to hear the minister in this place explain how those increased fees and charges that were announced today will be used in the budget.

**HON NICK GOIRAN (South Metropolitan)** [2.30 pm]: I am pleased to make some brief remarks in consideration of the Loan Bill 2017. I might indicate at the outset that although I do not intend to oppose the bill, as has already been outlined by the opposition’s lead speaker in this matter, I want to outline a couple of core concerns. They can be put broadly into two categories. The first is the unjustified quantum of borrowing, and the second is what I describe as the split personality spending approach of this government. I will take a few moments to explain those two broad concerns.

Firstly, I am concerned about the unjustified quantum of the borrowing that is before the house. It seems to me, and a number of other members have expressed a similar concern, that it is quite unprecedented to be presenting what is, in effect, a record-breaking Loan Bill in the absence of budget projections. I have heard most of the contributions to this debate. Unlike the honourable minister, who has had the privilege of listening to all the speeches and contributions on this matter, I have heard most of them, and I would say that the significant majority seemed to indicate that a loan of some sort is plainly required, but there is a difference of opinion on the record-breaking nature of this one and the absence of budget projections. In addition, the concern with the unjustified quantum of the borrowing in this bill is exacerbated in the sense that there is, as we can see, no plan to reduce debt. There seems to be a plan only to increase it. When I was preparing my consideration of, and remarks on, the Loan Bill 2017, I had made a note that sometimes borrowing is necessary. I seem to recall that that was the sentiment of a comment made earlier this week by the Leader of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, Hon Rick Mazza, if I heard him correctly when he said that. I would concur that sometimes borrowing is necessary, but the process of borrowing money should not be a game of pin the tail on the donkey. It seems to me that the more appropriate approach is to borrow in a prudent fashion. If we find ourselves in circumstances in which borrowing is necessary, it certainly should never be done to fund bad expenditure.

This brings me to my concern with what I describe as the split personality spending approach of this government. I want to spend a moment to highlight some good expenditure by this government and contrast that with some bad expenditure. As I said, it is my view, and I believe I am hearing from the majority of members in this place, that sometimes borrowing is necessary, but I have not heard anybody indicate that borrowing for bad expenditure is prudent and appropriate by the government elected by the people of Western Australia. It is, of course, only a steward of the money given to it by the people.

I want to give credit where credit is due and spend a moment to give an example of an area of recent expenditure by this government that I would describe as good expenditure. This happened last week. I was pleased to learn that the government had committed some \$310 000 for a regional men’s health initiative to address mental health and wellbeing in regional and farming communities. Last week, as I mentioned to members, was Men’s Health Week, and the theme was Healthy Body–Healthy Mind: Keeping the Balance. The purpose of the theme was to explore the different ways that men and boys are managing to keep healthy, physically and emotionally, in a busy and sometimes challenging world. In that same vein, I also commend the government for designating \$120 000 towards a state men’s health and wellbeing policy to complement WA’s women’s health strategy and Aboriginal men’s health strategy. Indeed, last year, in my budget reply speech, I drew attention to the fact that a men’s health strategy was not in existence, even though in our state we have had for some time a women’s health strategy and an Aboriginal health strategy. Indeed, I said that various indicators provide a case for the development of a strategy focusing on men’s health and also for a minister representing male interests, such as the notably high suicide rate. Naturally, I would go so far as to say that I am delighted that this government has run with my recommendation.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** You’re running the show—first Globalheart Church, now the Labor Party.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Mr Acting President, the foolish member opposite is fortunate that I am time-bound this afternoon.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Matthew Swinbourn):** I think that a point of order needs to be raised on both sides about the kind of language that is being used to refer to members in the house. On both sides, perhaps we can keep within the bounds of what might be considered civil, rather than referring to people in the pejorative.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Thank you, Mr Acting President. The honourable member opposite is fortunate that I am time-bound this afternoon.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** Otherwise I would be ripped limb from limb!

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**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** If the member wants to have a debate at any time about people's choice of religious affiliation, I would be more than happy for the honourable member to exert some energy, rise from her seat and move for the suspension of standing orders so that we could have a debate on such things.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Order, member!

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Since we are time-bound this afternoon and since I was in the midst of some remarks congratulating the government on some of its expenditure during Men's Health Week, I will continue, although I note the irony of the honourable minister feeling the need to interject when her own government happened to spend some money on male health. To go on, I was appalled last week when I heard the way that filmmaker Cassie Jaye was treated by *The Project* and *Weekend Sunrise* regarding a documentary called *The Red Pill*, which simply exposes the way that men are, at times, disadvantaged, and this is often under-reported. In no way does the filmmaker seek to undermine female disadvantage; she simply illuminates the way men are disadvantaged at times in western society. On *The Project* she was attacked by Carrie Bickmore for supposedly downplaying the fact that domestic violence is mainly perpetrated by men. The filmmaker, Cassie Jaye, simply responded that victims are sometimes males, yet there is only one refuge in the United States for men. As a former solicitor for victims of crime and now as the shadow Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence I appreciate that although women are the vast majority of victims, violence perpetrated by females against males does occur and it should not be controversial to say so. Indeed, on Saturday, 17 June, I noted a report in the *Subiaco Post* entitled "Charge over public fight". It is very brief, so I will read it in its entirety. It reads —

**A woman assaulted her partner on Stirling Highway last Friday.**

Cottesloe police received several calls about a couple fighting in public.

The man and woman argued on a train from Fremantle, got off at Cottesloe station, and resumed their argument as they walked up the hill to Claremont.

The woman scratched the man's face and left him with other superficial injuries.

Cottesloe police charged a Claremont woman in her late 20s with one count of assault.

She is due to appear in the Perth Magistrates' Court early next month.

As I say, I am not aware of anyone engaging in the debate and the fight for the prevention of family and domestic violence suggesting for a moment that only a small number of victims are female; I have not heard anybody suggest that. But the hysteria that arises whenever there is a comment made that there are some male victims of domestic violence never ceases to amaze me. In my view, it is not a competition over who is the most disadvantaged; it is simply a case of recognising that there are gender-specific areas of disadvantage that need to be addressed through targeted initiatives.

That is why I will spend a moment to highlight the issue of male suicide as I continue to commend the government for some good expenditure last week during Men's Health Week. It seems to me that this is the most significant area of disparity between the genders and I raise it because the matter recently hit close to home with an influential young man who was highly regarded in the Canning Vale community ending his life in the past fortnight. I know many of the people who have been affected by his death personally and everyone is at a loss to explain what could have led this man in his 20s, who was newly engaged, popular, employed and seemingly happy, to commit suicide. His community is in the midst of dealing with an utter tragedy, and as a member of Parliament representing the region where many of these people live I, too, am shocked and aggrieved by the circumstances. It makes me wonder what more we can do as parliamentarians to reduce the incidence of male suicide in our communities. That is why it is good to see this government recognising male suicide as well as other areas in which men are disadvantaged as worthy of being given special focus. As I say, I highlight those announcements by the government last week as examples of good expenditure that should be funded in recurrent spending and am pleased that it is doing so.

I want to contrast that, however, with several examples of bad expenditure and examples of expenditure on which, in my view, not one cent of borrowing should be necessary and not one cent of interest should be paid by any Western Australian. As it so happens, many of my examples fall under the education portfolio. I will start with the obsession by WA Labor with the Safe Schools program. The genesis of this matter was in 2013 in the dying days of the days of the Labor government when, if I remember correctly, Mr Rudd was on his second attempt as Prime Minister. In the dying days of that government \$8 million in funding was provided over four years. It is a matter of history now that in 2013 the then federal Labor government lost power and the Liberal government came to the Treasury bench and found itself honour-bound to allow the contract that had been entered into to continue. There seems to be a very different approach taken by incoming Liberal governments in contrast with incoming Labor

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governments to contracts already entered into. After some pressure had been applied by members of Parliament, the government conducted the Loudon review. The outcome of that review was that the Safe Schools Coalition Australia presented what I would describe as a somewhat sanitised version of the program. This was in the context of the program being pilloried in many quarters due to its content. Despite the fact that there was a downgraded version of the program, it still encouraged students to wear the uniform of the gender of their choice, use the bathrooms of the gender of their choice and join the sports team of the gender of their choice. It claimed to celebrate diversity and practise tolerance; however, it was not accepting moral and religious beliefs, thereby alienating and marginalising Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Indigenous Western Australians. It teaches students that although their biology has assigned them to a particular sex, their gender is fluid and is whatever they choose. In all of those circumstances and in light of the fact that the federal Liberal government indicated that it would not continue the contract when the funding expires—interestingly, the funding expires at the end of this month—on 23 April last year WA Labor promised to fund the program so that any secondary school could participate. In the event that the announcement made by WA Labor might have been an error of judgement, it is interesting to note that New South Wales and Tasmania have already decided to dispense with such a program and create their own state-based anti-bullying program. That example set by New South Wales and Tasmania has not been followed by the incoming Labor government at this stage. Indeed, during the election campaign WA Labor promised an extra \$350 000 per annum for four years—totalling \$1.4 million—so that Safe Schools could continue to operate in WA. The question that has to be asked is why. In my view, the new Premier of this state has been very vocal about the state of the finances. Through his representative ministers, he has brought to this chamber a request to borrow \$11 billion, saying that a lot of belt tightening is necessary. In those circumstances, it seems incredible that we would proceed to spend \$1.4 million on a program that has been discredited across the nation. It is \$1.4 million that we clearly do not have. If we had that \$1.4 million, we would not have to borrow \$11 billion. That is an example of some bad expenditure, in contrast with the good expenditure proposed by the government last week during Men's Health Week.

As time is running out, I will give another example. Just to give the education portfolio a break for a bit, I will move to the portfolio of the prevention of family and domestic violence. I will come back to education in a minute. The prevention of family and domestic violence is a new portfolio and I congratulate the incoming government for creating it. I have written to the new minister to congratulate her on her appointment and to indicate that, in my view, it provides a unique opportunity for bipartisan collaboration and cooperation. Members who have been here for a while will know that, whenever possible, I am an enthusiast for bipartisan collaboration and cooperation, albeit when political points need to be made I am not shy to do so. If there is an opportunity for bipartisan collaboration and cooperation, I am the first to encourage it. It was in that spirit that I wrote to the minister and I was pleased to receive her response. As I said, I think this is an opportunity to collaborate. I noted that the minister indicated that she would consider all other programs in other states before committing to the discredited Victorian program Building Respectful Relationships. The context is that if we are truly going to prevent family and domestic violence, there needs to be education for children. Studies show that if children experience or witness domestic violence, they are more likely to become perpetrators or experience violence later in life. We want to encourage children and educate them to have healthy, respectful and positive relationships. Nothing is wrong—in fact, it is a good thing—with a program that teaches children to have respectful relationships. The principle is a good one; how it is implemented is something else. There was, and continues to be, great controversy in Victoria about a couple of its programs. One program is titled Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships, which is intended for all school students. Another program, which is intended for years 8, 9 and 10, is called Building Respectful Relationships. I had a look at the Building Respectful Relationships program because it is an example of something that I would not want our new government to spend one cent on. The government should, by all means, spend money to educate children on respectful relationships, but it should do so cautiously and make sure that it has looked at the content. A lesson in unit 1 of that program asks students to read through a number of personal advertisements and to discuss some questions that flow from that. At the end of the lesson, students are encouraged to write their own personal ad. It is quite staggering that any individual who considers themselves to be academically rigorous or to have any intellect would put together a unit in a program for school students along those lines. But that is what has happened in Victoria. Understandably, much controversy was attached to that, as well as to other units and lessons within that program. It was in that spirit that I wrote to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and recommended that we establish a working group to look at a program that would be suitable for Western Australia. I look forward to the minister taking up my suggestion so that we do not spend one cent asking our school students to spend time reviewing personal ads or drafting their own.

Regrettably, in these first few months of the new government, there have already been some examples of bad expenditure. I turn to the \$30 000 that the Leader of the House spent in April to go to Sydney with her friends. I understand from newspaper reports and answers to questions asked by Hon Donna Faragher that some \$30 000 was spent for an overnight trip to Sydney by the Leader of the House, Hon Sue Ellery, and her partner in

this adventure, Hon Rita Saffioti. On 12 April, they decided to spend \$30 000 to go to Sydney with some advisers and so forth. Of course, nothing is wrong with ministers undertaking travel. Perth is so incredibly isolated that it is understandable that any travel by Western Australian ministers will be, by virtue of our isolation, more expensive than in other places. Nevertheless, it seems incredible that the trip, as I understand it, did not include any school visits. It is one thing to go to Sydney apparently to undertake a presentation on the planning, design and construction of new primary and secondary schools in Parramatta, which no doubt both the Minister for Education and Training and her partner in this adventure thought it was important and appropriate, but would members not expect them to maximise the time that they were over there? Was there nothing else that the minister could have undertaken during her journey to Sydney to maximise the purpose of the visit? It would appear not. Unfortunately, that high-rise investigation has proven to be a complete waste of time. No sooner had the minister returned to Perth, but at the slightest hint of protest by the Perth Modern School community she capitulated virtually overnight and the \$30 000 she had spent on that trip was completely wasted. We do not have \$30 000 for the Minister for Education and her partner in this adventure to waste. We know that because the government is asking us, in this Loan Bill, to authorise borrowings of \$11 billion. We do not have money for the education minister to spend on her obsession with the Safe Schools program. We do not have \$30 000 to spend on a discredited Victorian program that supposedly teaches students how to be respectful in their relationships but also teaches them how to draft a personal advertisement. We do not have a spare \$30 000 for the education minister and her partner in this adventure to go to Sydney on a completely wasted trip.

We also do not have money for ministers of the Crown to receive double the entitlement for their motor vehicle. I note that in our first week in Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition in this house asked a question without notice about this matter. The question was to the Leader of the House representing the Premier. The response from the Leader of the House was incredible. It indicated that the question should be put to the Presiding Officers. I think that will be followed up in due course, or may already have been followed up. The question was simply, “Did you double dip?” The answer was that the question should be put to the Presiding Officers. That suggests a level of shiftiness. If ministers are given a ministerial car, which they are entitled to, and they are also given a bucketload of money for a motor vehicle allowance—which everyone, including the Premier, recognises should not have happened—why not just say so? Why not just say, “Yes, I did that. I did that out of ignorance. I was not aware, like a lot of people, that this double dipping was going on. I have paid it back.” That would have been the end of the story. I would not have to make these remarks; there would be no point. However, to be shifty and say we should ask the Presiding Officers only adds fuel to the fire and ensures that this matter will be pursued, along with a range of other matters. I look forward to the outcome of that minor investigation by the hardworking Leader of the Opposition in this place. We will follow that with great interest. We do not have money for ministers to double dip. We do not have money for the Leader of the House to go on a \$30 000 overnight trip to Sydney with her partner in this adventure. We also do not have money for the Leader of the House to continue with her ideological obsession with the Safe Schools program.

In my remaining few minutes, I want to touch on the Insurance Commission of Western Australia. As members would be aware, the Insurance Commission of Western Australia is involved in a protracted case to do with the Bell Group liquidation. To call it protracted is almost a bit of a joke. The context of my comments is that at the time I was preparing my notes, the Insurance Commission of Western Australia was on target to make a before-tax profit this year of about \$440 million. The purpose of the Insurance Commission of Western Australia is to ensure that injured motorists receive just and fair compensation. However, the Insurance Commission is continuing to make massive profits each year at the expense of injured motorists by not paying the compensation to which they are entitled. The Insurance Commission also pays a dividend to government. On Tuesday of this week, the Leader of the Opposition in this house asked the minister representing the Treasurer a question without notice about the current status of the dividend from the Insurance Commission of Western Australia. The answer was in part —

ICWA’s dividends are currently under review as part of the 2017–18 budget process.

That is fine. What is interesting about the answer is that the Insurance Commission of Western Australia’s current approved dividend forecast for the 2016–17 financial year is a staggering \$116 943 million. I have spoken previously about how the Insurance Commission has surplus funds and makes a massive profit every year. No doubt there will be a further opportunity to look into that. The point is that the Insurance Commission is continuing to pursue the Bell Group litigation. The government should urge the Insurance Commission to make every effort to reach a resolution and put an end to that drain on funds. The fact is that for every cent the Insurance Commission spends on this litigation, its profit is diminished, and that in turn diminishes the dividend it pays to the government.

The Insurance Commission has funded the Bell Resources litigation to the tune of \$200 million. It has done so in circumstances in which it is an unsubordinated creditor. The main litigation has concluded and there is now an argument about how the money should be divided. The Insurance Commission has been struggling. It sought assistance from the former government through legislation, but that legislation failed to withstand a High Court

challenge. The Insurance Commission has become embroiled in multiple litigations, with no clear prospect of success. In recent times, the Insurance Commission has engaged two law firms. Those two law firms are referred to in the Insurance Commission of Western Australia's annual report as Quinn Emanuel Urquhart and Sullivan, and Jones Day. The first of those firms, Quinn Emanuel Urquhart and Sullivan, describes itself as the largest law firm in the world, and the second, Jones Day, which has 2 500 lawyers in 44 locations around the world, is also described as one of the largest law firms in the world. Many decades on, we find the state's insurer involved in litigation that started with the WA Inc saga in which, members will remember, the then Premier Brian Burke was very heavily involved. This is the same individual against whom, I have noticed from answers to recent questions in both houses, the Premier has issued an edict to his ministers, stating that under no circumstances are they to have anything to do with him. That is the history of this Bell Resources saga that the state is involved in. The Insurance Commission has funded the litigation to the tune of \$200 million. There is no question whatsoever that the Insurance Commission should be refunded every cent of the money it has outlaid to assist all the other people involved in the litigation to get as far as they have.

In 2015, I was involved, as a participating member of the Standing Committee on Legislation, in the inquiry into this matter when the legislation was before the house. The more I looked into it, the clearer it was to me that the Insurance Commission should be provided with the funds that it has outlaid to date. However, it needs to move on. That the commission continues to think it will get about \$1 billion of the pie is incredible, and that it is now proceeding to engage two of the largest law firms on the planet to continue this adventure is just staggering. The best thing that the new government can do is urge the Insurance Commission to make every effort to reach a resolution of the matter and cease the strain on the commission's funds. That means that some egos will just have to take a bruising, and there will have to be compromise, but that is what happens when we are involved in massive litigation. If we are going to continue to take it to the nth degree, we should expect it to go on for several more decades.

In conclusion, I summarise by saying that I am concerned by the amount being sought to be borrowed, in circumstances in which the government has not provided budget projections. It is a symbol of the arrogance of the new government that it has decided to proceed in this fashion. It is entitled to proceed in this fashion, but I think that it is an arrogant way. It is incredibly important that the incoming government does not allow one cent of expenditure that is not justified. The Minister for Education's \$30 000 trip with her friend is an example of that, and her obsession with the Safe Schools program is another. The Insurance Commission's continuing adventure in the Bell Resources litigation is yet another example, and the list goes on. I look forward to continuing consideration of this matter, and the bill.

**HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan)** [3.15 pm]: I also rise to speak to the Loan Bill 2017. As was stated in the government's second reading speech, this will be the largest loan act authorisation on record. I also note, as has been said by many other members, that \$11 billion is a lot of money. Of course, we do not know yet what the \$11 billion will be spent on. As such, I want to give some ideas to the government of the sorts of things that I think it might want to consider as expenditure as part of this \$11 billion. I note that the government will be commencing its commission of inquiry into the previous government's expenditure, and I do not wish to pre-empt what might come out of that inquiry, but I will make some broad comments about some of the previous government's expenditure.

Elizabeth Quay is perhaps not what a Green government would have spent money on as a priority, but I recognise that it is here now, so I am hoping that, as it has been built, people will utilise it, and I hope it ends up becoming a significant place in the Perth central business district, as was envisaged. I also want to make a brief comment about the new Perth Stadium. I do not feel the need to revisit the discussion on whether Burswood was the right location, but now that it is almost finished I am looking forward to its opening, and to seeing how it works. It looks like a pretty impressive building from the outside, and my personal view is that the architecture of the Perth Stadium is stunning. I am hoping that the expenditure will be worth it. I note that the past eight years has been a time of enormous change in the Perth CBD. It is a bit pointless now going over whether it was money well spent at the time. It has been spent, and my hope is that we will at least get to enjoy that large-scale investment into the future. Some of this has not been just state government money. It has included projects such as the sinking of the railway line, which I think is a really great idea. It has nevertheless cost a lot of money for both state and federal governments, and I hope we are going to be able to take full advantage of this expenditure in the future. As someone born and bred in Perth, I note that the nature of the Perth CBD landscape has changed dramatically, I think for the better. There needs to be a recognition that this money has been spent, and I do not feel the need to spend the next four years rehashing whether it was a good use of money at the time.

I also welcome scrutiny of royalties for regions, not because I disagree with the general principles behind the establishment of the royalties for regions program, but I suppose I am concerned that perhaps some of the expenditure that went through that program was not the best use of the available funds. I would welcome close

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scrutiny of how that money will be utilised, but I recognise that a good proportion of that royalties for regions money was being spent on, in many cases, a chronic backlog of infrastructure requirements that were really needed in the regions. Again, I cannot dismiss an entire program holus-bolus without recognising that some good has come out of it.

My concern now that we are in a very tight fiscal environment is that we make sure that we do not lose sight of the need to fund necessary services, particularly services that assist the most vulnerable in our community, and that we continue to invest in those services to help break the cycle of disadvantage, because, ultimately, if they do not receive the appropriate level of intervention and support, that will lead to greater expense for the taxpayer in the longer term. That is particularly so from a generational perspective. I suggest that some of the money we now need to invest in our human services will benefit us greatly within a decade. However, I recognise that that is going to be a bit of a hard sell, and it is particularly a hard sell within a short-term political time frame. I note that what I will be advocating for in this place will mean that early investment and intervention prevention services in a range of areas, which I will go into, will not necessarily result in the sorts of positive outcomes in a four-year time frame and will not necessarily look like it is value for money. We can always get short-term gains—we see in a range of services that there is always some level of improvement—but turning around systemic cycles of disadvantage takes longer.

Before I go into the detail, I point out Mr Acting President, there seems to be an error on the clock. I draw your attention to standing order 21 that provides that I should have unlimited time to speak. I look forward to seeing the clock turned off.

**Hon Alanna Clohesy** interjected.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Hon Diane Evers is the lead speaker and I am the leader. I look forward to the clock being turned off. Thank you for that.

I make the point that I will be scrutinising the budget very carefully to see how this \$11 billion is ultimately going to be spent. The government is going to need to make sure that this money counts.

The sorts of things that we generally need to invest money in is anything that will contribute to training and job creation, but also in areas of early intervention and prevention. I want to start by talking about the need to adequately fund the “Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025”, which is something I have spoken about in this place before. The purpose of this plan, which came to fruition under the previous government and has received bipartisan support, recognises that if we do not start looking at serious investment in early intervention and prevention services in mental health, particularly supporting community-managed mental health services to provide assistance to people, we are going to be paying for that cost in the long run, particularly through very expensive acute and subacute services. We already know that this is where far too much of the mental health budget is being spent. It is wrong that someone who is seriously unwell must finally get support for a long-term mental health issue by turning up to an emergency department. It is very rare for people to become mentally unwell overnight; it tends to happen gradually. If we are to encourage earlier access to services, that means we should effectively be enabling people to stay in employment, in housing and to continue to be contributing members of the community.

One thing the 10-year services plan has identified in particular is the sort of investment that will be required to meet needs going to 2025. However, we have already seen a deviation from an underinvestment in the minimum requirement that was identified in the plan to keep us on track. I am concerned that within a constrained fiscal environment, and although the Greens will be supporting the Loan Bill for an additional \$11 billion, that the temptation will exist to continue to simply throw money at the acute end, where I recognise there is a desperate need right now. We cannot turn people away, although people are being turned away, but we should not be turning people away from acute and subacute services who need them. However, at the same time we have to look at continuing on the path of investing in community-managed mental health services. Community-managed mental health services are very well equipped to provide the sort of flexibility, innovation and very strong-on-the-ground services that assist people with a range of mental health issues. They can be targeted and specialised, whether it is an eating disorder, bipolar disorder, schizoid-affective disorder, depression or anxiety, whether it is dealing with young people or the LGBTI community, whether it is dealing with transcultural needs, or whether it is an older person. A range of areas can be covered through this sector, but it needs investment. Instead, in the previous budget we saw a winding back of these essential services even in the face of a 10-year services plan that had already identified the desperate need for additional investment.

I also point to a particular provision within the 10-year services plan that is often overlooked and that I hope receives the sort of investment that it is going to require—that is, the provision in the 10-year services plan that addresses the need to improve our navigation of services. The trouble with navigation is that we need to be able to invest in supporting the frameworks of people coming together to best ensure that people are better able to navigate

services. I mentioned in my Address-in-Reply contribution that one of the mechanisms that has been created and that needs to be invested in and supported is the Mental Health Network, jointly established by both the Department of Health and the Mental Health Commission. The Mental Health Network has brought together multidisciplinary clinicians, lived experience, primary health and community-managed mental health services to bring together a shared wisdom to figure out how to best navigate through mental health services. It is really important that we get this right. Far too often, I suspect that members, particularly members who have been here for some time, have encountered constituents who have come to their offices saying they need help with their daughter, husband, a friend's family or someone they know who has a mental health issue and the constituents want to know where to go. The reality is that a lot of time, even with the resources of an electorate office, it is difficult to give advice on where people are best placed to go. If people are aware of a specialised and appropriate service and know how to navigate through the service, they will be able to access the level of support they require. This is a key area that we need to look at. We need to ensure we do not leave it to the side. The Mental Health Commission has this very firmly on its radar. With very limited resources, it is trying to look at how best to address this issue of navigation. The one thing that will not help is continuing to pull resources out of government bodies like the Mental Health Commission and entities that have been created that largely rely on volunteer activity like the Mental Health Network. This money is well spent because it helps people to better access the services they need. It also helps services better understand how they need to work with each other so that people who need mental health support for whatever issue they are encountering can navigate the various levels of support that should be made available to them.

I also want to suggest that a good investment of money is the proposal to establish the mental health recovery college. A number of people are very well placed to develop a framework around this policy, including consumers, carers, service providers, peak bodies and clinicians, who have been coming together to develop a particular model. This is a really great way to help people with mental health issues develop a range of supports and life skills to better aid their recovery from mental illness. This is an example of money well spent. It would be great if the government could look at this.

I also note that one of the initiatives that the previous government invested in, and that I certainly think needs to continue to receive support, is the independent placement services. Members probably have no idea what that is, so I will tell them. IPS is a program that is primarily a responsibility of the federal government but, in its wisdom, the state government also chose to invest in it in the past. It usually supports people with quite severe mental illness to make their way back into the workforce. It has a number of benefits. Firstly, it is really great for people who have got themselves in a cycle of needing disability support payments to find a pathway out of entrenched poverty. It is an amazing program that assists people to get back to work at a manageable level with the necessary support to enable them to successfully hold on to that employment. It has a secondary benefit as well. We cannot understate the importance and value of what we term "occupation"—in this case, I am talking specifically about paid employment—to people's recovery. It really makes a difference. If we speak to somebody who has an ongoing mental health issue, we find that gaining assistance to get back into the workforce has immeasurable benefit from not only a financial perspective, but also from a mental health perspective. As people get more and more well, they are able to return to full-time work or maybe they will be employed permanently in the part-time workforce. In any event, it is a good investment of funds and we should be supporting people to do this.

I also wanted to talk about suicide prevention. The previous government made a pretty hefty investment in suicide prevention, and I need to acknowledge that. I hope that that continues. It really needs to continue. Some of the things that came out of the previous suicide prevention strategies were not entirely successful. Some of the community action plans worked—they were brilliant—but some of the community action plans were probably not a great use of money. Before I was appointed to the Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention, a decision was made after reviewing that program to recommend a different approach to access funding. It has been recognised that suicide prevention funding needs a very heavy investment for a range of people. Obviously, the issue of Aboriginal suicide in this state in particular is a travesty. Regional members in particular who represent the Mining and Pastoral Region and also parts of the Agricultural Region would be aware of the desperate need to address the issue of Aboriginal suicide. That is all too clear. It is a really difficult issue to tackle. It is not a matter of just throwing money at the issue and setting up a program so we can suddenly address generational impacts of colonialism, racism, disadvantage and poverty. That has to be recognised. A lot is really wrong, including the fact that the federal government throws money at this area but does not even bother coordinating anything with the state government. If it has tonnes of money, it should give it to us.

Another part of the problem is that we need to ensure that local communities that are really well placed to run local programs get the support that they need. It is a fact that no one program can cover Aboriginal suicide. When we start getting into the Kimberley and Pilbara, the reality is that strategies differ from community to community, and that takes investment and work. I urge this government not to give up on investment in this area. To do so would be an absolute tragedy. The generational effects of what is happening with Aboriginal suicide are with us for a very

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long time, so that needs to be looked at. Likewise, we have recognised that there are whole areas of risk, particularly the acknowledged need for a lot of our farmers, who are a stoic bunch, but during times of natural disaster, drought and economic hardship they can be quite at risk. This is exacerbated by a sense of stoicism by some of these men who are not used to asking for help, and also isolation, which can be a massive issue along with, dare I say it, ready access to means. We have some really great programs out there but they are always looking for more money and more support to carry out those outreach services. The wonderful thing about this is that it is not just about suicide prevention; it is also about teaching men how to look after their mental health more generally. In my opinion, that is money well spent. I would certainly like to see this \$11 billion contributing towards that.

As I mentioned before—members will hear me talk about this quite often for the next four years—the Australian-first pilot program assists children who have been bereaved by suicide. By children, I mean those under the age of 18, particularly when they lose a parent or sibling to suicide. We know that these children are significantly at risk of taking their own lives and developing serious mental health issues. Early intervention has been demonstrated to have an amazing effect. We will not see the positive outcomes for these children for 10 or 15 years. We need to recognise that investment now saves lives later. It also saves money because it means that we are less likely to have children who will be in the mental health system as a whole. It would be very easy to pull the funding from that area, but the government should not do that because it is a really important program that is absolutely essential. I can assure members that if money is pulled from this program, I am not going to shut up about it. Let us see whether we can invest in these areas. I spoke last night about the need to make sure that we keep open programs like Living Proud, which is the former gay and lesbian counselling service, so that we can continue to provide specialised services around suicide prevention, in particular for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and intersex people. To keep the service open we are talking about \$80 000 a year, which is funding that will be discontinued. We are not talking about huge amounts of money. I really hope that out of this \$11 billion, this government will find a way to invest \$80 000 in Western Australia's only dedicated, award-winning service of 43 years that is helping to save the lives of LGBTIQ people. There are so many other areas within the suicide prevention strategy that need investment. We have a youth strategy, for example. The issue of youth suicide is devastating and it destroys the lives of parents. I am sure that I am not the only person in this place who knows people who have lost a child to suicide. For the sake of investment in specialised programs that can provide outreach services, teach resilience and support youth, let us not scrimp and save on this area, please.

I am going to be encouraging this government to make sure that we keep providing money to services in the suicide prevention sector. This government needs to not only avoid winding back services, but also invest in them properly. A caveat to that is this: I recognise that there are a lot of well-meaning organisations and people who put their hand out and want to run suicide prevention services, but it is a serious business. I am the first person to say that we need to be diligent with how this money is spent. We need to make sure that when we invest in these sorts of services, they are right for the community and they have some sort of clinical oversight and evidence base to demonstrate that they work. This was part of my criticism of the first round of funding for the community action plan. Some of the CAPs had all those things and, as I said, they were brilliant and a number of them went on to make an application in the second stage of suicide prevention funding and were successful in getting it. However, I also know that some of the CAPs, although terribly well meaning, were just pap and not a particularly good use of money. Sometimes a service can do more harm than good in the suicide prevention space if its people do not know what they are doing. We need to recognise the need for diligence around this issue. I know that members here either have got or will get in the future correspondence from well-meaning constituents stating, "I had a friend who committed suicide, so I have decided to set up this organisation that is going to help people to deal with suicide." It is very well meaning and it happens all the time; it is a general response to suicide—I absolutely understand that. However, not every service should necessarily receive government money. We need to ensure that we never do more harm than good by putting money towards suicide prevention services that are not really suicide prevention services. These are the sorts of things that this government could start with in terms of the \$11 billion.

Of course, part of the 10-year plan also dealt with the issue of alcohol and other drug services. We know that there is a desperate need for more services in this area. We know that the community down south, for example, has been asking for additional beds and services for the last 30 years. We need to free up the money and stick with the plan to make sure that we start providing services for people who want to deal with their addictions to alcohol and other drugs. One of the saddest things in the world to see is when people hit rock bottom due to their alcohol or drug use and get to the point of saying, "I need to do something about this. I want to do something about this." Too often it happens because the Department for Child Protection and Family Support has got involved and they have lost their children and just realised that their life has fallen apart. One of the worse things to happen in this state is that these same people who have hit rock bottom and are ready to turn their lives around are then told, "We're really sorry. It's going to be six months until you can get a rehabilitation bed to be able to deal with your addiction." The sad thing is that sometimes we lose these people for good. Sometimes they either do not survive through suicide or

simply end up dying from their addiction. The other thing is that from a cost perspective, it is just poor management. It means that people are in limbo for six months, children spend six months too long within the child protection services, which is expensive, and the human cost is enormous. This is the one area that I would really like to see us invest some of this \$11 billion into so that the minute someone has the realisation and makes the decision that they need to deal with their addiction, they can get the support to deal with it. The one thing that I want is for people to not be addicted to alcohol and other drugs, particularly drugs like ice, which devastates families and just is one of the ugliest drugs that I have ever seen in my life in terms of its impact on people, families and communities that are left to deal with the legacy of ice.

I urge members to look at the 10-year services plan that maps it all out. It actually states what services we need, the time frame in which we need them and how we need to make sure that we invest in them—it is all there. Sometimes people have said to me, “We shouldn’t take notice of it because it’s a Liberal document”, to which my response is, “Grow up”. It is a document that was created under a Liberal government but with enormous community input and, importantly, input from people with expertise from within the mental health and alcohol and other drugs sector. I see it as a sector document. It has had enormous input from clinicians, experts and people who know what we need in this state. We need to make sure that we keep up with the identified investments. That is what we should do with a good portion of the government’s \$11 billion. My strong advice to the government is: stick with the plan.

I also want to talk about our very expensive, overcrowded, bulging-at-the-seams prisons. As I have said before in this place, the one thing that I want from our prisons is that once people are in there, they have the capacity to turn their lives around so that they do not reoffend and go back in. As someone who has had a lot to do with prisons, I can tell members now that we have a serious underinvestment in training services within our prisons in particular. Many of the people who go into our prisons have not even managed to complete year 10. They have very limited skills and have not had the opportunity to be trained. They have come from backgrounds of disadvantage and have simply not had a lot of the opportunities that people in this place have had. There should be the opportunity to skill people up and to make sure they get training—in some cases making sure that they are literate—so that when they leave prison, they are better able to hold down employment, live successfully in the community and not reoffend. As I said in this place a week ago, part of dealing with that cycle of reoffending is making sure that we have proper health, mental health, dental, and alcohol and other drug services in our prisons. To anyone who thinks that those services are already there in abundance, I am really sorry, but that is not the case. We find that not putting money into those services means that we are continuing cycles of disadvantage, with people not being able to get well, to leave prison, to be whole and to become contributing members of the community. If they are women, they are also less likely to be able to get their children back, so once again there is the issue of child protection. We need to turn the prison system into an opportunity to get people out so they do not go back in, because that return is costing us a fortune. We need to look at investment in those services now. Concern has been raised with me about the decision to merge corrective services with the Department of the Attorney General and turn it into the Department of Justice. I know that doing so will mean that there is less transparency over what is happening with the corrective services budget, and we may not get an idea of how money is being spent in our prisons. That is something I will certainly keep a close eye on. I consider that investing money to deal with the crisis in our prisons out of the \$11 billion that this government is being handed would be money well spent.

I also want to talk about child protection. We have record numbers of children in the child protection system at the moment. These are some of the most vulnerable members of our community, and I think we need to do all we can to support children in the child protection system to live the best life they can. Almost without exception, those children have witnessed some degree of trauma and they are at higher risk of going on to have mental health issues or are already experiencing them. There are obviously issues with attachment and a whole raft of challenges that children should frankly never have to face. We know that we need to give more support to foster carers. The foster care system is already very much overstretched. Foster carers and also grandcarers have been saying for some time that they often just need support with little things. We need to recognise that investment now in children who have been caught up in the child protection system will save us money in the future. That is true even if someone does not care about kids, and if someone does not care about kids, they probably should not be here. Investing in the child protection system is money well spent. As part of avoiding children going to the child protection system in the first place, we need to ensure that those programs are appropriately resourced. The department needs to be enabled to better support families who are at risk of losing their children. Often these parents have not had the advantage of being raised in stable family environments themselves and need to have additional support to be able to best support their own children, whom they love. They love their children as much as anyone else does, but they need to get the support to develop the skills and environment to better raise their children. That is money well spent. The government should feel free to put money into that; that would be tops.

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The other area of child protection that needs investment, and something spoken about by the Western Australian Council of Social Service, is additional support for children who turn 18 years of age and are leaving foster care. This is a really vulnerable time for children. It is the time services effectively stop because they turn 18, but 18 is pretty young, and it can be particularly young if someone is suddenly cast into the world needing to make their own way without the normal family environments that would be behind them. I have to say that most 18-year-olds get to keep living with their parents—that is a truth—but for children leaving foster care that support dries up. It is an area we need to look at investing in in order to best enable these children, who have not had opportunities to have the same opportunities as other 18-year-olds, to best transition their way into adulthood. That is investment. We are talking about new money, and that is a hard ask in a constrained fiscal environment in which people want to cut money back, but I think this is a really important investment. If the government decided to put money into that area, I would be the first to applaud it. I suggest that part of the \$11 billion would probably be well spent going towards vulnerable people in the child protection system.

We have already talked about disability and what is happening with the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I have said previously that the decision to stay with the state or federal system should receive the greatest input from people with disabilities. I understand that the minister has been consulting with and listening to service providers and people with disability in their families about their preferred model. I will only make some broad statements about the NDIS and say that if we move towards a federal model or end up staying with the state model, the one thing I hope is that in a constrained fiscal environment the packages remain the same as the federal model as a minimum. There cannot be any cuts in that area. Obviously, there will be quite a lot of scrutiny on what happens with the NDIS as we move forward, because we need to know how it will be run, funded and what not. I will be looking at this area very carefully. The NDIS should be an absolute no-go zone for cutbacks. This is a hard-fought reform, and it was fought for because people with disability really needed it. It was about time that we started assisting people to live the best lives that they can.

For people with disability it is not just about the NDIS. Something that keeps getting raised with me is that people do not want to have other issues taken off the table. They want public transport to be as accessible as possible—as a start, that bus stops and other things in new developments are accessible by wheelchair. A number of people I know in wheelchairs have expressed concerns to me about getting to bus stops only to find that they are surrounded by mulch. They have explained the difficulty of wheeling a wheelchair over mulch to get to the bus stop. Even our train system—which by the way is excellent, although it needs to be bigger—has a lot of railway stations that can best be described as deadly for people with disability. I am particularly thinking of the train station at Karrakatta Cemetery, ironically, which I have been told has an almost lethal grade slope for people with wheelchairs. We need to look at investing the \$11 billion into those sorts of upgrades. For people with disability, there are many issues over and above the National Disability Insurance Scheme, all of which require money, but they are all investments that ensure that people with disability are best able to contribute to and live within our community.

Mr Acting President, I note that the clock is counting down, but I do not know whether that is merely an error.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Laurie Graham):** My understanding is that it is not an error. The ruling is that you had one speaker speak for an unlimited time yesterday. That is all you are entitled to. You were entitled to only 45 minutes.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** I note that —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** You can seek leave to continue.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** I am actually entitled to unlimited time.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** You can seek leave to continue for an additional 15 minutes.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** I seek leave to have my time extended.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Thank you, Mr Acting President. I will now conclude my remarks and deal with the issue of time at a later date.

I also want to comment on investment in public education services. In this place, we all know that public education services are an area of ongoing need and that we need to ensure that we are doing what we can to produce the best education system we can. There has already been discussion in this house about the issues of buildings, upgrades to schools and the infrastructure we require. They will be ongoing issues. I will comment on some of the programs in schools. Coming from the mental health and suicide prevention sector, I am really aware of an ongoing desire to make sure that we invest in a whole range of services over and above the necessary curriculum within our schools that will best enable students to navigate, both personally and socially, through what can be a pretty

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complex world. I am reflecting on the number of requests that I have had for particular programs to be run. I am aware that we have pretty crammed curricula as it is, so this can be difficult to address. Very successful anti-racism programs have been run within our schools, for example, as well as programs for a greater understanding of Aboriginal Australians. Ongoing requests are made to be able to run a number of multicultural programs in our schools. Our school psychologists are doing the best they can to deal with a whole range of issues and they are requesting more assistance to be able to run a variety of mental health awareness programs within schools. Those programs take money. Also, every time there is the tragic loss of a child to suicide within a school, there are always requests for follow-up investments in a range of suicide prevention initiatives as well as postvention services in schools.

I want to say how important it is to be able to run programs like the Safe Schools program and how essential it is to encourage schools to take up programs that ensure that schools are the safest they can be. That is why it is called Safe Schools, especially for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex young people. LGBTI teenagers particularly can often be very vulnerable within school environments and we should invest every bit of money we can—it will be money well spent—to assist these teenagers in being safe in their own schools. I do not understand why anyone would want them to be unsafe. That seems to me to be particularly important. Likewise, there are ongoing requests for programs to assist students with learning about disability. I also note how important it is to give students with disability the ability to be within school environments. I recognise that that is not what all parents want. Some parents whose children have a disability want other schooling options and that needs to be recognised. However, for many parents and the children themselves, being within a mainstream school environment is absolutely beneficial for not just them but also the children around them. We need to make sure that our schools are wheelchair accessible, for example, and that they welcome students with autism and other cognitive impairments. We are a big community and our schools are able to be accepting places. We need to make sure that we are doing what we can so our public school system is as accepting and supportive as it can be. It will probably be money well spent from \$11 billion.

**Hon Peter Collier:** Put all of it into education; that'd be good!

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** I thank the member for his interjection. I believe I have just suggested that a significant amount go into mental health, alcohol and other drug and suicide prevention services, but I appreciate the interjection. I concur that money invested in education is money well spent indeed! If a significant portion of this \$11 billion was going bolster our education system, I, for one, would welcome that wise investment of this very large amount of additional dollars!

Increasing funding in our TAFE system would also be a terrific investment. In my previous incarnation here, I stood in this place and spoke about the need to make sure that we invest properly in our TAFE system and ensure that we are making it as accessible as possible for people to be able to attend. For a number of people who attend TAFE, the issue of up-front costs and potential debt going into these arrangements can be prohibitive in their decision to pursue further training and qualifications. I think it is wrong for the government to put up barriers that enable that to occur. In the post-mining boom, investment in training services is essential to enable people to move out of poverty, disadvantage and unemployment. I said to people in this place that when I was a very young woman—I did not come from a particularly happy background—my first qualification was from TAFE. I got a certificate IV, which enabled me to get my first proper job. I leapfrogged from there and I am really glad I had that opportunity. I went on to get two more degrees and postgraduate qualifications. I can assure members that I have paid them all back in spades in my taxes ever since.

I think it is really important to make sure that we are doing what we can to enable people access to TAFE. The fees have become a significant barrier for a lot of people. A number of people who have received previous TAFE qualifications need to go back to get different qualifications to make sure that they are able to continue to gain employment. I strongly think that we need to invest in our training services so we can encourage as many people as possible to get into employment.

In the remaining time I have—I could talk about all sorts of things!—I will talk about improving safety at work. It is another area in which I think we need to look at heavy investment and where it would be well worth spending part of the \$11 billion.

In particular, I am critical of what is happening under WorkSafe. WorkSafe has lost a lot of full-time equivalents. It has also lost a level of expertise. The role of WorkSafe has been wound back considerably. It is no longer providing the level of proactive investigation of worksites that we need to have and that WorkSafe should be providing.

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It has been reported to me that one of the areas of greatest need in workplace safety is new Australians. A disproportionately high number of workplace accidents and deaths involve new Australians. Many new Australians have not had the advantage of being exposed to appropriate safety regimes and the opportunity to receive the training they require. A government regulator such as WorkSafe should play a role in requiring companies to address this need. A family will be severely disadvantaged if the bread maker of the family is injured or dies at work—I should say the breadwinner, but it might be the bread maker! We need to invest in this area, and that money would be well spent. What is happening with workplace safety in this state is not good. People are dying on construction sites, and they are dying brutally. It is horrific. This is a great area in which the government might want to look at spending a portion of this \$11 billion. That would be absolutely fantastic.

Another area in which this \$11 billion could be spent is the community sector as a whole. That includes not only mental health, alcohol and other drug services, which is an excellent sector, but also financial counsellors, the social services sector, the disability sector, and a range of other people on the ground. Those people are doing a fantastic job in organisations that are highly reliant on government to provide core funding to enable them to deliver the range of social services that we need to ensure that we are the best community that we can be. I encourage the government to not forget about the need to invest in this sector.

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the essential services that are delivered by our public sector. We talk often about our teachers, nurses and police, and we should, because they are some of our hardest working public servants. However, we need to acknowledge all our public servants, because they often do not get the kudos they deserve. That includes the people in child protection and the people in environmental regulation. It also includes the people who run our hospitals. They might not be in the emergency department, but they make sure that the hospital is ticking over and doing its job. We need to acknowledge the important role of our public servants. Cutbacks to the public service have a dramatic impact on the community, because they impact on the delivery of frontline services. It impacts on the community when public servants are made redundant or lose their job, or are not given pay increases that enable them to keep up with increases in the consumer price index. I encourage the government to be mindful of that. This bill is potentially releasing a lot of money—\$11 billion!

**Hon Donna Faragher:** Do you want to repeat that?

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Yes—\$11 billion! My concern is that this money will not be directed to where it is most needed. I have told members where I believe this money needs to go, and, importantly, where it will be effective in the long term. I recognise that investment in the areas I am talking about will often not have a demonstrated return within the four-year electoral cycle. I can tell members that the evidence demonstrates that if we invest in these areas, in the decades to come, and certainly within a generation, we will have turned around communities and people's lives. I look forward to the release of the budget and to scrutinising the budget in detail to see exactly what the priorities of this government are. I urge this government to take a long-term view when it comes to people's lives.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 1519.]

*Sitting suspended from 4.15 to 4.30 pm*