

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Pierre Yang; President; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — BUDGET MANAGEMENT

Motion

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [10.08 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house —

- (a) recognises that the \$64 million savings proposed through education cuts delivered by the McGowan government in the 2018 state budget were unnecessary and have had highly foreseeable consequences, which is particularly evident in the case of the privatisation of the Landsdale Farm School operation;
- (b) calls on the government to acknowledge that this was an unnecessary budget measure and that the consequences of the cuts outweighed any benefits realised under budget repair; and
- (c) further calls on the McGowan government to recognise and acknowledge that public education, health, and law and order should be the core business of government and therefore immune from budget repair measures.

I would like to start with the original \$64 million cuts to education. Twenty per cent of those cuts came from the agricultural education farms provision trust. We are talking about senior high schools in Cunderdin, Denmark, Harvey, Morawa, Narrogin and Esperance. There has been a reduction in the boarding away from home allowance, and around 1 800 families now have to find an extra \$700 a year to fund their child's education. Six camp schools have been shut down. They are Pemberton, Kalgoorlie, Dampier, Geraldton, Rockingham—the name of the sixth one eludes me at the moment; I cannot remember which one that was. That is a major issue for us. The closure of the camp schools is nonsensical. These schools were mostly self-funded and were often booked 12 months in advance. They were very well supported and were paying their own way.

The fees for VacSwim have been increased. The fees for a 10-day program have increased from \$13.50 to \$30. That is a 120 per cent increase. I cannot imagine how parents with three or four kids would be able to pay that massive increase in fees.

I also have to say that during this time, the government did reverse some of its planned education cuts. The government must have listened to the people, finally. The closure of Moora Residential College did not happen. The closure of the Schools of the Air did not happen. The stripping of \$84 259 from the gifted and talented education program did not happen. The closure of the accommodation wing at Northam Residential College did not happen. I would like to paraphrase what the Premier said at the time. He said that, upon reflection, his government had realised that some revenue saving measures in education were taken too far. The Premier should be commended for saying that. The proposed measures were expected to provide savings of about \$64 million. After those backflips, or changes, the total budget saving is estimated to be about \$41 million.

I now turn to some relevant comments that were made in Parliament about these budget cuts. Back on 13 March, I had a bit of a discussion about this. I would like to mention some of the things that I talked about at that time.

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: What year are you talking about, member?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I did say that. It was 13 March 2019. I said —

... One Nation and members of the crossbench are frustrated with ... the budget repair strategy ... The government is targeting the wrong areas.

I will talk about a few statistics. The government is talking about \$64 million in savings. In the scheme of the state budget, it really is very little. It is not going to make a difference to the budget, but it would make a massive difference to people in regional areas and to education in general. The withdrawal of essential services severely impacts families and communities throughout the regions, as well as those in the metropolitan area. There are impacts everywhere, including on schools such as the Landsdale Farm School. Basically, Labor is once again breaking another election promise, because these cuts are going to cost in the region of about 170 jobs in the education sector ... The WA public did not elect this government to push through policies on the fly without real consultation. The public would have expected this government to consult better than it has done. That is disappointing, because in the scheme of things the savings are really quite petty.

I want to talk about one case in particular—Landsdale Farm School. This is a bit of a case study about what has gone on. I have received a lot of messages from people who have worked at Landsdale Farm School, and I would like to talk about that. Until 15 December 2018, Landsdale Farm School was managed by the Department of Education. Family Support WA was contracted to take over the farm, and it commenced operation on 16 December. According to Family Support WA, it subsequently discovered that a large number of basic health and safety

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improvements were required, which had budget cost implications. I do not know why was this not discovered when Landsdale Farm School was under government control and ownership. The result was inevitable, because a private business entity does not have the same financial capacity or priorities as government, and generally is there to make a profit, or at least break even. Family Support WA changed most of the job descriptions and role requirements. That meant that all employees were required to reapply for their positions. In the period between December 2018 and June 2019, extensive changes were made to not only roles but also personnel, processes and employer expectations. This was a reasonably foreseeable consequence of privatisation.

I was contacted by a member of the public, who sent me an email that highlighted her experience with the privatisation of Landsdale Farm School. I will read from her email.

Hon Sue Ellery: Are you going to read the whole thing?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: No. I am quoting from her email.

Hon Sue Ellery: You are reading your whole speech.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: No, I am not.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Members, I will take note of that.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I am quoting from her email. It states, in part —

I am writing to you to inform you of my concerns about what has been happening at Landsdale Farm this year. Mainly the sacking of my daughter because she has autism.

My daughter, —

I will not read her name —

... has always wanted to work at Landsdale Farm ever since she was a little girl. Her dream came true as she worked for Landsdale Farm School successfully for four years when it was run by the Education Department of WA. When the farm was taken over by Family Support WA, she applied and successfully obtained employment with them. Two days before her six months' probation ended, she received a phone call and email to inform her that her employment was terminated effective immediately. The reasons in the email listed her communication difficulties and difficulties relating to other workers.

The Education Department workers supported —

Her daughter —

... and valued her as a farm worker. It is extremely disappointing that as Family Support WA, who provides services for people with disabilities, can terminate a person with autism because of her communication difficulties without giving her any warnings or support.

Unfortunately we are unable to continue to fight for my daughter to be reinstated.

Out of eight workers who have started working with the animals when Family Support WA took over Landsdale Farm, six are no longer employed there. Three had their contracts terminated, and three left due to high degree of stress over the management of the farm.

This is something that we foresaw; it was clear that this sort of thing would happen. This is what happens when education institutions are sold to make a measly saving in a massive budget. It has an effect on people. This lady's daughter, who has autism, had worked at Landsdale Farm School for four years prior to its sale. When the education department owned and managed the school, she was given the support that she needed. However, when it was put into private hands, that support was no longer there. She had successfully maintained her employment for four years. She had built up a bond and an understanding with her previous employer. However, after the changes were made, there appeared to be little tolerance or understanding of her circumstances. The changes that were made were very tough on this person. As many members will know, people with autism generally do not cope well with change. We would think that organisations such as Family Support WA would be understanding of the needs and support that may be required. This is a case of what can happen when the government privatises its responsibilities. Unfortunately, however, there are numerous examples of this sort of thing once a public corporation or entity is privatised.

I turn to additional information and recommendations. Perhaps the Minister for Disability Services would like to think about a way to accommodate employees with disabilities who could do with some help in instances such as this. Businesses could be helped to find a way to benefit from a person's unique skill set, as many major mining companies do. Employees vulnerable to change could even be sponsored. One obvious recommendation would be to place an onus on the government department to provide ongoing support both prior and possibly during the period of rapid change.

Extract from Hansard

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 5 September 2019]

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These are the very important areas that we need to look at. As I mentioned previously in my speech to Parliament, these are foreseeable consequences. The changes were made for a measly amount of money gained to reduce the budget deficit; I think it was \$41 million in the end after the changes made by the Premier. There have been consequences for this facility, and particularly the six workers who have now either resigned or left because they just cannot work under the new regime. Landsdale Farm School was a specific institution. Anyone who has been there would know that it had a special place in our education system. I have been there with my own daughters, who now have their own daughters, and I now go there with my grandchildren. It has been an exceptionally well run institution for many years. It was better when it was under the control of the education department. As I mentioned, education is an area that the government needs to be in control of, including running enterprises such as the Landsdale Farm School. It is always very difficult when a government comes to power and needs to make changes and tries to cut every area. I think this was done in haste. When the Premier made the changes, he basically acknowledged that this was done in haste. I only wish that he could have been able to stop the \$68 million worth of cuts in this area.

Those camp schools, especially those in the regions that I visited, were always very successful. As a boy, I visited those camp schools, and the memories have remained with me to this day. When I was younger, I attended the one in Rockingham on two or three occasions. Once something becomes a private enterprise something special is lost. Landsdale Farm School is now not the institution it once was. It will not deliver the great outcomes that it used to. It is a private enterprise and its main concern is to make money. We have now seen the effect that has had on these families and these people. It even affected a person with autism, a special case, with Family Support WA not supporting that person because it did not put support mechanisms in place to allow that person to make adjustments. Change causes problems for people with autism. That is recognised by the government and its institutions, but, unfortunately, that is not recognised by this private institution. These are things that we foresaw in the early days, and now they are coming back to bite us. I do not know how parents are going to be able to pay those extra charges, especially families with three or four kids in VacSwim. We are obviously very fortunate that the Premier reversed some of these decisions, but maybe in a few months I will be back talking about some of the issues that the Pemberton, Dampier, Geraldton and Rockingham camp schools are now facing. I hope I am not, because it is very disappointing to see what has happened at Landsdale Farm School.

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan) [10.25 am]: I rise to say a few words about the motion moved by Hon Colin Tincknell. As the member outlined, the motion is in three parts but broadly canvasses the impact of the government's ill-thought out, ill-conceived and rushed cuts that it made almost at the stroke of midnight in December 2017 after Parliament had gone into recess for nearly four months, and two days before the end of the school year when school graduations were underway and people were thinking about Christmas. With all that in mind, the Liberal Party supports the motion. Hon Colin Tincknell's contribution today focused primarily on the impact on Landsdale Farm School where, as he has outlined, the day-to-day management and operation of the facility now falls to Family Support WA. In paragraph (a) of his motion, he indicates that the cuts have had highly foreseeable consequences, and this is particularly evident in the case of the privatisation of the Landsdale Farm School operation. Hon Colin Tincknell has today raised some specific concerns. I will be interested to hear what the minister has to say in response to those.

From a more general perspective there is absolutely no doubt—I agree with Hon Colin Tincknell about this—that all parties in this house, with the exception of the Labor Party, raised significant concerns prior to any of these cuts coming into effect. We raised concerns about how these decisions would affect staffing, how they would impact overall costs for programs and the types of services that would be provided to students across our state. I will perhaps diverge slightly from the main comments that Hon Colin Tincknell made today by saying that it is not just Landsdale Farm School that has been impacted by these cuts. Sadly, many others continue to feel the pain as a result of the cuts that were made without consultation by this government in December 2017. They were other groups and organisations that fell, quite frankly, in the second-class category for this government. Those groups were not good enough to be saved in January 2018. They were not valued as good enough to be saved by either the minister in this house or the McGowan Labor government more broadly from the Premier down. Those organisations never had their funding cuts publicly announced either in the statement of December 2017 or January 2018. It took four months for this government to provide the full list of cuts made—that is, the \$64 million cuts and the remaining ones of around \$41 million after January. It took four months and about three weeks of questioning in this house for the minister to finally reveal those cuts. Of course, we know that after the January announcement, we did have one further change and that was thankfully to Moora Residential College. That was not because of this government; it was because the commonwealth government stepped in and saved the day. But what about the others? What about the play-based, purpose-built community kindergartens? There are not many of them, but they are valued by the community and the parents who choose to send their children to a purpose-built, play-based community kindergarten that is not on a school site. That is not denigrating the kindergartens at public schools—absolutely not. But community kindergartens are an acceptable alternative and whilst they are an acceptable alternative, parents should have the choice to be able to send their children there.

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The minister will say that parents still have that choice and that the kindergartens just need to get their numbers. But the point is that the minister has made it more difficult. She has increased the enrolment threshold from 10 to 16 children. That might be okay for some kindergartens in areas where there is high population growth, but that is not the case for all. Sometimes there might be a few challenges in one year. I know that last year the minister gave exemptions to all the kindergartens that were under the threshold, but will she do so again this year? I know that at least three are vulnerable. I want to know: is the minister going to do the right thing this year by these kindergartens and their families if they fall short of the threshold? I certainly hope so.

My other favourite issue that I like to talk about is the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre. I know Hon Alison Xamon from the Greens gets a bit excited when I start talking about this. So far this year, over 3 000 students from kindergarten to year 12 have visited that centre. That is how valuable the centre is. I see that Hon Diane Evers is nodding her head in support of that. The centre supports the national curriculum, particularly on Indigenous heritage and culture, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related subjects. Again, this government said that the centre was not good enough to be supported for just over \$400 000 over three years. I understand that after this year's cuts, the WA Gould League wrote to the government with a compromise, effectively saying, "If you could at least pay for the teacher's salary, we'll pay for the admin. That is what we'll do." Did it get a positive response? No. The door was shut. Talk to the hand—not interested. This is from a government that is supposedly committed to STEM and all things science. Where does that leave the WA Gould League? It is operating this year, but it is a struggle. It is obviously trying to identify alternative sources of funding. It is going down every avenue for help, but it is a struggle. It creates uncertainty. Schools do not know whether the centre will be open next year. I hope that it will be, and I am sure that the centre will work very hard to ensure that it is. But it should have been supported and it should be supported now.

Hon Colin Tincknell also raised the agricultural education farms provision trust, which had \$110 000 taken out from it in 2018–19, and \$220 000 will be taken out from 2019–20 onwards, according to answers that the minister provided to me in this house. There is absolutely no doubt that the trust and the committees that sit behind the allocations are under pressure in terms of trust allocations for projects for contributing and non-contributing sites, contingency funding and contributions towards infrastructure and other maintenance at all—I stress all—college sites. If the raid on this fund continues, the replacement of machinery and other infrastructure will be under even more pressure, and that is simply not good enough. There is absolutely no doubt about this.

Hon Colin Tincknell has raised this issue today and the minister may well say that this happened back in December 2017 and we have debated this on numerous occasions. Indeed, Hon Colin Tincknell has raised other matters that are not directly relevant to the cuts of \$64 million, but I will just say that he is right in this regard. Public education, like health and law and order, which is reflected in paragraph (c) of the motion, should be the core business of government. Sadly, this McGowan Labor government has shown time and again, across all these portfolios, and, in fact, in every portfolio, that it has an innate ability to make poor decisions that are rushed, ill thought out and often have to be reversed when the pressure becomes too great. They are decisions that have significant and negative consequences for not only those who are directly impacted but also the state as a whole. Sadly, in the case of education, we continue to see decisions that are rushed and which have an immediate impact. As has been outlined today by not only Hon Colin Tincknell but also me, for community kindergartens, agricultural colleges and the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, it continues to happen.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Minister for Education and Training) [10.35 am]: I welcome the opportunity to debate these things today. I want to say a couple of things at the outset. I am going to make my contribution and then, unusually, I am not going to stay in the chamber, because I am being briefed on another matter that the house is dealing with a bit later today. I am sorry that I am not able to stay, but I do not have any choice today. Therefore, I am sorry about that.

There is one thing I want to say about Hon Colin Tincknell's motion. I probably should not give the member this advice, because if he follows it, he might end up making my life a bit harder. What the honourable member should notice is that when other members are preparing for a motion, they do a fact check, most commonly by asking questions in advance during question time. I can often tell what the next motion is going to be, because I will get a series of questions about whatever, because people are preparing for their motion. Alternatively—this is a radical notion—the member could contact my office for a briefing. I do try to provide those and I am happy to provide those. Specifically, when there is an individual issue, like the one that the member raised about the young girl at Landsdale Farm School, if the member were to ask other members, in both chambers, across all parties, what my office's approach is to individual matters, I am confident that he would be advised that my office takes a problem-solving approach and we will try to find a solution. We do not make a fuss about it; the member does not make a fuss about it; we fix it. If we cannot fix it, we try to find a way to facilitate getting it fixed. Hon Donna Faragher could tell the member that on issues for which she and I are of the same view—there is one school now for which she and I are of the same view—I will arrange for her to be briefed by the director general, and I will encourage the honourable member to ask hard questions of the director general.

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Therefore, I suggest that the member adopt that approach, because some of the things that the member said in his remarks just now, although I am sure he was well meaning and well intentioned, are factually wrong. The six camp schools have not been shut down. They are being operated by Fairbridge, which is a fantastic organisation. Since Fairbridge took over, my office has received correspondence from kids who are attending the camp schools, saying that it is great and they love the approach that Fairbridge is taking. Landsdale Farm School was a fabulous facility and it is now. It was well used before and it is well used now. It is not being run by a private business that is just interested in profit. Family Support WA started Landsdale Farm School with a group of parents of kids with disabilities. It is a not-for-profit organisation, and it is a good not-for-profit organisation that is doing a great job. Twice during the member's contribution, the member talked about it being just interested in profit. That is not factually correct and the member could have checked that, if not by asking me directly, then by asking a question in the house. But the member did not bother to do that.

I have only 11 minutes left, so I am not going to be able to canvass all the things that I would like to canvass, but I do have to talk about the reason why tough decisions had to be made. I am going to reflect on some of the comments the member himself has made in this place and outside the house publicly commending the government for the decisions that we had to make. We knew the finances would be bad, but upon being elected to government, we discovered the worst set of books for Western Australia since World War II, and we had to make some really tough decisions. Hon Colin Tincknell in his public comments has said —

I acknowledge that the set of books that the Treasurer has inherited are some of the most difficult one could imagine.

The member then said —

... the need for budget repair is a necessary Government priority.

The member also said —

The simple way to reduce debt is to keep spending within the revenue means available. This is simple mathematics ...

We cannot act on the member's advice to the government, by not making any savings measures. We cannot do it.

Hon Colin Tincknell interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I did not interrupt the honourable member even though he was factually incorrect and reading.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: It's mean. Stop being mean.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is a bit like Bambi, but I am trying to be kind. Tough decisions had to be made, and the decisions in my portfolio were: Do I make changes directly into the classroom or to organisations that are highly valued by the community? Should those organisations be run by the Department of Education? That is the issue. Camp schools have not been shut down. They are still operating and operating well. Landsdale Farm has not been shut down. It is still operating and operating well. That was the basis of the decision-making.

As a consequence of those tough decisions, this government has turned around the state finances. The budget has returned to surplus this year, for the first time in five years. Our economy is strengthening. The honourable member is also on the record in his first budget speech as saying —

The people of Western Australia can no long afford any government with the attitude, "We'll pay for it tomorrow." Tomorrow never comes, and will never come for the people of WA because it is their debt. They own that debt. We need to start paying off the debt from year 1. Even if it is \$1 million, that is \$1 million less than in the last year ...

The member also said —

... a good start would be to make sure we do not spend more than we have.

Honourable member, that is exactly what we have done, and that is hard. I know the honourable member has run his own business and has experience in business, so he would know that from time to time we have to make tough decisions, and that is what we have done. As a consequence, we have turned the finances around. Under the previous government, when the credit rating agencies said that the government was not demonstrating any capacity to manage its own finances and, if it continued not to demonstrate that, the agencies would downgrade its credit rating, that is exactly what happened. The agencies downgraded the state's credit rating and, as a consequence, our capacity to borrow cost the state more, because as our credit rating goes down, we have to pay a higher price, particularly if the credit rating agencies are saying that the government cannot demonstrate that it has the political will—there is probably another expression that is far too —

Hon Alanna Clohesy: Unparliamentary.

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Hon SUE ELLERY: Indeed. The government must have the intestinal fortitude—maybe that is the way I can say it. The former government did not have the intestinal fortitude to make the tough decisions. Since then, the credit rating agencies have recognised the hard work and the tough decisions that this government has made, and our credit rating has been restored. That is a good thing for the state, because we can then start to spend the money on the sorts of things on which the whole community expects us to spend the money, and that is what we will start to do. We made tough decisions. In the Department of Education, we asked: What functions are being done that are still great and still valued by the community, but are they core business? Should those functions be run by the Department of Education? What was the basis of the decisions? The decisions were not easy and, as a consequence, some great organisations have had to change their way of working, but we are seeing the benefit of decisions like that across government.

The honourable member is quite right when he says that the core business of government should be health, education and law and order. There is absolutely no question about what state governments are responsible for delivering. Those are the three core services that we deliver. They are also three of the biggest budgets that we deliver. If we are to take into account the approach that we needed to demonstrate to the credit rating agencies and everyone who was watching us that we were serious about fixing the finances, to do that in a way that did not tackle the largest chunk of our budget would have had no effect. If we did not apply serious saving measures to two-thirds of our budget, we would not have made any significant changes to the state finances. We could not have made savings, because too much of the state's finances are focused on those three portfolios. If we were running our own business structured like that and said that we needed to make savings but we would not look at two-thirds of our business, we would not be doing the right thing by our business. That is exactly the approach that the government took. I certainly regret that organisations have had to change the way they deliver services and I regret the inconvenience and the anxiety that that undoubtedly caused people. I wish I had not been in a circumstance in which we had to do it. We had to fix the finances in the way that we did, but, unfortunately, we have to play the cards that we are dealt. That is the circumstance we found ourselves in.

Another point that the honourable member made during his contribution was that the government should not be selling these things. Honourable member, nothing has been sold. Those services are continuing, but they are not being delivered by the Department of Education. I know that the member was briefed on the range of savings measures last year. He could have asked for an update before he chose to make this his topic today, but he did not. It is important that when the member is describing what has gone on, he gets it right, because people out in the community listen to what the member has to say. We have not sold anything. People might not like the way that we changed the delivery of those services, but we did so to save the state money so that we could fix the finances, and so that when the finances were fixed, we could have the money to spend on the things that the community wants. That was tough and it was hard, but those things needed to be done.

I want to make a couple of other points on this government's commitment to education. Every day, fantastic staff in public schools across Western Australia deliver outstanding education. I am pleased to say that we have a very good working relationship with the non-government schools, and they, too, are delivering outstanding education. We have funded new science labs in public primary schools that enable kids to learn about science in specifically designed science labs, rather than the great general classroom teacher going to get the tub of equipment and going into the wet room. We have placed additional education assistants in schools across Western Australia, 49 per cent of whom are in regional WA, and additional Indigenous Aboriginal and Islander education officers. We have put in place fantastic support for regional schools. When there are not enough kids in year 11 and 12 to have a whole cohort doing a subject such as physics or chemistry, we put extra support into those classrooms. I saw that in operation at Karratha Senior High School and it was fantastic. Those kids can get those subjects through the School of Isolated and Distance Education, but have a dedicated support teacher on site. We have put in place myriad things across education in Western Australia, so public schools are doing great.

If the honourable member read the piece in *The West Australian* by Beth Hiatt—the kind of “league table” of schools—he would have seen outstanding public schools in not only the top 50, but the top 10. Despite the savings measures that have been put in place and despite my regret about the anxiety that caused some people and my acknowledgement that tough decisions had to be made, public schools in Western Australia are in fact absolutely thriving. They are doing outstandingly well, on any measure. Lynwood Senior High School in my electorate deals with a really challenged demographic, so the fact that that school is in the top 50 list is an absolutely fantastic testament to public education.

Public schools across Western Australia are doing well. Tough decisions had to be made because we inherited a set of finances that were a mess. If I had to do it all again, I would still say that education needs to bear its share of how we fix the finances, and we need to do so in a way that applies a hard but fair set of criteria.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [10.50 am]: I will certainly be supporting this motion, and I thank Hon Colin Tincknell for bringing it to the house. I totally agree with him.

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A lot of what the Minister for Education and Training just said was almost laughable. Quite frankly, she makes Monty Python look like rank amateurs.

I will say a couple of things. The surplus in the government's books has nothing to do with these cuts. Let us be perfectly honest: we are talking about massive windfalls as a result of increases in the iron ore price and the magnificent deal the federal Liberal-National government did on the GST. That is where the surplus came from. The Minister for Education and Training said that the government's cuts to Landsdale Farm helped deliver the surplus. We are talking about \$300 000 a year. That is not even scone money for the Department of Education. Give me a break! These are the small pickings that members opposite did not care about. They thought, "Oh, that doesn't matter, that's the small stuff. No-one will care about that." One of the affirmations I always use in life is: when you do not sweat the small stuff, it is time to go fishing. That is what we are dealing with, because these guys do not sweat the small stuff. We are talking about Landsdale Farm, which was set up for children with disabilities. We are also talking about Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre. Do members opposite want to go down there and say that those children do not deserve that? That is what we are talking about.

Let us once again have a very brief recall of history. These guys love recalling history. They have spent the last two and a half years being infatuated with the former government. Let us look at an infatuation that I have with —

Hon Alanna Clohesy interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Will you be quiet!

The PRESIDENT: No, order! I will be the one who tells people to be quiet, member. It gets a little hard when one person starts yelling and another responds, and then Hansard cannot hear anything, and they have a very important job to do. If you want to have a say, seek the call.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thanks, Madam President. I look forward to the contribution from the member opposite.

I remind members opposite that their party lays claim to being a stalwart of public education, but let me talk about what they left us, and I am not just talking about funding. The former Labor government left us with the lowest paid teachers in the nation. We had mass teacher shortages when we took over in 2008. We had under-resourced schools and the curriculum was an absolute mess. There was a serious decline in the numbers of public school students, and we inherited that from a Labor government. Almost nine years later, we had the highest-resourced schools in the nation by far. We put a teacher in front of every classroom, every year we were in office. We had the highest-paid teachers in the nation by far, coming from the lowest-paid. We showed teachers that we valued them. I have had to sit here and listen to the Minister for Education and Training carry on with all that tripe, but we actually delivered. That is not just rhetoric or ideology from a manifesto; we actually delivered.

Let me remind members that by the end of our time in government, we had increased education spending by 70.3 per cent, and student numbers went up by 16 per cent. That is a massive increase by any stretch of the imagination. We corrected the curriculum and there was a tremendous amount of integrity with regard to graduation. There was a wonderful investment into early intervention. We joined the national curriculum, with the capacity to adopt and adapt. That is what we did. We looked after those who are marginalised and introduced 38 Aboriginal kindergartens. We put more education assistants in our classrooms than ever before; we had greater numbers of EAs in our classrooms than any other state in the nation. What does the education minister come in here and say? Last year she said that the previous government had cut education assistants by 1 000. That is absolute garbage; she misled the house. Let me remind members what we did with education assistants. There were 5 457 education assistants when we took office and 7 561 when we left. That is a 38 per cent increase—more education assistants than anyone. We specifically directed funds to students with a disability and to Aboriginal students. We introduced the Aboriginal cultural standards framework in our classrooms—the first and only state to do that. We looked after public education. Is it any wonder that there was an increase in the number of public education students in Western Australia as a result of our government? Do members know why? The cherry on top of the cake was the independent public schools system, through which we empowered schools and communities across the state to get directly involved with the decision-making in their schools. That is what we did. The minister came in here with all that nonsense about how the government has to look after the budget; we are talking about \$300 000 a year for Landsdale Farm. That has nothing to do with budget repair; we keep on hearing that nonsense.

We did cut back on our spending in 2014; we still increased funding by \$300 million, but the members opposite, the Bolsheviks, had a field day. They would stand in here, day in and day out, and say to us, "Okay, we are going to increase funding" —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! If people find words to be offensive, there are standing orders and a manner for dealing with that. Do not deal with it by just yelling across the chamber. If you find something offensive, seek the call, and we will deal with it in due course.

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Pierre Yang; President; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West

Point of Order

Hon PIERRE YANG: Point of order!

The PRESIDENT: A bit late; you have missed the call on that occasion.

Hon PIERRE YANG: I do find that offensive.

The PRESIDENT: Yes, I have noted that. I will say to the Leader of the Opposition, I actually do not appreciate that word being used so frivolously.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Does that include “comrade”, Madam President?

The PRESIDENT: I will have a think about that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is in the same vein, so thank you. We do need a ruling, in that case.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Now that is offensive.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, it is not.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has the call; he is going to speak to the motion.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Madam President.

In 2015, after we asked schools to tighten their belts, we increased funding for primary schools by \$45 million. We increased funding for special needs by \$46 million and there was a further \$9 million for the chaplaincy program. I find it quite offensive when members opposite bleat and carry on. Members opposite say, “We’re going to have these cuts”, and they go for the low-hanging fruit, like Schools of the Air. That worked out well, did it not? There were also the camp schools, the gifted and talented program, residential colleges, Landsdale Farm and Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre. The government had to back-pedal on a lot of those things because they blew up in its face. It was only a couple of million dollars here and \$200 000 there or whatever, and it is talking about budget repair. I might add that this comes at the same time that the government said it would take a bit out of the schools that had more than 1 200 kids and redistribute the money amongst those that did not have as many students—the smaller high schools. I agreed with that, because the larger senior secondary schools were getting a lot of money and were over-resourced compared with those that were smaller. But did the government put that money back into the smaller schools? Not on your life, but thanks to Hon Alison Xamon and Hon Donna Faragher for asking questions on that issue. The government took \$12 million from the senior secondary schools. Did it put that back into the smaller secondary schools? Not on your life. Do members know what it did with that money? It used it to pay for its election commitments. The government has been spruiking this stuff about putting all the EAs back in, but it did not fund that from an election commitment; it redistributed the funds. Our larger senior secondary schools are now worse off and our smaller secondary schools are no better off as a direct result. It is extraordinary that the government can actually carry on as if the Labor Party is the saviour of public education. All the government is doing is pork-barrelling its own little projects. That is exactly what we saw with Local Projects, Local Jobs.

We also saw the government proposing to lead by example. The ink had not dried on their ministerial certificates before the Minister for Education and Training and the Minister for Transport went off to Sydney with half the public service to look at high-rise schools at a cost of \$30 000, and did not look at a school. She came back here and decided that it was not a good idea anyway, because half of Western Australia was demonstrating on the steps of Parliament House. She said that she would abandon that idea and build the school over in Subiaco, but that school is going to be full before it has even opened. It is a great idea. The government is saying that it is a wonderful idea, but if it is so wonderful, why did the minister not decide on the Subiaco site before the election? She nicked off to Sydney at a cost of \$30 000. Those little things are very indicative of the mindset of this government. The government does not mind carrying on, waking up, and saying its affirmations—blame the Libs, blame the Libs, blame the Libs—but when push comes to shove, and the government is itself judged, it will be judged on these things. Remember, when you do not sweat the small stuff, it is time to go fishing. These guys need to go fishing.

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [11.00 am]: I rise to make some comments about this very broad-ranging motion from One Nation—a little bit of budget repair, a little bit of revisiting previous cuts, and a little bit of talking about health, law and order, and education in general. I have to say from the outset that I really wish One Nation members would be a little less confused about which side of the fence they sit on. On the one hand, they like to stand up and purport to speak for the everyday battler, but on the other hand, it seems to me that they are very firmly in support of big business at the expense of the battler. One of the things that comes to mind is their flagrant refusal to support the gold levy, which, if it had gone through, would have provided the sort of money we are talking about to ensure that we did not have the sort of cuts we have seen.

Several members interjected.

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Pierre Yang; President; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West

Hon ALISON XAMON: Madam President, I am just talking to you.

Hon Robin Scott interjected.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Shush, shush, you!

The PRESIDENT: Members, I remind you that I get to tell people to be quiet. I have to say that it gets really difficult for the member who is on their feet. It forces them to raise their voice, which is unfair, when they have a whole lot of other loud voices around them. Sometimes Hon Alison Xamon, who has a much softer voice than most, can be hard to hear. We want to hear her, so let her have her say, and if you want the call, you can have it in due course.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Thank you, Madam President. I appreciate your protection to enable me to speak in this place. It is disappointing when I am shouted down in such a manner.

I wish One Nation members would figure out what they stand for. Are they here to just read in speeches on behalf of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, or are they actually representing Aussie battlers? In any event, I will pick up on some of the points in this motion, because it is worthy of further discussion.

I was one of the people who were disappointed by the cuts that went through, after Parliament had risen, back in December 2017. Some of those cuts have continued to have quite a detrimental impact. I am particularly concerned about the impact of the loss of Aboriginal staff in the district offices. The feedback that my office is getting is that that is still having quite a negative impact, particularly on attendance rates for Aboriginal students. Those sorts of cuts have had an ongoing, problematic impact.

Hon Donna Faragher and I share an ongoing concern about what has happened with the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre. It is a genuine issue, because the centre is doing everything in its power to make up for the loss of funds. It is trying to get charitable status from the federal government. These things are taking a very long time, and have been impacted by the fact that an election has been held. The centre is generally struggling to stay open. The amount of money it needs to effect that is really tiny, far less even than what Landsdale is looking for. The centre needs to be able to keep its teacher. It is false economy on the part of the government not to revisit that decision and ensure that the centre gets back its funding. It is a very important service that all schools have been able to benefit from. It has suffered quite a disastrous impact.

Hon Donna Faragher has already spoken about the impact on a number of community kindergartens, and there is also the issue with Landsdale. In relation to the matter of the individual staff member, along with everyone else, I have received the correspondence about that. I prefer not to talk about private industrial matters within this chamber, particularly without having undertaken due diligence ahead of time. I think that is an inappropriate use of the house's time. But I do recognise the ongoing concerns about access to Landsdale, and we need to keep an eye on that.

A range of changes have occurred in the education budget. Some additional money has gone back into education—I welcome, for example, some of the money for students with a disability that went into the last budget—but some quite problematic decisions have also been made, particularly on infrastructure. I am concerned about the decision that was made to just abandon the western suburbs school strategy. I do not think that was a sensible approach, and I remain very concerned about the future of the City Beach high school site. Any suggestion by this government to sell that site must be vehemently resisted. As has already been pointed out by Hon Peter Collier, we are looking at the new Bob Hawke College being already full by the time it opens. The pressure being brought to bear on those western suburbs schools is enormous. I am really concerned that the government does not look to what it sees as a short-term easy financial fix that will create long-term disasters for our capacity to meet our future public education obligations in that catchment area.

I will pick up on at least one other issue in my remaining time. I note that the third paragraph of the motion refers to the need for public education, health and law and order to be the core business of government. Of course, the Greens support that. The Greens have always supported that, which is also why we are happy to look at supporting everyday Australians over industry, for example. However, I will say something about the mental health component of health. I know that members will be surprised to hear this. In our efforts to ensure that we have balanced budgets or even a surplus, we end up making false economies. One of the greatest false economies of this government has been the decision to deviate from and not invest in the 10-year mental health and alcohol and other drugs services plan. We know that we need to keep up with demand, but we have not done that. We also know that we need to look at additional investment, because we need to assist people at the earliest stages of mental health and alcohol and other drug problems, before they become huge issues, before they become acute and before they become truly expensive for government. This is an example of this government missing the point of early intervention and prevention services, and it has missed an extraordinarily important opportunity to save money in the long term.

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Pierre Yang; President; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West

I also want to talk a bit about the money that goes into law and order. It is interesting that when people talk about law and order being the core business of government, they often talk about it in terms of needing to have more money invested in prisons. I want to point out how ridiculous that is. Once we look at putting more money into prisons as being the solution for law and order, we have failed. It means that we have absolutely lost the early opportunities to intervene in the lives of people who are struggling and going off the rails. We need to look at social reinvestment so that we prevent people from committing offences in the first place, falling through the cracks and ending up homeless, and ensure that people do not end up in prison. Prison needs to be the place where very few people end up, and then only because they have been so comprehensively failed, or for those people who are just criminals, not that the Corruption and Crime Commission will necessarily be picking up any of them, because it is not necessarily focused on dealing with organised crime. Nevertheless, we need to look at issues of early intervention and prevention for vulnerable people on the edges. One of the ways we can do that is to make sure that we get the money from those parts of our community, for example, large businesses, that are best able to pay for that. That is how we reinvest back into our community. That is what we do. Of course education, health, mental health and early intervention around offending behaviours should be the core business of government, as should housing and a whole range of other areas.

I want to put some perspective around this. We can talk about the sorts of things happening in education, but that is a really broad discussion. I am looking forward to a motion that can address the broader issues around what will happen in education reform in the future.

HON MICHAEL MISCHIN (North Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.10 am]: I will not take a great deal of the house's time on this motion. I was not intending to speak originally in any event, but what inspired me was the Minister for Education and Training's continual reference to her making "tough" decisions as a justification for every petty cut from her budget and every piece of pain that she has caused some community in Western Australia in the name of budget repair. Let me give her a bit of advice: making tough decisions is something that any moron can do. The important thing, and what makes ministers, is to make the right decision—to make decisions that are thoughtful, sensible, rational and do as little harm to their community as possible; and, if harm needs to be done, that a benefit is directly reaped as a result of that.

We have heard a lot about tough decisions. I do not think they were that tough at all. The minister was given a list of expenditure that amounted to peanuts in the scheme of things and simply accepted the advice of her department. If any government needs to do something, it is this one. Perhaps it will mint a medal for the ministers who have made tough decisions. Hon Alannah MacTiernan might be able to be recognised for her five years of battling like it was the Battle of the Somme. I think the Battle of the Somme took six months, but nevertheless she had five years of turmoil on the Mandurah rail link—the way she tells it. Perhaps she ought to get several medals for that one! The way that Hon Sue Ellery tells it, she ought to be getting a chest full of medals for all the tough decisions that she has made.

I will tell members what would have been a tough decision: that vanity project, the inner-city school, Bob Hawke College. That was not even in the 200 thought bubbles that came up prior to the last election; that was a few weeks before the election. It was announced as a great policy initiative, without a business case, with no thought put behind it, but something to attract attention and get on the front page of *The Sunday Times*. The amount of money that is being sunk into that could have built a desperately needed school in City Beach, and for which we had the land. That project is a vanity project. The world would not have risen as one and protested that decision, as it did when Perth Modern School was going to be closed down—another tough decision. There was a protest about that. People were upset about it; it affected them directly. That was a "tough" decision but it was not the right decision. The money that would have been saved in that little exercise, and for the sake of an inner-city college like the Bob Hawke College, could have been devoted to maintaining several cuts around the state that have actually caused some harm. It would have been a tough decision to have abandoned that for the time being, until the budget was, according to the government, in better shape, but that has not been done.

Tough decisions would have been not meeting the \$39 million money-for-votes thing that has come under the name of Local Projects, Local Jobs and perhaps deciding that a dog grooming van somewhere in the southern suburbs was not as important as keeping open Landsdale Farm, Moora Residential College, the Schools of the Air or the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre. Perhaps the money spent on the newsletter that goes out to some local group up in Hon Darren West's electorate could have gone to one of these things rather than simply "votes for money". Those would have been tough decisions. But no time at all was spent in dealing with those on their merits and matching them against the petty cuts and the pain that has been inflicted on many, many people and many rural electorates in the name of budget repair. This is penny-pinching stuff. Cutting newsletters, dog grooming vans and coffee vans to kick off some little business for the sake of maintaining Landsdale, Herdsman and the Schools of the Air would have been tough decisions. So much for tough decisions!

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Pierre Yang; President; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West

If the building of Bob Hawke College were cancelled tomorrow, I do not think that there would be protesters to Parliament or anywhere in this state saying, “Please don’t close it down. We want to have a school named after one of the Labor icons. Don’t shut that one down!” I doubt that anyone in the state would do that.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: But there were protests regarding Moora Residential College and the Schools of the Air. There are concerns about Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre and there were problems with shutting down Perth Modern School. Let us not get the “tough decision” thing as a justification for every petty, penny-pinching initiative by this government to try to fund one of its other election communities that cannot be supported by a business case and cannot be supported by any direct relevance to —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Mr Acting President, if the honourable —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Steve Thomas): Order, members! I will have order, thank you. I would suggest that perhaps accepting and sending interjections may need to cease for the rest of your contribution. I give Hon Michael Mischin the call.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Thank you, Mr Acting President. I was not accepting interjections. I keep getting them but I was not accepting them. I was trying to avoid having to worry about them, but I will deal with that last one. That one seemed to suggest that I am against a new school. No, I am not against a new school. I am all for new schools. There should have been one in City Beach. It had been planned for a long time and was necessary. That one has been abandoned in favour of a vanity project that had no business case to support it and was thrown out there.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members! The interjections are now coming from both sides of the chamber, not one side, and need to cease. The tolerance that Madam President shows for this sort of behaviour is not repeated when I am in the chair. We will keep them to a silence. Hon Michael Mischin has the call.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I say again that if this government were really concerned about opening up schools where they are needed, City Beach would have been the first candidate. That had been planned for years. The education department was behind it. The former minister had announced it. Land was available for it. The community was behind it. It was needed. Was that a tough decision to go ahead with it? No, it would not have been. What was, apparently, a tough decision was to cut everything else and to throw it into an inner-city school that had no business case.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, minister!

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: It is like an illness over there.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! We will have no more interjections from any side. Thank you.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: There was community support where students were, in City Beach, but there was no business case at all for this particular project of this inner-city college nonsense.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! If you want to have those arguments, you can take those arguments outside. Hon Michael Mischin has the call.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: The students in those western suburbs need a school. Not too many students live in the central business district.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Will you stifle yourself!

To abandon that project would have been a tough decision and it would not have even cost the government a single vote, but it would have caused a loss of face. Decisions need to be “tough”, but not so that they lose face. They will barge on. The real test will be whether the government tries to flog off the City Beach property for short-term gain, as was done with the Scarborough Senior High School site, and abandon the opportunity into the future for setting up a school where one is needed. I wonder who sold the Scarborough high school site?

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Pierre Yang; President; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Hon Alannah MacTiernan sold it when she was the planning minister.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Steve Thomas): Order, members! If members on my left were not encouraging the Minister for Regional Development, it would be easier for me to maintain general silence in the chamber. Therefore, I suggest that members not provoke the minister, and the minister not respond, and we will leave Hon Michael Mischin to complete his contribution.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I will wind up. I think I have made my point that “tough decisions” is not a justification for anything. It means nothing. It is a meaningless term. The government is trying to justify decisions that cannot be justified by any rational, compassionate, sensitive and sensible process. Instead, it is written off by saying, “It was a tough decision. I lost an hour’s sleep over that one.” Like fun! They are simply arbitrary decisions that cannot be justified by any business case or any rational process of analysis and which are doing harm to the community. We are supposed to feel sympathy for the minister, because she is now experiencing the same anguish as she has caused to the community. I do not believe that for one second. I wholeheartedly support Hon Colin Tincknell’s motion in this regard. This government has shown that it cannot make the right decisions. Justifying that by using the mantra “tough decisions” is just pathetic and not worthy of a government.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.21 am]: I would also like to speak on this motion. I vehemently oppose this motion. It is a bit sad that Hon Colin Tincknell would bring a motion into the house about things that happened a couple of years ago in the name of budget repair. As the Minister for Education and Training pointed out to the member, we are proud that we have done those things. They are things that we had to do. We had to repair the budget. The financial recklessness and mismanagement of the former Barnett Liberal–National government could not continue. This state’s credit rating had been downgraded three times. State debt had increased from \$3.6 billion to \$40 billion. That could not continue. The incoming Labor government promised the people of Western Australia that it would repair their finances. We were elected on that platform, and that is exactly what we are doing. We make no apologies for the difficult decisions that have come with that. Those decisions were made across the spectrum of government services. The Minister for Education and Training outlined very eloquently why those changes were necessary. This government inherited the worst books that Western Australia has seen since World War II. We promised the people of Western Australia at the election that we would fix their finances. We are talking about their finances, not our finances, the government’s finances or the finances of anyone in this Parliament; they are the finances of the people of Western Australia. We promised that we would repair those finances, and we are successfully repairing those finances by making difficult decisions. We are getting the finances of this state back on track.

The opposition and crossbench members still do not understand that Western Australia had a financial problem. They still do not understand that the government needed to do something about the recklessness of the former Barnett Liberal–National government in its eight and a half years in office. The Leader of the Opposition said that \$300 000 is nothing. The former government took the attitude that it does not matter what it costs; it will pay for it anyway. That is where the former government went wrong, and that is why it left this government with such a mess to fix up. I can tell members opposite that \$300 000 is a lot of money to the people of Western Australia, and, where money can be saved, it should be saved.

Hon Colin Tincknell interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: I did not interject on the member. I have a very short time, and I am not going to take interjections, but I will be happy to talk to the member about this later, as the minister has also offered.

That is the basis of where the government came from. Members opposite are a bit confused. As I have said, it is a bit sad that One Nation has brought forward this motion. I do not think One Nation has worked out what it stands for in the Parliament, whether it is financial management, or whether it is spending more, or spending less. I am sure that over the next 18 months, we will get a bit of a gauge on that. Today, we are being told by One Nation that we are not spending enough. If that is what today is about, that is okay. I am sure that on another day, One Nation will move another motion to say that we are spending too much and are not looking after the budget. I will let the member work out what he wants to stand for. We are very consistent in our message. The finances of this state were a mess, and we are fixing them. If the member wants to play political games all the time, people will start to see through that and tire of that. The people of this state want their finances to be managed properly, and that is what they are getting under this McGowan Labor government.

Hon Alison Xamon talked about the gold levy. That would have been a perfect opportunity to help the government repair the finances of this state. However, what did One Nation do about that? It stood in the way.

Hon Colin Tincknell interjected.

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Pierre Yang; President; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West

Hon DARREN WEST: What a load of rubbish, member. The gold price today is \$2 200 an ounce.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Honourable members, I am working very hard to make sure that all sides of the chamber are heard, and heard in relative respect and silence. That applies equally to Hon Darren West as it does to any other member. There has been far too much interjection on both sides at this point, as there was previously, and it will stop.

Hon DARREN WEST: Hon Michael Mischin gave the government some advice about finances. I have said in this place previously that it is great to get advice from members, especially cabinet ministers of the former Barnett Liberal–National government, because that is a good example of what we should not do. He also told us that we do not need Bob Hawke College. That is ridiculous. We need Bob Hawke College. That college is already nearing capacity, and it has not even been built.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: They said that it is not needed.

Hon DARREN WEST: They are saying it is not needed. I put on the record that the Minister for Education and Training, Hon Sue Ellery, is an outstanding minister. She is doing a great job in that portfolio, in challenging financial times. That makes it even more difficult to administer that important portfolio. Of course, public education and universal education are at the core of Labor values. Minister Ellery is doing a great job. Not only have additional education assistants been employed in classrooms across the state, but 49 per cent of those education assistants are in regional classrooms. The former government took them out; we are putting them back in. There are also additional aides in classrooms. We are building science laboratories so that we can foster the interest of young people in science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects and one day they will graduate from university and fill the shortage of STEM graduates in Western Australia. I have been with the minister when she has opened major infrastructure upgrades to public schools, not only in Geraldton, but also across the state.

The Minister for Education and Training gave Hon Colin Tincknell some advice. I will also give the member some advice—it is probably not advice that I should give the member—but he keeps talking about things that happened many years ago and have since been resolved. The member criticised the government’s decision on Moora Residential College. We made exactly the same decision on Moora college that the former Barnett Liberal–National government made. We made the decision to not spend \$8.7 million on that college. That has since been resolved, through the generosity of the federal government in providing money to the state government to rebuild that college, at a cost of \$8.7 million, not \$500 000.

Hon Peter Collier: You said that you disagree with that.

Hon DARREN WEST: No. The government is going ahead with that project, thanks to the funding from the federal government.

Hon Peter Collier: You disagreed with that.

Hon DARREN WEST: We are going ahead with that project, member.

In my last few seconds, I want to say that while members opposite snipe, knock and whinge about all the negative things, we are getting on with the job of fixing the finances of Western Australia, and delivering the best public education in Australia.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.