

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — PERFORMANCE

Motion

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.00 pm]: On behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, I move —

That this house condemns the McGowan Labor government's failure to deliver essential services and infrastructure while accumulating a massive budget surplus.

Members, it has been two elections and five years and it is difficult to see how the lives of Western Australians have improved in many areas under this government. Certainly, one thing we know is that many people's lives have not been improved under this government, despite the times that we live in. A consistent theme of the government seems to be that all the ills and failures to deliver projects or housing and to treat patients who are in ambulances outside hospitals in a timely manner are all due to COVID. But what is very clear is that all the major failings of this government were evident before COVID struck. In fact, those problems have simply continued on the same trajectory they were on before the COVID pandemic hit Australia. In some cases, government-specific actions have exacerbated some of those problems because the government has incorrect priorities.

As I said, the government has been in charge now for five years. I will say that, refreshingly, we hear a little less of this excuse, "Oh, it was the previous government," nevertheless we hear it from time to time. Certainly, in the last Parliament, we heard that excuse just about every day. Government members would say, "It's the previous government's fault because of X, Y and Z," but they must own the outcomes that have been delivered by a McGowan Labor government. What do we see at the moment? We are going to see a sugar rush. We will see announcements being made by the government. There are dollar signs everywhere for—I would say, to be quite frank—the immediate issues, but we do not see a clear plan for the future of this state. I will go through that in a little bit of detail.

The Premier loves headlines. Labor Party members love getting out there whenever they can in their fluoro vests and hard hats or jumping on bikes. Some of them do, member for Armadale!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): Minister for Finance and member for North West Central! We are five minutes into this —

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: No, member for Wanneroo, I am not going to tolerate this five minutes into this motion.

Mr V.A. Catania: Don't you have coffee or something to have?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Same to you, member for North West Central.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. I need your protection more than ever. All I have eaten today is a banana because I have been in this chamber the entire time.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Keep you regular anyway!

Dr D.J. HONEY: I think I will push through, Leader of the House.

A government member: We're just trying to keep time for you.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thanks. Let me catch my breath.

Major issues, such as inflation, are facing our economy, but the state government is contributing to Western Australia's inflation. We have enormous workforce shortages, and I will probably have a chance to cover this matter a bit more tomorrow in my reply to the budget speech, but it is a problem that the state is facing and has been exacerbated by the actions of this government. No government in Australia did more to restrict workers coming into its state over the last two years than this government.

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach!

Dr D.J. HONEY: That restriction has substantially exacerbated many of the state's issues. One of the criticisms I have, which was a matter that I raised earlier today, is about the government making announcements on huge projects. The Metronet project is massively over budget. It was originally budgeted at \$3 billion. We know there have been some scope changes, but the last number was \$7.5 billion. I turn to my sage who is sitting here: the member for North West Central. Would it be two years ago that the member estimated that this project would blow out to \$10 billion? The government should put the member for North West Central on the body that is overseeing these major projects because he could, obviously, give accurate estimates because that is what the Metronet budget is

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

heading to. On top of the existing Metronet project, which is years over schedule and billions of dollars over budget, the government announced another \$2 billion project—it says—to get rid of the level crossings on the Armadale line. I like getting rid of level crossings, member for Armadale. I have a boy who is living out that way now in the member for Armadale's electorate. If you are nice to me, he may vote for you!

Dr A.D. Buti: I wonder if he votes Labor.

Dr D.J. HONEY: He possibly could. I tell the member for Armadale that I never seek to direct my children in their political beliefs, and can I tell members that they have wideranging beliefs. Nevertheless, member, I like getting rid of level crossings. But the government is committing to a \$2 billion project—and these level crossing are due to be gone by 2024; we have the clock ticking on this one—that will not be done. But I would love a commitment to get rid of level crossings on the Fremantle line, after the Swanbourne crossings, because that is a major issue in my electorate. Nevertheless, I will get back on topic.

We see all these announcements and the great headlines. Everyone goes out with their fluoro vests on and signs go up, but the government does not deliver. Western Australians are incredibly fortunate that their lives and livelihoods have remained largely intact throughout the pandemic, but it seems that the principal focus of the government is to use the pandemic as an excuse or a reason for another headline. Western Australians have been doing the right thing to protect the health system and to keep their communities safe and strong, but they do not receive support in the critical areas that they deserve to from this government. Something that drives me to a degree of frustration is hearing the government say that the state is in such a robust financial health because of its prudent fiscal management. My good colleague Hon Dr Steve Thomas presented an excellent analysis of this yesterday. I will not go through it in detail here but it is absolutely clear that the financial position that this government is in is purely due to the excellent GST fix delivered by Mathias Cormann and the Liberal Senators and members for Western Australia, in conjunction with the now Prime Minister who was the Treasurer who locked in that GST fix. This year we are getting something like \$4.6 billion above what we would have got under the previous formula. I think there is an enormous risk that an Albanese Labor left-dominated government would undo that.

Dr A.D. Buti: Did Celia tell you to say that?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Finance.

Dr D.J. HONEY: If the minister is talking about the member for Curtin, Celia Hammond —
Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: — what an outstanding member of federal Parliament. What an outstanding advocate for her community; she is someone I am immensely proud to stand beside.

That GST fix was delivered by the federal Liberal government but there are also mining royalties. We will see where it gets to this year but we are billions of dollars above the forecast of even the Treasury predictions while communities and people are crying out for delivery.

Western Australian families are losing their trust, and I think many have lost their trust, that they have a reliable health system. There is talk about upgrades but nothing has been delivered. If members look at the trajectory of the health spend and at the trajectory of the demand for health services in this state, we should now have another major regional hospital in Western Australia. The government talks about the beds it is going to deliver, but as I am sure the member for Vasse, shadow Minister for Health, will be outlining, the government simply has not delivered on its promises. I am always fascinated to hear government members say, "We've fixed this problem because we've allocated this amount of money to it." They say they have fixed the problem by allocating \$200 million, \$300 million or a billion dollars. You can allocate all the money you like, but if you do not deliver, it is of no use whatsoever. This is the principal focus.

Any members who have come from industry know that in the last decade and a half the principal focus in industry has been on what they call execution of delivery. Having grand plans is fine and well. Having value statements and all those things is fine and well, but if you do not deliver an outcome, then it is a waste of time. That is the problem. We have a government that does not deliver—no more so than in the area of hospitals. Residents have been promised upgrades to hospitals. I do not wish to crib on the member for Vasse's space, so I will not go through it in exhaustive detail, but upgrades to Geraldton Health Campus have been promised for five years and there is virtually nothing to see. The government promised \$73.3 million at the 2017 election to deliver a new emergency department at the Geraldton hospital. The last time I saw it, there was tape blocking off the doors and the staff at the hospital were not using them. I am not sure whether that is still the case. Perhaps the member for Geraldton can let us know whether it has people going through the doors. It has been five years since the project was first promised and \$9 million has been spent on the car park and a new set of doors. I hope the doors are open now because I was there about 12 months ago and they were not.

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

Margaret River Hospital is another area where there is a great need. The WA Country Health Service identified that important upgrades are needed for that hospital but we have not seen any meaningful action by the government. The pre-eminent issue in Western Australia is that there are critical workforce shortages across the whole state, particularly in health care. That is making the attraction and retention of health professionals more important than ever. To be realistic, what chance do we have if the health facilities these workers operate in are neglected and left without upgrades? If people do not feel safe at work, it is even more the case.

We also have serious crime problems across the state. I have pointed out in this place before that there has been a 22 per cent increase in serious violent crimes since this government took power. Government members can have their blitzes and glossy photos of the Minister for Police with guns arrayed in front of him and all of that, but it does nothing to deal with the core issue that serious violent crime in this state has escalated by over 20 per cent since this government came to power. When we make these criticisms, we hear the government's deflection that crime has decreased overall. We know that during the COVID period when there were significant restrictions on people's movement, general burglaries and break-ins and the like decreased, but serious violent crime has continued to escalate under this government.

It is almost as though we are not allowed to discuss what is going on out in the Kimberley. Hon Neil Thomson, a member for the Mining and Pastoral Region in the other place, has been highlighting this issue since before he was elected to Parliament. In the Kimberley, youths are making a sport of trying to attack police officers. They are making it a sport. If they are in a stolen vehicle and they see a police car, they chase and ram the police car. Police officers have been seriously injured. That is the extent to which crime has got out of control in the Kimberley. When I was up there some time ago, because of the wonderful world of connection with mobile phones, gangs of youths in different towns—Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Broome and Kununurra—were competing with each other to see who could steal and burn more cars. They announced a winner on a monthly basis on the number of vehicles they had stolen and burnt in those towns. That is law and order out of control. Despite making numerous representations in Parliament, particularly Hon Neil Thomson, it was only relatively recently we saw any response from the government. To be frank, that crime spree continues largely unabated. It was even more disturbing be told that hundreds and hundreds of children were identified as at risk. There are government agencies in all those towns, yet it took the police to identify that those children are at risk. As I mentioned in this place before, when I spent an evening in Halls Creek, I could have walked out in the street and identified 50 youths who are at risk because they were on the streets, racing cars, drinking, yelling and shouting—these are children—all night until about five o'clock in the morning. Why did it take police intervention to identify those hundreds of children at risk? It seems that the Department of Communities has completely failed in its overriding duty to look after the welfare of those children. The worst part is the impact it has on the residents of those towns and communities. Everyone is fed up. Whether it is in the main towns or in Aboriginal communities, the residents are terrified, concerned and distressed about the welfare of the children, but they are also distressed about their personal safety. Of course, there is also an enormous financial impact when vehicles are being stolen and burnt. Now that it has become widely known that this is a problem, it is also seriously affecting tourism in those areas.

Tourism is one area that has massively suffered. It has not been properly compensated for or dealt with by this government. The tourism sector suffered more than \$3 billion in revenue losses through the pandemic. It is true that some tourist operators did quite well because of the tourists who stayed in the state and spent their money in the state. They were particularly the coastal operators who offer accommodation, meals and the like—restaurants and hotels—at prime coastal locations, whether they are up north or down south. However, losses to many tourism businesses have devastated the lifetime of work families. They have lost everything, yet the government has been really dragged to pay compensation to those businesses. Other members may have a chance to talk about that matter. A \$3 billion loss in revenue has caused enormous hardship.

As I have mentioned, there has been a dramatic increase in violent crime, concerningly, and I empathise with the government on when it can intervene and have an impact and when it cannot. But, very disturbingly, family violence-related assaults and threatening behaviour have increased by 20 per cent. That is 14 per cent above the five-year average, so it is clearly an area that needs specific focus. I hope that this budget contains some specific initiatives to address that, because we all know all violence is terrible, but in a domestic situation that violence is complicated and quite often all the more horrifying.

I turn to housing and rental prices. This is a matter at the feet of this government. As we pointed out, in its first term, this government sold 1 300 public houses. That in itself is not a bad thing. If the government is turning over stock, it is bringing new houses back in and it has a good process to do that before getting rid of those houses, that may well be sensible. I have encouraged the Minister for Planning. I have spoken personally with the Minister for Housing in my own electorate. I am certain that everywhere else there is an ideal opportunity to turn over land—not move things somewhere else, in case that is a suspicion of members on the other side—and develop it in a public-private

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

partnership. That could provide many, many more public houses, but the government could also provide other more general houses on that land at no cost to it at all. I encourage that turnover of land.

The shadow Minister for Housing, Hon Steve Martin from the other place, pointed out that there are 20 fewer public houses available today than in 2020. Again, we hear all these announcements from the Minister for Housing. I know the Minister for Housing is an empathetic person and has been in the position for only a relatively short time, but after five years, this government has collective responsibility for this situation and the fact that we have not seen net improvements in public housing. The minister again makes all these announcements and says that the government has dealt with this problem because it has allocated all this money, but, once again, allocation of money means nothing if the government cannot execute—if it cannot deliver those houses. This has not been brewing since the COVID pandemic; this has been brewing from the start of this government coming in, particularly when it sold 1 300 public houses with no plan to replace them. There was not a superheated market at that stage. The government could have engaged in a much more extensive building program, but it ignored things in an area that we would normally think the Labor Party sees as its turf and is especially empathetic to. Opposed to that, in the two terms of the previous Liberal government, public housing supply was increased by 35 per cent. I hear pejorative comments from the other side from time to time about the performance of the last government. We did care about public housing and we care about people who are doing it tough and need that support.

Now, we hear that there are houses in the pipeline and that things are going to come along, but what is actually being delivered on the ground? I desperately hope the minister is successful; I genuinely do. I know every member in this house does, but none more so than the members on this side. Everyone knows how distressing this is for people. I can tell members that pretty well every night when I go home and lie down in my bed, I spare a thought for people who are just desperate. They do not have a pillow to lie on. They are trying to find somewhere where they do not feel they are going to get assaulted or have their few personal goods stolen, because they have nowhere to stay. I hope the minister is successful, but I am greatly concerned that this government will not deliver, as in other areas. The government talks big in dollars, but it does not deliver when it comes to actually providing those houses.

We hear the government complain about the supply chain challenges, critical workforce shortages and the like. Yes, those things are true. There are supply chain pressures. We know that there are matters in Europe of great concern, obviously in Ukraine, and they have caused a deal of tension. We know that there is an enormous shortage, or at least a pending and growing shortage, of energy supplies around the world because of the move away from fossil fuels and the fact that the shortfall has not been made up by renewables, despite their growth, which I support. Yes, there are shortages, particularly workforce shortages, but what is the government doing about it? If we sit back and say we are offering really good wages or Western Australia is a really good place to live, it is not going to solve the problem. What is the government specifically doing to deal with our workforce shortages? The federal government did an enormous amount to deal with this issue of making sure that we have a workforce. Government members would know about the billions of dollars that the federal government has invested in the apprenticeship program to make sure that apprenticeships continue. We have more apprentices than ever because employers were fully subsidised to continue apprenticeships during the height of the COVID pandemic. The JobKeeper program was an absolutely stunning success in keeping businesses going during especially the very difficult stages at the start of the pandemic. What is the state government doing? Which minister is developing the plans to bring the workforce into this state?

There is global competition for people. That is not a subject I will go on about at length here now, but I think it is entirely predictable that in a decade or two most developed countries will be incentivising migrants as opposed to trying to keep them out. I think there is going to be a fundamental change because of this global shortage of workers. There are parts of the world near us where there are workers available—in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Pacific Islands. There are people who need work, who are unemployed, who would desperately love to work in a place like Western Australia to be able to send money back to their families and raise their standard of living, educate their children, give them good health care and the like. But who is specifically working on that? Where is the target of this government to deliver more workers in this state?

I know people had a bit of merriment about me saying that I get around and that I went to Maylands. I enjoyed going to Maylands, but I do get much further afield than Maylands, which I am sure members know. I can say this genuinely: every single industry I have spoken to, every business I have spoken to, says that the single greatest challenge they face, on top of supply chain challenges and the like, is the supply of workers. The state government can sit back and say, “We think this is a problem, but it is a general problem facing the world and, shucks, it is really tough and that’s the reason we cannot deliver”, or it can actually do something. Unfortunately, during this pandemic, the state government actively restricted workers coming into this state. At the time, I said I could understand why the government would stop just general tourists coming in—people going to twenty-first birthday parties or a buck’s show, even weddings, although I think sometimes that was unnecessary. I could understand at the height of the pandemic the concern about bringing people into the state, but we knew how to bring people in

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

safely. Tens of thousands of people did come—Western Australians returning home, although some were kept out for extended periods—but the workers, seasonal workers and backpackers were kept out. Now we have this enormous deficit contributed to in very large part by the direct action of this government. As I say, I understood and supported the decision around minimising the unnecessary movement of people, but we could have safely brought workers into this state. In fact, over the two years we probably could have brought about 100 000 workers into the state, which would have gone a long way to alleviating the shortages that we have now.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The member has illustrated the problem for the state government. Does she know what other states did? They built their own quarantine centres.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo!

Dr D.J. HONEY: If nothing else, the member for Wanneroo gave me an opportunity to have a drink.

The other states built those centres. The state government could have done something about it. What is it doing now? I will be fascinated to see the Premier's budget tomorrow. I will be fascinated to see the initiatives that will aim to alleviate that worker shortage. Which minister will be personally responsible for making sure that we have the critical workers that we need for this state?

We can look at the social housing program. As I said, we have all these announcements, including the \$319 million social housing economic recovery package. We know that has hit major delays. Only 82 houses have been built, are under construction or are contracted with builders, with just \$25.7 million spent of the \$97 million set aside recently. We have seen social housing demand reach record heights in this state. The figures recently released by the government show that the number of people on the public housing waitlist increased to 33 084 as of 30 April. Of those, 8 105 are priority applicants. That is an increase of 9 156 individuals since June 2020.

We know that the government has spot purchasing available to it, but it dragged its feet on that and purchased only 14 homes. I understand that there has been some acceleration of that program. I wonder whether members opposite realise that that is no solution. As I have said, I have deep empathy for those people who are doing it tough in the community and need somewhere safe and warm to sleep at night and somewhere to cook a meal for their kids. If we are just taking existing homes out of the market, someone else is losing. I have already pointed out that the number of homes that are available for rent or even purchase in the state is extremely low. I will not agonise over that point; I have spoken about it before. Spot purchase of homes may help in the short term to look like the government is doing something about it, but it is simply taking homes out of the market that other people cannot access. It does not deal with the problem. We need to see new homes constructed by the government to deal with that issue.

I was talking about the shortage of homes across the state and the soaring rents we have seen as a result. It is all right having a stimulation package to encourage young home owners, typically, to buy their first home. What initiatives are being taken to increase rental accommodation? For example, are special stamp duty arrangements being developed? We know that many developers would develop rental accommodation with just a bit of incentive. They do not expect to be paid for the whole exercise; they just want a bit of incentive to build to rent to take that pressure off the housing market.

I turn to the recovery funding for cyclone Seroja. The government announced \$104.5 million recovery funding for the victims of the tropical cyclone. I hope the member for North West Central will cover this in some detail. If that is the case, I will not go through that in detail. We understand that the cyclone that ripped through the area was a rare event. The government had to respond. Only around \$1 million of that \$104.5 million has been spent. Some homes are roofless and some residents are living in caravans. I have been through that area. I have seen some excellent footage that the members for Moore and North West Central provided. The better part of \$100 million is sitting in government coffers unspent because the grant processes are not effective. I know that the government has not tried to make that process deliberately hard, but nevertheless it is. What changes are being made to that grant process? What assistance is being provided? I have had very small windows into some of these processes. It might seem simple for people in this house who are used to dealing with bureaucracy, systems and so on, but the processes are daunting for many people. Where is the arm around the shoulder helping people go through that process and assisting? Although the money is available, again, in terms of delivery and execution, if you like, it has not been delivered.

Apparently, more than 70 per cent of grant applications are sitting on someone's desk. They have been received but they have not been processed. Apparently, the processing rate for the largest group of applicants—the recovery and resilience grants—indicates that nine out of every 10 applicants are apparently approved. We have talked about the distress of not having adequate housing. Whether people are living in the end of a shed, a caravan or a house that has no proper roof, it does not seem to be a satisfactory outcome at all. We had the issue of community infrastructure being trashed and the like. The former Minister for Emergency Services visited the area, and I am

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

sure the current minister has visited. He is a very empathetic person. That does not matter if the outcomes that the people need are not being delivered. The estimated damage cost is beyond \$200 million. Again, that is an enormous shortfall in the funding required to deliver everything needed for recovery.

The member for North West Central has raised in this place the issue of accommodation. As a result of that cyclone, a lot of accommodation on farms was destroyed. It was not accommodation that families were living in; other people were living in that accommodation, particularly in areas closer to the major regional centre. Regional workers were living in the area around Geraldton and the major towns. Because they had nowhere to live, they left. We all know that the mining industry and other areas are hungry for workers. This has caused a double impact on the communities: not only do they have all this devastation that they are trying to deal with, but they also lost critical workers in the area because those other houses have been destroyed. Many of those houses were not insured. Again, I would be interested to know the government's plans to ensure that regional workers have accommodation. We know that rental vacancies in most regional centres are effectively zero. The vacancy rate in most regional centres is actually less than one day's turnover of a residence. That is massive. Effectively, people are hot-bedding rentals. Someone moves in on the day that someone else moves out. That is what the percentages correspond to. It means that if someone wants to bring a worker into a regional area—all of us, particularly my colleagues and I on this side, are about improving development in regional areas—there is effectively literally nowhere for anyone to live in those regional communities.

Let us look at the approval of various grants. For the recovery and resilience grant, 328 applications were received, and 291 are awaiting approval; for the heritage grants, 40 were received, with 34 awaiting approval; for the small business grants, 50 were received, with one awaiting approval; and for the primary producer grant, 67 were received, with 17 awaiting approval, so that has done relatively better, along with the previous one. Out of the total of 485 applications received, 334 are awaiting approval.

We heard a little about the coming topic today in Parliament, with the Premier boasting about the forestry decision. It was a disgraceful decision to shut down the forest industry in what was only a third of the forest. This has been a topic in this place before. Recently in my travels beyond Maylands, I spent time in Manjimup and Pemberton.

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I was; it was a very well attended public meeting at which I was invited to participate extensively, and I was grateful for that opportunity. We see with that forestry decision not only the destruction of an industry and the destruction of jobs, going to the core of those wonderful towns and communities, but also a massive issue pending with bushfire risk. Because of mismanagement and the lack of thinning in the replanted previously harvested areas, there exists the potential for the death of thousands of hectares of forest. Essentially, so many trees have been planted that they have not been thinned. If a drought occurs in that area, which inevitably it will, large sections of that replanted forest will die. I was informed by people in that region that watertables in the area have gone down as much as nine metres or more. That means that if there is a drought, thousands of hectares of forest will die because it has not been thinned. There is a complete misunderstanding of how that forest should be managed by this government. Everyone likes trees. That forest was managed by Aboriginal people before European settlement and continued to be managed by Europeans post that settlement. In both cases, Aboriginal people and European settlers thinned that forest and maintained the health of the forest. That has stopped in large part in that area. It is an issue I will not hold up in debate here, but something the government needs to consider seriously. It has not only destroyed an industry, but also created an enormous fire risk around those communities through the mismanagement of the forest and, in fact, large areas of that forest are at enormous risk of dying. It all seems to be based on the wrongheaded philosophy of the government that a forest cannot be harvested sustainably.

We saw the great announcement of the \$50 million transition package. If I were a member of the Australian Workers' Union, I would be pretty happy. It has been given a \$200 000 gift by the state government. I thought it was unique and interesting that it had to go out and say what the government was offering, and also that the government would be giving money directly to a union. I like the AWU. I have said in this place before that it is a union that I have some time for. I am sure it was very glad to get a gift of \$200 000. As we have seen with that package, it is fair to say that it is generous for workers, despite that many of those workers will probably now leave those communities and move into mining and other areas. Ministers were down there celebrating the announcement of millions of dollars of expenditure on new mills. What do we see two years later? The government is shutting down that industry arbitrarily with no compensation. We see a lot of focus on that. We have talked in this house today about the extension of planning powers. One of the reasons was that it would be unfair to developers who invested money in a project and have not been able to progress with it. The government says that it needs to compensate them. However, there must be some evil associated with millers because what we see is completely, totally, utterly inadequate compensation. These are just families. In the large part, they are not conglomerates. They are really wonderful people. When one talks to them, one sees that they are utterly distressed. Their lifetime investment has been destroyed. They have lost everything. This government made the decision, when in good faith those people believed they had

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

20 years or more, based on the renewal with the federal government of the forestry agreement and statements from Labor ministers. All of a sudden, they were destroyed without any adequate compensation. It is a travesty and an injustice that no consultation occurred.

I know my colleagues are anxious to make contributions to the debate tonight as well—I am keen that they have the opportunity to do that—but I want to touch on a few other areas. We have spoken a little today about delivery. The Minister for Culture and the Arts boasted about his star power. We all admire his charisma. Nevertheless, he was in Fremantle promoting a \$100 million film studio. It was an election commitment, but what did we see? It was a glossy election commitment. Clearly, proper due diligence had not been done. When that was announced, people came to me with a raft of reasons, including interaction with the currently operating port, that would make it a completely unsuitable location for that development, yet the government went ahead with that election announcement and the project fell completely flat on its face when all the facts should have been known.

I have touched on an area today that I will reinforce with a graph. As I said, there is a major problem with this government's execution. More so than at any time in the last decade or more, there is a complete inability to deliver capital projects. That inability fits with the theme I have been talking about from the start of this—an utter inability to deliver. The government has a belief that announcing something is doing something. Announcing something might be good for the cameras and it might be good for the hundreds of media people who are employed in the ministers' offices or the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and give them something to do. They can organise a glossy and line up the ministers in their fluoro vests with someone standing beside them, but the government has a complete inability to deliver.

I have here some data in graphical form. In this graph, the blue line is the promised spend and the orange dotted line is the delivery of this Labor government. That is a graph of a complete failure to deliver capital spend in this state. I will not go through the entire list, but in 2020–21, a commitment was made of just over \$7.5 billion. The actual result was \$5.8 billion uncommitted and I am sure there was some bringing forward of major capital items and the like to even achieve that result. The government has achieved around only \$5 billion across its term in government—perhaps a tad more than that. The 2021–22 budget contained an \$8 billion commitment on capital projects. I wait with bated breath for the release of the 2022–23 budget after the Premier gives his speech tomorrow. At the moment, there is a \$4.2 billion credibility gap between what the government has promised and what it has delivered. I asked the Premier a question on this today because this is an important matter: Why create expectations? Why mislead people that the government is going to deliver things that it cannot? As I mentioned before, the Minister for Planning, who has been completely unable to deliver any project on time or on budget, announced a \$2 billion spend on the Armadale line. We know that that cannot possibly be achieved on the horizon to 2024, which is the promise. It was promised that at the start of 2024, that project would be completed. Let us wait and see. That is this project, and we heard from the Premier today that more capital projects will be announced, but there is an enormous gap. There is a \$4.2 billion credibility gap for this Labor government—the gap between what it promised and what it delivered.

I will conclude now and try to provide my colleagues with time to make a contribution. We hear all the announcements from the Minister for Transport about Metronet and all the things that will be done, but the government is not delivering. Major problems are facing the state of Western Australia. Our hospital system has been in crisis for years under this government. This government was handed a Rolls–Royce hospital system and it has done nothing to expand it ever since. We have had a housing crisis for the duration of this government's term and the government has failed to fix it. This state now has a workforce shortage. That is affecting every part of this state, whether it is health, housing or other areas. The government has failed to deliver for the state of Western Australia. Making announcements and coming out with glossy brochures is not doing work. This government is not doing the work that is needed to look after the people of Western Australia.

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [4.50 pm]: I would like to add to the contributions to this motion, which was originally to have been moved by the Leader of the Opposition and has been carried on by the Leader of the Liberal Party. I want to speak on a few topics that were touched on by the Liberal leader, particularly tourism. We often hear in this place about how wonderfully tourism is going in Western Australia. I want to give the chamber some reality about where tourism is sitting, particularly in the coastal towns from Kalbarri all the way up to Exmouth and, obviously, also the Kimberley. Although there have been some hotspots over the last couple of years, along with those hotspots has been a huge amount of pressure. Some of those pressures are the problems with COVID restrictions and staff absenteeism, and the lack of sufficient housing and workers' accommodation. Those problems are plaguing small businesses right across this state. The strain that is being placed on many small businesses in regional areas is highlighted by the fact that some are struggling to remain sustainable.

We need to remember that although there is a seemingly skewed view that everyone has been able to sail along as per normal, the reality for many people, particularly in the events, tourism and hospitality industries, is that since the first quarter of 2020, they have been buried in accrued debt, along with increasing costs. Businesses are also

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

facing the enormous challenge of not being able to source staff, and therefore often having to reduce their trading hours, which is impacting their income. The staffing problem, along with the impacts of the COVID restrictions and mandates, are stifling trade and creating a false sense of prosperity for many businesses. In many cases, small businesses seem to be bearing the lion's share of the impacts of COVID-19. The ongoing workers' accommodation shortages have resulted in operators having to work above and beyond what is deemed to be reasonable, with many working between 60 and 100 hours a week just to remain open. They are working harder for less, or for nothing in a lot of cases. Many businesses that have battled through are now facing the prospect of having to shut down, potentially leaving visitors without the services and accommodation that they need. That is placing them in a difficult financial position. It is also jeopardising the tourism brand in the regions.

We hear a lot about the issues that the government appears to be tackling, particularly when it comes to workers' accommodation. The government has fulfilled its election obligation to go out for expressions of interest to build the workers' accommodation that is desperately needed in Exmouth and Kalbarri. However, the reality is that we are talking about sites that will need a considerable amount of work to provide power, water and landfill in order to make them viable for private businesses to build that much needed workers' accommodation. Tomorrow, we will see the outcome of what the government's budget surplus will be. It will be billions of dollars. The previous year it was also billions of dollars. It would cost in the order of \$3 million to \$5 million to build the 200-bed workers' accommodation facility that is desperately needed by businesses in places like Exmouth and Kalbarri. I am glad that the former Minister for Emergency Services is in the chamber. The minister knows Kalbarri well. He has visited it several times. I think the community appreciates the fact that the former minister has taken a keen interest in its recovery from cyclone Seroja. However, we need only look at what has hit the ground—or rather what has not hit the ground. We hear a lot about the \$114 million that has been provided for the areas impacted by that cyclone. That is the biggest amount of money that has ever been allocated in this state for a natural disaster. The Leader of the Liberal Party touched on the fact that only a small proportion of that money has been allocated so far. There are still tarps around the houses in Kalbarri because of the inability to get people to work on those houses. Anyone who has driven early in the morning between Geraldton and Kalbarri, or the other way around, will know that it is peak hour traffic on the highway. That is because Geraldton is full of people who are working in the midwest to fix the houses and property that were damaged by the cyclone. Those people are taking up accommodation that is much needed to build tourism in places like Geraldton and Kalbarri.

That is without the effect of the insurance situation. I will touch on that more a bit later. A lot of companies are not coming to an agreement to settle insurance claims. People who have an adventure tourism or horseriding business are finding that insurance costs have skyrocketed to the point that insurance is not affordable, or that the conditions that are attached to them being able to operate their business are too onerous. When that is combined with the worker shortage, it often makes it impossible for them to continue to operate. That is what we are seeing in places like Kalbarri. The problem of being able to obtain insurance is escalating. That is not the case just in Western Australia. Around this country, the ability to obtain insurance is becoming a major hurdle in being able to operate a business, whether that is for a caravan park operator, a hotel or motel operator, or a person who is hiring out canoes, boats or a horse trailer. Insurance is impacting everyone.

Perhaps the Western Australian government and the Australian government should get together at a Council of Australian Governments meeting to see how we can assist businesses in WA and Australia to cover these rising insurance costs, and, more importantly, in many cases to even get insurance. The government should perhaps look at the New Zealand model. The reason that wise New Zealand is the adventure capital of the world is because the government offers that insurance. That decision was made back in, I think, 1973 and enacted in 1975. Australia was meant to actually be part of it, but obviously other issues at that time in 1975 prevented the government from going down the same path as New Zealand. Hence we are now in this predicament whereby a lot of business cannot get insurance or pay through the nose for it. For Kalbarri, it has been over 12 months since the state government made a commitment to build workers' accommodation for the workers to help rebuild Kalbarri, but we have still not seen anything. The government has now taken some rooms in an accommodation provider to assist in getting workers in Kalbarri. That then takes away tourists' ability to come and stay if the rooms are being taken up by workers rebuilding Kalbarri. It is a real catch 22. As the former Minister for Emergency Services would know, tourists still need to go to Kalbarri to help those businesses survive, but we also need rooms for the workers to fix those houses and businesses.

The government should have immediately worked out how they could put temporary accommodation in Kalbarri to assist the rebuild. However, some 12 months on, the government has gone out to tender. I have heard that quite a bit of site works is needed to make it a viable for a business to build workers' accommodation in Kalbarri. It is very similar to what is happening in Exmouth. The government needs to come to the party and realise that this is a gap and a need. The only way it will be filled and government will support small businesses in regional communities is to invest. We went through that when we were in government with Coral Bay, Karratha and Port Hedland. We knew that the government needed to plan the space to ensure that we could build viable workers' accommodation.

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

Workers' accommodation, basically, is built for workers in the tourism industry—that is, lower level paid employees. Therefore, we need rents and leases that are comparable to the wage for which they operate and the hours they work throughout the week. That is why the government needs to play in that space. Regional towns and communities like Kalbarri, Shark Bay or Exmouth having that workers' accommodation will only build the tourism product from which the state benefits. That leads to further investment by businesses.

It is great to build workers' accommodation for these towns, but the big issue is no staff. Businesses are forced to reduce workers' hours significantly, which impacts on income streams and their ability to remain both open and sustainable. We have seen that over the last two years when businesses have been unable to operate. The pressure of not having the workers has led to a lot of businesses closing for one or two days a week in our tourism hotspots, or huge lines of people trying to buy breakfast, lunch or dinner because the businesses do not have the staff to cater for the number of tourists. It can take a very long time for someone to get into their hotel room because the hotel just does not have the cleaners or the administration staff to check people in. These are all the pressures that businesses in Western Australia are facing because of the lack of workers. That is right across the board, but particularly enhanced in the hotspots in regional communities where the places we can go—cafes, restaurants, pubs, hotels, you name it—are limited.

If 25 000 people are in a place like Exmouth on one particular day, or 6 500 in Coral Bay, and the infrastructure and the human resources to support businesses are not there, a huge amount of strain is put on businesses. It is extremely hard to address, but we have to try and address it and entice people to get into the tourism industry and hospitality sector. I do not think the government has been able to capture that. It has hoped that opening state and international borders would mean an influx of workers. We have not seen that to date. What is the campaign to entice to Western Australia those backpackers who want to travel around and work? More importantly, how can the state government lobby the federal government to change the number of hours that our retirees can work to assist our businesses? The state needs to lobby the federal government to get that changed so that retirees can offer a couple of hours a day without affecting their retiree status or their pension. That would have an impact.

I do not think there is one silver bullet; there are many silver bullets. This is all contributing to mental health issues with increased stress and anxiety for businesses and operators. That is a cost to small businesses with many operators working extensive hours but still needing to reduce trading hours due to the lack of staff or the impacts of COVID-19, equating to less potential income and many suffering severe burnout from working 60 to 100 hours a week.

Over the last couple of years, I have raised in this place the issue of crime and its impact across this state. In the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, midwest or Northbridge, crime is out of control. We hear about these operations that the government is performing, and, yes, they do work. Having the police force go en masse to places like the Kimberley does reduce crime, but it is not a long-term solution. The questions that Parliament should be asking are: Why are these kids roaming the streets? Why are the youth committing these crimes? The question we should be asking is: why? When we know the answer, we should ask: What will we do to fix that problem? Why is it so bad to be at home that they are better off wandering the streets and committing crime, which is having a huge impact on our businesses? Businesses are getting broke into not one, not twice, but dozens of times. People's cars are being stolen. People do not even claim insurance anymore because of the cost or because it is affecting their premiums.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The cost of crime on our businesses throughout regional WA is shutting down businesses. Crime affects the ability of businesses in Kununurra or Halls Creek or Derby or Newman or Carnarvon to get staff. No-one wants to move to these towns because crime is through the roof. People do not want to get their car broken into when they go to work and they do not want their home broken into when they are at work. Crime is also impacting on tourists, who are avoiding these towns because of the fear of losing a bike or a tyre off the back of their camper trailer or being broken into and losing their bags. It is affecting government services because employees do not want to go to these towns because they do not want to go to a town or are constantly fearful living in their homes. Even police officers do not want to leave their partner and child at home while they do the night shift or early morning shift because they are fearful.

A perfect storm is occurring at the moment. I have raised in this house many times the reasons for that. The questions that the Minister for Community Services, the Minister for Police, the Attorney General and the Premier are not asking are: Why is this occurring? Why are youths wandering the streets and committing crimes? Why are youths happy to go to Banksia Hill Detention Centre? Is it because they will have a safe bed and the certainty that they will get three square meals? Is it because there are rules for them while in detention, which they do not have at home? Why is this the case? The government needs to have an open and honest conversation with the community, Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal people, because it is, unfortunately, predominantly an Aboriginal issue in regional Western Australia. There are no two ways about it. Statistics show that that is the case. How do we sit down and work out why? Once we work out why, we can work out the solutions and start to have an impact on the

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

ability of small businesses, tourism businesses and communities to function properly. It is very hard when 50 to 80 per cent of children in some towns have foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. How does a town operate? How do these children go to school? How do teachers teach kids who have FASD? I would say that it is impossible, unless the education system is tailored to the community that has these issues, which is not the case because they are out of sight and out of mind. If the people in metropolitan Perth knew what was going on in regional communities, there would be an outcry. It is no different from the plight of people we see in other parts of the world. We have Third World conditions here that are impacting on our regional communities.

We hear a lot about the challenges from cost-of-living stresses. Small businesses are struggling to cope with the rising cost of doing business, particularly in regional areas, including trying to compete with like businesses in the metropolitan area that are not exposed to the same level of costs. These businesses have increased freight, fuel and travel costs. We hear a lot about fuel costs. People can pay \$2.15 a litre for fuel in Carnarvon or \$3 a litre at Nanutarra Roadhouse. I would hate to think what people who live on the lands have to pay, because I used to complain when fuel was \$2.50 a few years ago. There are pressures from the increase in the cost of goods, the increase in rates and rents and the increase in water costs. It is a necessity of life and businesses do not have the ability to shop around for a better price. Many regional small businesses struggle with the unsustainable cost of water, which in many cases is up to three and a half times the cost of water in the metropolitan area, which is about \$2.50 a kilolitre versus about \$9 a kilolitre.

This is unsustainable and uncompetitive. The problem is that when governments freeze these costs, there will always be a rise, and that is what we have seen—a rise in the cost, not to mention the toilet tax. The toilet tax is a cost that is impacting on hotels and motels. If a business has more than three toilets, it gets hit with the toilet tax, and that is on top of the cost of the water that is used for flushing. In the hotels in some smaller regional centres, it could cost \$4 500 a month just to have a toilet, and that does not include the water that goes in and out. As I said, they are paying up to three times as much as businesses in Perth are paying. I would hate to think what the hotels in Perth had to pay when the occupancy rate was 10 per cent. A toilet tax is a fixed cost that impacts on their ability to upgrade their facilities. It would be interesting to see whether the changes that the government is proposing will have a positive impact on hotels and motels, because they have been impacted by short-stay accommodation providers such as Airbnb coming onto the scene. Is there not an ability for the government to look at the policies for hotels and motels and to consider minimising their taxes and overheads, including the toilet tax, to make them more competitive? I think we all agree that there need to be some criteria for short-stay accommodation providers, but let us look at the overheads of businesses and at the policies of government so that we can make those businesses more sustainable into the future.

I have mentioned insurance, which is a huge issue. The state needs to take this up with the federal government and change the way that insurance is provided in this country. Not only is the climate and natural disasters affecting insurance rates for businesses, but also there is a double whammy for those people who own a home and a business, because they are getting the increase at a home level as well. Particularly in the north west—I would say it is from Kalbarri, so it is applying from below the twenty-sixth parallel—it is virtually out of reach for many people to insure their home, let alone their business.

Ongoing liquor restrictions seem to be the norm these days. Weekend after weekend, there are liquor restrictions. I am very supportive of trying to curb antisocial behaviour caused by the consumption of alcohol, but there has to be a better way. It is not fair on tourists, it is not fair on businesses and it is not fair on the 99 per cent of the community who do the right thing. Let us expand the banned drinkers register and use it as a big stick. Let us allow the police, the housing sector, the health sector and drug and alcohol clinics to put people on the banned drinkers register. The reason that the banned drinkers register does not work is that there is no-one on it. It is very difficult to put people on it. This is an opportunity for the government to use it. If someone is at home and they do not know where their kids are because they are roaming the street, they should be put on the banned drinkers register. There needs to be a consequence for their lack of action. There needs to be an approach that targets those who need to be targeted to start to curb the crime that is going on.

It is not all beer and skittles for small businesses. Businesses are in a fragile position. Some businesses have done well—do not get me wrong—but a lot of businesses are under a huge amount of pressure. That hurts our tourism product at the end of the day because they cannot provide meals or ensure that people are checked in on time. They simply do not have the staff, especially because of COVID and the close contacts situation. It is having an impact on the ability of businesses to operate.

I have not had a chance to talk about health, but I am sure that the shadow Minister for Health will fly the flag about the need. We hear a lot about health. I have done the right thing and written to the Minister for Health about the issues that are impacting my community, and one of the big issues is the inability of women to have children in our regional hospitals. Currently in Carnarvon, women are pushed down to Geraldton or Perth to have their baby, when fuel costs are through the roof and the patient assisted travel scheme has not gone up. It is a struggle to be in Perth for three or four weeks prior to the birth of your child, and the costs associated with that, simply because you cannot have your baby

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

in Carnarvon. The government needs to change that, because we need to grow our community. COVID has presented a great opportunity to grow regional Western Australia. We have been taught that we can work anywhere and, more importantly, people want to be in the great outdoors. That is something that Western Australia has got plenty of.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) [5.20 pm]: I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Liberal Party —

That this house condemns the McGowan Labor government's failure to deliver essential services and infrastructure while accumulating a massive budget surplus

I certainly support the remarks made by those in the opposition team on this issue. I could touch on a range of issues but I will start by focusing on the crisis that our health system faces at a time when we are seeing a significantly lower number of hospitalisations than was anticipated during the COVID pandemic—in particular, the number of intensive care unit patients is significantly less than the modelling showed and the figures the McGowan government had anticipated. I understand there were eight patients with COVID in ICU yesterday and six the day before, which is certainly well down from the number the McGowan government had anticipated. I remember the comments made by the former Minister for Health when the government was first imposing restrictions in the very early stages of the pandemic and the promise that this government made to the people of Western Australia to ensure that our hospital system would be battle-ready for COVID. That could not be further from the truth. We have seen the Western Australian community step up and support the vaccination roll out; and our small businesses also stepped up and immediately supported those restrictions. Where we have seen a failure is the McGowan government's opportunity to properly invest in our hospital system.

As I have stated in this house before, this is not a new issue. Going into the pandemic, Western Australia's health system was already at capacity. This government has made much of its financial credentials—cost cutting, apparently to balance the books, but those cuts have not come with the necessary reforms. Today, during question time, I pointed to the statistic that we had the lowest number of publicly available beds per capita. The minister's strange response was to counter that by saying that our state is paying the most for those beds. Of course, that is a very different comment from the one that I made, which was the lack of capacity in our hospital system, not how much we are paying for those beds.

I will touch on the issues around efficiency later, but they point to the McGowan government's failure to properly implement the reforms that the former Minister for Health and the former Leader of the Opposition, now the Premier, had talked about in opposition about the sustainable health review. This government made much about the cuts to health it had made in its first term of government. It was very highly critical of the amount that the former Liberal–National government spent and invested in the health budget. Cutting corners does not come without consequences. The health portfolio is a perfect example of this, particularly given the significance and importance of health. As outlined consistently by the Australian Medical Association, the WA government's chronic underfunding of the health system has created vulnerabilities that have plagued the health system in recent years. The AMA's report card in 2022 shows that from 2008–09 to 2013–14, state government funding was up by 2.97 per cent, but from 2014–15 to 2019–20, spending went backwards by 9.6 per cent. It is interesting to note that the government's under-resourcing was highlighted by the Auditor General in part 2 of her report into the COVID impacts on state government entities.

The report states —

Total Health spending increased by 3.4% in 2019–20 and by 8.6% in 2020–21, compared with 1.5% in pre-pandemic 2018–19 with additional costs coming from demands for personal protective equipment, extra staff, COVID-19 testing and vaccines, and the hotel quarantine and security program.

The minister pointed to an increase in health spending over the pandemic years, but it is clear that the investment and that uptick has not been growing capacity in the system. We know that from the statistics that have been presented and the fact that WA has the lowest number of public beds in the country per capita. A 1.5 per cent increase in both 2017–18 and 2018–19 just keeps up with inflation and does nothing to provide for additional service delivery or an increase in demand. As I pointed out yesterday in the matter of public interest debate, we have seen significant cost cutting across the board in the commitments that this government made. I touched on the Joondalup Health Campus, which was meant to have had eight operating theatres but the government has committed to deliver only one. The medihotel that was promised to free up expensive high-care hospital beds is now just a vision; and, of course, the medihotel attached to Fiona Stanley hospital will now be run by the Aegis Aged Care Group and is yet to be completed, despite changes again and again to time frames. I also touched on the fact that the only medihotel this government has delivered to free up and provide capacity in the system has been four beds at Royal Perth Hospital. How extraordinary for a government that has been awash with iron ore revenue that we have seen such a lacklustre approach to providing bed capacity in this state. This has led to our health system being on its knees.

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

The ramping figures certainly speak for themselves. This is not a COVID issue; this is an issue that had increased significantly before the McGowan government was first faced with the COVID pandemic—in fact, from 2018. What was extraordinary and so disappointing about last year's budget during the pandemic was the increase of just 1.438 per cent in the operational expenditure. As the Australian Medical Association stated at the time, this was a functional cut to the budget, especially given that the consumer price index rate rose at about 1.8 per cent and we expected demand to significantly grow between what was anticipated to be three to four per cent per year. In those figures, we were seeing effective cuts to health, which was something that everyone but this government recognised. It is unfortunate that the Western Australian patients and health workers have inevitably paid the price for those cuts to health.

The government has also cut corners and has not delivered on projects. I have touched on the issue of the beds for Joondalup Health Campus and Fiona Stanley Hospital. Those beds would have been very much welcome, but, unfortunately, they still have not been delivered after five years of a McGowan government. It was extraordinary to see that in addition to the effective operational cut to health announced in last year's budget, we also saw another election commitment after the budget had been delivered for an additional 530 beds. It was as though the government had made an eleventh-hour commitment to bed capacity and then realised that it had a problem, so it made extra funding available in November for an additional 530 beds. In this place, we have spoken a lot about those beds and about bed capacity in hospitals. Today I asked the Minister for Health a question on that, raising concern that those beds will not be delivered until October this year, so they will not go online until the third year into the pandemic—potentially after the COVID peak has passed. It is anticipated that the peak has passed or has almost passed. Certainly, this delivery will be well after the population is vaccinated as well as after the winter flu season. What is extraordinary about this commitment of 530 beds, which the government made late last year at the eleventh hour, is that 46 of those beds will be leased in private hospitals. We know that the government has an issue with the private sector and its delivery when it comes to health, so it is extraordinary that it has had to resort to this situation. However, it is worth pointing out that, again, those 530 beds will not be delivered until October this year, well after the peak of the COVID crisis and the winter flu season. Obviously, this is a significant concern when we consider the extraordinary efforts that St John Ambulance made recently in making the call, with one in four ambulances ramped outside our hospitals in the wake of significant bed capacity issues across our health system, to encourage people not to call 000 because they may not get the response they would usually receive. We know that that is an outcome of the ambulance ramping that we have seen across our health system.

The Minister for Health referred to Dr Peter Allely, the WA faculty chair of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, and his support for the funding for the new ministerial task force. As I have said on the public record and in response to this, we certainly welcome any investment in the health crisis. We welcome any acknowledgement that this is a crisis and that the focus needs to be on what is required. It is also worth pointing out that Dr Allely acknowledged the bed block that we are seeing in the health system. Today I pointed out his comments to the health minister, and I will repeat them for *Hansard*. Dr Allely states —

We're incredibly busy ... we're incredibly full, would be the best way of describing it ... Our actual presentations, if you were to go on numbers of patients presenting every day to emergency departments, are actually down ... over the last couple of months. Maybe 10 or fifteen per cent. But ... we're basically stuck with emergency departments full of people that have already been admitted, waiting for beds upstairs. And that's got a lead-on effect if we've got ... a 30-bed emergency department with 35 people waiting for beds upstairs. We're literally minus five beds ... to see and assess the new person that turns up to the emergency department. And ... that's the block, essentially.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L. METTAM: The government can spin this anyway it likes, but it is there in black and white. We are seeing significant capacity issues and there is every reason for them. Government members have dragged their feet in acknowledging that there actually was an issue. They sat on their hands for five years, ignoring the ramping crisis, and when COVID hit, they delayed the delivery of the additional beds, which led to the situation in which the beds will not come online until October this year, and, desperately, some beds will be leased in private hospitals as well.

Other members in this place have talked about the fact that it is not only the metropolitan hospitals that are in crisis. There were 100 code yellow internal emergencies due to capacity issues across our health system last year. We are seeing significant levels of ambulance ramping in regional WA, and I have pointed to those numbers. The government has failed in its delivery of hospital and health infrastructure in our regions as well. We welcome the McGowan government's recent announcement about the upgrades at Geraldton Health Campus. Those upgrades are certainly required for an expanded emergency department and a new ICU. The costs have now gone up by about \$50 million because of the increased cost of construction. The Mayor of the City of Greater Geraldton, Shane Van Styn, put it quite well —

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

“They promised the hospital five years ago before costs went up, before COVID, before the skills crisis, it was all there and it just didn’t happen,” he said.

He also said —

... last week’s funding pledge was the 16th made in the five years since the State first committed to the upgrades and it was now time to get tools on the ground.

That could not be closer to the truth. When I asked a question in this place to the minister about when the much-needed upgrade to Geraldton Health Campus would be delivered, she stated that it would be after the tender process had been undertaken, which is certainly not much of an answer. We point to the fact that, very much like the task force that has now been established into emergency department reform, which the minister is overseeing, the commitment to upgrade Geraldton hospital has now been made for the sixteenth time in five years. There is still nothing more than promises without any clear time frames for when these important projects will be delivered.

Spare a thought for the Margaret River community and those in the surrounding area including Augusta who rely on Margaret River Hospital. The government’s own WA Country Health Service has stated that there is a great need for upgrades in Margaret River. It was recognised as a priority by WACHS but, unfortunately, it has not been given the same level of focus by the McGowan government. Calls from health workers, doctors and members of the local community about the Margaret River campus have fallen on deaf ears. We urge the McGowan government to consider it and we hope some valuable commitments will be made to that area. The Margaret River community understandably feels abandoned, not just by the lack of necessary upgrades that had been highlighted as a priority for that hospital, which has seen an effective cut of services, but also by other decisions that have been made in the Margaret River community as well. For example, the local community coordinator role in Margaret River was trialled and then cut. It provided valuable support for the homeless and for those facing mental health challenges in that community. That role was filling a gap in services in the community. It has left a significant gap in services in Margaret River. Together with the lack of upgrades and lack of focus on the Margaret River Hospital, it has left that community reeling.

Also in relation to health, I asked the Minister for Health a question in this place today on the new task force that she is overseeing. I pointed to another review that this government is apparently undertaking: the sustainable health review. The objectives of the sustainable health review were to drive a cultural shift from an acute-based hospital system to one with a strong focus on prevention and seamless access to services to alleviate the pressure on our emergency departments. This is a clear objective of the review that was undertaken in 2019, some three years ago, and the report. The review created an independent oversight committee. It is independently chaired and appointed and has a role to report to the minister. We raised some concerns in this place last year about where that review was at. The review was well supported by the health sector and by the health workers whom the opposition is always supporting. It was underpinned by the fact that about 190 000 of the one million attendances in emergency departments in 2017–18 could have potentially been avoided with treatment in primary or community settings. It was underpinned by statistics that 90 per cent of people attending an ED for acute mental health care in 2016–17 waited for up to 15 hours before progressing to a suitable care environment and seven per cent of all hospitalisations, which cost an estimated \$368 million, were potentially preventable with appropriate care and management outside of hospitals. With this in mind, the review stated what was required for the sustainability of Western Australia’s health system. It points to an investment in prevention and increasing the prevention budget to at least five per cent of total health expenditure by 2029. Evidence shows that prevention, early intervention and community support have economic benefits. That was what underpinned the strategy as well as the obvious health benefits and the sustainability of the health system.

Although the minister stated today, and the Premier has said it before, that we are paying more per capita than any other state for the beds that we have, I point them to a review that this government has undertaken, which was completed in 2019 and deserves the attention of this government. We have a health system that has a focus on acute care but, despite what was outlined in the review, 1.6 per cent of total expenditure is spent on prevention activities, which would support some of what has already been outlined in this report. If we saw investment in prevention increase from \$140 million to \$440 million a year, in last year’s terms, to reach a five per cent threshold, it would represent a \$300 million shortfall each year in prevention funding, or \$1.2 billion over a four-year budget cycle. Unfortunately, on face value that would be a cost to the McGowan government that it is unwilling to shoulder. Over three successive budgets covering a five-year period from 2019–20 to 2024–25, the government has announced funding totalling \$100 million for the sustainable health review implementation. It is a long way short of what is required for prevention, let alone the other 29 areas addressed in the report’s recommendations.

As the Commissioner for Children and Young People recently commented in relation to the Ministerial Taskforce into Public Mental Health Services for Infants, Children and Adolescents Aged 0–18 Years in Western Australia, there is no shortage of comprehensive reports. She was talking about the mental health space. When we look at health, there is a blueprint for this government to also address other issues of prevention. As I pointed out, the

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

government has failed to deliver and provide necessary capacity to enable business as usual in our hospital system, let alone with six or eight COVID cases in ICU. This government has also dropped the ball on its promises to address the sustainability of the health system. That was pointed out last year after it made its budget commitments. We certainly look forward to seeing what measures will be undertaken in tomorrow's budget.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [5.50 pm]: I also rise to support the member for Cottesloe's motion that this house condemns the McGowan Labor government for failing to deliver essential services and infrastructure while accumulating a massive budget surplus. I would like to reflect on the past week. I feel that a disturbing trend has emerged since the March 2021 election. I think it began with the electoral reform legislation coming through. As we have said many times, the Premier stood up during the election campaign saying that electoral reform was not on the agenda. The first order of business from the Attorney General and the Premier was electoral reform, which involved removing regional representation in the upper house. I think that was one of the darkest days in the history of the WA Parliament. It demonstrated a pattern that we have seen evolving over the last five years of government.

I said yesterday that the rhetoric has changed. We used to hear that WA was \$40 billion in debt and so on and so forth, but lately we have seen this pattern changing with a government that seems to want to ram every piece of legislation through, even though it cannot justify the reason for it or why it is so important. We saw that again yesterday with the response to the introduction of legislation relating to emergency management. When we were notified, the Premier signposted that that legislation would be introduced on 5 April. It waited until the day before Parliament started to notify us that a briefing would be held three hours before Parliament started on Tuesday. We are seeing a pattern. I am trying to work out what is motivating the Premier and the government to bring in bills of this nature, considering them urgent and not giving the opposition or the people of WA time to scrutinise them. What does he think of the people around him? What does he think of those advising him or is it a case of whatever he says goes? That seems to be the pattern that has developed. When we look back to the last time the Emergency Management Amendment (COVID-19 Response) Bill was introduced by the previous Minister for Emergency Services, he pointed out —

We will now be able to gain far more personal detail about a person's lifestyle, background and health.

The minister admitted that the provisions in the Emergency Management Act and the Public Health Act were draconian. If we google the word "draconian", it says that they are laws that are really harsh and repressive. The current Premier and the current Minister for Emergency Services feel that their ability to use these harsh and oppressive laws is acceptable. Is it right that we should have to question the intent of this government? That was the comment of the previous minister from the *Hansard* of 31 March 2020 about gathering those details and being harsh and oppressive. I think we saw another demonstration of it this week. This legislation is about command and control. It is about the ability of the Premier and the government. They have a taste for commanding and controlling the people of WA. I say to the member for Cottesloe that they have a taste for it and they do not want to let it go. That is what we are seeing.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown up a raft of situations. We supported those early bills. We supported the Minister for Transport; Planning when she originally said that legislation would be introduced relating to the state development assessment unit. Somehow, it became urgent for that to be revisited this week. That is the sort of pattern that has developed—no debate, no ability to scrutinise and no ability to talk to the stakeholders or the people of WA. That concerns me. As I said, I wanted to reflect on the past week.

If I move on to the health scenario, the shadow Minister for Health certainly laid out some of the problems that have been occurring within health. In one of its statements the other day, the Australian Medical Association warned the government of what will occur in the future. There is an absolute failure by this government to cope with the problems of capacity in our health system. The AMA called it wilful blindness of the government when referring to the problem in the health system. That was from 6PR on Tuesday, 10 May. That is exactly what we are seeing. The night before last, I was watching the Channel Seven news. A reporter said that on that day more ambulance ramping hours were recorded than for the whole of April 2017. That is just one day. We are seeing this in the headlines every day—top-down management of the health system has failed this sector. As the shadow Minister for Health pointed out, we have operational problems and we have infrastructure problems. That is what this motion is all about. It is about whether this government can put those infrastructure measures in place and manage the budget properly. As the member for Cottesloe said, can the government deliver it? There is no point talking about \$8 billion worth of expenditure if it can deliver only \$4 billion. The government needs to be a little more realistic about what it can deliver and what is happening in the economy at the moment.

One of the issues, aside from health, has to be social and public housing. We need to see more than the reactionary policy development, with media statements announcing millions of dollars, which are having a negligible impact on the housing crisis because we have a scenario in which many houses in the bush and in the metropolitan area are in need of repair. They are in need of a coherent plan for maintenance and repair. I have raised this with the

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

Minister for Housing many times. It is so important to have social housing in our regional areas repaired and maintained by local companies that are easily accessible, not by someone who is four hours away in Albany, Bunbury or Geraldton, if people happen to live in the wheatbelt. We need someone who will fix it and get straight onto it, to help our social housing clients. In a town in my electorate, a couple of houses are being fixed up, but over 100 people are on the waiting list. One of those people waiting for a house is living in a garden shed at the back of a friend's house. That is a real worry with winter coming.

I found it quite interesting to hear the announcement by the Minister for Environment about electric charging stations and electric cars. That was fantastic. I think we all agree that we have no problem with electric vehicles.

Mr V.A. Catania: It was our policy from the last election.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Absolutely. But what he failed to announce, which I found out when I saw the news at about 10.30 last night, was the 2.7¢ a kilometre tax that accompanies that electric vehicle announcement. It was great news, but the 2.7¢ a kilometre tax that this government will impose was not part of that announcement. The pattern that is developing is concerning.

On the social scenario, the people of Western Australia and families who are feeling the pinch are worried because food prices are rising, which is obviously attributed to increasing transport, fertiliser, packaging and ingredient costs. The biggest contributors to the 2.8 per cent quarterly jump in food prices are vegetables, which are up 6.6 per cent; soft drinks and juices, up 5.6 per cent; fruit, up 4.9 per cent; and beef, up 7.6 per cent. Companies such as SPC have just said, "Sorry, we have rising costs of tin, wheat and fuel. We are going to have to increase our prices across the board, whether it is baked beans, spaghetti, canned tomatoes or canned fruit." One thing members have all agreed on in this chamber during the impact of COVID-19 since March 2020 is the increased awareness by consumers in WA of the importance of access to food and, hopefully, the importance of people who produce our food. We would all agree that the appalling sight of busloads of people travelling from the metropolitan area to the country to clean out IGA stores and so on was probably one of the lowest points of the COVID pandemic. The only good thing about the pandemic in that respect was that it made people appreciate where their food comes from and how important the industry is. That is another element, and I hope that in the budget the government will support families who are doing it tough in WA.

Before I talk about a couple of my portfolio areas, I will mention the super departments. The government has made a mistake here. Those machinery-of-government changes have failed to produce the promised outcomes. Those departments are trying to deal with five or six different ministers and directors general. Public servants are scratching their heads wondering what is going on. We see that occurring in departments such as the Department of Communities, which does not have clarity or definition. We see it in the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries where the director general, who was meant to be looking at the compliance and governance of racing and gaming, said, "I don't know anything about it and I haven't got the training." This is what happens when departments are merged into one without the clarity or ability to perform their governance arrangements. I like to think the government might relook at those departments because when they are brought together like that it is difficult to manage them and to ensure that every part of the department works at capacity.

Another example is the Auditor General. We raised this matter yesterday in debate on the COVID-19 Response Legislation Amendment (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Bill 2022. The Auditor General made the comment that the pandemic had allowed financial management and governance foundations to inadvertently backslide and said it was very concerning. It is truly worrying when the focus was obviously on COVID. Eyes were taken off every other aspect of good governance. We have to realise that the governance must come back on to the departments. We need good government. As I said, this issue was raised by the Auditor General. Even Victoria, which had the world's longest lockdown under Premier Andrews, has still had a different scenario, conducting a review of the pandemic and making sure that it introduces its legislation in a much more planned and moderate way. Paul Murray in a recent article points out —

There are also potential political problems looming if some of the many fast-tracked projects being pushed through with undue haste for people close to the government unravel when the details emerge.

That quote is very appropriate when we consider the bills that have been rammed through by this government over the past two days. As I said, I am very concerned for our families. The recent *Foodbank hunger report 2021: The reality of the food crisis in Australia* found that one in six Australian adults has not had enough to eat in the last year and 1.2 million children have gone hungry in the same period. They are the things this government needs to think about. It needs to move the focus away from command and control of the people of Western Australia and start thinking about helping those who are doing it tough.

I want to talk briefly about education, which is the main portfolio that I look after. I raised in my questions to the Premier today the extraordinary letter that the Minister for Education and Training sent out to the principals

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

of WA schools last week. She graciously provided a small window of opportunity of an hour and a half for over 800 principals to tell her what was wrong with the system. As I said to the Premier, apart from blatantly undermining her director general, this move goes against every grain of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 because the minister needs to be at arm's length. Every time I write a letter to the minister asking for something, the answer I usually get back is, "I cannot respond due to the Public Sector Management Act."

Mr W.J. Johnston: Are you saying that what the minister is doing is inconsistent?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am concerned because to me it is a contravention of the communication and official —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Order!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I would like an extension but not an intervention from the minister, thanks.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am concerned; that is why I asked the question today. Let us face it: what principal is going to be brave enough to ring up and criticise the minister's policy and positions while thinking about how that will affect their future career?

Mr T. Healy interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I found it one of the most bizarre letters I have seen. By the way, I indicate to the member for Southern River that it was, "Dear principals" with a small "p", so the grammar was not even right. It was quite disappointing. I will move on from that because as we all know, the minister's "cut first, consult later" strategy started in December 2017 with the Schools of the Air and Moora Residential College, but during the COVID period, it has drifted into camp schools. We had good quality camp school operators out there and basically the minister said, "Sorry, we can't have our children going to these camp schools. We need to cut them off." However, she forgot to talk to the camp school operators. They were not spoken to at all before that announcement was made. A compensation package was put in place. That was after the camp school operators had made the minister aware that they had employees and that if some funding did not continue to flow, they would end up with no employees who were capable and trained to help out our schoolchildren. That is a demonstration of some of the communication levels that have been happening.

I take my hat off to our school principals and teachers, and to the Department of Education, for keeping our students at school. I am sure that the member for Southern River and I agree on that. The number one priority is for our children to be at school every day in that learning environment. I congratulate our teachers, and especially our principals, for the work that they have done in going over and above the call of duty. One of those tasks was COVID contact tracing. I thought that would have been a job for the Department of Health. I know that they were burnt out at the end of the first term, and I can understand why. I am concerned that the federal Labor election campaign states that it will restore respect in the teaching profession and boost qualification and entry requirements for those studying education. That is yet another slap in the face for our teachers.

Ms S.E. Winton interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The federal shadow Minister for Education thinks that our teachers are not quite up to it at the moment. As far as I am concerned, this policy position disrespects our teachers, who turn up day in, day out in one of the most difficult professions around. I am sure that the member for Wanneroo would agree that teaching is one of the most difficult professions around.

Ms S.E. Winton interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am just talking about the federal Labor policy, which has been brought out by the federal shadow Minister for Education.

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Madam Acting Speaker, I cannot hear the member standing right beside me because of the interjections from the members for Wanneroo and Southern River.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Thank you. The member should be heard in silence.

Debate Resumed

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I would be disappointed if I did not have an interjection from the member for Wanneroo—that is par for the course.

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

I now want to move quickly to the boarding away from home allowance. Every time I go to the annual general meeting of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, the subject of the boarding away from home allowance is raised with me. The previous government provided funding from royalties for regions of over \$2 100 per student. This government has dropped that to below \$1 300 per student. That is a real disappointment for me. Those kids and those families do it tough enough as it is. They then look at a government that has a multibillion-dollar surplus and is dragging money away from families who are just using that to help get their students to boarding school or the like.

The provision of government housing in the regions also needs to be looked at by this government. In many towns, principals, teachers and police officers need housing. That is causing a strain for those departments, because they might get a good principal who wants to come to a regional town, but, sorry, there is nowhere for them to live. This needs to be addressed. Another issue, which was mentioned by the member for North West Central, is the crime rate up north. That is flowing on to our teachers up there in particular, but no doubt to other professions as well. They are almost too frightened to go up there. One of the many people who have called me about this was a grandmother whose granddaughter was in one of the towns up north and was too frightened to go back and occupy her house. This is the sort of stuff we are getting. Rocks were thrown through the window of her car in the garage. People were knocking on her door on a Saturday night and threatening her that if she did not give them her keys, they would do this and this to her. These are the sorts of things that our regional teachers are up against and these are the sorts of things that this government needs to address.

While I am on education, I want to talk about the bizarre scenario that occurred on 5 February this year. I mentioned that date yesterday in my speech. International students who had planned to come to Western Australia, the vice-chancellors of the universities, people at the university boarding colleges and all the families who had planned to return to Western Australia had all been geared up for that date, but the Premier backflipped. This was another of his command-and-control scenarios: "Look at this! I will extend the date for another three weeks." When he saw the reaction from the Western Australian public, he started to back-pedal, but by then it was too late. He had messed up the lives of many families and of international students who were then stuck in places around the world. That also was a real disappointment.

I turn now to the sport and recreation portfolio. The funding for KidSport was another lost opportunity for this government. In 2011, funding for \$200 per child was brought in by Hon "Tuck" Waldron, a former very good Minister for Sport and Recreation. This voucher to help with the cost of sport is really important to our regional and metropolitan families. In 2017 when this government came to office, it reduced the allowance to \$150 per child. I give the government credit that last year, it offered families two vouchers of \$150 per child. I would like to see that go up to at least two vouchers of \$200 per child to help our families who are doing it tough. We all know that if we can keep children and families fit and healthy, it will reduce the pressure on the health system further down the line. That is certainly a big one for me.

Another concern in my shadow portfolio of racing and gaming is the proposed sale of the TAB. I am very worried about the threat to our country racecourses. No doubt this will come up in the months ahead.

On the health side, the patient assisted travel scheme provides fantastic assistance to our regional people. Every year, over 35 000 country patients access specialist medical services in Perth. PATS subsidises 99 000 travel journeys each year. However, this program is not keeping up with inflation. We know what has been happening with fuel costs over the last few months. This is one program that the government needs to have a look at. Under the scheme, a person who has to travel over 100 kilometres is given 16¢ a kilometre. For a 600-kilometre trip, a person might get \$96, when it costs \$2 a litre to fill up the car. That is something this government needs to think about.

The shadow Minister for Health mentioned the infrastructure at Geraldton, Mullewa, Margaret River and Mt Barker. They are just four that come to mind. We need to see some delivery, though. The member for Geraldton over there is well and truly aware of the promises that have been made from 2017 onwards. We need to see more than just a car park delivered.

In conclusion, I reiterate that we need to see a change of attitude from this government. We need to see less of the command and control. We know that the Premier has enjoyed the way things have gone over the last year or so and has control of the Western Australian people. What we now need is a government that will in tomorrow's budget think about the concerns of the average Western Australian.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [6.19 pm]: Firstly, I want to make a comment about the conduct of this debate. There was an agreement behind the chair about the way this debate would be managed, and I do not understand why the opposition has not kept to that agreement. There is no point for the opposition to come in here and raise 173 different issues and then give no time to the government to respond. It is simply pointless for the opposition to behave like this. How can the government be held to account if the

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

opposition comes in and talks about a scattergun of issues? How can it hold us to account? This is its job. The opposition is supposed to raise individual issues with us and have us respond to them. Instead, on a motion about infrastructure and essential services, we had discussions on the price of groceries, the supply of food from the east coast and the comparison between Australia's and Singapore's education standards, because the opposition raised a question about why the federal Labor Party is promising to invest in higher quality students to enter at universities. That is a response to the declining performance of Australian schools compared with Singaporean schools, which is an issue constantly raised by conservative politicians in Australia. Yesterday, the opposition said that when we announced our electric vehicle strategy, we forgot to mention the road user charge, even though it is in our media release, the Premier specifically mentioned it in his opening remarks of the press conference and all the journalists extensively asked each of the ministers, including me, questions on that topic. It also neglected to point out that 44¢ of each litre of petrol is taxed. If a person's car gets 10 litres per 100 kilometres, which is fairly average, that means they are paying 4.4¢ in tax to the commonwealth government for each kilometre they drive. We are proposing a 2.5¢ road user charge. What a scattergun, stupid waste of time. The opposition has come in here and wasted its opportunity to hold us to account.

I was asked to deal with this, because the matters were infrastructure and essential services, and we assumed that the debate would be about infrastructure and essential services. Instead, each of the members of the opposition got up and talked about different issues. How can the government respond? How can we explain why we have made particular decisions if the opposition did not tell us what it was going to ask us about? This is ridiculous, and it is not the first time. The opposition simply does not know how to use Parliament. It complains about a lack of accountability. The lack of accountability is the complete and utter incompetence of the opposition. Members opposite do not understand their own responsibilities to the people of the state. If they wanted to have a debate about the price of groceries, they should have told us, because we could have given an explanation about why the price of groceries is controlled by the commonwealth and that the commonwealth is responsible for the current behaviour of the national economy. If the opposition wanted to talk about the disruption of supply between the east coast and the west coast, which was one of the things mentioned, the Minister for Transport could have come in and explained how she engaged with the commonwealth government at that time over the crisis that was caused by things in South Australia. I mean, if the opposition actually wanted to know an answer to a question about any of these issues, it should have conducted its business in a proper fashion. How can the opposition do this and be so incompetent as to not understand how to use Parliament? It is just ridiculous. It is an embarrassment to the people of this state that we have an opposition that does not know how to do anything. I mean, the opposition is just bizarre.

For example, in the motion that we are debating, which was never raised by any member of the opposition in their contribution, it says "accumulating a massive budget surplus". There is no accumulation of a budget surplus. A budget is shown annually for that year. It is not an accumulation. We have run budget surpluses in government, because that is the responsible thing to do. Once upon a time, the Liberal Party used to complain about debt and deficit. The Court government ran five deficits in eight years and then the Barnett government ruined the state's finances. When we talk about debt, debt is one-third lower today than it would have been if the Liberal government had been re-elected. We have paid off debt left to us by the former government. Not only that—this is actually very important—the balance of the debt has shifted to the government trading enterprises, where the debt is paid for, not by taxpayers, but by the users of the services that the GTEs provide. The proportion of debt paid for by taxpayers has fallen as a share of the total debt in Western Australia. That is a good thing. What was it, \$2.6 billion? I think that is the figure that the Premier spoke about in question time yesterday about the savings that we have had.

Ms S.E. Winton: It is \$2.5 billion. That is \$950 for every person.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That has been saved because we have reduced the Liberal and National Parties' debt.

The motion also says, "failure to deliver essential services". What essential services have we failed to deliver? Not one member of the opposition raised a failure to deliver social services or essential services. None. They rambled about stupid things that were completely irrelevant. Every day they come in here and waste Parliament's time. They do not present a case and then they complain that we are being disrespectful. We are not being disrespectful. If opposition members did their job, we would be able to respond to them. The opposition is too lazy or too incompetent to know how to behave. I remember being on the opposite side of the chamber. I remember how hard it is. I know what work needs to be done. Members opposite need to go out and talk to people, analyse documents and read reports. None of that happens on the other side. The shadow Minister for Energy, the Leader of the Liberal Party, put out a media release saying that the budget had to include extra money for reinforcing Western Power's network. None of Western Power's money is in the budget. It is a government trading enterprise. There are reports in the budget papers about what it is doing, but it is not in the budget. The budget is the approval given by Parliament to the expenditure program of the government. GTEs are not included in that. As I said to the Leader of the Liberal Party and his predecessor Dean Nalder, there is a little chart in the back of the budget papers, I think it is appendix 8—I could be wrong—that explains the relationship between the budget and government trading enterprises. Go and

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

read it. Go and look. It was in the budget papers when his team was in government. It is exactly the same report. It explains the relationship between those two things.

I do not understand. How long is it that members opposite have to do their job before they start doing any work? Talk about taking a pay cheque under false pretences. This is a waste of time. The opposition had its opportunity. If it wanted the education sector to be covered, come in explain what it is in the education sector. It is silly. Members opposite do not understand. How would the Minister for Education and Training know that when the opposition said “essential services” it was referring to education? How is it that I, the Minister for Energy, have to get briefed by the Minister for Education and Training so that I can explain to the opposition what is happening? It is because the opposition is so incompetent that it does not tell us in advance what it wants to raise, and then it complains that nobody answers its questions. How stupid is this? This is the most stupid strategy I have ever seen.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Acting Speaker, I appreciate that the minister wants to make a point, but this is becoming repetitive beyond belief. He has made the same point for his entire contribution so far of nine minutes. I ask that you direct the minister to move on and deal with the substantive debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Thank you, member for Cottesloe. There will be no point of order, but, minister, if you could please get back to the point.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The point I am making is that the government has delivered essential services for Western Australia, we have delivered infrastructure and we have not accumulated a massive budget surplus. It is true that we have a budget surplus and that is a good thing, but do not forget that that is the operational surplus. What people refer to as this budget surplus is the operational surplus. What is the money used for? It is used to build infrastructure. This is why we ended up with \$42 billion of Liberal debt. The Liberal government did not understand that the budget surplus pays for infrastructure. In the last year that Eric Ripper was Treasurer, for every \$1 of government revenue, the government spent 87¢ on recurrent expenditure and the other 13¢ was spent on infrastructure. In the last year of the Barnett government, it spent \$1.13 on recurrent expenditure for every \$1 of revenue that it raised. It was borrowing 13¢ on top of every dollar to pay not for infrastructure, but for the pens and papers that were used in the public service. It then had to borrow money on top of that for infrastructure, which is why infrastructure spending fell under the last government. It is rising under this government because we are properly managing the finances of the state.

Not a single element of any of the speeches that were presented addressed the motion. I resisted the urge to get up and raise points of order because it is the opposition’s time and if members want to waste it, that is up to them. But not once did they raise any issues that were based on the motion that was moved. They raised random issues without providing any evidence or facts, so there was no capacity for the government to respond. We cannot respond because they needed to tell us the issues that they wanted to talk about. This is the problem with opposition members. They are lazy, they do not do any work, they waste time and then they complain that we do not treat them with respect.

What was their number one concern? I saw this thing about command and control, but that is not even in the motion. That issue was not raised by the opposition in its motion. How can the house agree with opposition members if they do not even condemn the government for the thing that they raise in their speeches? A number of speeches referred to question time and a number of other speeches referred to the second reading debate on a bill. What a waste of time! I am here with my notes ready to respond. Unfortunately, I cannot because nothing was raised by the opposition. There were random thoughts about nonsense. For crying out loud—the price of groceries! Heck, I have never heard anybody say that the price of groceries is the responsibility of the state government. How ridiculous! The member raised this nonsense about busloads of people going from the metropolitan area to the country. Is that the government’s fault? The government of Western Australia is responsible for stopping people moving around the state! How ridiculous! Yes, two years ago during the COVID pandemic, there were serious issues. Think about what the government did. We restricted the movement of people from one part of Western Australia to another, but the opposition opposed that. Tonight I heard the member for Cottesloe go on about how it was a bad idea to have the border up. He said that that stopped workers coming to this state. That is complete nonsense. Tens of thousands of workers came to Western Australia while the border was up. Our population increased with no international immigration. That is quite important because international immigration provides a much larger boost to our population than interstate migration. Australia does not have a high level of labour mobility between the states. It is very different in the United States. I know that the Premier and I are the exceptions to the rule, but there is not a high level of labour migration from the other states. Our driver is international immigration and the federal government stopped that, not the government of Western Australia. It is just nonsense.

This member is ridiculous. As I keep saying, I am looking forward to the new Leader of the Liberal Party coming in. I always do this and I am going to do it again. I urge the Leader of the Opposition to put somebody decent in as shadow Minister for Energy. In Western Australia, we have had a long history of good people being in both the

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

energy portfolio and the shadow portfolio, but that is different now. I did not agree with Dean Nalder's policies, but I respected the fact that he had some. It is dangerous. The current shadow Minister for Energy is dangerous for this state because there is a risk that people will take him seriously, and we cannot have that. I again urge the Leader of the Opposition to give the job to Hon Dr Steve Thomas or Hon Tjorn Sibma, because at least they might do some work. That would be unique. It is time for change, and that is one of the changes.

MR D.A.E. SCAIFE (Cockburn) [6.34 pm]: I, too, share the confusion of the Minister for Mines and Petroleum. I have been listening to the last few hours of debate and it was not apparent to me that there was any strategy or message that the opposition intended for members, the media or the public to walk away with from the debate. It was, as the Minister for Mines and Petroleum said, just a grab bag of issues. It was not even clear that there was any coordination between the various speakers, and that is a recurring theme with members of the opposition. They go away and do their own homework, but they do not bother talking to each other about what they have done, so they just list a grab bag of issues. We hear it in the way that members speak during private members' business. They say, "Now I'd like to turn to my portfolio responsibilities", as though they all just happen in a vacuum and do not have any kind of relationship to one another. Then members just run through a list of issues that they are upset about at the time, but it bears no resemblance to the actual subject of the motion.

It was extraordinary to hear the shadow Minister for Education and Training complain today during question time about whether principals should be allowed to speak to the Minister for Education and Training, but then he brought it up again during private members' business in debate on a motion about essential services and infrastructure. It has nothing to do with the motion itself, but it is also perverse in terms of the constituency that he is speaking to. The point that I think principals should take away from this debate is that the shadow Minister for Education and Training does not think that principals should be able to speak to the Minister for Education and Training. That seemed to be the point that he was making. It is irrelevant, but, as the Minister for Mines and Petroleum said, he did not take a point of order because if members opposite want to waste their time—it is their time; this is their three hours in the week—making points that are irrelevant to the subject of the motion but that also play terribly with the constituency that they are presumably trying to speak to, that is their business.

What I also do not understand about a motion like this—I made this point last year after the budget was brought down—is that members bring in these limp, generic motions in the lead-up to the budget as though to use them as a vehicle to list a grab bag of criticisms against the government. However, it also gives government members an opportunity to talk about how great all the things are that we are delivering in the budget. The opposition has framed this motion as though the government delivering a budget surplus is a bad thing. It is ridiculous. The government is delivering budget surpluses, but also essential services and infrastructure. That is a great story. It has made my job as the new Labor member for Cockburn the easiest it has been probably for decades, because I get to talk to my constituents about this government being not only a good financial manager, but also focused on delivering essential services and infrastructure. There is evidence of that all around my electorate. There has been the recent delivery of the North Lake Road bridge and the recent upgrades to the Stock Road–Beeliar Drive intersection. Construction of \$12 million worth of facilities is going on at Lakeland Senior High School. There is a new education support facility, a new house block and new sport and performing arts facilities going in there. It is just absurd that opposition members use their time to let members of the government talk about all the great things that we are doing in our community. It is the wrong strategy. The member for South Perth does not want me to give away the secret, but I do not have a problem saying it, because I said it last year in exactly the same debate. It is fine; they do not take advice from me and I do not expect them to. I am not trying to lead them astray on this one; their strategy is just wrong for all the reasons that the minister has outlined, but also for the reasons that I have outlined.

Let us talk about the delivery of essential services and infrastructure and about a government that absolutely does not deliver on essential services, and that is the Morrison federal Liberal government. It is an absolute failure in this space, because what could be more of an essential service than the National Disability Insurance Scheme? That scheme is a foundational piece of the national safety network that the Labor Party has built over decades. It started with things like the widow's pension through to Medicare, compulsory superannuation and now the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I have heard the chortling on the opposition benches to the effect that we should not criticise the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme because the Barnett government did not sign Western Australia up to it. All I can assume is that members opposite are saying that the Barnett government did not sign up WA to the National Disability Insurance Scheme because it knew that the federal Liberal Party was intent on gutting it and destroying that safety network. That seems to be the suggestion. The reason that WA signed up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme is because it is a fundamentally good and important concept that people with disabilities be given the care and support that they deserve. Unfortunately, that has not been delivered.

On that issue, I want to very briefly refer to a constituent of mine, Belinda Roberts, whose daughter suffers from autism spectrum disorder. Belinda has been through four appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal over her daughter's NDIS plan. Finally, when she was going for the fourth appeal, having had the National Disability Insurance

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

Agency lawyer up over that whole period and spending thousands of dollars on lawyers resisting changes to the plan, the NDIA finally caved and gave Belinda everything that she had asked for right back at the beginning before she had gone through that appeals process. She had to get media attention, my assistance and that of Josh Wilson, the federal member for Fremantle. She had to go through absolute hell and back to get an outcome for her daughter.

It is such a disgrace that we have a federal Liberal government that has refused to do its job and deliver a National Disability Insurance Scheme that actually provides independence and support for people with disability. Of course, that is typical of this federal Liberal government. This federal Liberal government is led by a Prime Minister who, in his own words, does not hold a hose, who is intent on forcing people to shake his hand and who is absolutely a phoney and is nowhere to be seen when the hard work needs to be done and who never takes responsibility. This government does take responsibility and delivers significant budget surpluses, but it uses the money from its strong management of the state's finances to invest in a range of services and infrastructure. I see it throughout my community and in the mental health space. I do not understand why our time has been wasted with this motion because it has no traction with the community and it does not reflect the government's record.

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.43 pm]: That is three hours of my life I am not going to get back! Before I start, I congratulate you, Acting Speaker, Caitlin Collins, on your first session in the chair. How unfortunate that you had to have that as a reminder of your first stint in the chair. I promise you there will be better days than this afternoon. Stick with it!

We had such an underwhelming performance again by the opposition. It was totally uninspiring and repetitive. If members go through *Hansard*, they will see that they just reread their old speeches. They are totally unprepared. It is not surprising then that Scott Morrison does not want to be seen in a photograph with the state Liberal Party leader. Is it any wonder that Scott Morrison and his federal Liberal candidates in this election do not want anything to do with the state Liberal Party in this campaign? The whole premise of this motion, for which the opposition did not mount an argument, is contradicted by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister loves hanging around with the Premier of this state. Scott Morrison loves hanging around with the Premier of a state that has the biggest success story to tell throughout Australia in terms of managing its economy. He does like to have photos taken with our Premier. I agree with Scott Morrison on one thing: a key to good government is good economic management and a good control of the economy. Good financial management means that a government can provide important services to members of the public, particularly around the cost of living. A fundamental difference between the federal government and the state government is the way they deliver this. The federal coalition government gives support with borrowed money, whereas the state government, as members will see tomorrow, provides important support through cost-of-living relief and much-needed services throughout Western Australia as a result of good financial management and being in a good fiscal position. That is the key difference.

Members might remember back to when the McGowan government provided electricity credits of \$600 to all households in Western Australia. That money was a direct result of finalising the Bell litigation that was conducted over many, many years. The government rightfully decided to give that money back to Western Australians. Compare that with the fuel excise, which is an important cost relief for people right now, but people also need to remember that is being provided with borrowed money. It will create a huge, multibillion-dollar hole in the federal budget that will go on the credit card and we will be paying it down the track. I remember the member for Cottesloe being in this chamber and criticising the government's one-off payments for electricity and saying that many people did not deserve or need the one-off payment we provided to all households. But with the fuel cuts, which are being paid for on the federal credit card, I did not see him get up here and say that many people in his electorate who are driving BMWs do not need the fuel excise and cheaper petrol. It is funny that when the state government provides cost-of-living relief, members opposite criticise it, but when the federal government does it with citizens' borrowed money, they have nothing to say at all.

I will touch on what the Minister for Energy alluded to before and what the Premier highlighted today, which is the continuing myth that Labor is not able to manage finances. The Premier put it well during question time today, and the minister referred to a couple of points, but I want to reiterate this. It is interesting that in his contribution, the Leader of the Liberal Party told us to stop going to the past and bringing up the previous government's record. Unfortunately, we have to bring it up because the debt of \$40 billion is still on the books now and we are still paying it off. We inherited a \$40 billion debt and we are still paying it off! It has not disappeared. To put it into real terms for people right now, we were on the path to a \$44 billion debt under the former Liberal–National government, and for the first time since 2015, through the budget tomorrow, net debt will be under \$30 billion. We will be the only government in Australia paying down debt; and by paying down the Liberal–National government debt that this government inherited, more than \$2.5 billion in wasteful interest rate costs will be saved. In real terms that is quite significant. That means savings of \$950 for every individual in Western Australia by us paying down the debt that we inherited from members opposite. That is the truth of the matter.

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

The federal Liberal coalition is not much different because it is heading to a debt of \$1 trillion-plus. As the Premier highlighted today, one of the largest spends in the federal budget now is paying off the interest on that debt. It is quite worthwhile highlighting these statistics, and the member for Cockburn talked about the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The interest costs are expected to rise to almost \$25 billion a year within the next four years. This is more than the annual cost of the disability pension, which is \$22 billion, and about three-quarters of the annual cost of the aged-care system, which is \$33 billion. That is what the costs for the interest bill—the credit card repayments—are going to be under this coalition government. Sound financial managers—I do not think so!

I just want to go for another couple of minutes because I am aware that the member for South Perth has also suffered through this debate for three years and I want to provide him with a brief opportunity to speak.

I often have conversations with many of my colleagues, but I am always interested in what the member for Churchlands, in particular, and the member for Nedlands say about their experiences of being a member of Parliament. They are often surprised with the reaction they get when they turn up to sporting events or parents and citizens association events where their local communities finally realise that they have a local member of Parliament who actually goes out to the community. They also tell me that they quite often have conversations with people in which the myth is finally busted, particularly in those safe Liberal seats, that Labor can and does manage the state's finances very, very well. They get comments like, "Do you know what? We have had five years of Labor and the sky has not fallen in. My business is still doing really, really well. I still get to take my boat to Rottnest every week, and the Labor government is producing surpluses each year. The sky has not fallen in." Likewise, if the Anthony Albanese Labor Party has the opportunity to form government, there will be more myths busted, because this notion that somehow the coalition government members are better performers is wrong.

In terms of the federal election coming up and because this motion is about infrastructure, I want to also talk about the real things that have been built in the northern suburbs.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Ms S.E. WINTON: The next time the member for Cottesloe comes out to Wanneroo, he will drive over the infrastructure that has already been built in my electorate in the northern suburbs. I also want to talk about the federal Labor candidate for Pearce, Tracey Roberts. As the Mayor of the City of Wanneroo, Tracey Roberts knows infrastructure better than most people in the northern suburbs. She has spent her entire career of over 11 years on the City of Wanneroo council and has delivered infrastructure funding right through the northern corridor. I am excited about and welcome the opportunity of having her stand up as our local voice in Canberra. Compare her with the Liberal candidate for Pearce, who, I have to tell members, is a serial candidate. She does not really know what she wants to do. In 2013, she had a crack at becoming the member for Butler.

Point of Order

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Madam Acting Speaker, talking about federal Labor candidates and the seat of Pearce is way off topic. I am sorry.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): There will be no point of order, but I will ask the member for Wanneroo to stick to the motion.

Debate Resumed

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I would just like to remind the house that the member for Cottesloe, in his contribution, gave a huge shout-out to the local member, bringing this topic into this debate, so I will use my opportunity to explain the choices that the constituents in Pearce have in this upcoming election. We know who Tracey Roberts is, but Linda Aitken, the federal Liberal candidate, is a serial candidate. She had a go at state Parliament in March 2013 and she lost. She had a go in October —

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Ms L. METTAM: The comments of the member for Wanneroo are completely irrelevant to the motion that has been presented and are actually quite nasty as well.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Member for Wanneroo, please close your remarks.

Debate Resumed

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will. I do not think I am doing anything nasty; I am just explaining who the federal candidates are.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston;
Mr David Scaife; Ms Sabine Winton

Ms S.E. WINTON: I would like to be able to continue in the same way that the member for Cottesloe talked about the federal election by referencing the member for Curtin.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, finish your remarks now, please.

Point of Order

Ms L. METTAM: The Liberal candidate is a senior healthcare worker and she does not deserve to be disrespected by the member for Wanneroo in this way.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Yes; this is not an opportunity for debate.

Debate Resumed

Ms S.E. WINTON: The fact that she has run for state Parliament three times does make her a serial candidate. The fact that she is a member of Margaret Court's Victory Life church is relevant to the people of Pearce.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Ms S.E. WINTON: The fact that members opposite do not want me to say it in this place tells me all we need to know about the Liberal Party!

I want to raise a matter brought up by the member for Roe when he talked about the federal opposition education spokesperson. I just want to contribute something to the debate that he failed to add about the current federal education minister, who I think is Alan Tudge. He is still the education minister during the federal campaign despite being involved in a \$500 000 payout as a result of some of his actions. He is still the federal education minister, yet the member for Roe had the audacity to try to touch up the federal opposition member.

Point of Order

Ms L. METTAM: This is not at all relevant to the motion.

Several members interjected.

Ms L. METTAM: It is nothing to do with it and we would like to hear from someone else.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Thank you, member for Vasse. Member for Wanneroo, I will ask you for the final time to please close your remarks.

Debate Resumed

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker; I will take your guidance. I only wish that you were in the chair earlier in the evening because you might have been able to show them a bit more discipline when they tried to talk about the federal election.

I apologise to the member for South Perth for taking the opportunity to highlight to the residents of my community the champions for infrastructure that we will potentially have in the federal Parliament. It is exciting that we might be able to have a voice in federal Parliament so that the Minister for Planning; Transport can get more money out of the federal government to service the northern suburbs. I cannot think of any greater champion than Tracey Roberts, who could let her federal colleagues know what is needed in the northern corridor. She has a proven record. I look forward to being able to work with her in the next federal government.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Ms S.E. WINTON: The member for Cottesloe just does not want to hear it, does he?

My final point is that the Leader of the Liberal Party said that the 2020–21 budget was a lucky budget. It is going to be really interesting to see what he comes up with tomorrow. He might need to go home and do some preparation tonight so that he can provide a bit of a fresh approach to interrogating the finances of the government. He should not just make it whiny but perhaps start to give us a bit of an idea about some of the policies that the opposition might actually take to an election. Since 2021, we have heard nothing about the opposition's position or what its alternatives would be for service delivery or infrastructure delivery in this state.

The opposition certainly did not raise anything that we, as a government, are doing in service delivery or infrastructure tonight, as was well pointed out by the Minister for Mines and Petroleum. The opposition really needs to get into a place where it starts offering some alternatives for what are still challenging times as we go through the pandemic.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.