

## SOUTH WEST NATIVE TITLE SETTLEMENT

### *Statement*

**HON ROBIN SCOTT (Mining and Pastoral)** [9.45 pm]: I will be brief. In 2015, the Barnett government reached a legal agreement with six Noongar agreement groups over land in the south west of Western Australia. This land stretched from Jurien Bay in the north to Albany in the south. It also included the Perth metropolitan area. The agreement meant that the Aboriginal groups would give up their right to native title over the area concerned. We have to bear in mind that even before this agreement, native title could not be claimed on any land that was being used as government land, commercial land, residential land, agricultural land or mining land. In other words, native title could not be claimed over a large majority of this land area of 19.7 million hectares. Regardless, in 2015, following a *Kumbaya* bipartisan effort between the Labor and Liberal Parties, Premier Barnett signed Australia's largest ever native title settlement worth about 1.3 billion taxpayer dollars.

The public probably does not know that this agreement, signed five years ago, is yet to come fully into effect, because for the last five years, the state government has been tied up in legal argument and actions with disgruntled Aboriginal people who did not like the settlement agreement and have a \$290 billion claim against the WA government for spiritual damage caused by the extinction of native title. We cannot proceed until the High Court has decided whether it will hear the six applications, so when will we actually hear about this decision? Back in July, the government updated us saying that August was the earliest date, yet here we are in November and I cannot find any updates anywhere. All the while, the taxpayers' legal bill keeps adding up and the McGowan government has not been open about how much it has spent on legal fees, nor has it confirmed that it will try to recoup some of these legal costs should it be successful with some of these legal actions. Assuming the best-case scenario and if we started tomorrow, the flow of taxpayers' money would go from a steady stream to a roaring river.

In the budget, \$302 million was announced for the south west native title agreement and, as my question without notice confirmed today, 121 homes have been given by the WA Housing Authority to a Noongar trust, plus an additional \$10 million to cover the repairs, replacement or demolition of these homes. I just hope that these homes will be given or sold to Aboriginal families. I think that having a home is a very stabilising thing.

Meanwhile, sadly, yesterday in my electorate, a 54-year-old woman was killed due to domestic violence. This happened out in the Wanarn remote community. Again, in my electorate on Saturday, a group of kids stole a car and ramraided one of the stores in Fitzroy Crossing. They then went on to put the crime on social media. It has become a game up there to see who can create the most damage and post it on social media.

The government has pledged \$750 million—if you like, three-quarters of a billion dollars—to enhance Aboriginal wellbeing. It has glossed over the fact that nearly half of this amount—\$302 million—is for the south west native title agreement. It has glossed over the fact that there is nothing in this funding to tackle alcohol abuse. Instead, we get engagement and empowerment programs, which is just a whole lot of feel-good rubbish. If the government is going to waste taxpayers' money, it should at least be up-front about it. The hardworking Western Australians in the middle of a pandemic deserve much more. I just wish that the media would hold the government to account and report the facts: we are spending \$302 million on a native title agreement, with little transparency or accountability. The fact is that Premier McGowan's budget has again let down the people of the regions, treating us like an ATM—pulling out money and just spending it. The fact is that both the taxpayer and Aboriginal people are no better off under this government than they were under previous governments. I say to the Premier: you might have some of the people fooled, but more and more are waking up to the way you and the government lead this state, and there is still plenty of time left before we head back to the ballot box.