

Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Dr Steve Thomas; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Wilson Tucker; Hon Kate Doust; Hon Dr Brian Walker; Hon Klara Andric; Hon Shelley Payne; Acting President

INNOVATION BOOSTER GRANT

Motion

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [1.06 pm]: It brings me great pleasure to bring this motion to the house today; I move —

That this house notes the McGowan government's commitment to foster innovation and grow entrepreneurship in Western Australia through the successful innovation booster grant and by providing initial funding for startups and small businesses to commercialise their ideas and create jobs.

I am always delighted to talk about not only the initiatives and programs that this government is responsible for, but also innovation and technology in this state. The history books show that Labor governments understand the importance of investment in the future and investment into our innovation and technology sector. Progressive governments recognise there is a role for government to foster and promote, and provide the conditions for innovative research and innovative enterprises to flourish and advance.

At a local level, members need only look across the river from this place to Technology Park in Bentley. I am quite familiar with the precinct. Hon Kate Doust is even more familiar with it than I am! At the time it was established, in 1985, it was only the second such precinct in Australia. It was opened by a Labor government. The Deputy Premier at the time, Hon Mal Bryce, had the honour. Of interest, Mal Bryce was the first minister for technology as a standalone portfolio in this state. Fast-forward to 2008, Hon Fran Logan took the footprint of Bentley Technology Park from 42 hectares to 314 hectares, a nearly eightfold increase.

Hon Darren West: What did the Libs do?

Hon DAN CADDY: It is interesting that Hon Darren West said that. He is spot-on; it is more than the Libs ever did. Members of this place would be aware that I have not always been directly involved in politics, and for some of the time that I was not, I was a project manager. One of the projects I was responsible for was Bentley Technology Park.

Hon Kate Doust: You were always very helpful, member.

Hon DAN CADDY: Thank you. I digress but I will respond to the member's interjection. We came up with a fantastic plan. As the honourable member would know, Technology Park is on the edge of Curtin University. We were looking at a way to integrate the two. A lot of work went into that project. I was on the land development side of what was going on, and met frequently with Hon Troy Buswell, who was the minister. We put a lot of work into this. A lot of government money was spent on this, too, I must say. I know that very well, having been one of the consultants. We had everyone on board. We had to realign some roads. We had the local government on board. We certainly had Curtin University on board. I think we possibly even had Main Roads Western Australia on board, which takes some doing sometimes.

It was all going great. There was a fantastic plan. Then one day, Hon Troy Buswell said, "No, that's it. We're done. Cut it." It was not long after that—Hon Darren West might remember this; I am sure that Hon Kate Doust does—that Premier Colin Barnett completely gutted the Department of Commerce. I do not remember the exact number, but it went from a working group of around 100 people, or maybe slightly less, down to single digits. It was a despicable display. That is the history of that; I appreciated Hon Darren West asking the question.

I go back to what I was talking about. I used the example of the Bentley technology precinct to demonstrate that innovation and understanding the importance of innovation to the broader community are not new concepts for Labor and Labor governments. I will come back to a small business located in Bentley Technology Park later, if I have time. The McGowan government realises that innovation is not just a concept to be seen on the periphery of the business or corporate world; it needs to be part of our every day. Technological improvements in turn lead to productivity improvements, which in turn generally lead to improved competitiveness. By fostering innovation and tech advances in our local small businesses, we create the conditions for improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in both our private and public sectors. This can help with a number of things. It can help to attract foreign investment. It can lead to higher productivity. Of course, that in turn leads to higher wages. Innovation creates jobs.

Businesses that choose not to innovate rarely survive. We do not need to go far to find examples of that. For example, Kodak was once one of the largest companies on the planet, but it came very late to the digital revolution in its industry and nearly died. It still exists, but it nearly died. Much the same happened with Blockbuster; it failed to innovate. We can contrast that with a company like Netflix. Most members would probably be aware that Netflix started out as a mail order company. It used to mail out DVDs; that was how people got their movies. What a lot of members may not realise is that Netflix spent nearly 10 years researching how to use streaming services to stream its movies—10 years of research into what was, at the time, innovative technology before that became its mainstream business. There are lots of other companies around the world. Lego, for example, started 90 years ago and almost

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went bankrupt in 2003. It innovated through innovative partnerships—through who it partnered with. That was really new for a toy company at that time, but that has now expanded around the world. But I digress.

I will go back to the great success of the innovation booster grants program in this state over the last few years. Last year, 34 recipients received grants of up to \$20 000 each. I will speak in detail shortly about one grant recipient in my electorate. Over time, more than 200 grants have been awarded for a total of \$3.7 million. These grants are often the critical difference for these small, generally tech, industries. It makes the difference between being able to push on with their agenda and where they want to go and pushing the boundaries of innovative research, or just having to settle down to what just pays the bills. In some instances, it may be the difference in them remaining viable at all.

One of the recipients last year was VetChip, which is located in my electorate. As I said, VetChip received a grant in the 2022 round. This continues the theme of the last time I was on my feet for a while in this place, when I was speaking about animal welfare, as animal welfare is really at the heart of this company. VetChip was created to fill a market void and solve the issue of being able to detect abnormal health parameters in animals. Obviously, animals cannot tell us when they are not well or when they are not feeling great. This idea is the brainchild of veterinarian Dr Garnett Hall, who believed that animals deserved a better technological solution to health prevention than the current industry standard of wearable collars to track animals. That was where it was at. Dr Hall is a veterinarian surgeon and is the owner of VetChip.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Current AVA president.

Hon DAN CADDY: Yes. He is a graduate of the University of Queensland. He has extensive experience working with the police, military and other government agencies both in Australia and overseas. As Hon Dr Steve Thomas rightly said, he is president of the WA division of the Australian Veterinary Association. He also works with media organisations to promote veterinary messages to communities on animal welfare and is a board member of the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia. Dr Hall has also worked extensively in emergency management disaster relief, including in the Australian Defence Force response to the Brisbane floods, cyclone Yasi, which was over 10 years ago now, and, more recently, the bushfires in 2020. He regularly conducts advanced skills training, teaching canine tactical casualty care to organisations right across the country. Hon Dr Steve Thomas, he was presented with an Australian Defence Force Gold Commendation for the veterinary team's assistance in Operation Bushfire Assist.

From what I can tell, Dr Hall was driven by a desire to use a combination of cutting-edge technology to improve animal welfare. How it works is quite extraordinary. We have been able to implant microchips into animals for a long time, but this particular microchip is a biosensing microchip. It is put under the skin of an animal, similar to how it is done for other microchips, and tiny sensors detect the animal's temperature, heart rate, respiratory rate, oxygenation levels and activity levels on a regular basis. The data from the chip is fed to proprietary AI software to determine where the animal sits compared with its normal parameters. The owner, or handler if these are working animals, is automatically notified of any unusual health changes on their smart phone, tablet or any other device they are using. This allows for the earliest possible intervention. In conjunction with other devices, people can not only track where their animal is but also how the animal is doing, for want of a better term. Through an analysis of the biometrics captured on these chips, people can know whether their animal has a fever or are given an idea of the stress level of the animal, which is especially important for working dogs. There are lethargy indications as well. This is still going through clinical trials, although some of it is up and going. It looks very exciting.

As well as being a recipient of an innovation booster grant in 2022, this outstanding organisation was a finalist in the 2022 Curtin Innovation Awards and winner of the science and engineering prize in 2021, and winner of the This is Fremantle Aspire Award in 2021. VetChip's work also has potential for applications other than simply monitoring pets. Critical applications are being looked at within the ADF, police and rescue services—any service that has a canine unit. VetChip is first and foremost there for animals; it is about animal welfare and monitoring how animals are going. Dr Hall has also been engaged with Defence West and attended defence trade shows, such as Land Forces in the Pacific. He has spoken to broader applications of this technology across the Australian Defence Force and at security exhibitions. He won the best presentation award for the Land Forces 2021 Innovation PitchFest. He told a story when he was presenting at Land Forces about a dog handler soldier who called him about his dog while on a field exercise. The dog had been working hard and it suffered heatstroke. By the time that was identified, it was too late, and there was nothing they could do for the animal. The dog did not make it, to put it crassly. That is a heartbreaking story. Not only was it heartbreaking for the handler and the unit, but also losing an ADF asset, like that dog was at the time, sets back an entire unit from a readiness point of view and comes at a significant cost. In the future, VetChip will be able to prevent instances like this happening through the early identification of any problems in animals.

This is a fantastic example of what comes from these grants. It has genuine real-world applications that will lead to animal welfare outcomes across the board, as well as in working dogs and other possible military applications.

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There are also potential applications for agriculture. There is no reason that these cannot be used on agricultural animals as well. I commend Dr Hall for his work in the area and for his tireless record on animal welfare.

I started my motion today by talking about Bentley Technology Park. I then went into a little bit of the history for the edification of my good friend Hon Darren West. In the time remaining, I want to reflect on a small business based in Bentley Technology Park that is punching well above its weight on the world stage. Last year, I was very privileged to tour a company called Motium with Hon Paul Papalia, in his capacity as Minister for Defence Industry, and also the member for Victoria Park in whose electorate it is found. The crew from Motium took their time to take us through every part of the facility. The facility had just expanded quite significantly—I would say by about 50 per cent from my reckoning. Motium started just over 20 years ago as a very small enterprise distributing small PCs. Its vision was always to build its own products and platforms.

I will try to explain, from a very non-tech savvy background, my exact understanding of what it does and why I was so impressed with the vision that Motium has. Essentially, it creates bespoke rugged—that is the key word—computing technology. It does the lot and it uses local supply chains as much as it possibly can. The crew design and manufacture in-house according to client needs, they run all the testing and diagnostics in-house and they have the manufacturing and engineering resources all in-house. Motium products can be found across many industries in which rugged technology and durable hardware is a necessity. This obviously includes mining, but also other things like waste management, emergency services, logistics, industrial automation, marine industries and defence. I will not name them, but through visiting the Motium facility, I could see that it was supplying some of the largest resource companies in the world and some of the major mining tech companies, whose names might not be familiar. This is a genuine success story with a global presence straight out of Bentley Technology Park.

Last year, Motium won an award at the 2022 West Australia Export Awards. It was also a national finalist at the Australian Export awards, an Australian Small Business Champion award winner and a finalist in the RISE Business Awards. That was just last year. It is an impressive little company. I say little, but it is growing very quickly. Its rugged and incredibly reliable bespoke options for PCs and LCD displays can quite literally be made to the specifications that any client suggests. It is no simple engineering feat to design something that will operate these things. When looking at the mining industry, the crew take these things and create something that is so durable that it can be used in the middle of the Australian desert on a mine, baking in the direct sunlight, or on a mine in Canada—there may be more than a 100-degree Celsius difference between those two places of use. It is not just about ruggedness from the point of view of rolling around in the front of a vehicle or something, as one might imagine. It is also about being able to withstand extreme temperatures. Motium owes its success to its panelling in its TUFF range, as it is called. It is creating its own accessories, to use a very unsophisticated term. Its products have become so good that the weak points are now the cords, cables and connectors and all of those sorts of things. It is now creating all of this. This is a real success story for tech and innovation in Western Australia.

I am going to run out of time here, but one of the reasons I wanted to talk about Motium is not just because it is such a success story, but also because of the way it does it. Its engineers are on site on Perth, which is critical for its business model and for creating jobs in Western Australia. Its procurement policy is weighted towards procuring from Western Australia and Australia whenever possible. It manufactures on site. Once again, this is good for local jobs and for growing local expertise in this specialised field. Its tech support is also on site. It is not just about being a leading tech innovation company; it is about doing it in the context of being a Western Australian company whose employees are Western Australian and based here in Bentley Technology Park. It is keeping that Western Australian element as one of its core values.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [1.26 pm]: Thank you, President, for the opportunity to make some comments on the motion moved by Hon Dan Caddy. Obviously, everybody on both sides of Parliament and the crossbench are all very interested in innovation and its capacity to develop new industries and new businesses in the state of Western Australia. If there was a place in the world that members might want to think about in relation to how to do innovation well, it would be well worth members looking at the Israel experiment. It is very focused on innovation. It has massive tax relief and significant grants for innovation companies. It is trying to take over the innovation space. There are obviously other places in the world. Silicon Valley in the US is another place where they tried to focus on a similar thing. There are a couple of European spots as well. However, if members want to see the approach to innovation in action, it is well worth having a look at what Israel does.

It is obviously a small country with a reasonable-sized population and not a lot of natural resources—no insult intended to Israel. There is not a lot of space there, so it has to be clever with how it develops its economy. It is very focused—is the Minister for Emergency Services about to say something?

Hon Stephen Dawson: It is one-third the size of Tasmania. I know that because the Israeli ambassador saw me this morning to talk about innovation.

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Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: There you go, one-third. It is not huge.

Hon Kate Doust: It has nine million people.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes. Compare that with Western Australia, which is a third of the size of Australia with two and a half million people in it. The resources are obviously very different. That is a place that does innovation particularly well. The questions before the house today are really: How well does the Western Australian process work? Are there potentially better or alternative models that we should look at? The member who moved the motion is very keen to spruik the government's credentials in innovation. That is what Wednesday afternoons are for. That is absolutely fine.

I want to note a couple of things before I get into the substance of my reply to the member. I want to draw his attention to a couple of things. He was very proud of the innovation booster grants and the work that they had done. I think he mentioned two or three different examples of that where they worked very well. That is great. The success stories should be proudly displayed. But is that the first attempt by a Western Australian government to engage in the innovation space? I looked for the initial set up of the new industries fund, because innovation booster grants come out of the new industries fund. On 28 November 2017, a lovely press release was put out by Mark McGowan, Premier, and Dave Kelly, the then Minister for Innovation and ICT. Dave Kelly is no longer a minister, but I am sure he takes great pride in this. The statement reads —

- Election commitment delivered
- \$16.7 million New Industries Fund to support innovation and Western Australian jobs

...

Premier Mark McGowan and Innovation and ICT Minister Dave Kelly today unveiled a \$16.7 million New Industries Fund, delivering on an election commitment to create Western Australian jobs through innovation.

That is a pretty worthy cause I would have thought. That was quite reasonable —

Hon Kate Doust: It was an excellent election commitment.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, that is pretty reasonable. But was there any history prior to that of innovation funds in Western Australia, prior to the Labor —

Hon Kate Doust: Not from your side.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am about to table the press release, honourable member. In November 2017, the Australian Labor Party made an announcement. On 12 May 2016, a press release came out from Hon Colin Barnett, Mike Nahan and Terry Redman that reads —

- New \$20 million innovation package

...

The Liberal National Government will invest heavily in areas of strength in the Western Australian economy in order to capitalise on the State's comparative advantages in mining and petroleum, agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

Over the page it states —

“We are investing \$20 million over four years for Government departments to work with relevant industries to support the researchers, innovators and start-up businesses which have the greatest potential to strengthen, broaden and build the Western Australian economy.”

The Premier said the \$20 million would be in addition to the \$30 million per annum already allocated to the innovation space.

Was this government, as it came to power, the first government to invest in innovation? Obviously it was not. The year before it came to power, there was a press release that said that \$20 million —

Hon Kate Doust: It took you eight years of nothing and then —

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Well done. The Labor Party made an election commitment of \$16.7 million. I am not even going to argue the figures with the member. The fact that the previous commitment was slightly higher does not matter. The fact is that this government did not jump into the space as the only government that was considering it. It is critical to note that for the debate before the house today. A \$20 billion announcement was made the year before, honourable member.

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I listened with interest when the honourable member who moved the motion talked about Bentley Technology Park. This park has had a mixed history; hopefully it is looking far better these days. The member mentioned the conversation around—I think he kept his title—Hon Troy Buswell when he was Treasurer of the state. I am not sure what time that was, but there was a story in ABC news back then that related to the functioning within technology park. It states —

Ex—public servants jailed for \$1.7m fraud

Two former senior public servants have been jailed for stealing more than \$1.7 million of WA taxpayers' money.

Roy Chapman and his estranged wife Joy Johnston fraudulently obtained the money over an eight-year period.

Chapman was in charge of Technology Park at Bentley and paid sums of money to companies owned by Johnston.

Is it possible, honourable member, that the then Treasurer of the day was a little concerned about the oversight and management of this particular unit, before we start casting aspersions that perhaps the government of the day simply took money out?

Hon Stephen Dawson: I think you're casting aspersions now.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am just reading out a news article, minister. Is it possible perhaps that the government of the day had some concerns about the management? Maybe that is why it went about things differently. Bear in mind, this happened some years before the announcement of the conservative \$20 million investment into innovation. This happened many years before, let us say, at least five years prior to that event occurring. Is it just possible that other considerations needed to be taken into account? If we look deeply enough, perhaps that might have been the case. Perhaps the government was right to have some concerns and not be wholly focused on the particular project of which the member is very proud. I accept that the member has made a big contribution in that area, and obviously it has probably improved since, but it is not to say that it was perfect at the time and perhaps there were some other reasons why.

I move now to the more substantive part of my contribution, which I really wanted to focus on today but had to deal with some of the Labor spin before we get to the actual debate.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: There is a lot of it.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, there is a lot. I have spent nearly half of my contribution simply dealing with the Labor spin at the start, so we are going to be rushing through this. No matter where we invest in innovation, the question always is: how successful is the investment? Members should not think for a minute that I am suggesting that everything that a government might invest in needs to provide a return or needs to be delivered. As Israel has found out, plenty of innovation investments by companies and governments utterly fail. It is not unusual because we are taking a gamble —

Hon Kate Doust: Their system is designed in their allocation of funding to support failure, to grow off failure, and to become better at it, and that better component goes back into government to feed back into innovation. It is a very good model.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: We agree on what is happening in Israel. It actually works very well, but even in that circumstance, not every investment pays off. It never will. In relation to the motion before the house today, what the government could have done was to give us an understanding of how successful this particular program has been to date. I fully accept that the projects put forward by the member who moved the motion are the successful ones—any member would highlight the successful ones—but how is the government measuring the overall success of this program of which it is so proud? How does it measure whether this investment is meeting the mark or perhaps should have different criteria attached to it? What is the review process that this government is using? An enormous number of projects have been funded. This is one of those investment projects with a large number of relatively modest investments in company. The good news is, of course, that all this information is on the internet these days. If members go to the innovation booster grant website, which is quite useful, they can find a list of the recipients all the way back to 2017. I note that it includes some of the recipients that the member talked about. For example, I think the member referenced VetChip, which received \$20 000 in 2022 and appears to have made significant gains on that. But there are plenty of other recipients. Perhaps the member, in his five-minute reply, or perhaps the minister, in his response, given that he is actually the minister overseeing that area, might be able to outline the success—I hope he is sending a message to his advisers so that he can find out —

Hon Stephen Dawson: I can tell you now, honourable member, in this sector, many of these projects take five, seven or 10 years to commercialisation, so it is not like you find a mineral today and you can mine it tomorrow.

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It's a long-term investment, but how we can measure it is by the number of people they're employing and the number of PhD students involved.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I will be looking forward to the minister outlining —

Hon Stephen Dawson: I've got to say other things. I just thought I'd give you the answer now.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Okay.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Let us bring it back to a debate rather than cross-chamber chatter.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I would be very interested to hear about that. Obviously, all these projects are not going to get up and make significant contributions. For example, in 2017, the first round of recipients included a company making end-of-life pet products such as pet caskets. I would be interested to know how some of these projects—we do not need to isolate particular ones, but some funds went to a fast nut removal company and a commercial black truffle processing company. In 2019, one project that was invested in involved self-vaccination immunotherapy for cancer. If that has actually been successful, that might be a really interesting project, but the hard bit is for anybody to find out how successful these projects have been. Poach Pear is a project for artisan plant-based pâté that uses secondary produce fortified with vitamin B12. I do not necessarily buy plant-based pâté but I would be interested to know how that one went, as well. It would be great to get some follow-up.

Hon Darren West: I'm shocked it's not your staple!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The member is shocked.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: You wouldn't find Hon Darren West tucking into it, would you?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No, not plant-based pâté. Possibly Hon Dr Brian Walker could advise us on a couple of these things. In 2020, there was a novel kit for draining skin abscesses. I thought that was quite interesting and I would be interested to know how that one works. There is also a project called "Backyard Bash" for the world's most advanced cricket wicket! Is that working?

Hon Darren West: Now you are talking!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That is not bad! The Australian cricket team could use some help. Backyard bash might actually give them a bit of spin experience, which might be particularly useful. There were also field research trials to expand the impact of the product "Mineral Magic" in the agricultural sector. Here is one for Hon Dr Brian Walker: Whole Green Foods Pty Ltd got \$18 040 to apply enzymatic processing technology to create hemp seed milk. I am not sure how that has worked either but, with his very good connections, Hon Dr Brian Walker might want to tell us a little bit more about that.

Hon Darren West: You do not remember drinking it, member.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No. My hemp milk is probably with my plant-based pâté. We had a bit of fun, and it is fun to pick out some of the weird and interesting stuff that has been invested in and that is not to say necessarily that they are bad investments. If suddenly hemp milk takes off and we are all having it in our lattes—I have long blacks, so it is not for me—that would be fantastic. We need to know, though, how successful it has been. There is one measure of success that I think we can absolutely use for this program. Perhaps my cynicism gland is a bit overdeveloped but the one measure of success that we can use for this project is how many press releases the government has put out.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: That is the Metronet approach! There have been 500 of those.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: There we go. How many press releases has the government put out? I suspect that this is the value for money we are talking about, not necessarily economic return on the investment. Hopefully some of it works; some of it obviously does. Is there an overall positive or negative? I do not know. I look forward to the Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy explaining it to me. I can tell members how successful this program is. If I run a search engine on this particular program, I found 94 press releases from 10 May 2020 and 47 press releases specifically on this program since the election.

Hon Stephen Dawson: How many since I took over?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Was it at the 2017 election?

Hon Stephen Dawson: No, I started in 2021.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It was 47 since the 2021 election. We are nearly two years in and there have been 47 press releases. That is not even quite one every two weeks.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: Lift!

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Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Come on, minister; lift your game! It is not quite a press release every two weeks that the government has managed to glean out of this program. That is what happens.

Hon Kate Doust: How many did you put out?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I have not been in government to put out any press releases on this. I put out a few press releases this year to bring down the government slowly but surely.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Leader of the Opposition.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you, President, for your protection. There were 47 press releases garnered from this program since the election nearly two years ago. If we have a metric by which we want to judge this particular program, it is very difficult to judge success or failure based on the success or failure of the products that have been invested in.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Does the Leader of the Opposition know how he could work out how successful the program has been? He could talk to the sector.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The innovation sector loves it and that would make sense because the government is putting money into the innovation sector. If the government took \$16.7 million and said, for example, it was investing it in the not-for-profit social services sector, does the minister know what it would say? It would say, “We love it; what a great idea!”

Hon Stephen Dawson: It would probably say it is not enough.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It would probably say it is not enough. I am sure the innovation sector would tell the minister it could use a heck of a lot more. There are a lot more companies out there that the government could invest in but I do not know how many more press releases could be squeezed out. I do not know whether government members sat down and thought, “How many press releases do we need to squeeze out each year? We will divide the money we have available each year by that many press releases and that will be about how much.” It must work out at about \$20 000 per project because that is about how much money seems to be delivered regularly.

The metric by which this government wants to be assessed is the success or failure, if it can explain it to us, but without a real metric, the success or failure of this project for the government is how many press releases it gets to announce. Of course, the companies love it. The government is handing out free money. It is not very complicated. They go out and find a company that could use \$20 000 for something; every company could use \$20 000 for something. I have no moral objection to the government doing that despite the fact that serving in the shadow Treasury, it is my instinct not to allow anybody to spend anything on basically any project. Being a grinch is part of the job but I do not mind the government investing in innovation and research. That is fine, but measure the success of it and do not for a minute pretend that it is out of the goodness of their hearts because it is not. The only metric that we can use to judge the government’s performance is the number of press releases it puts out. Of course, it is clever because every company that the government throws money at tells companies around them the government is throwing money at it and “What a great government, dipping into its pockets to pull out cash. That is fantastic!” The metric that the government should be measured by is the number of press releases—one every two weeks. That is the process the government is engaged in.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy) [1.47 pm]: It is my pleasure to rise to make a brief contribution on this motion this afternoon. At the outset, I want to acknowledge Hon Dan Caddy for bringing forward the motion. I particularly like the way he has worded it. It has not been a congratulatory motion saying “We’re great”. It is just noting that this government is committed to fostering innovation so it is disappointing that, in the contribution made by the Leader of the Opposition, he could not note that we are committed to fostering innovation in this state and to growing the ecosystem.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: It is disappointing. Of course, although the Leader of the Opposition would not say it, can I say that this is an amazing sector in Western Australia. Since about 2000, about 500 small businesses have created their headquarters in Western Australia, many of them kicking goals around the world. As has been said, you have to speculate to accumulate; you have to invest in industry to create an ecosystem to grow an industry. Slowly but surely, we are putting Western Australia on the map as a technology hub of sorts, certainly in the Asia-Pacific region, whether it is “cleantech”, “proptech”, “fintech”, “greentech” or “medtech”, there are so many opportunities in this space and so many goals being kicked in Western Australia by the smart people in the sector. Of course, since COVID-19, we have seen people move back to Western Australia. They decide they want to live here, grow their families here and let their kids grow up here. They might have made it big around the world and they want to create and help grow an ecosystem in this country because they recognise the value and opportunities that exist

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here. We have many smart people in this state doing extraordinary things on a daily basis and it makes me incredibly proud, as Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy, to be able to showcase and work with them. As I said, I want to acknowledge Hon Dan Caddy and thank him for his passion for this sector.

I am very pleased to be able to acknowledge that the innovation booster grants are now open for applications. This year, for the first time ever, it has increased from what was a \$20 000 grant up to \$40 000. That is a significant boost, as people would understand. That is in recognition of the great work that happens here. Those grants are awarded for research and development, product development, technology transfer and intellectual property along with commercialisation support services, because that is a really big issue. As has been acknowledged, many projects might not make it to becoming a unicorn or a Canva and to be worth \$5 billion. Others will certainly create jobs in this state and we will make money. However, not everything will make money. As has been acknowledged by some members in this place, failure should not be an issue in this sector because it is from trying something that we work out whether it works or whether we have to take a different direction, a different course or change the product. In this sector, I am happy to say, “Sure, try it.” I do not see failure as it might be seen in other portfolios.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Individual failure is not an issue; it is systemic failure that you have got to worry about.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: We are not seeing systemic failure in this sector in Western Australia. I will get to that a little later as I talk about some of the amazing people doing extraordinary things in this state.

This year, the grant amount has increased from \$20 000 to \$40 000. As an added benefit, recipients can request to receive 50 per cent of the grant up-front rather than generating the funds themselves and claiming back that money later. The remaining 50 per cent will be claimed after the project is completed. This will improve cash flow for recipients, especially those early-stage startups that are often cash-strapped; they have some great ideas but they need to get to the next level. Although previous recipients have been required to use an external third party service provider, this year the recipients can use internal resources to complete their projects. This has been welcomed by the startup community. For the 2023 program, 25 grants are on offer with at least five awarded to startups and small businesses in the life sciences sector, with the remaining 20 going to the broader sector in this state. In total, \$1 million has been allocated this year. That provides fresh support for innovative startups and small businesses in this state.

Many success stories have originated from the program over the years, one of which is medtech startup Neurotologix, which was co-founded by the impressive Kate Lewkowski. Kate is an amazing person. That company received a \$20 000 voucher grant for its low-cost remote patient monitoring system that revolutionises how dizziness and vertigo are diagnosed. This health issue impacts more than 2.9 million Australians annually and results in around 350 000 medical appointments. Neurotologix went on to win the overall WA Innovator of the Year Award last year, receiving a \$70 000 cash prize to further assist its research. This highlights the importance of investing in local innovation.

Another success story and previous recipient of the grant is VeinTech. This medtech startup has developed a handheld ultraportable vein finder. This innovation is tackling the high average insertion failure rate, which is 40 per cent, and up to 70 per cent in individuals with difficult intravenous access. Those who have had to have a needle put in would know that between 40 and 70 per cent of the time the needle misses. That causes pain, and there is also a cost associated with that. This incredible company has come up with a solution for that. Since winning the grant in 2020 to help develop this technology, VeinTech, which is led by a trio of great people—Nikhilesh Bappoo, Dr Katherine Arenson and Nicholas Buckley—has gone on to receive a string of funding and awards, including twice being a finalist for the Western Australian Innovator of the Year award. I had the pleasure of opening VeinTech’s new office in Leederville a couple of weeks ago. It continues to go from strength to strength as it moves along the pipeline from having an idea to putting it into practice. It has an exciting future ahead and it continues to grow. It is great to see that something that started small is working its way through the pipeline and, hopefully, will come to fruition and change healthcare as we know it. Something small can certainly make a big difference. Both the innovation booster grant and the Innovator of the Year program are funded by the new industries fund that the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, which is a \$16.7 million commitment to this sector over four years that will facilitate the acceleration of new and emerging businesses in Western Australia.

At the West Tech Fest in December, which Hon Wilson Tucker also attended, I had the pleasure of announcing our new innovation strategy, *Western Australia—the place to innovate*. If anyone has not seen it already, I can give them a copy of it. This strategy is a good one. It has a bold 10-year vision for Western Australia to become a global hub of innovation, investment, invention and impact. The strategy includes goals that are designed to inspire a new generation of investors and innovators to solve our challenges and to encourage the economy to move in new directions. Quite often, Western Australia is seen as a one-trick pony; that we have only a mining sector—sometimes people say that we have an ag sector, too—and very little else. The government is keen to diversify the economy in this state. The innovation sector creates real opportunities to divest and diversify.

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Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Can I just check: have you increased the overall amount of money that is available in the whole system or is it the same amount of money in a tighter section?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: We have reallocated to refocus on this area because it is one that we are seeing real success in.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: So it is more than the original \$16.7 million?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The honourable member should stay tuned for more information.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: The budget's coming up; tell us now.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: No, no.

As I was saying, the strategy is designed to inspire a new generation of innovators in the state. It will assist in elevating Western Australia's innovation onto the global stage. People in this state are already doing great things and they are known around the world. I had the pleasure of leading a delegation to the Bio International Convention in San Diego last year and many of these smaller businesses, innovators and tech businesses, came along. It was great to see them interact with venture capitalists, bigger companies, intellectual property lawyers or people who had commercialisation experience to take them to the next level to get their idea into operation.

Also as part of our new industries fund, the government is a sponsor of West Tech Fest. We have committed to support that fest with \$500 000 over two years. This year it celebrates its twelfth year in Western Australia. It has firmly cemented itself into the innovation calendar. West Tech Fest provides local and regional startups and technology companies the opportunity to grow and showcase what they are doing, their capabilities, and also to attract investment and reach new global markets. During my time as Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy, I have seen Western Australia emerge as a true centre for innovation and entrepreneurship. It is great to be involved in the West Tech Fest. Hon Wilson Tucker would agree with me that it was a really enjoyable experience. There were people here from around the country and also around the world sharing their expertise. It was an opportunity for our local innovators to learn from others and to interact with companies such as venture capital funds.

We are at a tipping point where the impact of technology is so significant that it can transform the way we do business. The convergence of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and automation and, indeed, the internet, blockchain and 5G, all have the power to change business models, to reinvent processes and to reimagine the way we all work. I get to meet these people on a daily basis—people with new ideas or who just explain to me how fast this stuff is moving. It is so fast paced, but many opportunities are coming out of it and there are many opportunities to diversify our economy in Western Australia.

The Tech Council of Australia and the Australian government share a commitment to achieve an extra 1.2 million technology jobs in Australia by 2030. We will get roughly a tenth of that in this state. There are real employment opportunities in that space, certainly for young people in particular who will benefit from the STEM investment that this government is making into primary and high schools in this state.

The remarkable innovation and technology prowess that exists in Western Australia is testament to the fantastic ingenuity and resilience of our community. Western Australia is an exciting place to be as we continually evolve and grow as leaders, and also as experts and partners in national and international initiatives in innovation, research and commercialisation.

Late last year, I had the pleasure of announcing by press release that we were investing in a new creative technology innovation hub in Western Australia. This one is located in the regions, so early next week—probably next Tuesday—I will officially open this new creative tech innovation hub in Bunbury in the south west.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I'll be there!

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The member has been invited?

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Yes, I'll be there.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Okay, good. He had better be on his best behaviour!

This is a multifaceted commitment, because it is a commitment to the creative technology innovation space, and there is a lot of that happening in the south west, but it is also an acknowledgement that people in regional Western Australia need to benefit from the innovation opportunities that exist. This is a partnership with Edith Cowan University. The hub will assist in growing a future-ready workforce and also entrepreneurs and innovators in Western Australia and, indeed, our regions.

The state government has invested \$1.2 million over four years for this hub. It will focus on creative digital industries, including gaming, experiential and immersive technology, software development, product design, advertising, film

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and media. The state government will also fund—again, through the new industries fund—three other hubs. They are the cybersecurity innovation hub; the life sciences hub; and the data science hub, through MTPConnect; and —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Is the new Bunbury hub coming out the new industries fund as well?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes, it is. Edith Cowan University is a partner and it is putting funding on the table also. There is the cybersecurity hub, the life sciences hub and the data science hub, and I will mention those a little later on.

The new industries fund has also budgeted this year for regional innovation workshops. We are sending experts and advisers to regional centres to run workshops and to potentially act as mentors to local startup founders and entrepreneurs. There is a range of innovative organisations around the state at the moment; Hon Darren West and Hon Sandra Carr will know about Pollinators in Geraldton, for example.

Hon Sandra Carr: We've been there.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes, we have been there; it does great stuff. There are regional innovators in Bunbury and we are sending a leading communications expert, an INSEAD lecturer, to Geraldton to run a communications workshop and to support local entrepreneurs there.

I refer to another press release put out yesterday. It is important to acknowledge the fine work that is taking place through the new industries fund. The Deputy Premier; Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade; Tourism and I put out a press release announcing that three early stage venture capital funds will receive operational support funding from the Western Australian Venture Support 2022–2025 pilot program, or WAVES. That is a new pilot program to encourage more early stage funding of local startups and scale-ups. For anyone with an idea, that early money is vital. Whether it was \$20 000 before or \$40 000 now, it just enables those innovators to move from the idea stage to the next stage, and it is then that they will know whether they have a future. Of course, there are many other steps along the way, because scale-ups are important, too.

The new grant program aims to encourage the formation of new early stage venture funds in WA. Through WAVES, Purpose Ventures Fund, Fund WA and Quokka Capital will receive \$100 000 each in matched annual funding from the Western Australian government for three years. That funding will assist with operational expenditure and it is headed by some of the state's most notable venture capital leaders. The three funds are expected to become operational in the coming months, enabling them to support more local startups and scale-ups. Increasing the number of startups and scale-ups in this state is vital for the growth and diversification of our economy in Western Australia, but also the creation of jobs across sectors.

This month I will also be launching round 4 of the successful X-TEND WA program. This is a competitive co-investment grants program that invests in organisations that deliver programs that assist WA entrepreneurs, startups, small businesses, emerging businesses and small to medium enterprises, to grow their capability to better navigate their commercialisation journey. That program also funds organisations that run programs that enhance investor education, engendering confidence for investment in innovative products in Western Australia.

I am running out of time very quickly. We also have MIT REAP coming to Western Australia this year. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is bringing its regional entrepreneurship acceleration program to WA, with about 100 visitors from the US, the Dominican Republic, Hungary and Brazil. These types of things grow the technology ecosystem in Western Australia; they put us on the map.

I do not have time to talk about it today, but we also have a future health research and innovation fund in Western Australia, which sits under my medical research portfolio. Again, that is a significant investment into this sector in Western Australia. Although the main focus is on research, there is also an innovation component. That is a \$1.7 billion fund at the moment, and the interest from that is reinvested into the research and innovation sectors in Western Australia. We also have a seed fund and innovation fellowships as part of the program.

Very quickly, because we are running out of money—sorry, time! We have lots of money; that is one thing I have in this portfolio that I have not had in others! I want to acknowledge some of the great people in Western Australia who are doing extraordinary things in the innovation space—people like Angela Fonseca and Maud Eijkenboom at Lixa, who are working on revolutionary antimicrobial technology. There are people like Rakesh Veedu and the team at SynGenis—the place that Hon Dan Caddy spoke about, at Technology Park—who are working on developing precision drugs. There are also people like Sue Fletcher, AO, the chief scientific officer at PYC Therapeutics, and her team, who were on the delegation to the US and are also doing some world-leading stuff. Sue has FDA approval for some of the projects she has worked on previously.

I also want to acknowledge John Barrington, AM, at Artrya and Dr Liz Dallimore at Argenica Therapeutics. Members can google these companies or, indeed, check them out at LinkedIn, and they will see their successes and how they are doing. I want to acknowledge people like Brodie McCulloch and his team at Spacecubed, who are well and truly creating and helping drive real positive change in the innovation space in Western Australia. There is also

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Jason Balchand, who is the chair of the Startup WA, whose work I want to acknowledge. For those who are interested, we are investing in Dealroom.co, which lists the range of small startup companies in Western Australia that are doing great work in the innovation space.

As I said, there are many extraordinary people doing amazing things in Western Australia, and I really encourage all members to understand the innovation opportunities in this state, talk to their stakeholders and share those opportunities with them. We can make a difference together.

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [2.07 pm]: I thank Hon Dan Caddy for moving this excellent motion today. We heard from the Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy and the honourable member about some of the government programs in this space, including the innovation booster fund and the new industries fund. I believe these are steps in the right direction and an acknowledgement by this government that we really need to diversify our economy and try to wean ourselves off the red stuff up in the Pilbara. We need to break out of the boom-and-bust cycle we find ourselves in by investing in the innovation space and investing in startups, creating a healthy ecosystem, trying to diversify our economy and future, and futureproofing Western Australia.

If the government is really committed to supercharging the startup industry and diversifying the economy, a number of ingredients are required and a number of levers need to be pulled. We need to get it right. As we know, innovation is a cornerstone of economic growth and the government has a crucial role to play in creating an environment that supports and encourages innovation.

Firstly, we need to invest in research and development programs to support the creation of new technologies and innovations. The government can collaborate with academic and research institutions to identify new opportunities for research and development investment in areas such as renewable energy, digital technologies and biotechnology.

Secondly, we need to provide incentives for businesses to invest in innovation. The government can provide tax credits or grants to companies that invest in R&D, as well as other incentives, such as access to mentorship programs and funding for startup companies.

Thirdly, we need to create an environment that promotes collaboration and knowledge sharing between companies. This can be done through the establishment of innovation hubs, which can provide space and resources for entrepreneurs, investors and researchers to work together and share ideas.

Fourthly, we need to provide access to funding for innovation projects. This can be done through the creation of venture capital funds, which can provide funding for startup companies and help to bring new technologies and innovations to market.

Finally, we need to provide access to training and support programs for innovators. This can be done through entrepreneurship training programs, mentorship initiatives and other resources that can help innovators to develop the skills and knowledge that they need to succeed.

I have a confession to make: the last five paragraphs that I read out were not written by me. They were not written by my hardworking staff or, indeed, by a human. They were, in fact, written by a computer program called ChatGPT. For members who are not familiar with ChatGPT, it is an artificial intelligence program powered by reinforced machine learning that takes prompts and questions and generates conversational text as an output. Members are probably asking, “Wilson, why did you just read out a wall of text from a computer?” I did it for a number of reasons. Firstly, I did it because I believe in everything that that computer program said about the innovation space and what the government can do to supercharge the sector. Secondly, I did it because we are talking about innovation and technology and I thought that using an innovative and disruptive technology example like ChatGPT would be very apt. Thirdly, I did it because the rate of technology adoption and advancement is increasing on an exponential scale. It is moving very quickly, disrupting traditional markets and industries and changing how we work and communicate. Some commentators out there are saying that we are on this exponential curve of change in technological advancement and that in the next 10 years, we will see the same rate of change as we have seen in the last 100 years. I ask members to cast their minds back 100 years. I think some members were probably here, haunting these halls 100 years ago!

Hon Stephen Dawson: Who are you talking about? Name names!

Hon WILSON TUCKER: I was not looking in any particular direction—probably in the direction of Hon Darren West! No, I am not singling out any one member.

The first supermarket that came to fruition was created 100 years ago. One hundred years ago, the first light switch was invented. If we fast forward to today, we have technologies such as CRISPR, the gene-editing technology that can change the building blocks of life; it can change a DNA sequence. That is the scope of change that we are talking about from then till now. We will potentially see the same rate of change in the next 10 years. Whether or not we like it, technology is here; it is disrupting how we work and communicate. We as a society in Western Australia and

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the government have an opportunity to either embrace technology and seize the opportunities and benefits it can provide or basically put our head in the sand and miss out on the opportunity.

We have seen play out in the media very recently some commentary about ChatGPT in the educational space. There were some examples of students using ChatGPT to generate their essays—a form of plagiarism. There was commentary from some teachers who came out very strongly against ChatGPT and said, “This is plagiarism. This program should be banned and students should not have access to it.” There were other teachers—I sided with these teachers—who I believe took a more measured, futuristic view and said, “These students are going to grow up using ChatGPT and artificial intelligence and more powerful iterations of ChatGPT, so rather than trying to ban it, let us try to work with it. Let’s embrace it and use it to elevate our thinking and potentially become more efficient in our daily tasks.”

Members heard previously some of ChatGPT’s thoughts on the innovation space and what the government can do here. I will share with members some of my human thoughts, and I will use the Western Australian lens in particular. In my humble opinion, the most important thing that the government needs to get right when we talk about the startup space and building a healthy ecosystem and encouraging the innovation sector in Western Australia is people. If we are going to solve complex problems and develop innovative solutions that disrupt markets and ways of thinking, we need to attract the right talent into Western Australia. There are numerous examples and evidence to suggest that when the right mix of people are in the same room working on a complex problem, they can solve it. I am talking about a computer engineer and a data scientist sitting down and basically building a data pipeline, accessing information and being able to interpret that data, or a domain expert, a medical researcher, a program manager or someone in that business space who can ask the question. Then there are the people at the back end with the expertise to provide the answer. That is when these scalable solutions can be found that can really put Western Australia on the map.

We heard some commentary from the minister about the growing number of people in the IT sector. The *Digital pulse* report from the Australian Computer Society stated that over one million Australians will be working in the technology sector by 2024. The Tech Council of Australia, which is one of the pre-eminent lobby groups for the technology sector, has said that in the near future, Western Australia will have more IT positions than resource positions, which will be a massive paradigm shift for Western Australia. There are a few different ways to encourage the number of people we need in these roles to get into the second fastest growing sector in Australia, including attracting people, training people and retraining people. Firstly, the training aspect is about making sure we have a healthy pipeline of graduate students coming through and taking up technology positions. We know that there is a massive gender gap in the technology sector not just in Western Australia, but across Australia; I think it is around 31 per cent. The government has a key role in trying to attract women into the sector. I think there is a fairly antiquated stereotype in the technology sector. I think that people have a vision of a nerdy guy in the basement, like a mushroom growing in the darkness.

Hon Kate Doust: You have a lot of experience of that!

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Yes; there was a time and a place for that.

The sector is different. It is diverse. It is moving on. The United States is further along in this conversation. It has not quite got the gender balance right, but it is further along than Australia.

The other element of training is about trying to encourage people with neurological and physical disabilities into the tech sector. A number of roles that are emerging are fairly repetitive but are also very important, such as data labelling. A number of people in the disability sector who want to enter the workforce could fill these very important roles, and they should be encouraged to do so. That is where the government can help join the dots and get them into those positions.

On the retraining aspect, 120 000 workers are needed across the sector, which represents nine per cent of the population in Western Australia. Those nine per cent are people who want to move to the technology sector and basically do a midlife career pivot. The government has a role to play in skills and training recognition to help make that transition much easier for them.

Finally, we need to attract people to Western Australia. The minister mentioned that Western Australia has a bit of an image problem. We are a mining state, and that is what we are known for, but we have a lot of success stories in the innovation space. I do not think we are very good at blowing our own horns in this space; we are certainly not as loud as the Americans.

We are competing in a very globalised industry, and the pandemic compounded that. The pandemic changed how people work. We have moved into a more distributed work environment. The tech sector and innovation space have been at the forefront of that. It means that it is no longer an east versus west equation; WA is competing for top-tier talent to come to this state from other countries. We are very much behind and not competitive on salaries.

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There is brain gain and brain drain. We suffer from brain drain, with people chasing golden handcuffs overseas working for US tech companies because Australian companies are not competitive on salaries. In WA, we need to really think about our strengths, what we can do to attract people and how we can stay competitive. If we cannot do it on salaries, maybe we can do on lifestyle. It is something the government really needs to think about: How do we get the right people here? How do we attract and retain them? A number of people came back to the state during the pandemic. Borders were shutting and that was an impetus for people to come home to familiar ground. WA was for all intents and purposes free. Now that the borders are open, we need to try to make sure those people stay in Western Australia and that brain capital does not chase other opportunities overseas.

I will leave it there. There are a number of ingredients that government needs to get right. We need to think outside the box, lean into our strengths as a state, promote ourselves and stay competitive on a global scale.

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan) [2.22 pm]: I want to thank Hon Dan Caddy for moving this motion today. It is a really important debate that we have had in this chamber on a number of occasions over many years, depending on which side of the chamber we have been on, and one that we should continue to have. Innovation is nothing new. From our first gasp of air, we innovate in every element of our lives. It is just that sometimes we need some frameworks to boost it along.

I thank Hon Dan Caddy for acknowledging our very good friend the late Mal Bryce. He really was such a leader in this space—a man ahead of his time. He pushed for ICT to be boosted and it has now become part of our language. He was a massive driver behind the establishment of the Bentley Technology Park precinct. When we were in opposition between 2008 and 2017, he was a great support to us. At the same time, he was driving the state and federal governments of the day to get the Square Kilometre Array to come to Western Australia and not South Africa. He pushed for the Pawsey Centre to be set up in Bentley Tech Park. I think he had a grander vision for what could happen in that precinct. I do not know whether Bentley Tech Park has ever met original expectations; it is a work in progress. It is really pleasing to hear that companies are coming back to that precinct as their hub and doing great work. Given the co-location of Pawsey, CSIRO and a number of other organisations and certainly the work in agriculture and energy and some of the projects that Curtin University has invested in that space, I think the potential is quite significant for it to be a great innovation hub right in the city. It is a very important part of my electorate and I am always very keen to promote the work done there. I acknowledge the challenges the innovation centre has faced over time, but some really good people have been based there since, working to try to get it back on track.

I also want to pick up on some comments on the Israeli model made by Hon Dr Steve Thomas. I went to Israel in 2010 and I would love to go back again to see where things are at. I have always liked the manner in which the Israeli government has approached innovation. It is not because it is something it has wanted to do; it is something the government had to do to bring the country up to speed. The Israeli government was so tactical about decision-making and the people that it attracted. It looked at what was happening in Russia in the early 1990s and saw that there was a huge number of people in the science and engineering space who wanted to leave Russia. I think a group of about 900 000 was brought to Israel. Where they were placed and the nature of the work they were given was targeted. The government set up panels for the chief scientist at the time, and the chief scientist took a strong lead role in decision-making on expenditure and the allocation of funding. The model supported failure. It was not seen as the end of the line; it was seen as an opportunity to rethink, repurpose and come up with a better idea. Failure should not be seen as the end of the line; it should be seen as an opportunity to reboot, rethink and get better at what you do. When they do have success, the government gets back funding to reinvest in other projects. I think that is a really interesting model.

When we were in opposition, I talked ad nauseam about the Israeli model to a brick wall—the Liberal–National government at the time, unfortunately. We could have done some really exciting things between 2008 and 2017, but we did not. I stand by my comments about the government of the day being asleep at the wheel. Members opposite talked about press releases being an indicator of success, and I went back and had a little look at them because a number of ministers worked in that space during the former government. It was Troy Buswell initially. We heard about the damage that he inflicted on the then Department of Commerce and the area of science and innovation. I was the shadow minister at the time, so I saw it happening and raised questions on numerous occasions. We then had Dean Nalder for a brief period of time. There were no press releases then. I think Buswell put out half a dozen but most were on science and none referred to innovation. We then had Bill Marmion. I think he put out about 19 press releases over his time on ICT. But try to engage Bill Marmion—lovely fellow—in this space, and you would not get a lot of movement. In 2013, the Liberal government installed the Premier as the Minister for Science. I remember that he rocked up to the Premier’s Science Awards and made the announcement that he was now going to be the minister. Everyone went, “Gee, let’s see what happens.” Nothing really happened.

The Liberal government of the day put out a document touting all its achievements between 2013 and 2017 entitled *Our major achievements: Building a better state*. Not once is “innovation” or “ICT” mentioned throughout that document. The only things referenced that might be considered close to science-based innovation are the SKA, the Pawsey Centre and Scitech. Two of those three were federally based initiatives that were driving the state along. They

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are fantastic projects. I will say that the Liberal government of the day engaged with us and we worked very closely with it and supported those projects. During that period, there was a constant battle about what was going to happen to Scitech. We came very close to losing Scitech, which, quite frankly, is a great facility for young people in this state to kick-off their interest in science, ICT and innovation, and we should do everything we can to foster that.

I think the member was coming from an interesting place and I appreciate he was not in Parliament during that period, but there were missed opportunities because the government of the day was so focused on our traditional business, which was mining and resources, and it would not listen when people said we needed to diversify. I want to acknowledge the current minister. Having listened to what he said today, I applaud him for his enthusiasm and engagement with the sector. Everything he talked about today reflects the fact that he has been working with the sector to create change and opportunities. If we do not have that in place, innovation will die on the vine.

I think Hon Wilson Tucker referenced the fact that we are not in competition with others. Well, we are in competition and we should be in competition, because competition encourages innovation. I have always been of the view that we are in one of the best parts of the world to be competitive and to attract business and opportunities to our state. Western Australia could be the hub and spoke, if we like, of engagement. The honourable member was right: a lot of people came back to the state. That silver lining of the COVID-19 pandemic should encourage us to think creatively about how to attract people to Western Australia. That has always been the issue, because we are on the quiet side of the country. It is hard to attract funding for innovation programs here, but we have the best lifestyle—we have the best of everything in Western Australia! That is a challenge, but I think the government has been dealing with that. The minister today listed a number of people who are doing great things in a range of areas locally. He unfortunately missed out places like the Australian National Phenome Centre, which I think has attracted half the staff of Imperial College London to Perth. They are doing incredible work.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I have another page of people whom I missed out!

Hon KATE DOUST: There is a huge number of people. Gareth Baynam is doing great work in Nedlands in the space of rare diseases and child health. I was fortunate to chair, in the last term of government, the ministerial council on precision health. I had about 18 or 20 people around the table at every meeting and I was just in awe of the capacity and background of each of those people in their respective area of research. I sincerely hope that the work done by that council will have some positive outcomes in terms of the medical research future fund. The council did some really solid work and made some recommendations to government that will not only be of benefit to the state in the medical research space, but also create jobs and attract people of a high calibre to our state.

In talking about attracting people to the state, I was recently on holiday in London for a few days during the week that Western Australia launched its tourism adverts to attract people to WA. I took photos and videos! I was in Trafalgar Square on a number of occasions and I watched the videos that present Western Australia as an amazing place to come to. They had glorious visuals. I thought that rather than being a tourism advert, it really should be about coming to Western Australia to work and live. I might ask the responsible minister to perhaps rebadge those ads as employee —

Hon Dan Caddy: I think Minister Papalia is onto it.

Hon KATE DOUST: Is he? Great. I thought Minister Cook might be engaged in that space as well. Western Australia is a great place to be.

There was a significant change in how we approach ICT, science and innovation during the last term of government. The government has put in place the infrastructure for those things. The booster grants that we are talking about today are just one element of a range of programs. I must say that I was really pleased to hear people talk about the new industries fund. I was very pleased, as shadow minister, to launch that program with the current Premier when we were in opposition, along with our good friend Nilesch Makwana, who was very helpful at the time and continues to be very helpful and engaged. I must say that he is a real leader in the innovation space in Western Australia. I am sure that a number of people in this room know Nilesch; he is very enthusiastic and always has great ideas about change. I think the difference between Labor governments and Liberal governments is that the former Liberal government did not really have a plan. It did not have a clear strategy that it wanted to roll out. It all comes back to leadership. If the leadership is not pushing these ideas along, is not working with industry or the universities and does not put in place arrangements to provide support to smaller organisations, nothing will happen.

It was really great to hear today that the government has increased the amount of funding in this set of grants. The challenge I used to find particularly for some of our biotech companies in Western Australia—we had some really great small companies working here—was in getting seed money, getting them through the commercialisation process and finding a safe place for them to get advice and support so that they could thrive. Sadly, a number of them hit the wall because they did not have that support. There are now better places; a range of organisations have been set up where people can come together in working hubs to get support and advice, and to grow.

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The grants that have been provided in not just the last year but also preceding years illustrate the diversity of work that is happening in Western Australia. It is significant. It has moved away from when it was predominantly the mining and resources sector in the mid-2000s. The annual Western Australian Information Technology and Telecommunications Awards function is a spectacular event that reinforces the quality of individuals working in this space in Western Australia. The mining and resources sector has continued to dominate work in the innovation space, but we have seen that shift. We now have companies looking at e-waste or working in medical research. I think Hon Dr Steve Thomas referenced cricket at one point. Companies are also looking at food issues, such as pâté. It is about diversity. It is about looking at different elements of our workforce. It is about creating employment opportunities for people who do not necessarily want to work in the mining and resources sector. These industries should run alongside that industry. People should be able to move in and out of those sectors depending on where we are at at a point in time.

I think COVID has been very significant. Yes, it brought people back to Western Australia. I was very fortunate that my son-in-law, who works in an IT company, is now back in Perth and, thankfully, will be staying. COVID presented an opportunity for people to come home, and some of them have stayed. We did not have a Google office in Perth before but we now have people based in Perth permanently. Hopefully, that will grow. Hopefully, it will attract other companies. Coming back to Bentley Technology Park, I have always been of the view that it is an ideal location for some of those organisations to set up shop and house their employees. We have enough capacity in and around that area to have our own Silicon Valley. I know that the government is probably well ahead of the game in thinking about where some of those things could happen. COVID has presented us with opportunities.

I am really pleased to see that the government has long-term engagement with the West Tech Festival, because that, again, is a great networking opportunity for people in our state. I know that we have hosted the AusBiotech conference. Having attended that previously, I know it is an excellent opportunity for people in Western Australia to network with other companies, look at what is happening in their space and acquire skills. If anyone has ever been to one of those events and watched how people pitch their products, they will know that it is a really exciting opportunity. Sometimes people who are working in innovative areas might have the capacity to come up with the ideas, design and implementation, but do not necessarily have the skill set to get their product to market, sell their product verbally or get other organisations—angel investors and such—on board. They can receive funding from the government to help take those steps and get advice from other organisations. We could be and should be one of the leaders in innovation in the South-East Asian region.

I have gone through the document the government has released—the *Innovation strategy* and the associated action plan—and I think it is a really solid plan. The plan is achievable; there is no pie in the sky stuff. It covers all the things that we know need to happen. It is an inclusive document. I like the fact that it incorporates Indigenous work. I know that one grant was given to an Indigenous architecture firm. I was really excited about that, because we should be looking at how to adopt Indigenous design into our housing. I do not think that we have really ever given thought to that in Western Australia. I know that they have done that in New South Wales. There are enormous opportunities in Western Australia. We have a great plan that I know the government is doing everything it can to implement. I am really excited about having been through this and from listening to what is going on, much more excited than I was when we were in opposition and it was an absolute dead zone. I see real, significant change.

I support the idea of getting more women engaged. Again, I refer back to my family and my daughter who works in the mining sector but in spatial technology. She loves all that online mapping work. The government has done some great work to build STEM in schools and to encourage young girls and women to participate. My son-in-law does voluntary work for the SheCodes program on weekends. He works with young women to encourage them to learn how to code. I would love to learn how to code—I might be over the age threshold of getting my head around that—but there are lots of exciting things happening.

Government can only do so much. It must be done in partnership with universities, industry and small business. I am really pleased to see the announcement today about a partnership to improve cybersecurity. Western Australia does exceptionally well in that area. I want to acknowledge people like Craig Valli who used to work in Edith Cowan University's cybersecurity area. They have always led the way, and I note that one of the companies that received funding through the innovation booster grant is a company that Craig Valli is involved with. There are lots of exciting things happening in that industry and this program is just one element of it. Over the next couple of years, as this program is rolled out, I think that WA will start to step up and take its rightful place as a leader in innovation, certainly in ICT, medicine, mining and resources, and agriculture—any of those elements. This is being driven by people who are passionate and engaged and who want to see the best for our state.

I congratulate the government on the work that it is doing in this space. It is something we have not seen for quite some time with previous governments. I thank Hon Dan Caddy and acknowledge his long-term engagement and passion for this space as well. I look forward to the minister outlining the additional work that is being done in this state that will bode well for us and our economy in the long term.

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HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [2.42 pm]: I, too, would like to offer my sincere thanks to Hon Dan Caddy for introducing this wonderful motion, which I heartily support. I also acknowledge the minister for the wonderful work being done by the government. I think we can all agree that the innovative movements by the government are all to be highly welcomed.

Innovation is the topic dear to my heart, but what concerns me are the barriers to innovation. I suppose we could define “innovation” as new thinking. There are two types of innovation. One type is the finer information that we get from delving deeper to discover more of the facts. The other type involves completely new thinking about things that have not been thought of before—the insights and the light bulbs flashing on of completely new ideas. At the moment, a lot of work in this area is about the refining of the old.

Members may not know that I once considered a career in cardiology, so I was fascinated to see that the old-fashioned treatment from the eighteenth century for congestive cardiac failure was to give a distillation of foxglove, which is a toxic plant but very useful for curing “dropsy” as CCF was then known. Of course, the derivative of that plant became Digoxin, a drug that in my earlier days was very commonly prescribed. Imagine my delight when I delved deeper into that area and found that a substance was created from the venom of a Brazilian pit viper that was used initially for treating hypertension. But as they moved forward with that treatment, they realised that for those who suffered from both hypertension and congestive cardiac failure, their failure eased. It turned out that this substance affected a previously unknown hormone in the heart, radically transforming the treatment for congestive cardiac failure. This happened from simply getting into the finer details of congestive cardiac failure. The question, of course, was: why is CCF present in the first place and can we remove that cause? That would be new thinking, indeed.

There is another approach to how this goes and I refer to cholesterol. For many years, people were hearing that cholesterol was bad for them. This was based on a study in 1959 by Ancel Keys that basically proved that an increase in the level of cholesterol caused an increase in the rate of heart attacks. This resulted in a mass transformation of our nutrition in which cholesterol was removed from foods and we had a more carbohydrate-based diet. The problem with that was that the data he used in that initial scientific study was completely false. He had taken that data that fit his theory, and removed the inconvenient facts that disproved this theory. For decades now, nutrition has been created for us that is deficient in natural fats and high in carbohydrates. As a result, obesity has skyrocketed and so has the rate of heart attacks. If we compare a picture of people on the beach from 1970 with one from 2020, we see a tremendous change in body shape due to the falsification of science that has been blindly followed and resulted in severe damage. Trillions of dollars’ worth of damage has been done due to false science, which is still propagated rather than considering that, in fact, inflammation is the main problem in heart disease—well, many diseases, actually—and that inflammation arises from gut health. The food processing industry is contributing greatly to poor health by causing inflammation at a gut level.

Does anyone care about this? We do not care about this because we are committed to old thinking. We are committed to the status quo. The status quo is an enemy of innovation. Status quo is old thinking and it is also a place of comfort. With the old thinking and old habits, we know where we are and we trust that because it has always been the case. Farmers are particularly liable to this: “I am going to do what my father did, and he did what his grandfather did.” Change at a farming level is quite difficult because, of course, we have proven time and again that this is the way to get the best yield. Adding innovation can be very difficult.

We need to think new and recognise that new thinking is actually very difficult. Not everyone can do that. In fact, hardly anyone can do that because we are used to the way we think. I congratulate the government on putting in place those systems that give those who are able to think with new thoughts the freedom, the ability and the finances to develop those thoughts. Fail as they might, they are new thoughts and they are proceeded with. When we put blockades in the path of innovation, we stifle it and we remain in the status quo, and that, by definition, leads us backwards. I congratulate the government on taking action not to do this. We need, however, open and inquiring minds, minds that are able to think differently and to look at facts and ask the question: why? Perhaps the better question is: what if?

As an example of old thinking, I will use the hemp house made of hempcrete. One of the first questions that someone asked me when they encountered the hemp house was: I wonder if a person can smoke it? It was an absolutely stupid question that demonstrated the inability of that person to comprehend the innovation in a property that can modify temperature, keep a person safe in a bushfire and is cheap to build and 3D printable. It is a building of the future. In fact, I believe that the Master Builders Association is considering the house for some award, certainly encouraging further use within Western Australia. Imagine the thought: here is a house made of hempcrete and the first question a person asks is if it catches on fire, can it be smoked. Terrible. That is stupid, ignorant, old-fashioned and a symptom of how to block innovation. We need to think anew. With the thinking of anew, we need to wonder what is it about thinking new that is so difficult now. I believe that it starts with education. We have in our schools

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a system that propagates the old. Earlier, ChatGPT was mentioned and how difficult it is for some teachers when they say, “Oh, they can cheat on their exams.” Much the same was said about calculators when they came out. I remember that in my schooling, calculators were banned. Calculations had to be done by hand. It was somehow cheating to use a calculator to get a result quicker, as if being able to do it on paper or in your head was somehow better. It is certainly faster and more accurate to use a calculator. In my schooling days, I used a slide rule. It was wonderful and I loved that thing, but it was not as accurate or quick as a calculator. We need to embrace the new and be allowed to think differently.

We need a change to our education system, because our education system is currently designed on the nineteenth century model of teaching children how to be productive members of a factory, to be the sheep of society and to be employed by business owners, rather than having the freedom to think anew. Any of us who have had children know the thoughts that they can come up with are utterly amazing. What do we do? We suppress them. We say, “That is wrong. You shouldn’t think like that. That is just inappropriate.” We need to encourage our society to allow children to use their innovative minds to think anew—yes, with structure, but anew. One of the best examples of that is neurodiversity. One of the first questions I ask in the clinic when someone comes to me saying that their child is autistic is: “What is your child’s gift?” I find that their memories are absolutely perfect, or they can paint wonderfully or that numbers come automatically into their mind and they can calculate at an astonishing rate. I am asked: “Can I fix this? Can I cure this? Can I make this person’s wonderful brain less wonderful so that they can fit into society?” I think there is an area here where we need serious work. How do we bring our children into the freedom to think with novel thoughts—to add to our society with thoughts that may be out of our comprehension because we have not had the freedom to think with new minds? For example, we have artificial intelligence—ChatGPT is a wonderful example of that. I use it to help me frame my thinking. However, on top of that we also need the human mind to add the innovation and insights that it has. I wonder what would happen if we allowed artificial intelligence to develop innovative skills. Where would we be if we allowed this wonderful tool to allow us to have new thoughts, insights and abilities?

I know that from the point of view of physics it is completely aberrant, but I have a question about the speed of light. I am a *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* fan. The idea of travelling to distant stars and new civilisations has always fascinated me. Apparently, the speed of light is invincible; it cannot be beaten. I have read so many reasons from the point of view of physics as to why it is actually impossible. The amount of energy needed to get to that speed prevents someone from ever achieving the speed of light. Yes, I see the physics. However, I then remember the stories from the 1940s, when people thought that someone could not go faster than the speed of sound and that the planes could not survive. It goes back even further to locomotives, when they said that anything faster than 40 miles an hour would destroy the train. I wonder if the artificial barriers that we put in front of ourselves can be overcome with innovative thinking.

I think Australia is one of the leaders in innovative thought. Wi-fi is an Australian concept. We have the ability here, in our society, to lead the world. One of my many concerns is the current stupidity within the world that leads us to the concept that war is a good thing. It is old thinking. We are talking about power bases. We are saying, “I am reserving to my country the right to rule another country. I will expand my domain to encompass your area, and if you want to fight back, you are the problem.” We are seeing this just now with this incessant acquired beat towards war. One thing going on is the US planning war against China. There is also the current Russia–Ukraine war. It is old thinking. Proxy battles are being fought and Australia is going to be in the middle of it as we are being asked to respond on behalf of allies and to take a position that is entirely unnecessary. This is old thinking.

We need to fight against it, and we need to stand for innovation. As a nation, we need to stand out there and demand that new thinking be expected, taught, allowed and welcomed. The government needs to facilitate this by putting in place the finances and facilities to allow this to happen. Those can only be welcomed with open arms, eyes and hearts. This is where we need to be. The status quo and the thinking of the past is our enemy. We need to be thinking anew. I thank Hon Dan Caddy for his motion. I wholeheartedly support it. I give my thanks to the government for its current efforts.

HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [2.55 pm]: I know that I am very limited in my time so as to be able to give Hon Dan Caddy the ability to reply. I want to thank Hon Dan Caddy for bringing this very important motion to the house. There were a lot of things I did want to talk about today, but unfortunately time will not permit. What I think I might do is just mention some of the recipients of last year’s highly successful innovation booster grants from the South Metropolitan Region.

Carbon AG based in Kwinana works closely with raw materials suppliers to manufacture unique carbon products for broadacre agriculture. It was awarded \$19 200 for its work into increasing soil sequestration, offsetting carbon emissions in farming. Another recipient was CoConnect. Formerly known as Camp Connect, it is a workforce communication, engagement and emergency app. The app is built to cater to remote worksites and teams, providing

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on-hand access to everything needed both on and off site. This includes features for personal safety, emergency management and effective workplace communications.

Another organisation is CleanSubSea based in Bibra Lake. CleanSubSea offers underwater ship hull cleaning solutions and utilises its revolutionary “Envirocart” system. It was awarded \$20 000 for that innovation. There is also another organisation called Digii, based in Leeming. Digii is a program that takes a world-first approach to preparing and protecting children in their digital lives. Digii was awarded \$20 000 for individualised curriculum reporting and program extension. An example of a service it offers is Digii@School, which is a curriculum-aligned digital wellbeing and safeguarding program for schools.

Another organisation is Innovative Mentoring based in O’Connor. Finally, VetChip is an organisation I know very well because Dr Garnett Hall, the CEO of VetChip, is actually my brand-new puppy’s vet. I was very pleased to hear from Hon Dan Caddy that VetChip was awarded that grant. I managed to have a good discussion with the company when I represented Minister Dawson at the Curtin University innovation awards last year. I thank Hon Dan Caddy for the motion and I look forward to hearing all the new recipients for 2023 announced.

HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [2.58 pm]: This is a great motion that has been brought today by Hon Dan Caddy. I would like to thank him for his motion today and particularly the government’s commitment to fostering innovation and growth. Being from the Agricultural Region, I just wanted to briefly acknowledge some of the great programs that have been really great for that region. There is so much potential in our state for value-adding to our agricultural industry, as well as our fishing industry. The first grant program consists of the value add investment grants. Those grants actually started through COVID as a stimulus measure from our agrifood and beverage fund. The value add investment grants were fantastic. In the first round, 18 participants shared in over \$10 million to upgrade their facilities and buy new equipment to increase their resilience, scale their business and increase productivity. A lot of these grants also went to our great fishing companies in Perth to set up processing facilities so they can value add, including for sale to the overseas market. The second program is the agrifood and beverage voucher program, which has been fantastic, particularly for smaller businesses across the regions. I do not know whether members saw the news the other day about Eagle Bay Brewing Co working with a farmer in Wagin to use local barley to make beer. Eagle Bay has received a number of those grants, as has Esperance Distillery Co. That has been really fantastic. I also want to mention the AgriStart Harvest accelerator program, which has been running for six years. It is the state’s leading business development program and has helped over 70 early-stage businesses. It is instrumental in activating the agricultural technology sector and helping to foster and grow our agtech sector. It has been a really fantastic program, which is supported by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development as well as the Grains Research and Development Corporation. It was fantastic to attend its showcase event last year and look at these innovative companies in the agricultural sector that are doing great things. One I want to particularly mention is Nork Solutions. It goes around all the bakeries and to Coles to pick up all the unused bread. It brings it back, processes it, mixes it with other feed, and uses it for livestock feed. That is a great way to reduce waste.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin): Thank you, honourable member. I will interrupt your remarks to offer the mover of the motion, Hon Dan Caddy, the right of reply.

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [3.01 pm] — in reply: Thank you, Acting President. I thank everyone who spoke on this motion. I thank the Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy for outlining the incredible breadth of what this government does. I especially thank Hon Kate Doust, who has been committed to this area for decades and understands it as much as anyone. She spoke about her knowledge of the history of Technology Park as well as innovation in Israel. Hon Kate Doust also mentioned Scitech. I had forgotten that the previous government wanted to shut down Scitech. My son, Patrick, who is now a second year university student doing engineering, was a regular at Scitech in his formative years. Can I draw a direct correlation? No, but nor can I rule it out.

I want to address a couple of things that were said. Hon Dr Steve Thomas asked how we measure success and the success of the programs. I know he said success holistically, but then he named a whole lot of programs, asking how we measure success. It was \$3.7 million over 230 applications, which is about \$16 000 each. If, of those 200, 190 of them failed but the other 10 created several hundred jobs and returned \$37 million—a tenfold increase—to the state, or \$370 million, we may have a 95 per cent failure rate. That is what this space is about but that would be a success. That is what fostering innovation is. There will be many failures, but that is all part and parcel of it. I think the deputy leader said it best; you have to speculate to accumulate. That is exactly what this is. It is being done very well.

I also want to reflect on the words of Hon Wilson Tucker, who is obviously an expert amongst us when it comes to innovation. It was interesting. He spoke briefly about ChatGPT, as did Hon Dr Brian Walker. It is fantastic. I have installed one of the apps because I was watching the kids use it on the phone. However, it has a way to go for local Australian content. I will tell members a little story. I was sitting with my good friend the member for Bateman and

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talking to her about it. She had not used it and I said, “This is how great it is.” I typed in “200 words on the electorate of Bateman.” It was interesting. It listed all the suburbs in Bateman, which was fantastic. It was spot on. Then it said that the seat was created in maybe 1949. Actually, I may have it here and will be able to read it. It said that the division was created in 1949 and that it is a “safe Liberal seat.” I found that one interesting to start with.

Hon Kate Doust: It is a heartland of Labor territory!

Hon DAN CADDY: Yes, it is now. It also said the current member for Bateman is Matt Keogh, who was elected in 2016. He is a great bloke, Matt Keogh, but he would be the federal member for Burt and is now Hon Matt Keogh. That technology is fantastic, but it does have a way to go, especially in local applications like that.

I want to pick up on something Hon Wilson Tucker said that was a lot more important. He said the key to growing innovation and technology is people. That is absolutely right. Way back, one of the first times I got to my feet in this place was to talk about the hydrogen industry and how we need to create expertise here so we have the people who are the world leaders. I think I compared it to the wind industry in Denmark when that started way back in the 1970s. Denmark now basically controls most of the intellectual property related to wind turbines. Without doubt, it is the world leader when it comes to the wind industry. I also spoke about Motium. One of the things I wanted to get across was that they understand it is about people, as well as technology and what they do. That is why they do everything here. They understand that using local supply chains creates jobs for people and they also understand that by having their engineers and their manufacturing crew in-house, they are growing people in their business. They are growing the knowledge base in Western Australia and retaining that knowledge base and excellence in Western Australia. That is an absolutely key platform for what they do. Hon Wilson Tucker was exactly right; people are the key to this. Question put and passed.