

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Shane Love; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Acting Speaker;
Ms Alison Kent; Ms Rebecca Stephens; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Lisa Munday; Ms
Lara Dalton; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr David Scaife; Ms Kim Giddens

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Presentation

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [3.37 pm]: I acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet on today. I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I rise today to inform the house of this Western Australian Labor government's agenda for 2022. This year, Western Australians will be experiencing many of the realities of daily life with COVID in the community, and the difficulties and uncertainties that come with it. For the first time in the two years since the pandemic began, we have an outbreak that we will not be able to eliminate. For many, 2022 will be a year of inconvenience and disruption. For others, there will be relief and progress, and tragically for some, there will be heartbreak and loss. In 2022 we will have economic headwinds. There is undoubtedly geopolitical uncertainty and even a federal election on the cards. There are undoubtedly challenging times ahead for Western Australia. But this is not even the first time that WA has faced challenges since this government was elected in 2017. Just like on every other occasion that WA has faced tough times, Western Australians will band together and rise to the occasion.

Our unique Western Australian strategy has put our state in the best possible position to confront these challenges. Although nothing is perfect in a pandemic, we have played the hand we have been dealt as best we can. We have used our natural advantages. We have learnt the lessons from other states that hastily rushed ahead. WA now has one of the highest first-dose vaccination rates in the nation. Our third-dose rate, essential for slowing the spread of Omicron and saving lives, is rising rapidly, as is the rate for younger Western Australians aged from five to 11 years. Guidelines for testing and isolation are in place. Our schools have been prepared. Proof of vaccination requirements have been rolled out, as well as quick and effective ways of showing it. Rapid antigen tests are arriving in this state each and every day by the millions. Our health system's capacity has already been expanded by 282 beds, with another 248 due to come online by October, and we are hiring hundreds of extra doctors and nurses to staff them.

Although the road ahead will undoubtedly be difficult and at times uncertain, the question remains: over the past two years of the pandemic, or in the months ahead, where would you rather be than in Western Australia? Although the experience of the pandemic will likely be a major part of Western Australians' lives this year, the world keeps turning, the work of government does not stop. In 2022, we have a full agenda—delivering our election commitments, creating jobs, delivering the infrastructure the state needs for the future and building Western Australia into a stronger, safer, fairer state for everyone. The engine for a safer, fairer, more prosperous WA is a strong and resilient state economy. Madam Speaker, throughout the pandemic, with the uncertainty it has brought, our careful and cautious approach has kept the economy firing, saving jobs and livelihoods as a result. In annual average terms, the domestic Western Australian economy has grown by 6.1 per cent since the start of the pandemic, which is the strongest growth of the states and three times the growth of the national economy. While the nation as a whole went into recession, Western Australia avoided it, and we drove job creation as a result. There have been 140 000 jobs created since we came to government. All the jobs initially lost to COVID in 2020 have been recovered and an extra 60 000 have been created. WA now has record levels of full-time employment and hours worked. The Prime Minister talks of his aspiration for Australia to have an unemployment rate that begins with a three. In Western Australia, it is already a reality. Our unemployment rate is just 3.4 per cent, with the highest participation rate of all the states. It is our lowest unemployment rate in 13 years and the lowest in the nation.

We promised to put WA jobs first, and despite a once-in-a-century pandemic, we have delivered. It is what Labor governments do. The Western Australian Jobs Act has ensured meaningful local content and participation in government procurement work. Local content is not really exciting or flashy; however, it makes a genuine difference in not only driving local economies, but also building and retaining skills and capacity in our state economy. The WA industry participation strategy that underpins the jobs act has, since its inception in 2018, generated 48 806 jobs, as well as 3 402 roles for apprentices and trainees. It represents a \$23.9 billion injection into our state's economy. However, we are not resting on our laurels; there is more to do to ensure WA jobs are always put first. We have capitalised on our current circumstances through the pandemic, using them to ensure that interstate fly-in fly-out practices are minimised. Thousands of staff have relocated to Western Australia, with pledges from the major companies to minimise the practice of interstate FIFO, whether by hiring locally or requiring new hires to relocate to Western Australia. It means more of the benefits of our resources industry will stay in WA, fuelling the local economy.

In that spirit, at the last election we pledged to deliver a new manufacturing plan for critical iron ore railcars and components. Following that pledge, it was incredibly heartening to see that Rio Tinto has committed to procure 50 locally built iron ore railcars. The Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade is in discussion with other companies to also commit to local procurement of their iron ore railcars. As part of our commitment, a full feasibility study into manufacturing opportunities for iron ore railcars in Western Australia is underway, with the results

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expected to be provided soon. With our successes with the Matagarup Bridge and the Bellevue railcar facility, we want to double-down on growing our manufacturing opportunities in WA.

Madam Speaker, although the Omicron outbreak on the eastern seaboard meant the full relaxation of our state border had to be pushed back—a decision that saved jobs and lives—the Reconnect WA package announced at the end of last year remains as relevant as ever. The hard border is not permanent and it is essential that our affected industries are supported in their preparation and have a competitive edge when WA welcomes back vaccinated travellers from overseas and jurisdictions with COVID-19. There will be \$185 million worth of initiatives over 18 months to target tourists, skilled workers and international students, promoting WA as the safe and attractive jurisdiction that we are. This is in addition to the \$77 million package announced last week to support these industries while we review the border arrangements, as well as the multimillion dollar support package to businesses affected by the Delta backpacker outbreak.

WA is a trading state, our success and prosperity has come from our engagement abroad, so we stand ready to assist our affected industries so they will have the competitive edge when the time is right. We are able to support our businesses and invest in local capacity so heavily because we have sensibly and soberly managed the state finances. Although there was concern over the volatility of the iron ore price, having conservative estimates for budgeting protects Western Australian taxpayers from external shocks. Sensible budgeting in Western Australia means budgeting carefully, preparing for the worst, because we know from experience that the worst can always come to pass. We have been at pains to not only avoid the terrible financial mistakes of the former Liberal–National government, but also keep our financial powder dry in the event of deteriorating conditions from the pandemic or other international problems. The *Government mid-year financial projections statement* confirmed that we are on track to deliver a surplus of \$2.4 billion this financial year, with strong surpluses forecast in coming years. Net debt is expected to decline for the third consecutive year to \$32.6 billion, more than \$11 billion lower than projected under the previous government. WA remains the only government in Australia in surplus, with the lowest debt trajectory of the states. Net debt is expected to double in New South Wales to around \$134 billion and treble in Victoria to almost \$150 billion by 2024–25, while in WA debt levels are projected to remain relatively flat. That means we will retain the capacity to do more, if required, without putting any additional burden on taxpayers.

The advantage of our strong financial management is that it allows us to invest heavily and sustainably in our health system. Our health system has consistently been shown to be the best funded in the nation. The *Report on government services* from January showed that WA has the highest per capita spend on public hospitals, 13 per cent above the national average. WA also receives the lowest funding per person from the commonwealth for general practitioners. The same report showed that despite not receiving our fair share of commonwealth support, in 2020–21 WA was the best performing jurisdiction in relation to presentations, with an emergency department length of stay of four hours or less. WA has remained the best performing jurisdiction in that category for the last five reporting years. Between the budget and the midyear review, an additional \$3.2 billion is due to be invested in our health and mental health systems over the coming years.

There has been a massive increase in staff to the Western Australian health system since the start of the pandemic, with almost 3 900 full-time equivalents added since early 2020. In addition to each hospital recruiting staff, the state government has run the \$2 million Belong campaign in local, interstate and international markets to attract more staff. Despite fierce competition for health professionals in Australia and around the globe, nearly 1 000 new doctors and over 2 000 new nurses have been hired into our health system since the start of last year, with more on the way.

I am also proud to confirm that a site has been selected for our new \$1.8 billion women’s and babies’ hospital. It will be located north of G-block at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, which will afford greater opportunities for natural light, upper-level green space and improved access to services at Perth Children’s Hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Design work will begin this month, with site works due to commence in 2023.

Although COVID might dominate headlines when it comes to schools and TAFE, 2022 will see strong investment in our children’s education and our state’s skilled workforce. This year, four new primary schools have opened, with a further four and one secondary school under construction. Over the next four years, \$104 million has been allocated to support student mental health and wellbeing. This includes funding for an additional 100 full-time equivalent school psychologists, the first tranche of which have now been hired. In addition, career practitioners will be allocated to 70 public schools in Western Australia. These are qualified teachers with expertise in career planning, who will help secondary students access a range of work experiences and study options and be the key conduit between schools and industry. In addition, this year there will be an extra 2 000 places in vocational education and training courses for year 11 and 12 students, with the number of places rising to 4 000 by 2024 to ensure every student has a pathway to a good job.

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With regard to our TAFE system, we are delivering the biggest TAFE capital works program in the state's history, while also ensuring that training in our state remains as affordable as possible. Under our Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative, fees for 210 high-priority courses have been reduced by up to 72 per cent. The results speak for themselves, as between the freezing of TAFE fees and the Lower Fees, Local Skills initiatives, student enrolments have increased by around 21 per cent. It means our state has a pipeline of skilled workers and no-one is locked out of opportunity.

Madam Speaker, 2022 will be an exceptional year for Metronet. There are 15 simultaneous Metronet projects, employing thousands of local workers. Despite the global supply chain challenges, we are getting on with the job and delivering this transformational program. What was once a promise is becoming a concrete reality. The Mandurah multistorey carpark and the Bellevue railcar facility have been completed, with the first locally made railcars due to roll onto the network this year. In addition, 2022 will see the Denny Avenue level crossing removal project completed and the opening of the Forrestfield–Airport Link. Meanwhile, another five projects are currently under construction—the Morley–Ellenbrook Line, the Yanchep rail extension, the Thornlie–Cockburn Link, Lakelands station and the new Bayswater station. The planning for the Greenwood multistorey carpark is underway and a further five projects are in procurement stages—namely, the Victoria Park–Canning level crossing removals, the new Midland station, the public transport operations centre, the high-capacity signalling project and, of course, the Byford rail extension. Metronet is a once-in-a-generation undertaking to drastically improve the way we move around our city, reducing congestion, creating jobs, improving our city. With our new two-zone fare cap that was introduced on 1 January, the genuine difference it is making to households' cost of living right now will be expanded when those new lines reach more areas of Perth.

Work is also continuing on planning and preparation for the new port and freight corridor at the Kwinana industrial area, with \$400 million allocated in the recent state budget towards the Westport project. Fremantle port has served our state well for the past century. It was a visionary, daring and controversial project that has proved its worth many times over. But for the decades and even century ahead, Western Australia needs a new port to ensure our future success. It is time to be visionary, daring and even controversial again. Only this WA Labor government is committed to making a new port a reality.

As always, my government will make the safety of the community a priority. We will be relentless in disrupting criminal activity. We will ensure our hardworking police are properly resourced. We will do the challenging but essential work when it comes to breaking the cycle of disadvantage and desperation that fuels crime. In October 2020, we pledged to recruit an additional 950 police officers over four years. In less than two years, over half that commitment has been met with 570 of the 950 police recruited over and above attrition. It is a fantastic achievement at a time of historically low unemployment, with the state government's Let's Join Forces campaign resulting in a record number of applications.

One of the government's key priorities this year will be dealing with the issue of juvenile crime in regional communities, especially the Kimberley and Pilbara. This week, police will launch a major operation in our regions. The initial focus will be the Kimberley, which has experienced a recent increase in criminal behaviour, some directly targeted at and resulting in injuries to police officers. Operation Regional Shield will see the deployment of personnel from the regional operations group as well as numerous high-profile police assets. This will be a firm response but it will not be the only response. I want to reassure the people of the Kimberley that this police operation is only the start of what will be a comprehensive government response.

In the coming weeks and months, the government will be launching a range of initiatives aimed at addressing young offending in the Kimberley, Pilbara and other regions. Firstly, we will expand the capacity of our police force to respond to local crime spikes in regional communities as and when they occur. Secondly, the government's successful Target 120 program will be rolled out across the Kimberley in an effort to stop children becoming lost to the criminal justice system in the first place. Thirdly, we will stand with communities who are proposing local solutions to local problems and will fund some local targeted initiatives. Finally, for those young offenders who do end up before the courts, we will be piloting new initiatives aimed at providing on-country sentencing options as an alternative to detention in Perth. The reasons for the problems we are seeing in the Kimberley now are many and complex. They will not be solved in the life of this government but we will continue to put a major effort into a comprehensive response. I would like to thank the member for Kimberley for her strong advocacy on what are complex social issues that need comprehensive responses.

Work will also continue on ensuring that we build the homes we need for Western Australians from all walks of life. Our building bonus grant program from the early days of the pandemic secured a pipeline of work for our residential construction industry during what was an incredibly uncertain time. It has also resulted in over 19 000 Western Australians realising their dream of building their own home, increasing the housing stock in Western Australia. At the same time, we are investing heavily in social housing. The McGowan government will invest \$2.1 billion in social housing in this term of Parliament. This will include the delivery of around 3 300 new

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homes. There are currently more than 600 new social homes either under construction or under contract. In a heated and challenging housing and construction market, the government is delivering these homes as fast as possible by investing in a diverse range of construction methods, including modular and timber-framed homes.

We are also continuing to address the challenges of homelessness in Western Australia. We are investing more than \$70 million to deliver two Common Ground facilities in Perth and Mandurah. This financial year alone, we will invest more than \$150 million on homeless support and prevention, including measures directed at helping women and children. Also included in that investment is funding to run our new transitional accommodation facility at Boorloo Bidee Mia. This facility is doing tremendous but difficult work; it is actually trying to get people off the street permanently, not just simply give them a place to sleep at night and then send them back out onto the street. When it comes to homelessness, there are no easy or simple solutions that lead to lasting change. In these challenging times, it is essential that we think outside the box in order to deliver what the community needs.

In 2022, the Parliament will debate the Forest Products Amendment Bill to expand the functions of the Forest Products Commission to allow it to trade in carbon assets associated with forest products, as well as purchase land to establish plantations. This bill will enable current and future governments to maximise the benefits from our historic \$350 million investment to expand the softwood estate, as part of last year's announcement that this government would end logging of native forests from 2024. The decision to end native logging will preserve at least an additional 400 000 hectares of karri, jarrah and wandoo forests, and create at least an extra 33 000 hectares of softwood plantation, while supporting affected communities with a just transition plan.

Last week, agreement was reached on the support package for native forestry workers, including redundancy payments, training and reskilling support and new employment costs. Consultation will continue on the just transition plan, with agreement likely to be reached in the coming weeks surrounding support for affected businesses and communities.

This year, we have begun our nation-leading plan for phasing out single-use and disposable plastics. Stage 1, which is already in effect, includes items such as plastic plates, bowls, cups, cutlery, straws, thick plastic bags and polystyrene food containers, and will be enforced from the middle of the year. Stage 2, which will come into effect at the end of the year, will phase out plastic produce bags, polystyrene packaging, microbeads and coffee cups, if they contain single-use plastics. The Western Australian community wants to end the damage single-use plastics cause to the environment, and with our Plan for Plastics, we are taking the necessary steps, while supporting consumers and businesses along the way.

In 2022, we will also see decisions taken on the pathway our state will take to achieve our pledge of net zero by 2050. We all know that climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time, and the decisions and actions that we take over the coming decade will matter when it comes to the quality of life future generations will experience. In the absence of national leadership, the state government has an important role to play, both in emissions reduction and providing that leadership to the broader economy. However, it is important that we take communities with us on this path forward so that we have a reliable plan that does not leave people behind.

Since day one of this government, we have had a strong reform agenda. We have not been afraid to tackle tricky issues in the public interest, and that will not change in 2022. We will continue to build on our legislative record to protect the public and create prosperity.

One of the first priorities of this house will be the Firearms Amendment Bill 2021, which will disrupt organised crime and illegal motorcycle gangs' access to firearms, increase the penalties for drive-by shootings and crack down on 3D-printed weapons.

Work will also continue on amendments to the Bail Act, to reform the act in light of the tragic death of Annaliese Ugle, to ensure that child victims are at the centre of decision-making in relation to bail.

Also, as part of our response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, this house will debate the Parliamentary Commissioner Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Bill 2021. This important bill will compel heads of organisations to notify the Ombudsman of reportable allegations or reportable convictions involving the organisation's employees, volunteers and contractors, and complement the existing reporting requirements to the WA Police Force and the Department of Communities.

In addition, the Railway (BBI Rail Aus Pty Ltd) Agreement Amendment Bill 2021, currently before the house, will increase the penalties for those who dangerously trespass on our railway network.

The government will also seek to pass the Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021, which will provide much-needed tax relief to relieve the financial and economic impacts of a declared emergency.

Work will also continue this year on three long-term pieces of reform for the economic development of the state. Firstly, following extensive consultation over the past year by the Minister for Planning and the Parliamentary Secretary

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to the Minister for Planning, the government is working through the feedback received and the recommendations of our next set of actions to reform the planning system, following the successful reforms delivered in 2020. Secondly, public consultation will soon conclude on the government's proposed local government reforms before a final package is developed, with the intention to introduce the legislative reforms into Parliament before the end of the year. These are the most significant reforms since the Local Government Act was introduced over a quarter of a century ago, and are designed to improve the transparency, accountability and efficiency of the sector. Thirdly, the government will aim to introduce the announced reform of the Land Administration Act, to unlock new economic opportunities through both pastoral lands and unallocated crown land. These reforms will mean that WA can leverage new economic opportunities in our regions for renewable energy, which requires large areas of land for operations like carbon farming, wind farms, solar energy and hydrogen production.

This year, Western Australia's first-ever state infrastructure strategy will be tabled in Parliament. This will be the culmination of almost two years of work and consultation undertaken by Infrastructure Western Australia. The establishment of IWA and the development of the state infrastructure strategy was a key commitment of this government. This is an important step forward, providing an orderly and well-considered road map for the state's infrastructure needs over the next two decades.

In 2022, the McGowan Labor government will continue its record of delivery for our regions. We have retained and improved the royalties for regions program, delivering \$1 billion every year for projects that create quality employment and a greater quality of life. Furthermore, we are investing in important regional projects like the Port Hedland Spoilbank Marina, the redevelopment of Geraldton Health Campus, Tom Price Hospital and the new Newman Hospital, the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, the Albany ring-road, the Manuwarra Red Dog Highway upgrades and the Kal City Centre project. The regional economic development grants program is supporting local regional businesses and the Collie Futures fund is supporting job development to support the ongoing economic transition around Collie, not to mention the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on upgrades to our regional TAFEs, schools and ports. My government has always been committed to ensuring that young people in our regions see a future there for themselves in vibrant, bustling communities, towns and cities, with improved economic opportunities.

The work that we do in this Parliament and in government matters. It makes real changes in people's lives. It creates opportunities for the future and ensures that the next generation gets to enjoy the same kinds of opportunities that we received.

The legislation that we pass leads to real change. The planning reform bill from 2020 established the state development assessment pathway. That legislation has approved 16 proposals worth more than \$1.6 billion, and six of those developments are now under construction. The Western Australian Jobs Act has resulted in local sourcing for 91 per cent of jobs on applicable government projects. The Criminal Law (Unlawful Consorting and Prohibited Insignia) Act 2021 has already broken up gatherings of outlaw bikies. The Constitutional and Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Equality) Act 2021 means every Western Australian will have an equal vote in our upper house. The Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Act 2021 is protecting patients and staff from harassment. Our landmark voluntary assisted dying legislation has given 50 Western Australians control, dignity and relief at the end of their lives.

Our work here makes a concrete difference, and the Parliament has a lot of work to do this year. We have a full agenda, and we will have to implement it in difficult circumstances as we experience the impact of the Omicron variant. But just as I know Western Australians will rise to the occasion, so must we. Here, in this chamber, now with a COVID-safe seating arrangement, we must get on with the job. That is what our constituents expect of us. That's what the public expects of us. That is what we were elected to do. Let us continue to work hard for the people of this great state.

Consideration

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K.E. Giddens): The question is —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.10 pm]: I rise to contribute to this debate and respond to the Premier's Statement that has just been handed down. Once upon a time in this place it was traditional for the Leader of the Opposition to respond directly to the Premier, but in more recent years it has become practice for the Leader of the Opposition to make their response and contribution on another day, usually on the Wednesday following. On this occasion, I will be the first of the opposition persons to make a response today.

I will not respond in detail to the Premier's just-announced outline of his position, but I note that it referred to royalties for regions and, of course, we have seen throughout regional Western Australia royalties for regions stripped of any real sense of purpose compared with the way it once contributed to regional areas. Once upon a time people

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in regional WA had confidence in royalties for regions. Now they consider it as something that is no longer active. We see the continual stripping out of that fund to provide the ordinary business of government.

The Premier just boasted about electoral reform. He calls it “reform”; we call it “silencing regional voices”, and that is what it has done. It has stripped away the ability for regional people to have representation in the other place and, potentially, it will strip away regional representation in this house as well. No doubt, the Leader of the Opposition will have much more to say about these matters going forward.

Before I go any further, I would like to acknowledge the losses from the ferocious bushfires we have seen in the summer period throughout Western Australia, from the pastoral areas, through the hills, wheatbelt, south west, great southern and the south coastal region of the state, where I believe it has just been confirmed that six homes were lost in the Hopetoun area alone. Our thoughts are with all those people who have suffered loss to their properties and homes and the impacted farmers who will see their soil potentially stripped away by coming winds. I also say that we have great gratitude for all of those people who have contributed to fighting those fires and have given their time to help combat the situation and bring the fires under control.

My own electorate of Moore is no stranger to fires. In fact, there were a couple of little fires not far from my farm there the other day. But another natural disaster that has touched the electorate in a great way over the last 12 months has been cyclone Seroja. Cyclone Seroja has affected communities from Kalbarri in the north all the way through the midwest and down into the central wheatbelt, and has caused devastation over a very wide area indeed. People who have suffered throughout that area are now feeling, in some cases, very worn down, worn out and fatigued because they are still living amongst the devastation of tropical cyclone Seroja. They often know friends in their own towns who have had to relocate to larger centres such as Perth and Geraldton because they do not have a home to live in. Their house has either been destroyed or badly damaged. There are empty blocks in towns where houses once stood. It is of grave concern that it could lead to a lessening of the population in some of those towns.

Insurance Council of Australia figures show that \$337 million of claims have been made, with over 9 300 claims, but there are still 2 300 insurance claims that are yet to be closed. I know there has been fantastic committee work done on a local level to respond that situation, and I commend the work of many of the country local governments that have been working so hard, especially their CEOs. I particularly want to make mention of the CEO of the Shire of Northampton, Garry Keeffe, who has had to deal with the twin destruction of the Northampton town site and Kalbarri. That is the most heavily impacted of the shires in terms of loss of housing and the sheer effect on the general community. Other local governments have done tremendous work as well—shire CEOs, shire presidents, councillors, shire staff and others in those areas.

There has also been a tremendous response from the community. Going back to Northampton, the Northampton Cyclone Response Committee, led by current Northampton shire deputy president Rob Horstman, has done a fantastic job in responding to the needs of the local community, providing local responses and giving support to the locals that they felt they missed in the earlier part of the response. I would also like to thank the people who have been employed by agencies who have made effort in the area, and I look forward to them overcoming some of the challenges that the people of the midwest and northern wheatbelt have faced since that event.

The residents of the midwest have also suffered a lot this year from the effects of frequent power outages. That has really added to the toll of fatigue that many of them have felt as they have gone through very, very long periods throughout the summer without refrigeration, air-conditioning and sometimes the ability to even buy food or petrol in the area. Sometimes they have gone without communications. In some circumstances that has led to businesses suffering losses. The other day I was speaking to the proprietor of FoodWorks Dongara, Karina Clifford, who has lost thousands of dollars’ worth of food due to spoilage over many years because of continual power outages that have affected her business in Dongara. She has had to put in her own solar panels and generators to try to combat this problem, which is a continual cost to her and her business, and makes it difficult for her. Although she has that equipment, she has to physically go to the shop to make sure it is working when an outage occurs; otherwise, she could face further losses. She used to be able to claim insurance for those outages, but following her claim several years ago for around \$30 000, her insurer stopped covering for that and now it is not possible. She cannot seem to claim damages from Western Power.

Residents in the Springfield area near Dongara have no access to water when the power goes out. I raised concerns about the very poor supply of power to Springfield in a grievance in this place in September 2020 to the then Minister for Energy, who is still the minister now. He dismissed the concerns and blamed climate change. Guess what? Nothing happened in Springfield to address the issues and nothing positive has happened to the ability of Springfield residents to access a reliable supply of power since. Many residents of the midwest now refer to this minister as “Blackout Bill”, and it is little wonder when we see what is going on for them in their communities.

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I also draw attention to the fact that many individual residents have had to spend thousands and thousands of dollars to wire in portable or small generators to have power throughout the summer. When our residents and constituents have to shell out thousands of dollars so they can have some sort of power supply throughout the summer, it shows that the system is not fit for purpose, it is not working and it is not a good or safe system and all.

I spoke with other businesses recently. I had contact from some residents of Walkaway, which is in the member for Geraldton's electorate, which is a neighbouring electorate to mine. They said they had six outages between Boxing Day and 6 February with outages totalling 76 hours. These people are dairy and milk producers. They have suffered business losses in the thousands of dollars because of these outages, yet they have been offered the paltry sum of \$80. Between 4 December and 3 February, power outages in Horrocks totalled about 117 hours, when temperatures were hovering around 40 degrees in that area. Western Power eventually arrived with a generator on 31 January and brought in a couple of other generators on 2 February. There has been genuine concern about the disposal of the spoiled food and waste in the community, which is also in the grip of a mouse plague. The community has been hit very hard. On 3 February, Western Power reported that it was washing and silconing the line from Northampton to Horrocks—indeed, I saw evidence of that when I was up there recently—but why was that preventive maintenance not done beforehand?

Belinda Davis, one of the constituents in the area, kept a log of outages in Horrocks. On 4 December 2021, Horrocks went without power for 15 hours and three minutes. On 26 and 27 December, the infamous Christmas blackout that led to the minister calling for an inquiry—because of that blackout, not because of the continual problems in the midwest—lasted for 22 hours and one minute. On 30 December, there was a blackout for 11 hours and 10 minutes. On 5 January, there was a blackout for 10 hours and 11 minutes. On 18 January, there was a blackout for two hours and 33 minutes. On 26 January, there was a blackout for 12 hours and 31 minutes. On 28 January, there was a blackout for 11 hours and 49 minutes. On 29 January, there was a blackout for nine hours and 10 minutes. On 31 January, in the upper, northern and central parts of Horrocks, an outage lasted 12 hours and 29 minutes. Guess what? They were the lucky ones because the rest of Horrocks—the south and White Cliffs Road areas—experienced an outage of 17 hours and 31 minutes. On 3 February, just before I went up there, they had had four hours and 44 minutes without power. As members can see, it was a very shocking situation for that town.

Port Gregory suffered more than 160 hours in outages in December and January. No Western Power generator has been taken to the town. The water supply to the town, which is provided by the shire and not Water Corporation, is under threat because of the power situation. There is a real safety risk in many of these areas as mobile communications go down. We know that many people have turned to mobile communications as their primary source of communication.

Last weekend at Binnu, there was two millimetres of rain. Guess what? There were 10 pole top fires. Incidentally, those poles were recently replaced after tropical cyclone Seroja. Pioneer Lodge, which is an aged-living facility in Northampton, is looking to buy a generator so that it can power its 16 residential units when there are power outages. It believes it could cost about \$70 000. Who can help them with this funding? Presently, if there is a power outage, the residents have to run their own small generator, but they are probably more likely to relocate to other family homes in Northampton or neighbouring towns. In any case, it is not fair to expect old people to have to go to a different place to live or to run their own generator.

Another consideration we have to take note of is the supply of medicines. The Dongara doctors practice had to dispose of hundreds of doses of COVID-19 vaccines following a recent blackout because its emergency backup to power its fridges only lasts eight hours. In fact, a fortnight's worth of vaccines was thrown out. Although there was some resupply, it was left without a vaccination program of any sort for about a week, at a time when people were desperately trying to get their vaccines because of the mandates and older persons were looking for their third jab.

On 15 December 2021, a Western Power media release declared that it had done significant work in the region to mitigate the risk and impacts of bushfire. Western Power said that this year it would invest \$10 million to replace poles, wire and insulators in the midwest to be ready for the bushfire season. Blah, blah, blah, blah! I have seen this so many times before. In 2014, I brought a grievance to this house to the then minister, Mike Nahan. That kicked off the development of the Kalbarri microgrid. When I researched for that grievance, I saw that there was at least a decade or more of the same promises of more maintenance and more activity and that we would not see the recurrence of these problems in the future. Guess what? It just keeps on happening. It may or may not be Albert Einstein who once said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. If that is the case, this minister and the organisation that he is in charge of must be truly quite deranged.

I understand that when the minister recently visited Kalbarri to finally open the long-stalled Kalbarri microgrid, he had a meeting with community leaders about the power situation. I must say that he did not impress the community leaders very much. He told them that they could not tell him anything about living with unreliable power because he had lived in Indonesia. He said that if they want better power, they have to pay more for it. These community

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leaders are outraged. How dare he suggest that the standard that regional Western Australians should expect for their power supply be Third World. How dare he expect that by simply asking for reliable power, they should have to pay more. They are already paying for their own generators, businesses losses and the diminution of their lifestyle in 40 degrees when they suffer from extreme heat around them. The minister—“Blackout Bill” as he is called up there—likes to simply blame global warming. Surely, if he thinks that global warming is to blame, it is time that he commits seriously to new systems and more investment to make the system work, rather than doing the same tired old things every year. There is a real impact on commerce in the midwest. In fact, the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry has picked up on something. Last week, an article in the *Midwest Times and Northern Guardian* quoted Joanne Fabling, the chief executive officer of the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The article states —

Ms Fabling said Western Power in 2010 found the South West Interconnected System—which services the Mid West—was at capacity.

“Fast forward on 12 years, we are back at this situation again and the Mid West is not only at capacity, but we have infrastructure that is failing because we are at year 48 or 59 of a 50-year lifespan for that system,” ...

She goes on to say that cyclone Seroja resulted in the already vulnerable system becoming even more fragile and that the midwest would become unattractive to investors if a solution was not found soon. That is a key issue here. This is an issue of regional development as well as safety, comfort and anything else. Communities are becoming unattractive places to live. We are seeing people leave those communities. They do not want that. They have a vision for themselves and for the future and they want to be able to thrive and grow.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr R.S. LOVE: Talking a bit more about businesses, I visited a business there a week or so ago. I will not name the business, but it is what we might call a batch plant. Its process is to make a product in batches. It is critical to the production of that product that once it starts, it has reliable power throughout the process. On 6 February, along with everyone else in Geraldton, it did not have power because the antiquated cricket wickets as they are called—the wooden poles and wire that bring power up through Three Springs to Geraldton—gave out. The business was in the middle of making one of its batches. That particular episode cost the business an estimated \$10 000 in committed energy costs, wasted labour and materials, yet the most it can claim is \$80, which is not a significant amount of money for a \$10 000 claim.

Another organisation, a mine north of Port Gregory, installed its own microgrid at its mine site with powerlines joining Western Power’s lines. The purpose of the microgrid is not to provide power during lengthy blackouts but during brownouts, for spikes and interruptions. If an outage is planned, the mine needs an hour to an hour and a half’s notice to clean out its wet plant. It is a wet mine and the plant is impossible to restart if it stalls. If that occurred, they would have to manually clean out this big plant to get it ready to flow again, which would take hours of heavy manual labour from an ageing workforce in hot and humid conditions. It is an unacceptable that this mine has so many power outages. This season it has had power outages in excess of 160 hours, while last year there were 49 hours. The mine believes that Western Power has turned up the sensitivity level on its lines more than is normal, leading to power outages. These outages did not happen as regularly before this occurred. The mine believes that the loss to its revenue stream from continual blackouts totals \$3 million to \$4 million. This mine is a significant employer in the region with 60-odd employees, operating 24/7, and it is essential that it continues to produce product. It needs reliable power to do that.

Tourism in that area is suffering. I was in Dongara recently and spoke to the proprietors of Southerlys Tavern and Restaurant, who explained how distressing it is not to be able to provide the hospitality they wish. They have been protesting loudly for years as it has been setting back their business. I spoke with other businesses on that recent trip, such as Horrocks General Store, Port Gregory Caravan Park and Horrocks Beach Cottages, all of which have suffered terrible losses. Holidaymakers have been upset and could not understand why they could not get a cold drink, run their air conditioners all night, or use the pool and other facilities. Those businesses and communities have experienced reputational damage.

Dongara is the main community in the Shire of Irwin, with a population of around 3 500. Since December last year, 2 626 claims for power outages have been made in Dongara alone, and I suspect many other people have not made claims. My colleague Hon Martin Aldridge has had a good response to the launch of a petition he put before the people of Western Australia calling on the Legislative Council to look at this situation. In fact, it is the first electronic petition allowed under the standing orders of the Legislative Council. It is an excellent idea that Parliament opens up to this new way that people are communicating. I hope this house looks at such an electronic process in the future.

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I turn to my shadow portfolio responsibility of transport, which is an issue not only in my electorate of Moore but across the state. The challenges in the freight industry include a lack of drivers. This comes from a reluctance of truck drivers to come west because they fear they may not be able to return across the border to see their families for a lengthy period. It is pretty well accepted that most people like to occasionally see their families, yet in the transport, mining and other industries people have come to work in Western Australia and have been locked away from their families for months at a time. With the planned opening of the border in February, many drivers—one organisation told me there were 300 drivers involved—headed east to see their families over Christmas with the expectation they could come back to work in February. When that did not occur, they found themselves locked out. Those drivers could not get back into Western Australia to provide a vital service in those industries. We have seen just how vital freight is with the closure of the rail line from South Australia and all the issues arising around that.

The supply chain problem has shown us how important transport is. Recently at the border, a truck driver tested positive to COVID and the police ordered him to isolate in the cabin of his truck for two weeks. I suspect that the Minister for Transport intervened in this to get some sense into the situation so that the driver could spend his isolation period in an appropriate place. It shows that not a lot of thought has gone into ensuring those supply lines are crisp and clean, and work well. Recently, trucks were pulled up on the South Australian side of the border to go through border checks. There were pulled up very close to each other and a fire broke out and destroyed those trucks and their cargo. These are not signs of a well-organised system or a great supply chain. We need urgent action to cure these problems.

People are concerned about the quality of roadworks in many of Main Roads Western Australia's major projects. When we look at the NorthLink project, every time we have a hot day the bitumen starts to bleed. Often Main Roads will go out and chuck more stones on the road to try to soak up some of the bitumen, and then we have more broken windscreens. In excess of \$1.1 million has been paid out in damages caused to motor vehicles using that road since it opened. A few shortcuts were allowed to be taken in the construction of that road that led to this problem. That is an ongoing issue, but it is not the only one. As people drive into Toodyay, there is a lovely big area of new road in a controlled speed section—so the area is not heavily impacted by travel. However, as you drive onto this lovely piece of very expensive new tarred road, just before you get into town, an area about the size of this chamber has developed a pot hole that has been covered over and repaired. For all the money that the Western Australian public has put into that piece of roadwork, we see a shoddy outcome. It is not good enough and it needs to change.

I now turn very briefly to the skill shortages in mining that will soon come to a head. I am told problems are developing in the mining industry in approvals for works, explorers and prospectors. The lack of staff in the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety is contributing to those problem. Recently I attended a lunch for School of Mines graduates. I talked to the head of that school and the vice-chancellor of Curtin University who expressed concern that not enough students were coming in the front end, affecting their ability to provide mining professionals such as chemical engineers, metallurgists et cetera for the industry in future due to problems with international students and attracting staff.

The Premier's Statement referred to the Geraldton Health Campus. That project has been stalled; it is on the backburner. All that has been done in the five years of this government is the development of a car park and an entry that goes nowhere—it is not connected and is not being used.

The people of Geraldton, and those of the electorate of Moore whom I represent and who also rely on that hospital, are dismayed at the situation. We have seen recently in Three Springs mayhem around the ham-fisted attempt by authorities to close the hospital's aged-care centre. Apparently, it was just miscommunication. I know that patients' relatives were contacted directly to discuss moving those patients. It seems that someone was caught out.

Amendment to Question

Mr R.S. LOVE: This government has had two years to prepare and learn from the other states. We know that we are not well placed to manage COVID in the regions. Many questions remain about staffing, hospital protocols, testing and dealing with health staff shortages. Because of that, I move —

That the following words be added after “noted” —

and that this house condemns the McGowan government's failure to effectively prepare the state, squandering the two years since the first case of COVID in Australia

I expect that members of the opposition will speak to this amendment. We know that there has been ample opportunity for regional Western Australia and the city to be properly prepared for COVID, but we know that that opportunity has been squandered. Mullewa is still waiting for its hospital after five years of this government. There have been five years of delay and still there has been no development of Mullewa Hospital. Geraldton hospital has stalled. The people in Three Springs are concerned.

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MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [4.40 pm]: Welcome back for 2022, Acting Speaker.

It falls on me today to support the member for Moore's amendment to the question on the Premier's Statement. I could not agree more that we have seen two years wasted. This government has failed to make use of the two years since the first COVID case was reported in Australia. As the shadow Minister for Education and Training, my focus will be on the school system and what has happened over the last few weeks, which, to be honest, has been quite disappointing.

It is a combination of that and the Premier's backflip on 20 January about the opening date of 5 February. I think this has caused a great deal of anger and resentment in the community. People are not happy. It has taken the wind out of the sails of many families who have had to travel over east to see sick relatives and to go to funerals and weddings and the like. They have been stuck over east. They were working towards the date of 5 February, as were many overseas travellers, international students and the like, and then the Premier stood up on 20 January and basically said, "That date is finished. I'm not going to give you any particular reason for it." That was what really upset people. There was no logic, background or reason for it. People were basically left high and dry. I cannot describe to members the number of constituents who have rung me since then. As I said, people who were visiting sick relatives in Queensland or New South Wales could not come back. Hospitality and agricultural businesses were relying on people to come into the state to support their businesses. Workers who were agreed to be essential by this government have been unable to come into the state. It has been quite amazing.

Today I want to concentrate on the chaos and confusion that both the Premier and the Minister for Education and Training have created and the amount of worry that they have caused for students, parents and grandparents. They have had two years to prepare for this situation. I acknowledge that we have been fortunate in that we have lost only a few days of school in WA over the last couple of years. That has given us plenty of time to prepare. We heard the education minister say on the first day that schools would be the first to open and the last to close. Sure enough, within one day, a school closed. It was quite amazing.

What we have seen from this government is what I call the "cut first and consult later" methodology. The lack of communication has been a real disappointment. It was described very well in the "Smithy on Sunday" cartoon in the weekend newspaper, which had a teacher at the front of the class teaching a lesson on clear communication skills and saying, "Ellery ... McGowan! You obviously have some homework to do" and they both had an "F" for fail. I think that cartoon described it very well.

As I said, the chaos and confusion in our school system has been really disappointing. There has been a lack of clarity. The close contact arrangements were not explained well. In the first few days, we had the casual contact arrangements, but within a few days we had the close contact arrangements. The explanation for that was diabolical. I have not heard an explanation that hard to follow for many years. This has left not only parents and students, but also principals and teachers scratching their heads.

As we have seen, Winterfold Primary School closed on the first day and then things flowed on and now 29 schools have been affected. I am trying to point out that these sudden changes in activities have really pulled the rug out from underneath not only parents and families, but also school administrative staff, principals and the like. It was really summed up in an article by Bethany Hiatt in *The Sunday Times* in which she answered 20-odd questions on behalf of our state government to explain to parents and families what is going on because it has not been very well communicated to families by the government.

The president of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, the peak parents and citizens body in WA, Pania Turner, who is very well respected, said that many parents were upset that so many activities were being canned and were stunned by the short notice. She is reported to have said —

"We are disappointed with the lack of time given," ...

"It puts many parents and P&Cs in a difficult position to adapt to new restrictions."

She also said that it would have been helpful for more information to be provided ahead of time on the different settings that would apply for low, high and very high case loads, instead of a last minute flurry of instructions. I think that sums it up pretty well.

I would like to quickly run through a few of the 20-odd explanations that have been provided by Bethany Hiatt in support of the member for Moore's amendment in relation to the fact that we have had two years to prepare.

Firstly, I refer to school camps. This week we saw the chaos and disappointment that occurred when not only students, but also school camp operators were left high and dry. They have had the rug pulled out from underneath them. They were prepared, but, all of a sudden, the education minister had some sort of thought bubble: "We're going to cancel school camps because our students have to live in a closer environment." What about boarding schools and residential colleges? Does the minister not think that those students live in the same environment? Of course they

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do—every day of the week. All the staff at our camp schools are vaccinated—5 000 employees are ready to go. The rug has been pulled out from underneath them, with absolutely no consultation whatsoever. They had to spend the best part of last week trying to defend their situation.

Finally, the Minister for Education and Training has come to the party with a \$3.5 million package, with 100 per cent in weeks 1 to 4, 70 per cent in weeks 5 to 7 and 50 per cent in weeks 8 to 10 to support the employees, because the government saw what happened in the eastern states when the school camps were closed. Now we have New South Wales and Victoria providing \$98 million to try to get their employees back up and running. School camp operators have had to come out and fight the case when they were not even consulted in the first place. Needless to say, school students who were looking forward to the camps, which are part of their curriculum, are disappointed.

Swimming lessons is another one. It depends on the school, apparently. Are swimming lessons off? It depends on the school because the official guidelines say that swimming programs can go ahead, but some schools have decided to call them off. We saw the school ball situation. There was another thought bubble from the Minister for Education and Training. She said we would can the school balls—no good. What happens? Some of our students presented petitions and had sit-ins somewhere down near the minister's electorate. There was some sort of backflip on our school balls.

These are the sorts of issues. I refer to inter-school carnivals. We can have 1 000 students at an inter-school swimming carnival. We can have parents who are vaccinated and unvaccinated—no problem. It is all over the place.

I refer to school canteens. Canteens can stay open and parents are allowed to volunteer there, even though they are barred from classrooms, but if someone has a special needs student and they need to settle them into the classroom for the day, that is not on. Parents can volunteer in the canteen, but they cannot settle their special needs student into the classroom. They have to drop them at the front gate. That is not good enough.

There is still a long way to go with air purifiers. We know the government has spent over \$10 million on them, but they have still not been delivered to many regional schools.

Another one is rapid antigen testing. We have seen the Premier and the Minister for Health out at a big warehouse with rapid antigen tests. We have absolutely no idea how this will play out in our schools. That is another one. There has not been any communication on that one.

Finally, I want to talk about international students, because our international students have been left high and dry. International students have been stranded all over the world by the Premier's backflip about 5 February, which he made on 20 January. Students are stranded all over the world. I have been talking to vice-chancellors and they are very worried about the mental health of their students, and I have not seen the Minister for International Education appear once. I have not seen him.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am glad he is here!

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have heard absolutely nothing.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Here he is; he has appeared!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Members! Member for Roe, please be seated.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the House, thank you. Member for Roe, continue.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: As I said, I would like to reiterate my comment. The Minister for International Education has been a notable absentee. I certainly have not seen him. I have not heard too much at all about what he is going to do to repatriate our international students who are left stranded around the world, a lot of them with no money. I can assure members that our vice-chancellors are worried about the mental health of our international students, let alone the damage to our international reputation. The repair will take years. I can honestly say that I am disappointed with the chaos and confusion. I am disappointed with the way the Premier and the Minister for Education and Training have continued on with the “cut first, consult later” attitude. It is not good enough. I certainly back up the member for Moore with his amendment.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.54 pm]: I also rise to support the amendment moved by the member for Moore and speak to the issues regarding the two years, the gift of time, the McGowan government has had to prepare for COVID. The border well and truly has served its purpose. Two years later, it is

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now time to live with COVID and be open and transparent with the people of WA about a plan to move forward, which the Premier and the McGowan government have failed to deliver.

The intent of the hard border was never to keep WA closed off indefinitely. It was always supposed to be a measure of last resort and an opportunity to prepare—prepare our health system and vaccinate the population of WA. The people of Western Australia have overwhelmingly stepped up. Our jurisdiction has some of the highest vaccination rates in the world. We have seen the Western Australian public overwhelmingly step up and be compliant. They have overwhelmingly got vaccinated, but now they are still left in limbo with no light at the end of the tunnel and no certainty about when they will be reconnected with the rest of the country. The goalposts keep moving.

In March 2020, the Premier told this place —

Our approach is based on evidence and expert advice, and we are in lockstep with the commonwealth government. Our actions will be reasonable, equitable, proportionate to the risk, based on health advice and, as far as possible, consistent with other states.

He told this place that we needed to avoid ill thought out propositions that create panic, like closing the border to the east. That was his response when the opposition asked those questions. The Premier asked at the time what would happen to the supply chains, but two weeks later, the border was closed —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, member for Vasse, stop for one moment. Member for Roe, can you please put your mask back on. Thank you.

Ms L. METTAM: The Premier stated at that time that it would not be forever and that it was a temporary closure to make sure that we limited the spread of the virus in WA. That decision was overwhelmingly supported. It was proportionate to the risk at that time, but I am not sure that anyone in WA could have perceived that this temporary measure meant two years with still no certainty and no date on when Western Australia will be connected with the rest of the world. That is deemed not proportionate, given our current circumstances in which we have the highest vaccination rates in the world. It was about flattening the curve and buying time to prepare the health system so it was battle-ready. The Minister for Health at that time stated, “When the storm hits, we will be ready.”

After closing the borders, flattening the curve and buying that much-needed time to prepare an already ailing health system for the inevitable, where are we today? Almost 700 days later, we are still closed to the rest of the world. What have we seen in that time? We have seen the McGowan government’s spin cycle in overdrive, playing to the fear with populist phrases like crushing and killing the virus, which is quite plainly impossible. We are no longer in step with the commonwealth government or the rest of the country, and we are more segregated and as divided as ever.

Is it any surprise that residents and businesses are increasingly disillusioned and noncompliant with the ever-changing rules, as we have seen with people getting tested? We have a community that is fatigued and disconnected and no longer trusts what the Premier says after his border betrayal and the comments he has made since. We have a community that senses the real reason we are still closed is because the health system —

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member appears to be reading the speech.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): There is not point of order. The member for Vasse can continue.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: The community senses that the real reason we are still closed is that the health system, despite the Premier’s rhetoric and the gift of two years to prepare, will not cope. We have seen debacle after debacle in the preparation of the health system. The supply of rapid antigen tests is just one debacle. There has been secrecy around the supply of rapid antigen tests and the Minister for Health is still unable to state when they were first ordered. These vital tests, which are an important tool, were illegal to purchase until 10 January this year, and the state had no supply. Seemingly, tests were ordered some time in December. It was an extraordinary situation in which local supplies in Western Australia were sent to other states while at the same time taxpayers’ money was being used to charter flights to ensure a suitable supply of rapid antigen tests here. The government only took action on this matter after watching long queues at testing clinics over east.

Possibly one of the McGowan government’s biggest failings with the health system has been staffing levels. The management and recruitment of health staff has been another debacle. It is understood that WA Health has increasingly relied on interstate and international nurses and doctors. The result has been that many have returned to their country or state of origin and left the health system chronically and dangerously understaffed, particularly in the regions. The member for Moore touched on that. We have seen cuts in health services in some of our regional areas. There have been cuts to health services at Wyndham Hospital. We talked about cuts to elective surgery

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today. For some time, they have been operating only two of the three operating theatres at Bunbury Hospital at South West Health Campus because of cuts and the shortage of theatre staff. This has all been because of the lacklustre response over the last two years to prepare our health system and ensure that we have enough health workers. Instead of prioritising the refresher pathways program to enable local nurses and midwives to re-enter the workforce, the program was put on hold; it was suspended for 15 months during the pandemic. Our international recruitment blitz was announced in April 2021, but because the creatives needed more time, that was put on hold for six months as well. We have seen much fatigue across the health system as well.

Another extraordinary outcome of the way that the McGowan government has managed this situation is that health workers have been extremely challenged when trying to enter the state. We had reports in January this year of more than 100 doctors, including specialists, being locked out of this state. My office has been contacted by many people who found the bureaucratic processes of the G2G system overly challenging. This is at a time when we need health workers so much. The upskilling of staff to nurse ventilated patients in intensive care did not start until October last year. I would have thought that given the many questions asked in this place and the gift of time and what we have seen in other states, that training would have come much sooner than the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly when we have been lucky to have had no or very little COVID in the community and the resources to invest in our health workers as well. The government bought ventilators but it did not plan for the specialist staff required, which is just extraordinary.

The government has been dragged kicking and screaming to invest in extra bed capacity. We know that going into the pandemic we had the lowest number of available public beds per capita in the country. The government announced 332 beds in the September budget and committed to opening them by the end of the financial year. How many will be in regional areas? Well, none. Again, and consistently, it is an afterthought. Less than three months later, in December 2021, because of the obvious heat that this government was feeling from health workers, health advocates and the general public about how it has let down our health system, there was another big announcement of 270 more beds for the system, appreciating and understanding that the government's commitment to health in the pandemic was simply and completely inadequate. Half of the beds will be in a modular form that can be erected quickly, because the government has not used the gift of time, and only 30 will be in regional Western Australia, in Bunbury.

We know that regional WA will rely on patients being moved to Perth to be dealt with because the only ICU is at Bunbury hospital. Thirty of the 530 beds will be in the regions. It is quite damning that not all the beds will be online until the end of this financial year, given that, quite obviously, COVID is already here. It is extraordinary that the commitment is not to provide necessary beds until after the winter flu season. That again highlights how this government has dragged its feet on such an important issue.

In relation to ICU beds, we somehow also ended up with fewer ICU beds per capita in 2021 than we had the year before and the lowest number on a per capita basis in the country. According to a report in *The medical journal of Australia*, the number of available ICU beds decreased from 6.7 ICU beds per 100 000 Western Australians to six beds per 100 000 in 2021.

What exactly has this government been doing? It has been applauded for putting in place the hard border, but when it comes to these important areas of WA public health and preparing for living with COVID, we have seen a complete debacle and an unacceptable set of circumstances. The government erected some large marquees outside our hospitals to triage patients, but when did that happen? It did not happen until last month. After admitting that the Omicron variant could not be crushed and killed, the McGowan government erected some tents a month ago. That happened right after the government told Western Australians that despite the border reopening being locked in for 5 February and that they could have confidence that the health system was capable, it would keep an indefinite hard border, but it did not feel it would be of any benefit to provide the modelling as to why.

They dispute and put down Professor George Milne—someone who has also provided advice to the government in the past, someone who has also provided advice to the WHO—as a mere mathematician, but at the same time do not believe that the public deserve any transparency or any clear answers about when we will be reconnected with the rest of the world.

Overwhelmingly, the Western Australian public have stepped up and there has been an opportunity, with an extraordinary iron ore surplus that this government has had, to ensure that we are better prepared for right now. It is extraordinary that the Premier does not feel that he needs to answer any questions or provide any certainty about what the path forward should be. This is more policy on the run from a Premier whose decision-making is driven by, and reliant on, fear. We have had two years to prepare for this virus and the Premier is clearly not ready.

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Belmont.

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Shane Love; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Acting Speaker;
Ms Alison Kent; Ms Rebecca Stephens; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Lisa Munday; Ms
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Ms L. METTAM: Instead, the Premier is keeping the state in limbo to buy more time and Western Australians deserve an honest answer about why.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [5.11 pm]: This idea that we have had a hard border since March 2020 is just nonsense. I personally visited Canberra in April last year. I went there for five days to see my sister Margaret Eichholzer. At this point, I want to congratulate Margaret on her medal of the Order of Australia she received in this year's Australia Day honours for service to education. Well done to Margaret. I visited her in April last year. I needed to do a G2G, but there was no actual approval process. I could leave and come back because there was no COVID on the east coast. We did not have a hard border from the middle of March till when New South Wales got into trouble. Then we still did not have a hard border because it was only people in New South Wales who were not able to visit Western Australia. People in other states were able to come here because they did not have any COVID. Then, because New South Wales did not properly manage COVID—it did not lock down like in South Australia, Victoria and other places—that COVID outbreak in Sydney spread to Victoria, then its case load got too high, and it was also excluded from coming to Western Australia, other than through the G2G process. South Australians, Queenslanders, people from the ACT, the Northern Territory and Tasmania could visit Western Australia. It was only later, just before Christmas, when Tasmania and South Australia, having opened to New South Wales and Victoria, suddenly had an Omicron outbreak take over their states; then they became high-risk jurisdictions and people from those states were excluded from coming Western Australia. It is simply not correct to say that we have had a hard border since March 2020. Anybody who says that does not understand what actually happened.

The next questions I have are: Are members opposite actually telling me that they wanted people with COVID to come into Western Australia and infect their community? Is that actually what they are saying? Remember, until this week, the majority of COVID cases in Western Australia over this terrible period of Omicron have been in returned travellers. Returned travellers were over half the infections in Western Australia. Had the Liberal Party and the National Party had their way, all those people would have been in their electorates infecting their community. Are members opposite actually saying that is what they wanted to happen? I certainly did not want that to happen. Once New South Wales and Victoria et cetera get their Omicron under control, then we can have a look at what happens. It is exactly what the Premier said, or, exactly as the Premier said, if circumstances change domestically in Western Australia, we will have to have a look at it.

I want to go to the question that the member for Vasse raised about the date of the border. We need to take note of a number of things that were said in here on 10 November last year. The Leader of the Opposition said, in reference to the Premier —

He did not want to be in the position of setting a date and having to shift it.

That is what the member implied the Premier was saying. She went on to say —

I have said repeatedly that Western Australians understand that this is a somewhat fluid situation.

In November last year, the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged that the Premier might have to change the date. Do members know who else said a similar thing that day? It was the member for Vasse. She said —

We have stated consistently that if that date had to change, the WA community would overwhelmingly support it and it understood that that may be the case and it may have to change if the health advice required it.

That is what she said in November; a little different from what she said today. The Deputy Premier, the Minister for Health at the time, later in the same debate said —

When the member for Vasse says, “Set a date, and if you need to change it, that is fine; we will not critique you or anything like that,” quite frankly, that is absolutely laughable. The member for Vasse must think that we just came down in the last shower ... if she thinks we think that she is not going to criticise us every step of the way.

What did the member for Vasse interject? She said, “I wouldn’t.” That is what she said in November. She said she would not criticise the government if it had to change the date. What did she say today? She criticised us for having to change the date. There is a word for you, member, and we all know what it is. What a disgrace. You are an embarrassment, member for Vasse. She should not come in here and say something different from what she said in the past because, guess what, we know what she said.

What did the Leader of the Opposition say on 6PR on 19 October 2021? I quote —

... if those dates need to change, well that’s something I think the public would understand as well because the nature of COVID is that there are things that happen that are unexpected. But I think we need to trust the public to understand that.

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Shane Love; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Acting Speaker;
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Of course, this government does trust the community to understand that. We always knew that the Liberal and National Parties would not put the interests of Western Australians at the front of their minds. They put forward poor, old-fashioned opposition politics and come in here and say exactly the things they are saying.

I want to talk about vaccination rates. I quote the Leader of the Liberal Party when she said on 9 October at the Liberal Party state conference —

There are no significant jurisdictions in the world that have achieved that level of vaccination and we know, given the appallingly low level of vaccination in Western Australia, that we will not achieve 90 per cent until sometime a long distance into next year, probably into the second part of next year.

He was wrong again. Over 99 per cent of over 16 year olds have had their first dose and 52 per cent have had their third dose. That is a leading figure in the nation. I do not know the exact numbers. We might be above or below another jurisdiction, but it is an extraordinary achievement. We did that against the wishes of the Liberal and National Parties. They have opposed us every step of the way. Members opposite talked about what happened back in February and March 2020 and implied that they were asking for a hard border to be put in place. No, they did not. They asked for the economy to be stopped and for all interstate trade to be paused. They were asking for the mining industry to be shut down. That is what they asked for. The Premier stood in this place and said that he would not shut the economy down, but they are now misquoting what he said, out of context in a different way. Remember, the opposition opposed the hard border when it came in. We all remember opposition members getting up in here. We listened to speech after speech, MPI after MPI and private members' business after private members' business, supporting the federal Liberal government, supporting Clive Palmer and attacking our border, which is one of the things that has kept Western Australians safe and allowed the government of Western Australia —

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr R.S. LOVE: I think that the minister is misleading the house. I do not think he will find any reference in *Hansard* to any support from this side of the house for Clive Palmer in any of his exploits against the state of Western Australia, and I ask him to withdraw that remark.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As I said, the Liberal and National Parties and the federal Liberal–National government all supported Clive Palmer. Remember what happened. The member for Moore is rewriting history. Clive Palmer is a former life member of the Liberal–National party and a former state director of the National Party in Queensland. The federal Liberal–National government intervened in the case in support of Clive Palmer. It spent taxpayers' money on the case. That is a fact. It objected to certain evidence being provided by the state of Western Australia and called for a change to the way the case was being heard. Then the federal government pulled out too late, but the presiding judge forced the federal Liberal–National government to stand by its submissions. I am not going to say that the member for Moore is lying, but I am saying that he is misleading. He must not remember what actually happened. That is one of the problems with the goldfish opposition members. They do not remember what they did yesterday and they think that no-one else remembers it either. It is a disgrace. The point of being in opposition is to provide an alternative for the people of the state. I know what it is like to be in opposition; I did it for eight and a half years. The problem with this lot is they are lazy and take their lead only from what has already been reported in the media. They never do any work. That is exactly what was said in the Liberal Party analysis of the 2021 election result. It specifically mentioned that in the report. The opposition has forgotten nothing and learnt nothing. It is a disgrace to this state.

I want to remind members, as the Premier pointed out today, that almost 3 900 FTE have been added to the health system since early 2020. The opposition says that we have not recruited enough staff. I am sure that we could do more, but 3 900 FTE added to the health system of this state is an incredible achievement.

The member for Moore talked about the problems in the mining industry. The chief executive of the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies was in the media yesterday saying that we have the best conditions for the mining industry since the 2012 mining boom. That is what he said. Western Australia is now getting over half of all mineral exploration expenditure for the first time in memory. The Western Australian mining industry is going from strength to strength because the state government has managed COVID, the economy and our whole society in a strong way to make sure that we have had that success.

The member for Roe talked about the government banning school balls. The government never banned school balls. If the member was simply wrong, he should stand up and apologise, and if he knew he was wrong, that is unparliamentary. The Western Australian government has not done that in this current COVID environment, although

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two years ago we did. Today, individual schools make the decision, not the Western Australian government. Individual school communities are allowed to make decisions for themselves. The member also asked why we are allowing children to stay at boarding houses but stopping them from going to camps. The students who are in the boarding houses have parents in the member's community, and elsewhere, who want their kids to go to those particular schools. If the member is asking for those kids to be sent back, what is he saying? Is he saying that they should be in the boarding schools? Is that what he is suggesting? Or should they not be in the boarding schools?

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sorry, I cannot hear the member.

Mr P.J. Rundle: We wanted some information.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: But what information does the member want? They are allowed to go to the boarding schools. What information is the member seeking?

Mr P.J. Rundle: Clarity.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Clarity on what? They are allowed to go to the boarding schools. What is the member asking?

Mr P.J. Rundle: Just for clarity. That is what we are asking for.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have given the member clarity. They are allowed to go to boarding school. The member has to tell us what he wants clarity on. He is the one who is creating the confusion, not me, because the students at the boarding colleges are allowed to be there. Is the member suggesting that they should not be there?

Mr P.J. Rundle: That is not what I am saying.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What is the member saying? What about the boarding schools is a problem to the member? If he does not want the students there, tell me. If he does want them there, he should tell his community that the government has got that decision right. The member cannot have it both ways by coming in here and creating confusion by saying that students are confused about going to boarding schools when there is no confusion. They are allowed to go to boarding schools. The member for Roe is the one creating the confusion.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Direct your comments through the chair.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Certainly, Acting Speaker. The member is confused and is creating confusion, and that is not helpful. The member for Roe also talked about the government needing to provide information. I suggest that the member go to the Department of Education's website. There is a webpage on COVID-19 that sets out a whole series of questions and answers. I accept that there may be parents who are not aware of that. That is understandable. Not every parent will be aware of the information that is available, but they should talk to their school because many of the decisions that will have to be made over this difficult period when COVID cases are sure to increase will have to be made in the schools. The Premier has always made the point that sometimes there will be contradictory decisions. Sometimes things will look a little bit ragged around the edges. It is the first time in 100 years that we have had a global pandemic. I ask the opposition to do its job, which is to not confuse people and to be honest with people and to support the government, because we are making the tough decisions on behalf of the community.

I commend the Premier for his 2022 Premier's Statement. I urge the opposition to provide a copy of the speech to interested constituents, because that would remove much of the confusion that the members complain about. This is a good government with the strong leadership of the Premier that is allowing Western Australians to stay safe and strong. This will be a difficult year because we know, after two years, that we now have a number of community cases.

I want to finish on the issue of the testing rates. The idea that because the government has put in place a hard border, that means people are not getting tested is the most bizarre claim that I have ever heard. It is just ridiculous. The government has continually said that people who have any symptoms should get tested. I was interested to hear the Minister for Health today say that the testing capacity was 30 000. Work that out as a percentage of the total population. That is an incredible capacity, and now we have rapid antigen tests. I will finish on RATs. The member for Vasse criticised the Chief Health Officer for the fact that he, until 10 January, did not say that RATs were acceptable in Western Australia. He had reasons for that, and he has publicly talked about it. It is not as though it was a confusing issue.

Mr T.J. Healy: Rats have always been acceptable to the National Party.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We know that rats are acceptable to the National Party.

Many mining companies and other businesses have a large supply of RATs and are using them as part of their management tools for their workforce as COVID community cases come up. In the end, the opposition does not know

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which side of the street it is on. Is the opposition saying that the failure of the government is that there are COVID infections in the community or is it saying that there are not enough COVID cases in the community? Look at what the opposition is asking us to do. We are not going to “let it rip” like New South Wales, where every public health order was removed and look what happened. There were tens of thousands of cases every day, hundreds of deaths, with thousands of deaths in total. I think 80 per cent of New South Wales’ aged-care facilities were in lockdown. Is that what the opposition is saying we should aspire to? That is just crazy. This has been a sensible approach. I am from the east coast, like the Premier. Apart from my wife’s family, I do not have family here in Western Australia. I enjoy my Saturday Zoom sessions, but I would love to catch up, but that is a small sacrifice to keep my constituents healthy. I urge the chamber to reject this childish and ill thought out amendment moved by the member for Moore.

Division

Amendment put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mr D.A.E. Scaife) casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (5)

Ms M.J. Davies
Dr D.J. Honey

Mr R.S. Love
Ms L. Mettam

Mr P.J. Rundle (*Teller*)

Noes (40)

Mr G. Baker
Ms H.M. Beazley
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr J.N. Carey
Ms C.M. Collins
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms L. Dalton
Ms D.G. D’Anna
Mr M.J. Folkard
Ms K.E. Giddens

Ms M.J. Hammat
Mr T.J. Healy
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr H.T. Jones
Mr D.J. Kelly
Ms E.J. Kelsbie
Ms A.E. Kent
Mr P. Lilburne
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk

Mr D.R. Michael
Mr K.J.J. Michel
Mr S.A. Millman
Ms L.A. Munday
Mrs L.M. O’Malley
Mr P. Papalia
Mr D.T. Punch
Mr J.R. Quigley
Ms R. Saffioti
Ms A. Sanderson

Mr D.A.E. Scaife
Ms J.J. Shaw
Ms R.S. Stephens
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Dr K. Stratton
Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms C.M. Tonkin
Ms S.E. Winton
Ms C.M. Rowe (*Teller*)

Amendment thus negated.

Consideration Resumed

MS A.E. KENT (Kalgoorlie) [5.39 pm]: I rise today to reply to the Premier’s speech. When I wrote my contribution, I did not know that the opposition was going to move an amendment on the topic that I will talk about. I must have been psychic when I wrote this.

In February 2022, I find myself standing in this Parliament after having had the privilege of serving for the first year as the member for Kalgoorlie. When I initially nominated to stand as a candidate, as with any of us lucky enough to have a seat in this place, it was not an easy decision to take this path. It is the brave and the bold who take this path. I can tell members with absolute certainty that there is nowhere else that I would rather be and under whose leadership I would rather be under that in Western Australia under the stewardship of the McGowan government.

Is there a government in power in the world that is not and has not been criticised for its handling of the pandemic? It is almost like the critics sit back and dream up what they can pull out each day. We have never experienced anything like this, but I do not need to tell anyone else in here today what it has been like. I want to relay what is happening elsewhere so that we truly have a grasp of how COVID is impacting on our lives. I found an interesting piece called “The Countries Who’ve Handled Coronavirus the Best—and Worst”, written by Beth Howell on 3 February 2022. She wrote —

The novel coronavirus has crept its way through almost every country across the globe since the start of 2020, resulting in more than 358.55 million cases and over 5.62 million deaths.

Some countries have dealt with these chaotic months better than others. Lockdowns were imposed at different times, various strategies were considered, and restrictions varied in severity from government to government.

Ms Howell continued —

It’s clear to see that time is everything when it comes to the pandemic. Countries that locked down early were able to manage the virus more efficiently—and countries that ignored the virus are now suffering the consequences.

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The author of another article said —

As of 10 January 2022, 26 countries report that over one per cent of their population is catching COVID-19 each week.

...

I am also deeply concerned that as the variant moves east, we are yet to see its fullest impact in countries where levels of vaccination uptake are lower, and where we will see more severe disease in the unvaccinated. Taking the example of Denmark, where Omicron cases have exploded in recent weeks, the COVID-19 hospitalization rate for unvaccinated patients was 6-fold higher than those that were fully vaccinated in the week over Christmas.

...

... for countries not yet hit by the Omicron surge, there is a closing window of opportunity to act now and plan for contingencies.

For countries not yet hit by the Omicron surge, there is a closing window of opportunity to act now and plan for contingencies.

In summary, the author said —

... our overarching drive must be towards vaccine sharing and solidarity—across age-groups, sectors, borders and political lines.

I will come back to the issue of solidarity across political lines later. I would like to focus on how COVID has impacted us here in Australia. I will start with New South Wales. In January 2022, consumer confidence fell to its lowest point since 1992, when Australia was emerging from recession. A survey of 2 000 members by the lobby group Business New South Wales found 40 per cent do not have enough cashflow for the next three months. On 30 January 2022, the New South Wales Treasurer, Matt Kean, said —

“We estimate that the cost to the NSW economy of the Omicron outbreak has been about 60 per cent of that of the Delta outbreak,” ...

“So it is having a huge impact on the economy, not as large as Delta, but it’s particularly being felt by some sections of the economy.

“That’s the small business sector—retail, tourism, hospitality and those businesses that ply their trade through face-to-face trading like hairdressers and beauticians.”

The New South Wales Premier said the state government has “always known” people would die as a result of loosening COVID restrictions, after documents surfaced suggesting the government was warned Omicron could lead to a spike in hospitalisations.

The advice contained a briefing written by the New South Wales’ Health COVID Critical Intelligence Unit was published on 10 December 2021, five days before the New South Wales Premier scrapped an indoor mask mandate and density limits on venues amid the surging Omicron infections on 15 December. It was later forced to reverse that decision on 23 December as the cases spiked in the face of the new variant. Unfortunately, we all witnessed how that decision has had an impact on the community and the economy.

Let us move to Victoria. Westpac Bank recently said —

As COVID-19 case numbers have surged over the summer, bricks and mortar retailers have been hit hard by consumers trying to dodge the virus by largely avoiding the shops, but other businesses have suffered operational woes including shortage of staff and stock.

On 30 January, *The Age* said that some aged-care residents had been forced to go without showers and meals and have had their wounds left undressed as Victoria’s nursing homes face unprecedented staff absenteeism due to the outbreak. By 30 January, around 1 700 aged-care residents were sick with COVID-19 compared with 400 on 7 January. Staff infections increased from 450 to 1 350 in that time. Melbourne woman Rosy Clarkson said her mother had been confined to her room at a private aged-care home for two weeks as the coronavirus ripped through the facility infecting nearly all the staff and almost a quarter of the residents. She said —

“It was like a war zone in there. One staff member began to cry when she was talking to my sister over the phone. The staff were doing double shifts, no breaks, working 12 days straight ... just to care for the residents.”

The City of Melbourne’s recent survey found that three in four businesses are struggling to survive the current outbreak. The survey found that 74 per cent of city business owners were barely surviving or under intense duress while 53 per cent were not confident they will remain open for more than three months. Lord Mayor of Melbourne,

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Sally Capp, said that the survey indicates that business confidence is declining, particularly among the city's hospitality and retail sector. She said —

We know Melbourne's business owners are incredibly resilient, but the Omicron outbreak is having a significant impact as people isolate or understandably take it upon themselves to limit their movements," ...

"It's clear the economic impacts of the ... variant are similar to those felt during lockdowns ...

I now turn to Queensland. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland said on 8 February that one in five Queensland businesses reported a critical constraint on their ability to maintain normal operational hours or service delivery since December. It said that many businesses are on their knees and some have told it that the Omicron wave has caused them more financial and emotional harm than the original COVID economic impact in Queensland in 2020.

Let us turn to what the Prime Minister has said lately. He said —

... when I say we haven't got everything right ...

... I was optimistic.

"We were all desperately looking forward to a great summer. And one of the things we learn again is that the virus has a way of bringing you back to Earth ...

"And we could have communicated more clearly about the risks and the challenges that we still faced ...

"Omicron came and completely turned things on its head.

This is the reality for a lot of Australia and I am sure we can all agree it has been pretty dire. I turn to Western Australia. We are two years into this historic pandemic and we get constant carping from the opposition. When we wanted and needed unity and strength, the opposition did everything—and is still doing—everything it could to polarise and divide. Did the opposition want to open the border recklessly? Yes, it did. The member for Cottesloe recently joined family separated by the border at a "morning for mourning" rally. He boasted that he met families separated from one another due the state's hard border on the day we were originally promised to reopen. He said —

... the Premier failed in every aspect to prepare our State efficiently.

"Two years mostly COVID-free in our incredibly prosperous State, he had all the luck in the world and none of the wits.

Good grief! Where has he been living? Oh, that is right; he is in Cottesloe. How has his life been affected so far from COVID? Not much, I bet—the same as the rest of the state. Let us look at the life we are living and enjoying. Have we been able to attend family gatherings, weddings and funerals? Yes! Have we been able to enjoy shows at the Fringe World Festival? I know I have. Have we been able to socialise with friends? Absolutely! Have we been able to travel throughout our wonderful state—if we were lucky enough to get accommodation? Yes, of course we have! Most tourism operators are calling this past summer a bumper season.

How are businesses and the general economy going? NAB's monthly business sentiment survey still recognises WA business conditions as the best in Australia, which has been the case for much of 2021. The goldfields has had unprecedented growth. What did the goldfields business community say when we updated the 5 February border plan? Thank you; thank you; thank you! Here we are, having slowed the number of people coming into our state right down so that we can manage the thousands coming through, I say to the Premier, the Minister for Health and the Chief Health Officer: my family has appreciated your stance to keep us safe; my goldfields community thanks you for keeping us well. Of course, through the opposition critics, the Premier has stayed true to his goal to save people's lives. Opening overnight on 5 February to thousands of people roaming the streets would have infected the community and caused so many more deaths, and no testing, no quarantine, no public health measures would have caused a flood of COVID across WA, a surge in hospitalisations and resulted in thousands of people not being able to go to work or school.

The media in WA has been unrelenting of late. Somehow the state government's trying to slow down the spread of COVID-19 by using a cautious approach is not acceptable. Instead of criticising every step, from both the media and the opposition, it would be good for them to appreciate just how fortunate we are to be in a position to be able to adjust our settings, to put us in the best position to handle this new variant and to protect Western Australians and the Western Australian way of life. As the Premier said, if we can hold back this current Omicron outbreak, we will be one of the only places in the world that can achieve a high third-dose rate before we reach widespread community transmission. This is something worth striving for.

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We currently have 509 active cases, which for us is huge, but across Australia there are 232 112 active cases as of yesterday. More importantly, there are, sadly, so many deaths caused by this COVID virus in Australia that I feel people are getting complacent towards the actual figures. When I say there are 4 618 deaths as of yesterday, it is awful, but I want members to look at this visual, which is confronting. Behind each one of these figures is a family that is grieving and a family that has lost a loved one with a gap left in their lives. We need to remember this. We need to know that my government, the McGowan government, makes every decision based on whatever makes the community safe and the economy strong, and does everything possible to avoid a family dealing with a COVID death. That is commendable. I am so proud to be part of this McGowan government at this critical time in our history. I commend the Premier's Statement to the house.

MS R.S. STEPHENS (Albany) [5.53 pm]: Premier, on behalf of Albany, I firstly want to thank you and the government for keeping my community safe. In Albany, we know that COVID will appear, but the time we have been given to prepare for it, with your foresight and the tools you have provided us, will help ease us through this stage of the pandemic and are incredibly valuable. They save lives, they save jobs and they keep our community functioning—and it is functioning and thriving.

One example of Albany's outstanding contributors is our flourishing community member Mrs Carol Petterson, who received a Medal of the Order of Australia in the general division at the recent Australia Day 2022 proceedings. "Aunty Carol", as she is respectfully known, is a pillar of the Albany community. Born at the Gnowangerup mission in 1940, Carol was raised in the bush at Jerramungup in a family of 17 people, spending most of her life on traditional country. A devoted family woman, Carol has four surviving children, 13 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Carol identifies as an older and traditional owner with the Menang and Gnudju peoples of the south coast of Western Australia. She has worked for various different government departments, retiring from the public service in 1998, and continues to work as a volunteer for the Noongar community.

One of Carol's key achievements is bringing about social and economic change for Noongar people through land claims and access to mining income, which is to be applauded. Carol's other passion is ensuring that her grandchildren and great-grandchildren have the opportunity to embrace their languages and culture through traditional experiences. I had the pleasure of watching Aunty Carol and artist Ben Beeton open the inaugural TEDx Kinjarling in Albany where they shared their ambitions to the Genestream project to connect the first steps and songlines of Australia's First Nations people in a national art trail. It is very clear to me why this prestigious honour was bestowed upon Carol Petterson, OAM, and I take this opportunity to congratulate her and thank her sincerely for all that she has done and continues to do for the Albany community and Noongar people in particular.

By working together, Premier, and by listening to our community and prioritising its needs, this McGowan government has delivered significant benefits to the people by ways of new infrastructure, renewal and upgrades to asset and record investment in transformational projects that will see communities thrive. On New Year's Eve, I was able to open the official upgrades to Binalup–Middleton beach, a \$9 million redevelopment with funding support provided by federal and state governments together with the City of Albany. Coastal protection measures were applied to the foreshore to protect the site and to allow for precinct development. A seawall now protects the Middleton beach coastline during extreme weather events. The public elements include the development of a promenade between Ellen Cove and Emu Point, new footpath connections, an upgraded car park, beach showers, drink fountains and even little dog bowls that you can fill with water as you walk your dogs along the beach. A beautiful mural by local artist Jhodi Bennett and some incredible stonework, which I must claim, were laid and designed by my Uncle Chris Burnell, now grace Ellen Cove, bringing this world-class project to life.

The \$16.6 million Mount Lockyer Primary School rebuild now sees students in the door and classrooms as the 2022 school year begins. This investment in education will raise standards of living, strengthen the economy and help develop our children for the future. Mount Lockyer Primary School was 65 years old and the only school in Albany that had not received major upgrades. The facilities were old and dated and clearly, with increased enrolments, is booming now and the suburb is thriving.

The \$175 million Albany Ring Road and 11-kilometre heavy haulage freight route around Albany for the transport of goods to and from Albany is on track. The project will be delivered in two phases and is progressing steadily. The new bridge over Albany Highway is taking shape and earthworks are in full swing. The massive number of local jobs that this project will deliver to the Albany economy is significant as the multiplier effect in relation to supply of goods and services to the project by Albany-based businesses.

Construction is well underway of the \$13.1 million Albany radiation oncology project, which will provide great southern residents with access to lifesaving cancer treatment closer to home and on country. This important project has created over 50 jobs and is on track to be completed in the second half of this year.

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Construction has started on the state-of-the-art \$3 million State Emergency Service headquarters in Albany. Facilities will serve as a base to manage large-scale emergencies in the region. The Albany SES is a very active unit with over 55 volunteers helping to keep our local community and visitors safe all year round. Whether it is responding to storm damage, rescuing trapped or injured people, conducting searches on land or helping the public prepare for emergencies, Albany SES has a proud history of service. I urge anyone thinking of becoming an SES volunteer to give it a go.

I congratulate the Railways Football and Sporting Club that received \$300 000 recently from the community sport recreation facilities fund to help to redevelop club facilities and provide female friendly change rooms.

As a former student of Albany Senior High School, I have fond memories of performing in annual productions, but in particular the Rock Eisteddfod. We had to rehearse on the basketball courts and only got to practice on stage when we arrived in Perth the day before the competition. Thankfully, the McGowan government's investment of \$6.3 million for a new performing arts centre at Albany Senior High School is currently under construction. This project will provide students with the opportunity to rehearse and perform on a world-class stage enhancing their capabilities, skills and confidence.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Ms R.S. STEPHENS: As a former student of Albany Senior High School, I have fond memories of performing in annual productions, particularly the Rock Eisteddfod. We had to rehearse on basketball courts and were only able to practise on stage when we arrived in Perth the day before the competition. A new performing arts centre at Albany Senior High School is currently under construction thanks to the McGowan government's investment of \$6.3 million. This project will provide students with the opportunity to rehearse and perform on a world-class stage, enhancing their capability, skills and confidence. It will promote a rich artistic culture and will ensure that we deliver a broad and high-quality education in regional WA.

Recently, alongside the Minister for Regional Development, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, I attended the fourth round of the regional economic development grants in Albany. Five incredible great southern projects were funded, sharing a total of \$586 000 of state government funding, supporting almost \$3.2 million in total project value. Venco Products is an Albany-based manufacturing facility that makes pottery wheels, which are exported globally. RED grants funding of \$190 000 enables it to purchase land and construct a new manufacturing facility in Albany. It will be a game changer for Venco and will see it leverage the demand for its product and take its business to new heights. The Albany Business Centre was funded to the tune of \$50 000 to enable it to redevelop its building to increase space for startups and improve accessibility for workshops and education. Again, this will make an enormous difference to many small businesses in Albany that utilise the Albany Business Centre while they are growing their brands.

In closing, I again thank the Premier, who has consistently put the health and wellbeing of my constituents first amid a global pandemic to ensure that Albany remains strong. In challenging times, this government's investment and opportunities have kept Albany businesses and schools open, kept people well and out of hospital and employed, and kept major infrastructure projects on track.

MS E.J. KELSIE (Warren–Blackwood) [7.03 pm]: I rise today to contribute to the Premier's Statement. I begin by commending our McGowan Labor government for its strong leadership during these times of uncertainty. Summer in Warren–Blackwood is a glorious time. We have some of the best beaches and wineries. We have world-class trails, stunning sunsets and friendly communities that welcome tourists and visitors to our beautiful south west and great southern region. We pride ourselves on being robust communities that celebrate together and pull together when things get tough—and, oh my, have they been tough recently! I have never packed a bag to evacuate before and I have never listened so intently to ABC radio news or hit refresh on the Emergency WA website as much as when the fires kicked off in Denmark and followed in Bridgetown soon after. Both incidents reached emergency warnings. Summer in Warren–Blackwood is a glorious time, but it is also bushfire season. It is a season in which carelessly discarded cigarettes, campfires left glowing, wind changes or lightning can have catastrophic consequences.

The past few months have put Warren–Blackwood's emergency services under real pressure. Recent bushfires in Margaret River, Manjimup, Denmark and Bridgetown as well as others in the great southern and wheatbelt region have seen our emergency services working long hours and days. Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Darren Klemm highlighted that the state had never had this many emergency warnings at one time. Investing in emergency services is paramount to keeping our community safe. I am very proud to be part of a government—the McGowan Labor government—that continues to prioritise investment to support our emergency services. Emergency services received a \$281.8 million state budget boost. We are helping to prepare communities for disasters by funding projects aimed at increasing disaster resilience. We have contributed \$2.18 million of funding through the joint commonwealth–state national disaster risk reduction grants program, which aims to reduce the risk and impact of

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bushfires and other natural hazards. Since November, more than 50 new water tanks are in the pipeline for construction as part of this government's plan to improve emergency response efforts to regional bushfires and to support economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: Acting Speaker, this is the third speech that I have sat through that has been read out verbatim by a member. I ask you to recognise the fact that under parliamentary rules, it is expected that members do not read their speeches. I understand that there is a bit of latitude for new members, but, honestly, they have all been members for a year now, and it is time to depart from that process. Therefore, I respectfully put to you, Acting Speaker, that —

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: No; I have not finished my point of order. I respectfully put to you, Acting Speaker, that you do not allow the reading of speeches by members. This is the third in a row that I have heard tonight.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member for Moore has not referred to an actual standing order at all. If he was in the chamber earlier today, the same matter was raised with the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party for doing exactly the same thing.

Mr R.S. Love: She was not! She was clearly not!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: She was!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): The point of order is not upheld.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, member, I have not given you the call. Can you please just wait.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Sit down!

Mr R.S. Love: We're hardly dominating you guys.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, member for Moore. There has been a degree of latitude to let members refer to notes, and that is the way we will be proceeding tonight. Thank you.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Point of order, Madam Acting Speaker. The member is now clearly canvassing your ruling. I think you should call him to order.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Warren–Blackwood.

Debate Resumed

Ms E.J. KELSIE: Why, thank you.

The Shires of Plantagenet, Manjimup and Augusta–Margaret River have all received funding in the latest round, with the investment targeting either high-risk areas located outside a town site or brigades without current storage facilities at their station, reducing the time volunteer firefighters spend on refilling firefighting trucks. We have also invested \$140 million in new emergency services fleets, including three new state-of-the-art vehicles, a flood rescue vessel for emergency services and more than 140 new appliances. Plus, we awarded a \$47.5 million state government contract to build up to 300 new firefighting vehicles in February last year.

We are also investing in bushfire mitigation. Last year we announced more than \$2.8 million for high-bushfire risk areas, with the Shire of Nannup securing over \$200 000 to deliver 14 bushfire mitigation activities. These grants help boost bushfire mitigation activities in high-risk local government areas, helping to reduce fuel loads and bushfire risk. Some of the big-ticket items include: new fire stations, including two in the south west at Waterloo and Dardanup, with construction made possible by nearly \$1 million from the emergency services levy; a \$3 million state-of-the-art State Emergency Service headquarters in Albany; and a \$13.4 million emergency services hub being built in Collie.

Pretty close to 10 years after the Margaret River community was devastated by the 2011 bushfires that destroyed 47 homes and damaged a further 106, a deliberately lit fire in Leeuwin–Naturaliste National Park, near popular tourist attraction Mammoth Cave, burnt through 8 000 hectares, forced evacuations and resulted in the closure of major roads for days. I was in Margs at the time. We could feel the town waiting tensely for the bushfires to abate. Clouds of smoke drifted across the town site for days. It was pretty eerie. The town was quiet. Fire trucks and crews from local bush fire brigades and further afield were kept busy fighting the fires. They fought all night to save properties, livestock and many of our region's natural assets.

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I would like to offer a huge thanks to the Minister for Tourism at the time, Hon David Templeman, who came to Margaret River to meet with local tourism operators, people who genuinely thought they were going to lose their livelihoods, particularly those in the Boranup Forest. I would also like to say thank you to Tourism WA and Australia's South West for assisting me to help our local tourism operators with grants and much-needed support so that these passionate people could adapt their businesses and remain viable during the peak tourism season and beyond. It was an emotional meeting. Many tears were shed. The Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association is also to be commended for its professionalism and focus to get things done for the benefit of the region. The Shire of Augusta–Margaret River also worked incredibly hard behind the scenes with the incident control team to ensure that the community was kept up to date.

Not long after the Boranup fires, an out-of-control bushfire to the east of Margaret River, in Treeton and Osmington, had the community on edge once more and our emergency services teams on the fireground. Thank you also to the Minister for Environment, Hon Reece Whitby, for coming to Margaret River to see the damage to the caves infrastructure and to hear from the people on the ground about their future plans and ambitions for our natural assets.

Just days between the Denmark and Bridgetown fires, residents in areas of Manjimup were urged to leave their homes as there was a potential threat to lives and property. I was also in Manjimup when these fires kicked off. Big thanks, of course, go to all the fireys who fought to get this one under control, and also to the staff at Manjimup Gateway Motel, who worked into the evening preparing meals for the emergency services crews on the ground. It is quite surreal to sit in a local pub and look around the room as people receive a text message asking them to prepare to potentially evacuate. As I said earlier, never before have I had to pack a bag for an evacuation. My property backs onto bushland, and I have had an evacuation plan for some time.

The fire in Denmark started not too far from town. It took hold swiftly, and as the day grew longer the ferocity of the blaze grew stronger and the sirens in town louder. As people in the regions know, when the town sirens go off, it can be pretty daunting. People look around to see what is going on. As news of the bushfire spread through the town and hit social media, people started to get activated into support mode. The Denmark fire was close to home in every sense. I, like many others in my community, had to seriously think about packing a bag and leaving. While supporting my community, working closely with the local shire and liaising with the now Minister for Emergency Services, Hon Stephen Dawson from the other place, about the fires in Denmark, the Bridgetown fires took off. Simultaneously, the Denmark and Bridgetown town sites were under threat. The winds heading towards both towns were not favourable and neither were the forecast temperatures. To say I have never felt more grateful to our emergency services for the training they receive, the equipment they operate and the sheer number of volunteers we have in our communities, the air support that was activated swiftly, and the water provided from local dams and farmers is an understatement.

Authorities say that the best time to create a bushfire plan is not when we are being hit by disaster or an emergency warning; it is when we are not at risk. Do not wait until the last moment. Not everyone thinks clearly in an emergency. Even if we are calm in a crisis, it can feel like chaos simply because of the nature of what is happening around us. The experience has made me consider my personal preparedness. Ninety per cent of Western Australia is bushfire prone. A bushfire plan can help keep us, our loved ones, our pets and our livestock safe. The bushfire plan that can be found on the website www.mybushfireplan.wa.gov.au is easy to use. It has bushfire preparedness checklists and resources to help people decide on the best options. A bushfire safety plan helps people identify whom they need to protect, when they need to leave, where they are going to go, who they need to let know and what they are going to take with them. People should also always have a backup plan, as I discovered. It takes about 15 minutes, and that is 15 minutes well spent.

I had never actually packed my car to evacuate until recently. I grabbed two large tubs of photos, document folders, sentimental stuff from around my house, my favourite pictures —

A member: And your dog!

Ms E.J. KELSIE: Yes, I did grab the dog! I grabbed my dog lead and dog food. I grabbed a cat box and I was ready to shove the cat into the cat box and go. I contacted the member for Albany because I thought I would be staying at her house. It is a weird feeling, the thought that you are packing your car and you are going to leave and you do not know what will be there when you come back. I also phoned to check that my insurance was up to date. I was lucky. We did not have to evacuate, although a third of people in the Denmark town site had to evacuate to Albany or Walpole.

Some people in my community were not so lucky. Homes were lost and sheds, too, and people's belongings, pets and livestock. Some animals actually escaped the fences as they burnt to the ground; others perished. My personal thanks go to our local Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in Albany for providing on-the-ground support to the Shire of Denmark to assist with the euthanising of animals that had been injured during the fires. It was harrowing to visit the fireground and see firsthand the devastation of properties and also the animals that had perished. To the Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, thank you for also personally

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checking in on me and helping me to support my communities in their time of need. The communities of Denmark and Bridgetown are both hugely thankful for the swift actions of all our volunteer and career firefighters, our local police, our local SES teams and our local shires, who worked in collaboration through these events across their boundaries. Almost 4 700 hectares were razed. Sadly, a friend's uncle and a much-loved Bridgetown local was seriously injured in the Bridgie fires. I wish him well.

Bushfires can be tragic. They can be devastating and traumatic for all involved. We in Western Australia are pretty resilient. When our communities take a hit, we pull together. We step up to support each other. It is the Western Australian way. Thank you to the career and volunteer fireys, the support crew on the ground and in the background, the amazing women from the Country Women's Association, the community groups that arranged meals and supplies, the people in neighbouring towns who offered to take in pets or livestock, the Facebook community noticeboards with offers to help, and the cafes and restaurants that gave away free pizza and coffee to the fireys, vollies and support teams, and to all the people in each of the towns affected who offered help, support, accommodation and money. It is the West Aussie way to help our neighbours when things get tough and to look out for one another. From what I have seen recently, it seems it is also the Warren–Blackwood West Aussie way to bake our way out of a crisis. Cakes, biscuits, muffins, roast vegies, loaves of bread and donations of baked goods came in thick and fast.

I also want to mention that without community-minded businesses, like those commended at the WA Volunteer Employer Recognition Awards, some of our volunteers would not be able to get away from work to support their teams. The recent awards recognised 24 businesses, organisations and self-employed volunteers from Boddington to Esperance. There was an overall 20 per cent increase in the number of businesses nominated for allowing their employees to attend emergencies. That benefits not only their immediate community, but also our whole state, as these volunteers travel throughout the region to fight fires and support other brigades.

In the coming weeks, I will be working with St John, the Shire of Denmark and the local SES to support the installation of a reverse-cycle air-conditioning unit at the Denmark Airport patient transfer base, which is also used by the SES volunteers when they are filling the water bombers. It can be either pretty cold or stinking hot in there, but hopefully this will help make a change.

It was an absolute pleasure with the Premier to also meet the Bridgetown volunteer bush fire brigade captain, Millie Nedelkovski. Millie told us how the fires had pretty much surrounded the brigade headquarters and how the trees straight across the road were burning. They were being stamped out by the volunteers who were there. The shade cloth out the back of the headquarters was spotting, so it was burnt with holes. When we called up, they showed us how one of the utes had lots of burn spots on the back canopy. Millie had not had much sleep when we spoke to her, but she was still full of the good energy that makes our volunteers absolutely worth their weight in gold. It was inspiring to meet the teams as well that had come from Perth to assist our local crew with the management of these intense fires and to assist with incident control support on the ground. I want to thank the Premier for visiting Bridgetown and the volunteer bush fire brigade, and thank him for providing support to me and to the community during this stressful time. I know the Shire of Bridgetown–Greenbushes CEO, Tim Clynych, and the president, John Bookless, were both very appreciative of the Premier's support.

I would also like to thank Hon Jackie Jarvis, MLC, member for South West, from the other place. She was also a great support to the south west community and myself during this time. Jackie came to Denmark and Bridgetown in the aftermath. She is based in Margaret River. She was also there when the fires ripped through the capes. Recent fires have also come very close to her property. Last night I had a quick catch up with Lez Baines, who is the chief bushfire control officer at the Shire of Denmark. He told me that there were still eight appliances out each day and that volunteers are still on the fireground keeping the embers and hop overs from the recent bushfires under control. They are hoping it will slow down by the end of this week. We talked about how 60 properties were saved and reflected on how very sad it was that properties, livestock and pets had been lost. Lez told me stories of how the local farmers had worked together to help protect each other's properties and about how some of our local contractors, like Matt Candy, Nigel Palmer and AD Contractors, worked through the day and night helping on the ground with their earthmoving equipment. We talked about how the different volunteer bush fire brigades from Albany, Walpole, Plantagenet, Collie and even Gosnells, among others, came to help and how the local police from Denmark, Albany and Walpole worked together on traffic management and made swift decisions that kept people and properties safe. He told me that every single appliance in the Shire of Denmark was utilised to fight the fires that threatened the town site. We both commended St John Ambulance, the local shire staff and councillors, the Denmark and Albany State Emergency Service, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services for all working together professionally to help keep the town safe.

[Member's time extended.]

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Ms E.J. KELSBBIE: Without the air support of the water bombers and helicopters it could have been a really different outcome for my home town and for Bridgetown. Lez was off to get some well-deserved rest last night and then he was getting back out there again today. I have heard it said more than once in the past couple of weeks that our emergency services in our local communities are our local heroes.

To conclude, I simply want to say thank you. Thank you to all the vollie firefighters and those working behind the scenes. Thank you to those on the ground and those who took notes and those preparing food. Thank you to the businesses who worked long hours and offered their resources willingly. Huge thanks to the farmers and landowners whose effort to save their property and their neighbours' property helped save our community. Thank you to our local governments that stepped up and supported each other across their boundaries. Thank you to each department employee and those in charge, making decisions to keep us safe in the most stressful of environments. Thank you to the families at home who shared their loved ones to enable them to get out on the fireground to support our communities. I commend the Premier's Statement to the house.

MRS L.A. MUNDAY (Dawesville) [7.24 pm]: Could I ask you, Acting Speaker, to also ask the member for Moore to have some room for me while I read my speech on my first day back? I, too, would like to stand and contribute to the debate on the 2022 Premier's Statement. Rosalynn Carter, a former First Lady of the United States, said, "A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't want to go but ought to be." I stand today to say thank you to the Premier for being a great leader. He has stayed the course and listened to advice to keep us safe. Although there has been a loud and aggressive minority who disagree, Western Australians have by and large done the right thing. We have been vaccinated, we have worn masks and followed the science and health advice.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: I appreciate the fact that the member for Dawesville has outlined that she will be reading her speech and asked for my forbearance, but I do point to the fact that parliamentary debate is not based upon the reading of speeches. I point to the newer members. I know there are many and I know that they want to make their speeches and they have them all written out. I appreciate the member for Warren-Blackwood has been through fires et cetera.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: If I could continue. A point of order should be heard in silence.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Can you just get to the point, please, member for Moore.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The member for Warren-Blackwood I know has had a traumatic experience with the fires et cetera, but, honestly, it is time for members to move beyond the reading of speeches.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Moore, there is no point of order. Members are able to refer to their speech notes, as we have mentioned before.

Debate Resumed

Mrs L.A. MUNDAY: Thank you, Acting Speaker. We have worn masks and followed the science and health advice whilst ignoring the harmful rhetoric and fearmongering. In the last two years, WA has been the safest and most productive state to live in. Our lockdowns have been few and far between compared with other states and our Chief Health Officer has not been on the news at 11.00 am every day of the past 12 months justifying his position and reporting the number of COVID cases because we have been safe. This is because the tough decisions were made early, and good practice was put into place by the Premier, the Chief Health Officer, the Commissioner of Police and these great leaders who looked at evidence, looked at other countries and navigated the course.

One thing I cannot get my head around is everyone asking for certainty. Actually, I can understand why people are looking for certainty, because humans need direction and certainty to quell anxiety and fear of the unknown. I get that, but how can we ask for certainty when we have not been through a pandemic before? How do we ask the Premier, the Chief Health Officer and the Commissioner of Police and other specialists to make decisions based on factors that have not even occurred yet? Look at New South Wales and Victoria; why would we copy them? People are dying every day with COVID. Worse still, people having strokes and heart attacks are not getting treated promptly because those states do not have the time and space to care for them. Why would we want that? A leader who continues blindly with their decisions just because they made it, despite seeing the writing on the wall, is destined to see casualties. The Premier could see the opening on 5 February was going to cause a huge wave of Omicron cases to wash over us here in WA. Thousands and thousands of cases were being diagnosed in other states. Here in WA we have had it good for so long that many of us are truly oblivious to the real cost of the virus, whether it be medically, emotionally or financially. When the border opening was delayed, it was for the sole purpose of saving lives. We all want to see our family interstate or overseas, go on a holiday and have our normal lives back as soon as possible, and although we are not officially open yet, WA residents can leave the state and return right now.

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Yes, we still have to quarantine for seven days, but I think it is a small price to pay for the immunocompromised people in our community who we need to keep safe.

One of these people is a good friend of mine, Jodi. She is 43 years old and a mother of three: Scarlett, who is 14; Calais, who is 12; and Hudson, who is five. Jodi was diagnosed with breast cancer last year. Her diagnosis was invasive micropapillary carcinoma grade 2. Grade 2 cancer is highly survivable. Jodi had her surgery and had the cancer removed along with one lymph node. All the cancer was successfully taken, however the oncologist felt that to be sure, Jodi had to undergo chemotherapy and radiation therapy. At any other time, Jodi would have felt quite safe that she would make a full recovery, but during a pandemic, this adds a huge degree of difficulty and worry for her. Although she is three times vaccinated, which is generally the rule for all cancer patients, her immune system is left depleted, making her vulnerable to any infection going around, not just COVID—gastro, influenza et cetera. Jodi and everyone like her, whether they have cancer, have undergone an organ transplant or have an ongoing immune disorder, need our protection.

We need to look past ourselves and protect the people who need us to stand up and be counted. The fact that WA has reached an amazing first-dose rate of 99.3 per cent for the 16-plus age group goes to show that we are indeed a state that is considerate of others. However, it beggars belief that a small but loud number of people are quite happy to let it rip. They want their freedom and have given no thought to the Jodis in our life who will be put at unnecessary risk just so that we can get on the other side of it. Why would we accept unnecessary deaths if we do not have to? Yes, WA is one of the last places to go through it. Yes, winter will be here in four months. But it has been the right decision to wait for the third-dose vaccination rate to grow and to give everyone who wants it the opportunity to be as safe as possible against the Omicron variant. To that end, I give a big shout-out to my paramedic husband and to all my ambo mates who are going out to houses, nursing homes and car accidents and beginning to cross paths with known and unknown COVID-positive people. I thank you for the work you do. I know it is going to get harder. I want you to know that every person in this chamber appreciates the work you do. We all thank you. Please be safe.

I also acknowledge every doctor, nurse, police officer, support worker and professional carer, and everyone else on the frontline. I understand that the last two years have been difficult, and it is going to get harder for you all. For the work you have done to make us ready, creating places for a surge capacity of COVID while making sure that people who have a heart attack, stroke or car accident still have a place to come—thank you. To those of you who work in our nursing homes and especially those dealing with COVID-positive patients in our local nursing home in Mandurah, thank you for caring for our most precious older generation.

Our government is working towards increasing staffing capacity. We have already employed an extra 120 doctors and over a thousand extra nurses since this time last year. I know that our Minister for Health, Minister Sanderson, and her team are listening and working hard to make sure that we all support you as much as we can during these uncertain times.

I have eight primary schools and three high schools in my electorate. I have been reaching out to principals to check in and see how each school is going. It is remarkable how resilient our teachers are, and that includes every education assistant and all our admin staff, as well. They have worked so hard during this COVID period to adapt and change with the flow and educate our young people during the pandemic period. I thank them for the hours they have worked outside of their teaching period, for the workbooks and online platforms they have created during lockdown and for the home schooling packs they have provided to parents and caregivers so that we all felt supported, not to mention the hundreds of hours committed to plans A, B and C. We thank you. I also take this opportunity to welcome the 700 new graduate teachers who are embarking on their teaching careers. Welcome and thank you for your service to educating our young people.

I also give a shout-out to the retail workers and small business owners in my electorate and across the state who work hard to do their jobs with the added stress of having to check COVID certificates. They are ensuring that people check in to make contact tracing easier if there is a COVID outbreak. I think it is important that we say thank you to these people. Some are as young as 14 years old, and they are having to do these checks and work with these new rules. It is essential to be kind and respectful to these people, who are just doing their job. When I am out and about, I see that 99.9 per cent of the population are adhering to the rules and waiting patiently in line for these checks. I think it is a small price to pay for our safety.

I want to focus more on my electorate and highlight some of the major commitments that are being rolled out. Firstly, I highlight the Peel Health Campus upgrade, which is due to come back into public hands on 13 August 2023. We look forward to the \$152 million upgrade, which will include more palliative and mental health beds and new imaging, oncology and outpatient services. The tender process recently began to select a licensed private hospital provider to design, build and operate a co-located private hospital on the Peel Health Campus grounds. This process

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should be completed by midway through this year. One of the most exciting changes in health in the Peel region is the reinstatement of the distribution priority area to keep the Mandurah, Pinjarra and Dawesville regions as rural. This means that our GP clinics can now recruit doctors from overseas and access a larger pool of medical practitioners. I thank the WA Primary Health Alliance, which advocated loudly for this reinstatement. I and my fellow colleagues David Templeman, the member for Mandurah, and Robyn Clarke, the member for Murray–Wellington, also provided letters of support to see the reinstatement of our electorates into the DPA region.

The Mandurah Estuary Bridge duplication project was a major election commitment during my 2021 campaign, with the government committing \$55 million of the \$110 million in the 2021–22 state budget. This will help to reduce traffic congestion and address other safety issues associated with motorists merging on a three-lane bridge. A second bridge will be built on the eastern side, alongside the existing bridge, to provide additional traffic lanes and support for the current structure. This bridge is a primary connection to the southern part of Mandurah. The added bonus is that 500 local jobs will be created and supported during this building project, which will also have a flow-on effect for our local businesses. Early works being undertaken by Main Roads include environmental and heritage assessments, preliminary site investigations, concept design and stakeholder consultation. Main Roads has been progressing development activities and at this stage, the tendering process is due to commence around the middle of this year with construction from 2023 and an expected completion date of 2024.

Another major windfall for my electorate and the Peel community is the McGowan government's cheaper fares plan, which came into effect at the start of this year, reducing train fares to a two-zone maximum. This means that a person getting on the Mandurah train will pay only a total of \$3.90 for a ride into the city or beyond. The beginning of the Mandurah line is nine zones away from the Perth CBD, and a regular commuter was paying up to \$16.40 for every return trip. The two-zone fare could potentially save people over \$3 000 a year. While I am talking about trains, another significant achievement is the \$32 million Mandurah station multistorey car park that was officially opened in November last year, providing commuters from across the Peel region with access to almost 1 900 undercover parking bays. I say a huge thankyou to our Minister for Transport, Minister Saffioti, for her continued support for me and the entire Peel region. This includes the duplication of the bridge, the capped two-zone fare and the Mandurah train station.

The state government's September budget delivered a \$1.9 billion boost to health and mental health services throughout WA, including more doctors and nurses in the regions. I look forward to the development of a new Peel women's health program, which will connect women with health and support services and information at both the crisis and early intervention points. The Peel region was also given \$8.6 million to expand community alcohol and other drug integrated services. Too many families are familiar with a member struggling with addiction. I am so pleased to be helping with these services.

Christmas was a difficult period for a lot of my constituents in the Dawesville region. We experienced extreme weather over an extended period, which culminated in many, many power outages. These power outages went on for periods of over 16 hours for some people over a four-day period from Christmas Eve. People in my electorate and other areas in WA endured relentless heat, with over 34 000 houses losing power. Under the extreme circumstances, the McGowan government doubled the extended outages payment from \$80 to \$160, which I know a lot of my residents greatly appreciated. I have also spoken to our Minister for Energy, Minister Johnston, regarding these outages, and I publicly thank the minister and Western Power for organising two generators for my electorate. They were greatly appreciated. I also thank the minister for commencing an independent review into these outages that will include Western Power's network, operational planning, network design, load forecasting, asset management and maintenance. I look forward to seeing the results of that review.

I rang and spoke to every constituent who emailed me and wanted to speak to me about their circumstances during the Christmas period. My main concern was for those who require power to survive, such as people on home oxygen, and it was a great pleasure for me and my team to be able to offer support to my constituents over the Christmas period. I also say a big thankyou to all the Western Power workers who endured the heat on the ground to be out working around the clock to fix the outages and to everyone who worked in the office to field calls and support the WA residents. It was greatly appreciated.

I am extremely proud to be part of the McGowan government and its commitment to continue to invest in the Peel region, particularly in the growing electorate of Dawesville. We have seen investments in community infrastructure, quality training programs and the much-needed expansion of our health and mental health care systems to include more innovative services. It is clear that the McGowan government has not forgotten about regional areas and has worked to ensure that we have the same level of access, affordability and availability to service delivery as the rest of the state. I am excited to see the long-term benefits of these projects and investments in my electorate and surrounding regions for a long time to come.

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This government has made decisions and policies that commit to the safety, investment and development of infrastructure and services in the Peel region, particularly in my electorate. I look forward to continuing to deliver as the member for Dawesville as part of the McGowan Labor government. Thank you.

MS L. DALTON (Geraldton) [7.39 pm]: It is my absolute pleasure and privilege to rise and speak in this place today. Over the last 11 months, I have experienced a different kind of working life. At times it has been equally as exhilarating as it has been daunting. Representing the constituents of Geraldton has been a privilege. I owe my thanks to the wonderful people of Geraldton and also to the McGowan government for supporting me and again investing in Geraldton and the midwest.

People in Geraldton often ask me what it is like in my new role and what it is like to be a local politician. I have to say that I have absolutely loved the challenge and the opportunity. However, to be completely honest, at times I have found it quite confronting and emotional. Over the past few months, I have found myself navigating gently and carefully through people's fragilities, anxieties, frustrations and fears. I did not expect to be managing some of these issues with the people of my electorate. They are nothing at all like the issues that I thought I would be tackling as a local member. The day-to-day difficulties of life that usually come through the office such as power reliability, housing and health are still quite consistent, but now we also have to deal with G2Gs, the ServiceWA app, mandates and compliance questions for industry groups. I have had to work through all these issues, which are really hard for some people to navigate. They become overwhelmed in a new world about which their understanding is sometimes limited.

As well as that, at approximately 11.30 am each Friday, a group of people protest outside my office about the mandates that our government has placed on some industries. They feel that some of these decisions made by the Chief Health Officer are unfair and that the advice that the government has taken has impacted their lives. Do members know what? I actually support their right to protest. In the past, I was an active activist. I marched for action on climate change and against budget cuts to the ABC, and also for the promotion of Indigenous rights. Disappointingly, the people outside my office have become quite hostile on occasion. This can be a little intimidating. It has certainly been intimidating for me. It has been intimidating for my staff. On occasion, particularly recently, it has been quite intimidating for the people who access my office—my constituents who need to come to me to get some guidance, help or support on an issue. But then I go to a seniors' morning tea or I attend a croquet club event and I catch up for a cuppa with a friend who has been undergoing chemotherapy treatment, at the end of her cancer treatment. They have such a different perspective on their life in 2022. They are so grateful to our Premier and the government for looking after them and their families and for keeping our state relatively free of COVID so far.

It has been interesting to see the comparison. Over the break between Christmas and coming back into this place, I have had a lot of time to reflect on different people's capabilities of resilience and their attitudes. There have also been many occasions to celebrate and recognise our successes and the wonderful life we live in the midwest. I have spoken in this place about the devastating impacts of cyclone Seroja. I have probably talked about it so many times that people are perhaps rolling their eyes now. Through that experience, I found that camaraderie, compassion and community spirit also came to the fore. This spirit was reflected in the joy that was found in the community events that I experienced last year, including the inaugural Shore Leave Festival. The weekend was filled with the best produce from the land and sea that Geraldton and the midwest are famed for. It was a celebration of all things culture, seafood and adventure. A lot of people came from all over the midwest to enjoy that festival. Like the Chapman Valley Show, I noted that people were really craving that connection and ability to have some fun and to come together as a community. This event was held thanks to the investment of the McGowan government. In the future, it is projected to hopefully generate more than \$2.7 million for our local economy. We look forward to that occurring in the future.

The \$9.1 billion investment into regional infrastructure, as released in the 2021–22 budget, shows that this government is committed to improving the lives of all Western Australians. The much-needed investment, particularly towards housing, and the significant redevelopment of the suburb of Spalding, was very much welcomed by my constituents. This investment has acknowledged the need to get work underway to revitalise Spalding, but also the current difficulties we face with housing supply and the general need for public housing. While we are bringing some housing back through refurbishments, we are also carrying out significant work for people who have great liveability in their suburbs. This work will contribute to the long-term aim of revitalising the suburb and meeting the community's vision.

I was particularly pleased to see that the WA TAFE sector has also undergone some revitalisation under the McGowan Labor government. As some members would know, I am a former TAFE lecturer, and to see enrolments up by 32 per cent is wonderful news. For a little time during the previous government, we saw a huge drop in enrolments. We had to make a lot of staffing changes. People were not able to continue working under a contract because we did not have the students to support that. It is even better to see the bricks and mortar and the investment in

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Central Regional TAFE, the local TAFE in Geraldton. The construction of the new visual arts facility is well underway. There will also be a \$4 million upgrade to facilities and a recognition of the value of creative arts and industries, which may have been ignored for a long time. We are fortunate in Geraldton to have wonderful options for further education, with diverse courses on offer, ranging from crucial jobs in aged care, particularly now, through to comprehensive maritime trading, trades training, nursing and information technology as well as a lot more. I am particularly interested to see that our government is also creating new education pathways into the workforce of the future, with more vocational education and training places in WA TAFE, giving more students the chance to transition from school to training and qualifications in their careers.

As a TAFE lecturer, I noticed that students grow in confidence and self-esteem when they have the knowledge and understanding to do the work, deliver the service and succeed in their endeavours. When people say, “Go out and get a job, it’s easy, there’s a lot of work out there”, it is not always relevant for some young people. What I have loved about TAFE is that we have the capacity to hold a young person’s hand and give them some confidence in themselves and some basic work preparation skills to make them feel confident to go out and ask for and apply for that job that traditionally they may not necessarily have.

Our schools have also seen a magnificent investment, from the maintenance blitz and bringing new jobs forward through to new STEM classrooms and facilities. I am happy to see that in the coming years, investment will continue as both our senior high schools—Geraldton Senior High School and Champion Bay Senior High School—are preparing for new STEM classrooms to be built. I know that both those high schools are very much looking forward to that.

It is also exciting to see that the McGowan government is investing in renewable energy at three Geraldton schools. Not only do our state schools educate our children, but also they are becoming virtual power plants, with solar panels on the roof that transform sunrays into electric current and batteries to store that energy. Our schools will literally be powering our community into the future. Imagine a school with no power bills to pay. I bet each school board will be very happy to see that!

Western Australia has also seen record investment in mental health services under this government. I recently had the privilege to visit the Geraldton step up, step down facility. That facility was opened a little over 12 months ago by our Premier. I met with the new manager and operations manager, who took me around the facility and I have to say that I was absolutely blown away. I had been there before as a candidate, but it was great to go as the member for Geraldton to see the rooms and to talk about what the service had to offer. I have a few friends and family members who have been in tight situations with mental health, so it was really comforting for me to see that this facility is available in Geraldton. The step up, step down facility provides short-term residential mental health support for people who are either at risk of becoming unwell and having to go into hospital—that is, the step up support that they need before they present to hospital—or leaving hospital, for example, when they are discharged from a clinic or Graylands Hospital in Perth and need extra support to transition back into the community; that is, the step down. I know the step up, step down facility is a really welcome addition to the services in Geraldton. People being able to access the mental health care that they need in the place in which they live is crucial to recovery. I am proud to be part of the McGowan Labor government that is delivering real outcomes in regional Western Australia.

One of the great things about being a local member in Parliament is seeing local commitments being delivered. Although some of these projects are not the biggest things members will see or hear about, they are sometimes the most important things to community groups and the people who are actually involved on the ground. In the last 12 months, I have been thrilled to watch the development of each of the commitments I and the McGowan government made to the people of Geraldton. One I would like to talk about is the wonderful Wandina Playgroup, which is using the \$50 000 it was provided to create an entirely new playgroup facility on the grounds of Wandina Primary School. The growth of Wandina Playgroup has been absolutely amazing. It has so many families involved that it has to roster attendance so that everyone can attend each week. The playgroup now has new office space and storage areas, which is complemented by a new shaded outdoor area. I know that this place will leave a legacy long past my term as the local member for Geraldton.

The same can be said for the Geraldton Toy Library, which I used to be a member of. We made a small pledge of \$40 000 to a hardy group of volunteers who have renovated the existing facility, added new storage space and expanded capacity to provide a service to all the families of Geraldton.

Volunteers make up the backbone of our community through the Geraldton Volunteer Marine Rescue Group. Although it is not necessarily a sexy commitment, I was able to pledge enough money for the rescue group to build a shed to house a generator, which, of course, is something really important to them. I am really, really pleased that that has been delivered and is now being used.

One commitment close to my heart is the Short Term Accommodation for Youth. In the past I have had a lot to do with STAY. It offers young at-risk people a place to live—a place where they are safe, a place that provides support

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to them and the security of having a home to go to. We pledged \$200 000 for major renovations to create new bedrooms and facilities for residents and staff. The house the young people attend had aged quite considerably over time and it needed a little bit more infrastructure built around it to meet current demands, particularly in our COVID times. My thanks go to Amanda and her staff, and the board of STAY for the work that they do in our community.

Another community group in Geraldton is ATLAS—that is, Access to Leisure and Sport. It is a community group that gives people with disabilities the ability to access the sport and leisure that they may not have been able to access before. Since 2003, ATLAS has been able to debunk the myths that had resulted in people having barriers to really fantastic services. ATLAS is the difference when it comes to participation and inclusion in Geraldton for people with disability. We were able to fund new equipment to enable ATLAS to expand their services and to add to its capacity to serve people across Geraldton and the midwest and all the way up to the Gascoyne.

The Men's Hub in Geraldton offers fellowship for blokes who need it the most. Traditionally, men find it challenging to discuss their own mental health issues. The Men's Hub was created when it was identified that the services for men in Geraldton who were struggling with aspects of their lives were limited. The McGowan Labor government saw this as a barrier and delivered a new 12-seater bus to help men access the facility, attend appointments and go on wellbeing excursions.

Those are just a few of the local commitments that I have been able to watch funds be delivered to. I am absolutely thrilled to see that they have been able to be delivered. The last group I want to mention is a group called Funtavia.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L. DALTON: Funtavia's great idea for the midwest region was to have a custom-built show in a trailer so that it could bring all the equipment to put on a professional performance to any location. It is something that I know, particularly in these times, will bring joy to many, because there is nothing better than being able to watch live music or a live performance, especially for people in the outer regions who rarely get to enjoy those opportunities. I am proud to be a part of a state government that stands by its people, that supports the communities that elected us and the places where we live.

I came to politics to make a difference and to improve the situation in Geraldton for the people who live there. Yes, there have been challenges delivering local commitments since the March election last year. We had a cyclone and there have been problems with material supplies—as we all know it is hard to find a tradie who is not booked out for weeks. At the moment, these projects are still moving ahead. I thank everyone for their patience and determination in getting things done.

I take inspiration from the people I meet every day—the volunteers, the long-time advocates and the passionate supporters. I look forward to beginning a new year in Parliament. I will continue to advocate for the people of Geraldton. I thank the Premier and the ministers of the McGowan government for their ongoing support.

MS C.M. TONKIN (Churchlands) [7.57 pm]: I rise to talk about how proud I am —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, member. You can take your mask off.

Ms C.M. TONKIN: I am so used to wearing it, it is stuck to my face.

I rise to talk about how proud I am to be the member for Churchlands and to be working in my wonderful and very engaged community. Before I talk about recent history and Omicron and the impact that that has been having on our community, I want to talk a little bit more about the way in which I have been working. When I was campaigning, I identified seven issues that people repeatedly raised with me and would like to see addressed. I will go through those issues, because we have since engaged a number of community residents in working groups around five of those issues. Two of the issues involved building constructive relationships between the state government and local government—the Town of Cambridge and the City of Stirling. I have worked very solidly on that agenda and developed very effective relationships with both councils. I meet regularly with the Mayor of the Town of Cambridge and I will be meeting with her at the end of this week. I get together regularly with the Deputy Mayor of the City of Stirling and also engage solidly with the Mayor of the City of Stirling and a number of other councillors. A councillor from the City of Stirling came to see me last week to talk about the need for toilets around Herdsman Lake. Surprisingly, although there are public toilets at Lake Monger, there are actually no toilets at Herdsman Lake, and this causes a great deal of consternation in the community. One of the councillors came to see me to talk about how we could advocate for some toilets to be built there to improve the amenity of that wonderful wetland.

That is one of the issues. Another issue is the quality of our educational facilities and opportunities in the Churchlands electorate. We have many wonderful schools in our area. They include schools with large numbers of students from migrant backgrounds, such as Lake Monger Primary School, and elite private schools such as Hale School. They are all

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very different, with different challenges and demographics. I have met with all the school principals and some of the school boards and P&Cs, and I am working my way through each of the primary schools, serving on canteen duty. I have covered six primary schools so far, and I have a few more to cover, but I enjoy that immensely because it is wonderful to listen to people and talk to them about what is important to them. Quite a few issues are raised with me by the parents and staff on duty and, indeed, the teachers also come and talk about what they would like me to advocate for.

I have been working hard with the schools and I have managed to donate a number of flagpoles. A lot of schools had only one or two flagpoles and they wanted three so that they could fly the Aboriginal flag, the Western Australian flag and the Australian flag. Most recently, I was informed by Lake Monger Primary School that it had finally got its flagpoles installed, and it was after a Western Australian flag to fly proudly on one of those poles. I think 11 schools wanted flagpoles; a lot of schools, anyway, that I was asked to contribute to.

Building relationships with schools is very, very important because I can learn about what issues they are facing. One issue that has been raised repeatedly is the issue of student mental health. In these times of COVID there is a great deal of anxiety amongst children, and the schools have been managing very effectively. I was very pleased to note that our government committed to increasing psychology services to schools as part of the recent budget. That has made an enormous difference. Building relationships with schools is something that I enjoy immensely; I love the graduation ceremonies and I love listening to the principals reading information about each graduating student—their character, their interests and their ambitions. I am in tears for many of them because they are fabulous young people, and I think our future is in great hands because of them.

Another issue that we formed working groups around is wetlands and bush habitat. We have three renowned hydrologists on our wetland and bush habitat working group. We have an arachnologist—a spider specialist—and we have Nicky, the frog woman. We have a person who is passionate about Carnaby's black cockatoos, and we have a member of Cambridge Coastcare, who orchestrates planting and stabilisation of sand dunes. We have people who are passionate about Galup—Lake Monger—and are forming a friends of Lake Monger group. These people are passionate. We meet monthly at the Herdsman Discovery Centre, hosted by the WA Gould League. We really have an ambitious agenda to see the greening of our electorate.

We also are passionate about some commitments that I was able to achieve through our local commitments process, and we have two projects underway. One is to redesign, decontaminate and revegetate the swales at Lake Monger. The swales will take the runoff from the freeway and other drains and filter it through vegetation before it enters the lake. It is a process of improving the water quality. We have a \$700 000 commitment in the budget for that project, and the conceptual design phase is already underway. We are looking forward to seeing that project being delivered this year. We will get to see the initial concept plans this month.

Another commitment is to revegetate Perry Lakes, once the water starts flowing from the Herdsman main drain. The Town of Cambridge has a project to divert some of the water flow from the Herdsman main drain, which currently drains into the ocean, to Perry Lakes so that we will see wonderful lakes there again, rather than dried-up areas. That project is necessary for revegetating with aquatic species. The current vegetation is basically terrestrial vegetation that is inappropriate for a water environment, so some revegetation will be undertaken. We have a budget commitment of \$300 000 to undertake that planting. Our wetland and bush habitat working group is very much engaged in watching that project. We have members of the Friends of Perry Lakes on our group and they are very much concerned with making sure that that commitment is delivered properly, to the benefit of the environment. I might add that the three hydrologists are all making submissions to the Ngarangara mound groundwater consultation, each from a different angle, but all thoroughly scientifically based.

We have another working group that focuses on preventive mental health. These are people who are very concerned about the wellbeing of people in our community and the balance of responses. We have very, very good acute care for people with mental health conditions, but we need a lot more support in the community to prevent mental health issues arising. That group has been supported by a fourth-year social work student at Curtin University who actually helped with the production of a directory of preventive mental health services and support in our electorate. We have published that, and it is being distributed to GPs, community organisations, schools and even cafes, so that people can sit and look through and find information that is suitable for them.

We are embarking on a project this year to look at how we can work with the Alliance Against Depression model, which is a community-based response to depression and mental illness. We are working through that process at the moment. Again, it is supported part-time, this time by a social work student from Curtin University who has been placed in my office for this semester.

We also have an ageing working group, which worked with me on a community consultation that we ran late last year. We ran four community consultations across the electorate. I sent letters to 9 028 older people and invited each of those people to come along to those consultations and provide us with their perspectives on what was

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important to them in the community. The information we gathered from those consultations has now been provided to the Minister for Seniors and Ageing to form part of the input into the WA seniors strategy. People from our community are having direct input into the seniors strategy, which is wonderful. But also, the feedback from those consultations is driving my agenda with that working group going forward. The sorts of issues that people raised as being important to them will be my focus over the next three years.

We have a traffic congestion and road safety working group. Members would be surprised at how vexed that issue is in our community. All sorts of issues fall between the cracks of the two councils and Main Roads, so our community working group is identifying options to mitigate traffic congestion and to ensure that we address some of the road safety issues that have arisen as a result of the extent of the traffic on the roads. There is a lot of through traffic in the Churchlands electorate heading to the freeway, heading north and south et cetera, and around the schools. We work with that group and tomorrow evening I will talk with someone about how we orchestrate a strategy to bring the councils together to work effectively to address problems that if one addresses, literally get pushed down the road for the other. We want to get them to come together to work effectively on these issues.

Finally, we have a very exciting group: the green jobs working group, which looks at innovative products and services in our community. It looks at opportunities to provide products and services that take emissions out of our supply chains and to address some vulnerabilities in our supply chains that have particularly emerged through COVID. I am working with a group that is looking at the feasibility of developing a manufacturing hub for vertical take-off air taxis. Amazing local firms are engaged in that space. We are having a workshop on Friday to work through the detail of the outline of the feasibility study, which will save a lot of money in getting a consultant to do a feasibility study.

I am also working with the member for Nedlands. We each have a social work student and about a half-time project for those social work students is for them to work together to identify the local innovators in our community. The member for Nedlands' electorate has a lot of medical research and medical-type innovative companies, so our young students are going to come together to identify who these innovators are, to look at the nature of their innovations, to look at the challenges they are facing in commercialising their innovations, and to generally provide opportunities for them to network with each other, because sometimes these companies do not know that another exists. Really, we are about making this wonderful extent of innovation very visible in the community. We will also use that information to advocate for those companies that can potentially provide for the diversification of our economy.

A range of wonderful people from our community are engaged in each working group and they certainly drive my agenda.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms C.M. TONKIN: Probably 70 per cent of my work in the electorate is driven by the agenda that those working groups set for me. I know that these are things that people in our community are passionate about, that they want to address, and I am very, very happy to be working with them. The other 30 per cent of my work is really reactive.

I would like to talk a little bit about that experience when it comes to Omicron. Before the decision to slow the opening of our borders, my inbox was inundated with people writing to me saying, "Please, tell Mark, do not open the borders", as if I have a hotline to the Premier. I did certainly pass on their concerns. This was the impassioned plea, "Do not open the borders", because they could see what was happening in the eastern states and were very concerned. We have a lot of older people in our community and they were particularly concerned. After the decision was made, of course, I had all the people who had implored me that we should keep the borders closed come back to me and say, "Thank you very much", so they were very grateful. But then I also got inundated with people who expressed opinions from mild dissatisfaction to total outrage that we had not opened the borders completely as we had originally specified. I have been dealing with that divergence of opinion.

People are very engaged in our community. They write really long emails and they are well thought through. I have taken the time to make sure that I personally respond to each of those people concerning the issues they raise. That has taken quite a lot of time. It took me two weeks, basically. For two weeks, I had lots of those emails, and it took me about two weeks to get through responding to them all in a way that addressed their specific concerns. I think if people are engaged enough to contact me with a considered email, then I should respond in kind. That is the nature of the people in my electorate.

That might present a rather jaundiced picture of what the sentiment around the opening of our border is in the electorate, but I would like to talk about what I picked up from being out and about talking to people. The general sentiment in our community among those who are not inclined to write to me but those with whom I interact on a daily basis is that they are overwhelmingly supportive of the way in which the McGowan government, our government, has managed the pandemic. I think that is a solid base of support, notwithstanding people having very strong opinions either way on the border, people in the community are very supportive of what we have done.

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Generally, older people are strongly supportive of the measures that we have put in place to keep the community safe. One older person commented to me recently that they were touched that the Premier was emphatic in stating that the health measures aim to save Western Australian lives, and especially the lives of those of older people who are very vulnerable in this pandemic. People appreciate that. If we read the statistics coming out of the eastern states on a daily basis, we can become almost numb to what those figures mean, but those figures represent valuable lives that have been cut short unnecessarily. Older people like my aunt, who is 92, understand that the health measures put in place are there to help them. The measures give people confidence to go out shopping, participate in recreational activities, visit family and friends and socialise in cafes, pubs and restaurants. My aunt rang me recently—I check in on her to make sure that she is all right—to advise me that if I could not contact her during the evening, I should not worry because she would be at the Herdsman Lake Tavern with her friends, who are also older people. She feels confident to go out and that was not the case early in the pandemic when she was fearful of leaving her unit and her neighbours were fearful of leaving theirs. Now that the vaccination rates are up and there is a push to get our third doses up, and because of the requirement for people who enter certain premises to wear a mask, she feels safe to go out. I think that is very much the sentiment that has been expressed to me by lots of older people. These are confidence-giving measures for them.

I have also had contact with many vulnerable and immunocompromised people. The member for Dawesville mentioned some of those people in her community of whom she is aware. Many of those people feel very frightened about the Omicron outbreak, and they are grateful that we have introduced measures that help reduce the transmission of Omicron in the community, because it helps them. I will add to that. It gives me a great deal of warmth in my heart to know that a lot of people in our community are also very happy to go along with these health measures because they know that it protects vulnerable people. We are a good, caring community in that regard.

Businesses have told me that they are appreciative of the guidelines that have been issued. Bringing out the guidelines in advance of them being implemented, and before we moved into a high case load environment, gave businesses the opportunity to see whether they could work with them. The general consensus is that those guidelines made the likelihood of those businesses being able to stay open much greater. Businesses were very happy to be managing under those guidelines. Since the guidelines have been implemented, the feedback has been very positive.

Feedback from those in the hospitality sector has been very positive. The industry is sensitive to customers staying at home rather than going out to spend and socialise. These businesses saw what happened during the uncontrolled Omicron outbreaks in the east. Even though people are free to go anywhere they like, it has meant that people have stayed home and imposed lockdowns on themselves, which has sent many small businesses to the wall. People in the hospitality sector in our community are very happy with the measures that have been put in place because people feel confident to sit in a cafe, restaurant or pub and enjoy themselves.

Other local businesses are responding to the opportunities that have emerged through COVID. Yesterday, for example, I met with the owner of a company called Adarsh Australia that has just received a significant order to locally manufacture face shields for the health sector. This company and many other local businesses have found ways to innovate in response to the challenges and opportunities that COVID has brought.

The measures implemented in our schools have ensured that they are able to operate in this high case load environment. Recently, I was talking with one principal and I asked how opening up in the new school year had gone. She said it had gone great and that they were having a great year. Therefore, even though we have COVID in the community, people and schools are managing because they are well resourced and supported.

We are about to run our second Mental Health First Aid course for people who are interested in supporting others who are experiencing mental health issues. Our first course was well attended, and we had a lot of people from schools attend. This next course will be more focused on the community generally and has already been oversubscribed. It will be run at the end of this month. We have very caring community members who are engaged and want to help others.

Beyond dealing with the pandemic, what I love about being the member for Churchlands is that I represent people who are often very thoughtful and engaged. We are truly in this pandemic together, and I am proud to be working with my community as the member for Churchlands.

MR D.A.E. SCAIFE (Cockburn) [8.26 pm]: It is conventional in these debates to start by noting that it is a privilege to rise today to speak to this matter. But I want to say that it obviously is a privilege, but it is a particular privilege for me because I get the great honour tonight of following six great Labor women who have so far spoken on the Premier's Statement—I believe that I will be the only Labor bloke to speak on the Premier's Statement—and that is something that the Labor Party should absolutely be proud of. I do not want to give away too many secrets tonight, but if members of the opposition are listening, they too could have great women on your team, but it turns out that they need something called “affirmative action” because it actually works. Members opposite only have to listen —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

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Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: It is just so typical that of course the opposition pipes up on this, because it cannot resist the bait, because it knows it has a problem in this area.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: One of them, and of course it is a lonely bloke, is just talking off into irrelevance in the corner over there; whereas, if he listened, he would learn that affirmative action produces the great team that we have here.

You know what, member for Moore? You have real worries here, I have to say, because you are all cocky like you were in the last Parliament, telling people, “You’ll be gone, you’ll be gone.” But I tell that member: the people of Nedlands and Churchlands have not had members of Parliament who have worked this hard for them for a long, long time—perhaps ever! Like I said, I do not want to give away too many secrets to members tonight, but do members know what the secret is to holding on to a tough seat like Collie–Preston in an election like the 2013 election? It is called hard work. I know that you lot will be flat out doorknocking a couple of houses in four years, but we actually have members of Parliament here in seats that are not traditional Labor seats who are clearly working their guts out, and I am absolutely so honoured to be part of this Labor government and part of this Labor caucus. Members opposite can criticise us for whatever they like, they can criticise us on policy, they can criticise us on ideology, but the one thing they cannot criticise is the work ethic of our members of Parliament.

I wanted to get up here today and reinforce the Premier’s point. It is the hard work that this government, all the members, the Premier and all the ministers have done has meant that we are strongly managing this pandemic. It means that our communities are safe. It means that our communities are relatively free, and it means that our economy is strong. We have heard absolute nonsense today from the opposition about how concerned people in the community are about various issues and that there is outrage and pandemonium in the education system, but it is just completely false. I can say that I have been out to six schools in just the last two weeks to see how they are going with the transition. One of those schools is Atwell College, which has had a positive COVID case. I can tell members that the feedback from school leaders, teachers and P&Cs is overwhelmingly positive. This is what the Minister for Mines and Petroleum means when he says that the opposition is lazy. The problem is that opposition members talk only to the people who agree with them. They talk only to the people who seek them out. However, of course the people who seek them out are the people with gripes. They are not out in the community talking to average families and average parents in our suburbs who are concerned about schooling. Those people get that we have to strike a balance between keeping the community safe and restricting the spread of the virus, while at the same time preserving as much as we can a normal face-to-face curriculum.

I have to say on that note that I am relentlessly optimistic about the way in which we can face the challenges of this pandemic. Our optimism and the optimism of this government has proven that if we are optimistic and if we make the right calls, we can steer this ship in the right direction. This government provides information to people. It trusts local community members to make the right decisions. That is why we are in the very strong position that we are in now. I am also relentlessly optimistic about what my electorate can become. In fact, the work of this government is turning my electorate into an even better place to live. The strength of the economy and the strength of our community at the moment has meant that we can make significant investments into my electorate, and that we can also strengthen the work that is being done with community groups, because they are still able to meet and go about their activities in a relatively normal way.

I want to reflect tonight on many of those community groups. Before I do that, I want to congratulate the winners of the City of Cockburn Community Citizen of the Year Award. I am so proud that the City of Cockburn Community Citizen of the Year Award for 2022 was jointly awarded to Maggie Zentner and Matt Wilson. Both Maggie and Matt are leaders in the Cockburn community. I am lucky to count them as both friends and supporters. I want to tell members a bit more about Maggie. Maggie Zentner has been the driving force behind the Yangebup Progress Association over the last few years. She has successfully led the fight for upgrades to our local parks, and for a mural along the freight rail line that runs through Yangebup. I was so pleased to work with Maggie to deliver new fencing for the playground at Nicholson Reserve. Maggie is also a regular volunteer and cook at the Yangebup Family Centre. Maggie, you are a force of nature and we Bupians owe you a great deal.

Matt Wilson, another great leader in our community, is the chair of Black Dog on a Lead, which is a local community group spreading the word about the need to speak openly about mental illness. He has been a champion of breaking down the stigma around mental health, which is something that Matt and I both have in common. Matt is also heavily involved with Beeliar Community Voice, which has made Beeliar an even better place to live through many of the initiatives that it has run. Matt, thank you for your tireless advocacy and hard work. Congratulations again to both of you.

I now want to acknowledge some of the work that is being done by various community groups in my electorate during the pandemic. The pandemic has been challenging for all of us, but particularly for community groups. My

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 15 February 2022]

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Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Shane Love; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Acting Speaker; Ms Alison Kent; Ms Rebecca Stephens; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Lisa Munday; Ms Lara Dalton; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr David Scaife; Ms Kim Giddens

experience is that community groups have overwhelmingly risen to the occasion. I now want to run through a few of the groups that have done an outstanding job during the pandemic. The first is Jandakot Lakes Junior Cricket Club. Jandakot Lakes Junior Cricket Club is a very active sporting club in my electorate. I have joined the club on a number of occasions down at Atwell Reserve while the Junior Blasters have been training. It is always a fun family occasion. In fact, last time I was down there we were even joined by Jhye Richardson, a local boy who is currently playing for the national cricket team and played as part of our recent successful Ashes campaign. The club has seen huge growth in its membership over the last few years and has been progressively adding teams each season because there is such high demand. I have been particularly pleased by the growth in the number of girls teams as more and more young girls sign up to play cricket.

The club celebrated its fortieth anniversary last year. I was pleased to join it for the celebration. I was particularly pleased that I got to give the club a birthday present, which was delivering on my commitment to fund new uniforms, a bowling machine, upgrades to the cricket training nets, and iPads for game day. Congratulations, and, again, happy birthday to Jandakot Lakes Junior Cricket Club. I would like to acknowledge all the members of the club's executive: the president, Brian Mathews; the vice-president, Danielle Gray; the treasurer, Suzie Hallows; the secretary, Melanie Walker; the registrar, Geraldine Stewart; and general committee members Tracey Bettridge, Dene Olive, Theuns Keyter, Jamie Bradford, Chris Hammond, Brad Day, Simon Babich, Aaron Caird and Mick Gray. Thank you for all the hard work you do for our community.

I am very fortunate to have several great cricket clubs in my electorate. One of the standouts is Phoenix Beeliar Junior Cricket Club. One of my favourite local cricketers, Abby, whom I will talk about a bit later, plays for the club, and she absolutely loves it. The club is doing great work in expanding opportunities for girls and women, with tryouts recently underway for a women's senior team, which would be a first for the club. I joined the club for a fundraiser quiz night in November last year, and I was pleased to support it with a donation for its raffle. I want to place on the record my thanks to the executive of the club for their hard work in building up the club in our community. I want to particularly thank the president, Joshua Jago; the vice-president, David Smith; the secretary, Andrew Morgan; the treasurer, Paul Gibson; and the registrar, Lisa Gibson.

The next club that I would like to speak about is Western Border Soccer Club. One of the great things about Cockburn is that we have both a vibrant sporting community and a vibrant multicultural community. One of the standout clubs in both respects is Western Border Soccer Club. The club is proudly made up of locals with Slavic roots, from new migrants to older, more established families. Whenever I am down at Western Border Soccer Club, they always welcome me at their home ground at South Coogee Reserve with open arms and a feast of traditional food. I have been down to several games and family days and I always enjoy it. I am pleased to be supporting the club by providing funding of \$25 000 for upgrades to its clubrooms. I can tell the club and its members that I will always have your back and do my best by you. I would like to thank all the players and club executive for making it the successful club that it is today. Particularly, I want to officially put on the parliamentary record my thanks to Marko Banic, Dordije Golub and Drazen Radjenovic, who work tirelessly for the club and who have always made me feel welcome.

We do not just have great sporting clubs in Cockburn. We also have some of the best community organisations in the state. One of the pillars of the Cockburn community is the Yangebup Family Centre. It is a place at which people can get support, make friends and learn new things. There is so much on offer at the centre, thanks to the hardworking staff and volunteers. There is occasional care for kids, chair yoga for people with mobility issues and belly dancing, just to name a few. The family centre has also been a leader in advocating against family and domestic violence in our community. I recently had the privilege of sitting in on a pre-kindy orientation at the family centre, and I was so impressed by the care given to the new parents. I was back at the family centre on Friday last week for an event that we call Community Eats, at which the team treated dozens of community members to a delicious feast. I am proud that the family centre will be getting even better, because over the coming months work will commence on a new nature play area that is partly funded by a \$100 000 grant that I have delivered to the centre.

There are many great staff and volunteers at the Yangebup Family Centre. I want to give a special mention to Sam Williams, Jo McGillivray and Julie Taylor for their work. I also want to thank the committee members, the chairperson, Maria Quaggan; the deputy chairperson, Kym Maloney; the treasurer, Tracy Pearson; and committee members Maggie Zentner, Kelly Hutton, Rosie Miller, Selina Colebourne, Laura Thompson, and Ann Gerlach.

The South Lake Ottey Family and Neighbourhood Centre is another organisation doing amazing work in my electorate. The centre is always focused on ensuring that people who are struggling get what they need, whether that means food or just a friendly chat and someone to support them. As an example, the centre runs what is known as the Repair Cafe on the second Sunday of each month. People can go to the centre and bring something that is broken to an army of volunteers who are there. People can hand over this item—members would be amazed at the items that they can fix—and the team of volunteers will fix it. While they fix it, people can sit back and enjoy a coffee. That is a great service that I think really makes the centre unique. But it also does other things such as arranging

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for a hairdresser to come to the centre, setting up a little salon area and offering free haircuts. The work they do is just incredible. Last Friday morning, I joined the team at the Ottey centre handing out food relief, including bags of vegetables, fruit and snacks, to people who rely on the centre's services. Thank you to Merrilyn Grant and Wendy Everett for all the work they do and for welcoming me to the centre.

Wendy raised with me that she could not get her ServiceWA app working and I said, "Wendy, don't worry about it. Come into my office next week any time and we will sort it out." I spoke to my electorate office this afternoon and they said that Wendy had been in earlier today and they had set her up with her proof of vaccination on the ServiceWA app. In fact, my staff went to the effort of creating a Gmail account for Wendy because she did not have an internet presence at all. That is the effort that my office will go to. I thank my staff for that. I am always happy to assist Wendy and any other community members with anything like that.

Of course, I could not speak about great community groups in Cockburn without mentioning the Spearwood Dalmatinac Sport and Community Club. The Dalmatinacs, or Dallies as it is known, has been an institution in Cockburn for decades. The club emerged out of the need to provide greater social connection and support for Slavic migrants in Cockburn. Reflecting on its history, it was a multicultural project before multiculturalism was even an accepted policy of governments around Australia. The club celebrates Slavic culture and history; trains great sports teams across soccer, netball, futsal and bowls; and cooks up a delicious Friday night dinner on a weekly basis. I took my family to the club for dinner two weeks ago and we all had a great time. I still think back fondly on the spit roast of lamb and pork that night. I am really looking forward to seeing the upgrades to the club over the next year or so using the \$135 000 grant that I delivered as an election commitment together with my colleague the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Hon Simone McGurk. I want to thank president Denis Tomasich and his wife, Maureen, for always making me feel welcome at the club. I also give my thanks to Ivo and Alenka Radonich, Ivan Perica, Pam Baskovich, and Tony Petkovich.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: The Lions Club of Atwell is another fantastic volunteer group making Cockburn an even better place to live. What I love about the club is that it is always looking for new ways to contribute to our community. It has annual events such as the Christmas Santa sleigh, when Santa is taken on a tour through the suburbs and hands out treats for the kids and sells the traditional Lions Christmas cakes. The club also pitches in whenever help is needed, no matter what that is. I remember particularly, just after I had been elected, how quickly the Lions club stepped up when a family lost their home in Beeliar to a fire. There are so many great volunteers at the Lions club that I cannot name all of them, but there are a few absolute troopers who deserve a special mention. To David and Marie McGlashan, Peter and Georgina Kenneday, Tim Irvine, Carol Wright, Sally and Doug Allen, Tarun Dewan and Maria Reynolds, thank you for your service to the community. It is the Lions way.

Cockburn would not be the great place that it is to live without our amazing residents associations. They are vibrant groups of people who always have ideas on how to improve our community and are always willing to step up to the plate and fight for those ideas. I am very fortunate to have the Yangebup Progress Association in my neighbourhood of Yangebup, led by Maggie Zentner, who I congratulated earlier for winning the citizenship award. The YPA does excellent work advocating for improved facilities in Yangebup. Its work has led to new fencing being installed at the playground at Nicholson Reserve and a brand new mural along the train line fencing in Yangebup, which used to be covered in graffiti. It also runs events that the whole community can enjoy, like the carols and family fair that I attended in December. I am officially placing on the record my recognition of the tireless work of president Maggie Zentner, vice-president Kirsty Hughes, secretary Marie Brand, treasurer Anish Shah, and committee members Kevin Brand, Rosie Miller, and Carol Zhang.

The Coogee Beach Progress Association is another great group keeping residents connected in my electorate. From the moment I was elected, members of the association have been working constructively with me to get results for Coogee. Their work has helped me to deliver on projects that will make important improvements for Coogee. In fact, the association has been fighting for some of these projects for a very long time and I am pleased to deliver on those projects so quickly within my first 12 months as the member for Cockburn. Those improvements include a feasibility study for a roundabout at the intersection of Cockburn and Mayor Roads, which local residents know is an intersection that needs an upgrade, and also securing funding for a signalised pedestrian crossing at Coogee Beach. Coogee Beach is an extremely busy precinct now in my electorate. It is very popular for events. It is very popular on Sunday mornings when surf lifesaving nippers is happening, so it is absolutely critical that we ensure that it has the safety and the pedestrian infrastructure that is needed as a busy precinct. I really want to thank those community members who came out to speak with me about the pedestrian crossing just the other week. I attended a meeting of the Coogee Beach Progress Association, and I am really pleased that we are all working together for a long-term integrated solution to traffic management around Coogee Beach. Thank you to president Karen Moulton, vice-president

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Daryll Smith, secretary Terry Hemsworth, treasurer Jon van Santen, and assistant secretary/treasurer Tony Certoma. Their work is making Coogee a great credit in my electorate of Cockburn.

I also want to separately acknowledge Karen Moulton and John Ivey for their work establishing the Coogee Community Garden, which is becoming a vibrant and beautiful part of Coogee.

The other group that I would like to mention tonight is the Coogee Beach Surf Life Saving Club. The Coogee Beach Surf Life Saving Club has been around for probably about 15 years now, and was originally housed in a metal shack on Coogee Beach. It was a pretty rudimentary structure, but through the hard work of club members, about five years ago they finished the build on a brand new facility with local government funding, and it is now one of the best surf lifesaving club facilities in Western Australia. I think I heard the member for Warnbro claim that the Secret Harbour Surf Life Saving Club is pretty special, but in my opinion it has nothing on the Coogee Beach Surf Life Saving Club. That team has built that club from the ground up in the last 15 years, and I want to thank them for their work in doing that.

The club is absolutely flat out with its surf lifesaving programs. As I said, its nippers program is just absolutely exploding. It cannot find the space that it needs for all the kids who want to be involved in it. I give my thanks to the club, and I particularly recognise a couple of club members who have been instrumental in getting me involved in the club. I recognise Sarah Mahony, who roped me into doing a 24-hour rowing challenge. I will not claim that I rowed for 24 hours—it was probably about 24 minutes, generously, that I rowed for—but I went in there and got on as they had teams rotating through. Sarah also participates in events such as Ride Against Domestic Violence, which, of course, some of our members participated in. Thank you, Sarah, for getting me further involved in supporting the club's activities. I also want to thank Simone Blom. Simone is a really special connection for me, because I just happened to doorknock Simone during the election campaign, and Simone said to me, "You absolutely have to come down to the club. You have to hear about what we're doing." I have done just that. Simone is also a star because she helps run the Starfish Nippers program at the surf lifesaving club, which is a program that ensures that children with a disability can get involved in surf lifesaving as well. To Sarah and Simone and all the executive members at the surf lifesaving club, thank you for all the work that you do.

Some may argue that my contribution tonight has been a series of 90-second statements or vignettes, but before I conclude, there is another matter that I want to raise, which is on a different topic. My electorate officer, Cassie, has a five-year-old daughter, Abby, who is a regular visitor to my office. In fact, one of Abby's latest artworks is proudly stuck on the wall behind my desk. Last week, we received the bad news that Abby has been diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. Fortunately, I am pleased to inform the house that the prognosis is good. With chemotherapy and the best care at our world-class Perth Children's Hospital, we are all confident that Abby will soon be back to being her usual ray of sunshine, and I wish her the very best with that. To do my bit to support Abby through her treatment, I have committed to shaving my head and raising funds for blood cancer treatment. I give fair notice to my colleagues now that I will be around rattling the tin over the next month or so, and I also give fair notice that they will be looking at my lumpy head at some point in the not-so-distant future. Fortunately, nobody sits behind me to get that view! To Abby, all the best, and to the whole Harrison family, my best wishes to you in successfully getting through what is going to be a difficult and challenging time, but I am sure is going to be a time that you pull through in very good spirits.

In conclusion, this government has achieved what governments around the world can only dream of. We have had two years of living essentially COVID-free. We now have a gradual and controlled experience with community spread of the virus. Our vaccination rates are stratospheric. They are world leading. It is a credit to the Premier, the Minister for Health and the former Minister for Health that we are in the position we are today.

When I was down at Community Eats in Yangebup on Friday, I was chatting with a few locals about the situation. We were reflecting on the recent tragic COVID-related death that we have had here in Western Australia. That is obviously a tragedy, but we were also reflecting on the fact that this was only the second COVID-related death in Western Australia since the beginning of the pandemic. The words used by the members of the community to me were that that was incredible. Obviously, any death is tragic, but we have basically saved thousands of lives in Western Australia because of the good work that this government has done. I think that the opposition grudgingly knows that that is the case.

Our management of the pandemic has meant that our economy is the strongest economy in essentially the whole of Australia. It has meant that our communities are stronger and more resilient. They feel the confidence to face things. I think that it is really important to repeat what the member for Churchlands said. We had all these commentators on the east coast in particular saying, "Open up, open up; your lockdowns and restrictions are killing businesses." There is no doubt that some businesses have struggled during the pandemic, but what we also knew was that if we adopted the Liberal and National Parties' belief that we have seen in New South Wales of just letting it rip, that

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would, in effect, impose shadow lockdowns on businesses, because people do not have the confidence and do not feel safe enough to go out to the pub or to enjoy a night out.

On the whole, I am incredibly proud to be in the chamber with other members. This is a hardworking, forward-facing, optimistic government, and I am certainly looking forward to continuing to work with the Premier and all my colleagues to build on that legacy over the next year.

MS K.E. GIDDENS (Bateman) [8.55 pm]: It is a great privilege to rise tonight to make my first contribution of 2022 in this place. Returning here is a reminder of the great responsibility and privilege I have to represent Bateman. It is something that I am not used to. I have not got used to the feeling and I hope that I never do.

It is impossible to talk about 2022 without addressing the challenge that faces us—that is, the challenge of COVID and Omicron. Although it is a topic that many of us are probably tired of speaking about, I did not go to a single social event over the Christmas and new year period—not a single barbecue or gathering of friends and family—where this topic was not discussed. It is something that is on all our minds as we wonder what the year will bring as we face the Omicron spread in our community.

I would like to discuss this from multiple perspectives. One is from my own personal experience when I visited my family in Tasmania just prior to Christmas. When I left for Tasmania, it was rated as very low risk, so one could travel freely from Western Australia and return freely from Tasmania back into Western Australia. I have family down there whom I have not seen for a couple of years, mostly not because of the border arrangements, because Tasmania has been very low risk for a long time and I could have freely travelled there, but more because of time and the usual constraints. I took the opportunity to go down and see my family. I arrived on 17 December with Tasmania opening up, I believe, on 15 December or thereabouts. I was on the ground, as it were, as that state opened up, and Omicron very quickly spread through the community. Tasmania as a state had previously been highly successful in managing its COVID response. I witnessed a high degree of anxiety in the community, which is understandable, but also the economic impact of the opening up of Tasmania. This was meant to herald a new beginning for tourism and businesses, particularly for hospitality businesses that previously relied on international and interstate tourists.

Instead, Tasmania experienced a large number of bookings being cancelled and businesses closing their doors. The businesses that were closing their doors were the very businesses that were meant to benefit from the opening up. They were hospitality businesses in the CBD and they were closing for a number of reasons—sometimes they simply did not have the staff because their staff had been exposed to the virus and they did not have the capacity to open, but also very often because people were not visiting. People stopped going out. When visiting my family, I also stopped going out. I did not do the usual things that I love doing when I go down there, such as visiting Mona, walking through Salamanca Place and stopping off at some of my favourite restaurants and bars. In part, it was because I had to very carefully manage my own return to Western Australia, and I could not risk being at an exposure site, but I certainly was not alone in making those kinds of behavioural and personal choices about how to manage the Omicron outbreak that was occurring in that state. Business after business was posting on Facebook their decision to close their doors, at least temporarily. I hope that those businesses are able to recover. As I said, this opportunity that heralded a new start of living with COVID ended up being the very thing that forced them to close their doors.

With that in mind, I returned to Western Australia. When I returned to work, I noted a variety of emails from constituents, as other members in this place have noted, some of which very strongly advocated to open the borders, saying, “Let’s get on with it.” Increasingly, as the evidence emerged from other states and from over east, a large volume of emails started to come into my inbox, with people saying, “Please. You can see what’s happening in the eastern states; why would you open up now?” There are a range of opinions on this issue. I referred to the barbecues and social events that I hope all members enjoyed over the Christmas and new year period. There would have been different opinions from almost every person members spoke to. I would like to apply a bit of my passion, going back to my teaching days, and talk a little about a level of fatigue that has perhaps entered the community. When we face significant trauma—members may be familiar with this—we experience the fight, flight or freeze response. I received a variety of diverse email responses from people saying, “Let’s get on with it” to “Please don’t do it.” I started to reflect on the fact that we are seeing a widespread community response to the challenge of COVID. Some of those responses were fight responses—“Let’s get on with it; just bring it on.” Some responses were flight responses. Some responses were freeze responses—“Let’s not do anything; let’s just stay as we are.”

I would like to provide some advice to that diversity of views by saying that we should just take a collective deep breath. Western Australia has been hugely responsible in managing its response to COVID so far. The trust that we have placed in the evidence and the advice of health professionals and health experts has led us to the position where, to date, in Western Australia we have had only two COVID-related deaths of people who acquired the virus

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locally. That is two. With a deep breath, and with the trust and the confidence in which we have managed the pandemic so far, I encourage people to continue. People have asked me for advice on different things, they have challenged the health advice and they have provided alternatives. That is what a robust democracy is. I am more than happy to hear that range of views. The evidence around the third dose is very, very clear in relation to Omicron. The decision to respond to the evidence of what was occurring in the eastern states and to provide time for Western Australians to get their booster shot has undoubtedly saved thousands of lives in Western Australia.

I would like to discuss a division that has entered the public discourse. It is not the anti-vax, anti-mandate division that is so prominent in the media. It is a quieter division, a silent division, that has crept into a number of responses from community members that I have received. A summary of a fairly routine email to me might go something like this: “I have done everything right. I have received all of my shots, including my booster. I have family over east or overseas. Why should I be locked down? We know that Omicron is less severe in terms of illness than Delta, so let’s get on with it. We know that it affects mostly the elderly and people with underlying chronic conditions.” I want to draw attention to those last two statements in particular in my response. Somehow the aged—that is people, scientifically in relation to Omicron and COVID, in the 70-plus cohort—are targeted. I have parents who are approaching 70. They have many years with their grandchildren ahead of them. They have many years of their retirement that they worked hard for ahead of them. They are healthy and fit. To suggest somehow that their life has less value and is less worthy of protection on the basis of their age when they would otherwise look forward to many years ahead of them is something that disturbs me about that discourse. Likewise, the discourse that COVID affects people with chronic illnesses. Again, millions of people in our community live successful, well lives with chronic illnesses. There is a suggestion that their life has less value.

The member for Cockburn just shared the story of Abby, the daughter of one of his staff members. I pass on my best wishes to Abby and her family as they undergo the challenge ahead after a blood cancer diagnosis. As the member for Cockburn said, Abby has a great prognosis. With treatment, we know that many cancers and other chronic illnesses can be overcome. Again, the suggestion that people who are immunocompromised at a particular point in time should be left to the luck of COVID, I guess, disturbs me.

Again, let us be kind to each other. Most of us in the community—whether it is at a community organisation level or whether it is members on all sides of this house—are acting in our best interests to protect Western Australians. If we continue with that, we will continue to have the kind of success that we have enjoyed so far in Western Australia.

COVID aside, there are other things going on in my electorate. I would like to spend a bit of time talking about some of those things. Since my election in March last year, I have been busy working with community groups to implement the election commitments that I was able to support for some of the many fantastic community and sporting organisations in Bateman. I will very briefly go through some of those election commitments. Ardross Primary School is a beautiful little school that has a strong focus on sustainability. It enjoys a beautiful environment with many trees and a very active and engaged student cohort. The government has provided \$80 000 to enable Ardross Primary School to continue that work around sustainability upgrades, including some of the infrastructure at the school that has aged, improve its energy efficiency and reduce its large running costs. Schools, like many large buildings, are very expensive to run, so any savings that can be made in that area can be passed on to other programs to support student learning. The \$80 000 commitment has been funded and delivered to Ardross Primary School. I really look forward to seeing the work that it is doing in that area.

Very close to Ardross Primary School is Applecross Senior High School, to which \$1.5 million was committed for a new STEM classroom. The design for that classroom will begin very shortly—in the coming weeks. I really look forward to working with the school and the community to see that design and then obviously the construction phase and the delivery of that classroom to support STEM learning at Applecross Senior High School. Paul Leech, the principal, has over 1 700 students. Paul and his team deliver an exceptional quality and standard of education. That classroom and that facility will support him to enable that learning to continue.

Bateman Winthrop Scout Group is led by barra scout leader Glenn Elliott. Glenn is a fantastic contributor to the community. He has been involved in many community groups over his time. He has been a resident of Bateman for a long time. His children went to Bateman Primary School. They are now in high school. I was very pleased to support Bateman Winthrop Scout Group with a \$17 000 election commitment to purchase canoes and provide water safety education programs so that its scout members can get out on the river and enjoy the environment that we have around us here in Perth. Those canoes, like many things in the supply chain at the moment, took a long time to arrive. They were ordered last year. The funding was delivered last year. I believe that they arrived recently. I look forward to getting down there, enjoying the water with the scout group and celebrating the arrival of those canoes.

Likewise, Blue Gum Park Tennis Club, a very active group in the community with juniors and all the way up to seniors, has received \$60 000 to deliver a spectator stand and shade, which is really important, particularly for those

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grandparents who regularly engage with the club to support their grandkids. They sit there while their grandkids have tennis lessons, so the spectator shade is a great facility upgrade for Blue Gum Park Tennis Club.

Kardinya Lawn Bowling Club has received \$121 000 to replace its retractable shade cloth. Kardinya Lawn Bowling Club is dear to my heart because it has a strong focus on inclusion and all-abilities bowling. It supports people of all abilities from across the state and is a welcoming community club that represents everything a local club should be in the community.

Kardinya Netball Club is driven by the passion of Debbie Librizzi. Debbie is a powerhouse who—I would hate to play against her on the court—runs that club with great passion. Like many netball clubs in Bateman, it really struggled for quality facilities, including the courts. The courts have had their day in the sun. They are cracked and faded, and slippery when it rains, so the \$80 000 that was promised to Kardinya Netball Club will go a long way to providing the kind of facility upgrades that will help the club to train safely and grow. That funding is a great contribution to Kardinya Netball Club and I am heading down there for a barbecue shortly, which I am looking forward to very much, to celebrate that.

A commitment of \$1 000 to Mt Pleasant Bowling Club has meant that planning in conjunction with the City of Melville is well underway. It is a very large project, which includes accessibility upgrades and some asbestos in the building that needs to be remediated. As anyone who is building or doing renovations at the moment would know, that project, like many, has had its costs blow out significantly. There has been a process, and I thank and acknowledge the City of Melville for working so productively with Mt Pleasant Bowling Club to meet the challenges and come up with a plan to fund and get those works delivered. I look forward to that happening this year.

Is that almost 20 minutes? I had better hurry up!

Murdoch University Melville Football Club is a large club in my area, and it is growing, like many clubs, due to the participation of women and young girls in sport. Although Bateman enjoys beautiful open space and many parks and reserves, there is a shortage of playing fields in particular. I have been able to work with Murdoch University Melville Football Club, and \$50 000 has been provided to put in additional lighting at Winthrop Park, which will enable the club to grow the number of girls who can participate and to ensure that it has the training space that is needed to support those teams.

Palmyra Rugby Union Club has received a \$10 000 grant for two spectator marquees. One was delivered last year and another one is on order. I look forward to seeing them being used this year.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: An amount of \$80 000 was promised for the Piney Lakes Reserve fenced dog park, which would provide an enclosed off-leash dog exercise area. This involved lots of consultation with community members and, like some things, some people really supported this project and others raised concerns about the project and the level of consultation. I was really pleased to be able to work with the City of Melville and ask it to go back to the consultation phase to consult specifically with local users of that park to identify their needs. That consultation resulted in community support for an enclosed off-lead dog area in that park. That contribution of \$80 000 will go towards that, with construction due to begin in April this year.

South of Perth Yacht Club, like Kardinya Lawn Bowling Club, is strongly committed to the inclusion of people of all abilities. Its Sailability program is supported by, I think, 50 volunteers. It provides people from across the metro area of Perth the opportunity to come to the club and experience the joys of sailing and being on the water. Certain modifications need to be made to the boats and equipment to enable people to safely do that. When I met with members of South of Perth Yacht Club as a candidate, they said, “We’ve got this program, but we don’t have a safety boat so that they can go out sailing safely. The participants need to be followed by a safety boat.” With \$80 000, the club has now been able to purchase a boat, which is undergoing the final work that it needs to bring it up to the standard of a rescue boat. Again, I cannot wait to get on the water and experience that.

Tingara Netball Club has received \$100 000, which, again, has gone towards resurfacing netball courts at Brentwood Primary School. This commitment is a particularly great one because it supports both the school and Tingara Netball Club. The funding has been fully delivered and I expect work to commence very shortly. I look forward to that being delivered to Tingara Netball Club so that their members can enjoy playing on a resurfaced court.

I also committed \$200 000 to Tompkins Park for the upgrade of an existing playground into a nature playground. It is beautiful down on the foreshore there and any parent or anyone who takes children to parks will know that a great park attracts people from across the area. I look forward to working with the community to identify the kinds of facilities that they would like to see there. The area has been loved for generations, and this funding and the upgrades will see the park continue to provide those facilities and be a favourite for families for generations to come.

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Finally, \$20 000 was committed for Windelya Sports Association. Windelya worked really hard to self-fund and upgrade its clubroom. It said, “We’ve done all this work. We have self-funded it and we have delivered it on a really tight budget. We’ve got this fantastic facility but we don’t have the money to fit it out.” That \$20 000 has meant that it has been able to put together some of the outdoor furniture, TV screens and other fit-out that it required to enable people to fully enjoy the benefit of that facility.

Other achievements across the electorate last year included STEM boost funding to a number of my local schools. Kardinya Primary School received \$25 000; Winthrop Primary School, \$25 000; Ardross Primary School, \$40 000; Bateman Primary School also received \$40 000; and Brentwood Primary School, \$25 000. This funding means that all schools in my electorate have now received STEM boost funding.

As great and rewarding as it is to get out in the electorate and to see our election commitments being delivered, I also realise that there is never enough to go around and there are always more community groups that are doing fantastic work with next to nothing. There are always community groups that have great plans for upgrades or facilities that are needed to support them in the really vital work that they do. We know how important sporting organisations and other community groups are to the fabric of our community and that other work needs to be done in our community. Kardinya Red Sox Ball Club is a great little community club that is passionate about what it does. It supports rookie ball for three to five-year-olds who get out there to hit a little T-ball as well as baseball. Again, that is another extremely inclusive club that provides for both girls and boys in the community and in which a little goes a long way.

I have mentioned Tingara Netball Club and Kardinya Netball Club, but Winthrop Netball Club really needs additional facilities, including a storage shed, to support its work. Members carry their equipment around in the backs of cars. Something as simple as a storage shed would enable them to keep and store all their equipment on site, where they train.

Applecross Cricket Club and Melville University Cricket Club are seeing an absolute explosion of young girls and females participating in cricket, which is fantastic to see, but many of these clubs simply do not have the training facilities or fields to be able to grow their club and meet that demand. They have identified new cricket nets as something that would really enable them to meet the needs of more people in the community.

Likewise, we are seeing an explosion of girls participating in football. The member for Bicton and I hosted a women in sport forum with the MSPO, Tony Buti, as part of community cabinet last year. Time and again the feedback from the community groups was, “We have so many girls who want to participate; we just can’t meet the need.” Change rooms are a really significant barrier to women and girls participating in these sports. I would like to see some focus on that, and I have certainly identified that with the City of Melville. New upgrades at Karoonda Reserve in Booragoon would support a number of clubs: Booragoon Football Club, Tingara Netball Club, Bateman Junior Cricket Club, CBC Cricket Club and Brentwood-Booragoon Amateur Football Club are all based at Karoonda Reserve.

Those are just some of the groups in my community that are doing fantastic work. There is an opportunity for those clubs to participate in the upcoming federal election. The election process is a great opportunity for local community groups to advocate for their needs. It is a legitimate process, and I will continue to advocate for those community groups to the local federal Labor candidate, Sam Lim, and also to work with the current member, Hon Ben Morton, MP.

I know that Sam Lim is the kind of candidate who understands communities, because he has lived it in his background and his experience. Sam was born in Malaysia in 1961 and grew up on a rubber plantation. When he completed his schooling, he became a police constable in the Royal Malaysian Police Force. After the death of his father, Sam had to give up his work in the police; it did not pay enough to support the family, so Sam operated a number of small businesses over the next 18 years. He did well out of that, and started a charitable organisation that helped local rural communities in Malaysia. When Sam migrated to Australia, he reignited his passion for policing and went to the WA Police Academy, graduating as a police officer in 2007. Sam’s diverse experience and language skills, in particular, has seen him work in the WA Police Force as a diversity engagement officer. He has been critical in the COVID response, working on the front line and across multiple languages to support communities in Western Australia that would perhaps otherwise be marginalised. Sam was awarded police officer of the year in 2020 for the work he did in WA Police Force. I know that Sam gets local communities, and understands the importance of our community groups. I will be working very hard with him to introduce him to the community and to ensure that the people of Bateman have a strong choice when they go to the federal ballot box. I am very proud to support Sam in that.

I will conclude on the topic of the federal election. I note the current member for Tangney, Hon Ben Morton, MP, and his petition to the state government to upgrade Leach Highway and Stock Road. He has said that he will never stop fighting for Roe 8 and 9. The federal government claims to have allocated \$1.2 billion to this project. It is claimed in an advertisement in a local newspaper that 3 500 local residents have signed the petition. I would like to support the member for Tangney and say that I would be very happy to receive that petition and table it in this

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place. My other message is: you do not need a petition for \$1.2 billion of federal money. If this is an important project, I encourage and invite the member to commit that money right now to the people of Bateman, to improve the infrastructure he claims to want to improve through the petition he has initiated. I would be very, very happy to work with him on that, so I ask him to please approach my office with those 3 500 signatories. Thank you.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House)**.

House adjourned at 9.26 pm
