

PUBLIC SECTOR — CPSU-CSA — NEGOTIATIONS

553. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations:

I refer to this government's fair and reasonable wages policy, which is a vital measure in repairing the state's finances. Can the minister update the house on any progress in the ongoing negotiations with the Community and Public Sector Union–Civil Service Association of WA?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

It is an excellent question from the giant killer of Bicton. I remind the house that the member for Bicton was so scary that the member for Bateman would not run against her. He changed seats and knocked off a Liberal candidate because he was not prepared to run against a Labor candidate.

I want to let you know, Mr Speaker, that today the Civil Service Association announced the outcome of its ballot for what is called the General Agreement 7 negotiations, in which 92 per cent of CSA members supported the agreement with the government. I want to congratulate the members of the CSA for taking a responsible attitude to budget repair. They understand that Western Australia's finances are in a dire situation, and they are in a dire situation for two reasons: firstly, because of the incompetence of the former Liberal government that increased debt in this state by over 1 000 per cent and took the budget from a \$3 billion surplus to a \$3 billion deficit, and also because there have been \$5 billion of writedowns since the election. The members of the CSA have acted responsibly to support the government's actions to have a fair and balanced wages policy in this state that provides a flat increase of \$1 000 a year for all public sector workers. I congratulate the CSA members on that. They have shown great responsibility for the situation that confronts the finances of this state.

I note that a number of other unions, including the WA Police Union, are also moving towards settlement of this amount. I remind members that the Leader of the Opposition said he was jealous of our policy and that he had wanted to do it himself, but he was not able to get it through his cabinet. We are implementing it because it is a fair and balanced approach. I also urge the opposition to come on board and fully support the government's wages policy, and not just occasionally in front of journalists, because it is urgently required to help repair the budget damage left by the Liberal Party. If the public servants of this state can take the responsible attitude that they have demonstrated by their vote today, I urge the Liberal Party to adopt the same responsible attitude that the Civil Service Association's members have taken.