

CORONAVIRUS — STATE OF EMERGENCY

236. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. When will the Premier share his plan to transition WA from a state of emergency to living with COVID as an endemic disease, as many Western Australians are waiting to understand the details of that plan?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

That is a better question. I do not think the Leader of the Opposition understands what the rules are and how they work. The state of emergency declaration is renewed every two weeks under existing laws. They are not new laws. The laws themselves relate to a range of things, in particular around giving police protection from people who threaten them with COVID or spit on them, or things of that nature. If the Leader of the Opposition does not support that, she needs to be honest and accountable as to whether she supports that. We support our police officers, who have done an absolutely extraordinary job over the course of the last two years in terms of making sure Western Australia has the best outcomes of anywhere in the entire world in dealing with the pandemic. That is what the legislation is. If members opposite do not support that, be that on their heads.

In terms of the renewal of the state of emergency, that is done each and every fortnight by the Minister for Emergency Services. It was originally Fran Logan, then Minister Whitby and now Minister Dawson. That is done on the recommendation of the State Emergency Coordinator, who is currently the Police Commissioner, Chris Dawson. That is what is done each and every fortnight in order to ensure that we have certain powers. Those powers have allowed us to do things such as mask wearing, as the Leader of the Opposition is currently doing. It has allowed us to put in place mandates around vaccination. It has allowed us to put in place some of the border controls that we have used to ensure we kept the virus out of Western Australia, and things of that nature. It has allowed us to do those things. We currently have around 8 000 new cases in Western Australia today. We have 230 or thereabouts people in hospital and eight or nine people in intensive care. We are expecting the hospitalisation rates to grow over coming weeks. We are hopeful that we have reached our peak and that numbers will come down in overall terms and we will start to trend out of this.

What is occurring in the eastern states, however, are spikes. Their hospitalisation numbers are going up as we speak, because that is the nature of COVID. One thing the opposition has not learnt over the course of the last two years is that it is very unpredictable, and governments have had to act. Governments that have acted proactively and used the levers and tools of government have achieved the best outcomes of anywhere in the world. That is what we did. We did things that were, in ordinary circumstances, very controversial, but the actions we took have meant we have the lowest death rates, the lowest hospitalisation rates and the best economic outcomes of anywhere in the world, yet the Leader of the Opposition complains. In a planet of seven billion people, Western Australia of 2.7 million has achieved the best outcomes, yet the opposition comes in day in and day out and complains about it. The government will continue to do its best to ensure that we follow the health advice and do things that achieve great economic and health outcomes. The opposition has so many messages. I note the police spokesperson, Mr Collier, said in late February —

As long as these restrictions come on the recommendation of the Chief Health Officer, the Opposition will support them.

That is what he said. Now, the Leader of the Opposition comes in saying something different, as indeed does the Leader of the Liberal Party. He is always out there criticising and opposing the health recommendations we receive that have resulted in the best health and economic outcomes of anywhere in the world. It is a very unusual phenomenon. As I keep telling them, it is the worst opposition in Western Australian history. It is the worst opposition, I think, in Australian history. It needs to look at the opposition leader in South Australia and what he did. He was constructive, positive and supportive of the government doing difficult things, and look at what has happened to him. Unfortunately, it is not in your DNA to do it, because you have no idea what you are doing.