

PREMIER — FUNCTION ATTENDANCE

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

Noting the front page of *The West Australian* today, how does the Premier reconcile sipping \$1 000 bottles of Penfolds at a soiree hosted by Nigel Satterley in the same week that government workers are being forced to rally for better pay and conditions from a Labor government flush with a \$5.7 billion surplus?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! Member for Wanneroo, the Premier will respond, not you.

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

That is a very, very silly question. As Premier of the state, I get invited to many functions and events. On any given week, I would be out four or five evenings a week, whether it is Parliament, community functions, sporting events or important dinners—whatever it is. I get invited to many things—business dinners and all sorts of things—so I am out regularly. I get invited to dinners with businesspeople who invest in Western Australia, and I sometimes have dinner with them. I cannot help what type of wine is served at dinner. I do not control that. I do not control what the food is; I do not control what the drinks are. That is totally outside of my capacities, irrespective of what the member might think. So, that is what occurred.

Dr D.J. Honey: It was \$1 000-a-bottle wine tasting; you knew that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the Liberal Party interjects on me. I just want to make a point, considering he has interjected on me. He has plans to use his taxpayer-funded electorate office for fundraisers. The ad says, “Come and join us for drinks and canapés. Find out about the leader and his priorities, with special guest Dr David Honey, Leader of the WA Liberal Party and member for Cottesloe.” Where is it being held? It is at his taxpayer-funded electorate office. There is the ad right there. He interjects on me for having dinner with some businesspeople, which is a common occurrence—for me, at least, it is. I have dinner with businesspeople. I have dinners with community groups. I do these sorts of things all the time to promote the state. I get invited by people who invest large amounts of money and therefore create many jobs, and I have dinner with them. That is the role of a Premier, a Chief Minister, a minister, a Prime Minister or a federal cabinet minister. That is just natural; that is what occurs in government. It is very naive not to understand that. But the member for Cottesloe uses his electorate office for fundraisers; there it is. When he was sprung, he cancelled it. That is what occurred.

To the other part of the member’s question, the government has a wages policy that is quite significantly more generous than that of New South Wales and Victoria. The lowest-paid workers get the biggest increases, in percentage terms, and it is something that I would encourage the workforce to sign up to. I get a lot of feedback from members of the workforce who would like a \$2 500 payment and a three per cent per annum pay increase. On top of that, as is legislated nationally, there is a 0.5 per cent increase in their superannuation. That would all be funded by the state at a cost of around \$2.5 billion. For many parts of the workforce, that would mean a pay increase this year in the vicinity of eight per cent.

As I said, that pay increase exceeds that of New South Wales and Victoria and exceeds most of the private sector wage increases out there, and it is on top of a lot of the other things that we have done in government. We have brought a great many services back in-house. We have provided a great deal more permanency, with 15 000 to 20 000 public sector employees receiving permanency. We have provided domestic violence leave for the public sector workforce. We have put in place new workers’ compensation reforms—industrial manslaughter and a whole range of things like that. We have put in place the strongest cost-of-living support of any state in Australia. We have employed a great many education assistants sacked by the former government. There have been many such initiatives since we have been in office. We are doing everything we can to encourage and support our public sector workforce, which does a terrific job across the state.