CORONAVIRUS — HOTEL QUARANTINE

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

I have a supplementary question. Given that the Premier is removing the Mercure hotel and two other hotels as quarantine facilities, why did he, his health minister or the acting Chief Health Officer not just come clean with the Western Australian public and admit that the hotel was substandard, high risk and should not have been in use as soon as he became aware of it?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

We received a report on 16 April—10 days or so ago. The person in question who was released from hotel quarantine was released on 17 April and he was negative. He was tested and returned a negative result when he was released. He had come back from overseas. He had recently been overseas, which is another set of issues—people going overseas in recent days, particularly to countries that are very much impacted by COVID. He was released on 17 April. The minister and I received a report on this on 16 April and the report did not say that the hotel could not be used. The report says that any issues in the hotel could be mitigated. In light of what has occurred and the fact that we have taken a highly precautionary and cautious approach in relation to it, which is different from other countries around the world, we will continue to take a highly cautionary and precautionary approach. So we will phase out, hopefully by the end of the coming month, the three hotels that are not as good as the others. That will have an impact because, of course, around the world there are people who want to come to Australia—predominantly returning Australians—and this will reduce the number. I will make the point—I have made this point to the commonwealth repeatedly—that per capita, Western Australia was taking the most returned Australians of any state in Australia. I know that New South Wales says it is taking the most, and it is in total numbers, but per capita, Western Australia was taking the most returned Australians. With 10 per cent of the nation's population, we were taking 17 per cent of returning Australians from all states. We have been doing our bit but, in light of what has occurred, we have decided that we will reduce the number of returning Australians coming through our hotel quarantine system to make sure that it is as secure as we can make it.