

CORONAVIRUS — RESTRICTIONS

Statement

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [5.52 pm]: On the back of the statement from Hon Stephen Pratt, whom I have missed as a colleague on the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs—welcome back to the chamber—we are all relieved to hear about Elena’s recovery. We very much felt your experience throughout what would have been quite a distressing, I would have thought, 10 days or so, particularly with a heavily pregnant wife. We obviously look forward to sharing with you the joy of your soon-to-be newest member of the brood. Congratulations.

I thank you genuinely for sharing that story, because it gives us a good sense of perspective and proportion about this invidious and insidious virus, which is manageable. Reassurance, clarity and perspective are absolutely required.

I also want to reflect on the excellent contribution made by Hon Kate Doust and particularly her reference to the member for Riverton, Dr Jags Krishnan. I want to reflect on that quickly, because it was my privilege to represent the opposition today at a formal lunch for the visiting High Commissioner of India, along with Yaz Mubarakai, the member for Jandakot, and Kevin Michel, the member for Pilbara. I want to reflect on the contribution that each of those three people of Indian ethnicity bring to this Parliament and the advantage that provides for Western Australia and Australia re-engaging with India and entering into a new phase of not only normalising but also deepening that critical trade relationship, which is unexplored.

I want to reflect on the spirit of perspective proportion and to a degree of optimism that Hon Stephen Pratt brought, because it is consistent with a couple of messages today from the Premier. I am not normally one to laud the Premier, as members will be well aware. The Premier made a significant announcement today around lunchtime concerning the easing of public health measures from next Thursday. It is often the way in communications in the modern age that we communicate in multiple channels in real time. The formal doorstep was given and the media statement went out, but also a tweet to announce the decision and the particulars.

A quote attached to that tweet recognised the high number of recorded COVID cases, and I put to members that it is a serious underestimation of what is likely to be the case. We are all swimming in a sea of it, and I expect the real figure of 10 000 was probably reached earlier in the week, but that is an aside. The Premier mentioned —

While that number is high, it is also cause for optimism.

It was with that spirit of optimism, circumspection and restrained confidence that I moved a motion today that called upon the government to explain the situation. It was not to condemn the government. In fact, I lauded the government. I asked for it to provide an explanation and some clarity about the necessity of still using these very strong instruments, and to indicate the path ahead. I was informed that today was not the day to have that debate. I am sorry; we can never accept that proposition in this house. We can have untimely and uncomfortable debates and discussions in this house.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Minister, order!

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Unfortunately, the minister did her government a disservice with the quality of the argument she brought forward, and her whole proposition was undermined 90 minutes later.

Several members interjected.