

Hon Peter Collier; Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Rick Mazza; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Pierre Yang; President; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Darren West

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## GOVERNMENT AGENCIES — POLITICISATION

### *Motion*

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition)** [10.03 am] — without notice:  
I move —

That this house expresses its grave concern at the McGowan Labor government's permitting, facilitating and engineering of the politicisation of government agencies and institutions, including Lotterywest.

One of my greatest concerns about the current government is that it has this almost obsession with social engineering. We saw it in the debate on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill. Any member who did not agree with the government was a philistine. They were insignificant. Somehow, their attitude or values were not worthy of consideration. Those of us who did not vote for that bill were demeaned constantly by the Premier of the state. Unfortunately, that sort of attitude has now transferred into government agencies, not least Lotterywest, and it is disgraceful. An institution that is sacrosanct and has delivered over \$6 billion to Western Australians over the last 30 years has now been infected with the social engineering mantra that has permeated through from the top levels of government. It is absolutely disgraceful.

A perfect example of this is an issue I have been following for the last few weeks; that is, the Margaret Court Community Outreach organisation, which is affiliated with the Victory Life Centre church. It is a magnificent organisation. Right at the outset, I point out that I am not a member of that organisation, although Margaret and Barry Court are very good friends of mine. Having said that, that is irrelevant to the issue. The Margaret Court Community Outreach centre delivers over 75 tonnes of food and supplies each week to people who are struggling due to the pandemic. Prior to that, it had delivered literally tens of thousands of tonnes of food to people throughout the community who are really struggling. It has delivered food hampers and clothing. The organisation assists over 800 students a week and delivers food to 22 agencies. I repeat: Margaret Court Community Outreach delivers 75 tonnes of food a week throughout our community. It is a magnificent institution. Anyone can go to Osborne Park and look at the factory there, the dozens of volunteers, and the tonnes and tonnes of food that gets wrapped up and delivered to people in need in our community. That organisation does that almost exclusively through in-kind donations and volunteers. That is exactly the sort of institution or agency that deserves the support of Lotterywest.

I will give members a few statistical examples of how much this organisation is doing. In October 2019, before COVID, it was dealing with 2 010 clients a week. In September 2020, it was dealing with 5 390 clients. That is an almost threefold increase. In addition, we can look at its in-kind donations. In October 2019, the organisation received \$985 823 in in-kind donations. In September 2020, the figure was \$1 713 092. We can imagine the extraordinary challenges faced by that community outreach centre to get those supplies out into the community. It desperately needs support to try to get that food out. Everyone knows that people are struggling out there, particularly those who are underprivileged or have lost their jobs and cannot feed their families. The Margaret Court Community Outreach centre assists those people enormously.

Two years ago, the centre applied to Lotterywest for funds to buy a freezer van. That was not an unreasonable request. The centre needs the van to assist with the literally tens of tonnes of food that are going out to the community every single day.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** A good investment.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Absolutely—every single day. Almost two years later, that application was rejected. The centre received a letter from Lotterywest and was told very generically that its application had not been successful. Barry and Margaret Court wrote to the Premier. In that letter, they wrote —

To be advised that our application has not progressed is very disappointing. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic MCCO distributed 32-42 tonnes of food per week. Today we are distributing over 62 tonnes of food per week.

That figure has increased since this letter was written. The Premier sent them a nice response. He crossed out “Mr and Mrs Court” and wrote —

Dear Barry and Margaret

...

Unfortunately, I have no capacity to override a decision by Lotterywest not to support an application. However, I am advised that Lotterywest is presently receiving applications under the Emergency and Crisis Relief program which is a key program of the new Lotterywest COVID-19 Crisis Relief Fund. I believe that your organisation has recently been in contact with Lotterywest about a new application.

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Remember that, guys? That is the one that we approved in this chamber. Were we in this chamber told at the time that that money would go only to organisations that agreed with same-sex marriage? No, we were not. Just remember that. We approved that bill.

Barry and Margaret applied for this new COVID relief fund grant on the recommendation of the Premier. Then they got this very generic letter from Susan Hunt, the CEO of Lotterywest, which says in part —

Under our legislation, Lotterywest has discretion as to which eligible organisations receive Lotterywest funding. I confirm that the Lotterywest Board unanimously agreed not to support your application.

That in itself is not an issue. Okay; it missed out, but the disgusting devil is in the detail. Barry Court and another representative from the Victory Life church and Margaret Court Community Outreach were called in to meet Ms Hunt and another representative from Lotterywest. I will read an explanation from Barry Court of that conversation between Ms Hunt and the other representative. This is part of what happened —

After many years of operating without Government assistance, MCCO operations supply food to the needy in Perth, Kwinana & Forrestfield, our resources are fully utilised to the extent we contacted Lotterywest for assistance.

After many communications, we were advised to meet Jenna Leslie and Susan Hunt from Lotterywest. This meeting we presumed was to convey some positive news.

This was not the case and we were advised that no funding would be given to Margaret Court Community Outreach (MCCO) or any other organisation that Margaret Court was associated with. This was specifically because of Margaret Court's stand on her opposition to same sex marriage.

Susan Hunt advised of the diversity of Lotterywest including the sponsorship of WA's Pride Festival.

It goes on.

The other person at that meeting with Barry and Ms Hunt, Bryam Robayo, who is also from the church, gave this interpretation —

Then Susan proceeded to reveal the outcome of the grant application, by stating that the Board of directors of Lotterywest has unanimously agreed not to approve the grant due to Ms Margaret's views on same-sex marriage and what she has said in the past.

...

Susan underscored the importance of MCCO in the community but stated that Lotterywest does not want to have any association with Ms Margaret. I requested if that outcome could be emailed to MCCO with a clear statement as to why the application was unsuccessful. In addition, if this is a position that Lottery West is going to hold in view of all other applications that MCCO would make in the future.

Susan says as long as Ms Margaret is still the chairperson, Lotterywest will have no association with MCCO but if a new chairperson takes over and apologises and changes the viewpoints toward same sex marriage then the outcome might be different. Also she says that Lotterywest was the major sponsor of WA's Pride Festival and it would not be well seen that they help us. I expressed that this is discrimination against Margaret Court Community Outreach as the work we have been doing for the last 20 years is not being seen, especially during Covid.

That is the interpretation of two people from the Victory Life church who were at that meeting. We could say that perhaps they got it wrong, but I seriously doubt that. I have known Barry Court all my adult life and I assure members that he is an honourable man. I do not know Bryam, but his views exactly replicate those of Barry. Honourable members do not need to take the word of these two men about it; they can take the word of Susan Hunt from Lotterywest. These are comments that she made on ABC radio during an interview with Nadia Mitsopoulos on 8 October 2020. It goes on for a while. Nadia said —

Victory Life Community Services applied for funding to purchase a new freezer van to transport food donations, why did Lotterywest reject that application?

Susan Hunt replied —

So just to give some context for this decision and how Lotterywest works, we're, as a government Grant maker and the biggest grant maker in WA certainly and potentially within Australia, we're really committed to equality and inclusion, and that is in line with government policy and also anti-discrimination legislation. Everyone knows we do have anti-discrimination legislation.

Yes, Ms Hunt, we do know that. She went on to say —

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But there are of course some that can't be supported. And in this case, Lotterywest's Board's decision was really because as an organisation, our purpose as an organisation which is clearly stated everywhere, is about building a better Western Australia together. And our approach which is led by the Board itself—the Board is the discretionary decision maker here—is to build that sense of belonging for everyone in the community, and indeed one of the pillars of our ground-making is literally to build an inclusive and thriving community.

So that's really why in this case the Lotterywest Board in their decision-making around which grants they would support felt that the grants from the Margaret Court Community Outreach Group didn't fit with that approach because of the public statements of the founder not aligning to our strong commitment to inclusion and diversity.

Nadia Mitsopoulos said —

And specifically that was in reference to Margaret Court's views on same-sex marriage?

Susan Hunt said —

Yes. And the LGBTIQ community more broadly, where she has been very outspoken, and from the feedback that we get and many of your listeners might also hear, people have been quite damaged and quite hurt and offended by that, and that really doesn't align what Lotterywest is about and I think what the majority of the community values about being West Australian.

Nadia went on to ask —

Is this a recent change that you do take into account these social issues when you look at an organisation and what they stand for?

Susan Hunt replied —

Look. Lotterywest has always had a very strong community focus. I think our direction comes clearly from our Board. They have the discretion on what organisations will be supported and they take a lot of things into account. I think Lotterywest has always had that commitment and I think that this is the first time this group has ever applied for something and so it's been highlighted.

Rubbish! Nadia then said —

So while they share those views, would it be the case that this group and any group affiliated with Victory Life Church would not be successful in getting any funding unless they recounted ... Margaret Court came out and said "I don't believe that anymore", which I doubt will happen, it's the case that, as it stands, and given what they stand for, they will be unlikely in the future to get any money from Lotterywest?

Susan Hunt said —

Well, as I mentioned, it's around our commitment to diversity and inclusion. So that stands. It's in our Grants Framework. Our Grants Framework has been more explicit around these issues. About the last three years we've had a very clear Lotterywest Grants Framework with five pillars.

Susan Hunt has clearly identified the fact that Margaret Court Community Outreach did not get a grant because of Margaret Court's views on same-sex marriage. So that is what we have come to in our society, guys!

I will just add to that. The reason that Margaret Court Community Outreach did not get the grant was not that it was not worthy or did not have merit or did not need a van because the thousands of people who were getting food did not want it anymore; it did not get funding for the van because Margaret Court had a view on same-sex marriage that differed from that of the board.

A government member interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is exactly why it did not get it. That is absolutely disgraceful!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** If the member agrees with that, he should hang his head in shame!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** When did this come about? Let us look at this social engineering that has now permeated Lotterywest after trickling down from the government. Susan Hunt said in that interview, and I mentioned this before —

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Well, as I mentioned, it's around our commitment to diversity and inclusion. So that stands. It's in our Grants Framework. Our Grants Framework has been more explicit around these issues. About the last three years we've had a very clear Lotterywest Grants Framework with five pillars.

Do members know why it has been the last three years? It is because that is when there was a change of government. What did the government do? One of the first things it did was to napalm the existing board of Lotterywest and put in its own hand-picked board—and here it is. This is exactly it. This is a media release from the Premier and the Minister for Health. Their hand-picked Lotterywest board will adhere to their whim. This is an absolute disgrace. I will get back to the pillars in a moment.

Having said that, I want to know whether the Premier agreed with this. I have asked a plethora of questions over the last week, but I get the typical response: "Look at the hand." I do not know what happened to open and transparent government that the Premier offered at the start. Every time we have a difficult issue in this place, the Premier puts up the hand: "Look at the hand." So much for transparency!

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** As I have said, this is not a Glad wrap government; this is an alfoil government. We cannot get through anything. We have more chance of getting into the Kremlin or the Vatican than we have of getting information from this mob. It is an absolute disgrace.

In one of the answers to the questions I asked, I was told to go to the Community Investment Framework, which I did. The government tabled these documents. Have a look at these, guys. These were tabled. These are the criteria for getting a grant from Lotterywest. It is a quick guide to the Lotterywest COVID-19 relief fund 2020–21 grants and information on grant making under the Community Investment Framework. This is on the website for all to see. Members can see this. I challenge anyone in this chamber to find anything in here that says that people must adhere to the government's values to get a grant. There is not one word about that. It refers to inclusive, thriving communities; connected cultural experiences; protected sustainable ecosystems and all the rest of it—all these motherhood statements. What about the 4 000 people who are getting food from Margaret Court Community Outreach every week? Do they not fall into this category? Are they not part of a smart, innovative society?

A government member interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Will you be quiet!

Do they not want to be healthy and active? Do they not want that? Are they less significant because they happen to get their food from Margaret Court's foundation? Is it less significant? Honestly, Madam President, this beggars belief! What should the Victory Life Centre do? Should it say, "We'll give you food only if you don't agree with same-sex marriage. We'll give you food only if you don't agree with voluntary assisted dying. These are our values and you get your food only if you adhere to our values"? Of course it does not do that. It is a community organisation that assists some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in our community, particularly over the last six months when people have become unemployed and have got enormous mental health issues. That foundation is assisting thousands of those people day after day and this government wants to prevent that from occurring.

Let us see whether there is some consistency with regard to this. I looked at the grant proposals approved by Lotterywest over the last three years. They are all here; they are on the website, so members can easily access them. There are literally dozens and dozens of organisations and churches that hold the same views as Victory Life Centre on same-sex marriage and other issues—exactly the same!

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Does the member mind? If he wants to talk, he can open his mouth in a minute. I am not taking interjections.

Why did dozens and dozens of other organisations get grants, yet, somehow, the Margaret Court Community Outreach program has been rejected? That is discrimination because Margaret Court has views on same-sex marriage. This is going straight back to McCarthyism in the 1950s. Do members remember Joe McCarthy from Wisconsin? He said, "We're not going to have communists. We're going to outlaw communists." In Australia, we even had a referendum on whether we could have a Communist Party. This is exactly the same. This government is saying, "These are our values. You adhere to our values or you're not going to get any grants." That is exactly what is happening. Susan Hunt brought this up as well. She said —

... I would point out that we have anti-discrimination legislation in ... Australia more broadly, and that also aligns with government policy ... the importance of diversity and inclusion. It's core to our efforts of being West Australian in my mind. Our Board has the decision-making around this and this is the decision they've come to.

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She actually states it: we have an anti-discrimination policy. How on earth is not providing a grant or saying an organisation cannot have a grant because of its views on same-sex marriage not discrimination?

Let us look at the Equal Opportunity Act. Section 62 states —

**Goods, services and facilities**

It is unlawful for a person who, whether for payment or not, provides goods or services, or makes facilities available, to discriminate against another person on the ground of the other person's religious or political conviction —

- (a) by refusing to provide the other person with those goods or services or to make those facilities available to the other person ...

It goes on. Let us look at what "services" includes. The act states —

**services** includes —

- (a) services relating to banking, insurance, superannuation and the provision of grants, loans, credit or finance ...

Quite specifically, Lotterywest has discriminated. The board of Lotterywest has pandered to the government ethos and said, "Okay, Margaret Court, you can't have a grant." That decision has been based upon her religious views. According to the Equal Opportunity Act, we are not allowed to discriminate on religious views, and that includes the provision of grants. It is black and white. If Susan Hunt wants to hang out the Equal Opportunity Act as a bastion of why Lotterywest did not approve the grant, she should get her facts right.

This is social engineering at its absolute worse. It is an absolute disgrace: "You adhere to our view or you don't get any money. You can apply to assist those in need, but we are not going to give it to you if you don't agree with our values." Is this what society has become? Does this reflect what we are as a society? I hope that Lotterywest, quite frankly, rediscovers a status as being completely devoid of political interference. I hope that every organisation that applies for a grant is judged on its merit, not on the values of the Lotterywest board.

**HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan)** [10.24 am]: Thank you very much, Madam President, for this opportunity to support the motion put forward by Hon Peter Collier, which I have taken with some enthusiasm. I want to focus specifically on Lotterywest as an institution and particularly on the word "politicisation". I want to address this issue from its genesis.

Within the first few weeks after the McGowan government's election victory, it was determined by the Premier that Mr Paul Andrew, the previous chief executive officer of Lotterywest, would effectively be targeted for removal and that the Premier had in mind a suitable replacement. This is validated by way of file notes between the Premier and the then Public Sector Commissioner Mr Wauchope, which were obtained by yours truly through a Freedom of Information Act process in the first few months of 2017. The terms of Mr Andrew's departure were revealed by way of a small article, I believe, in the business section of *The Weekend West* sometime in June or July 2017; I do not have the time line immediately to hand. Lotterywest will claim, when it is convenient, to be independent of government. Nevertheless, we are all sensible enough to know that it has a reporting obligation and that Premiers do take responsibility for the agency and customarily review board recommendations for grants. There is a political intercession in the process of awarding grants.

Governments, as has been the case, have within their gift the capacity to reshape the composition of a board through the natural attrition of members and the appointment of other individuals. I make no reflection on the individual, but I note that changes have been made to the board of Lotterywest over the last three years to the degree that Mr Jim McGinty, a Minister for Health and Attorney General in a previous Labor administration, now has a reasonably senior role. I am not completely sure of his capacity, but he is certainly on the board. Of course, boards have oversight of an organisation to direct its structure and strategy, but they do not interfere in the operational decision-making, one would hope. But it was clear from the outset that the previous CEO, for whatever reason, had fallen out of favour. A variety of reasons were put by others in the press that I will not go into because I do not necessarily know what the Premier's motivation was in the removal of the previous CEO, but that individual was removed. We sought justification for that decision and an explanation for his departure. He was otherwise a reasonably high-performing CEO, probably not without some controversy. We have CEOs to make difficult executive decisions and we understand that some people will get the rough end of the pineapple as a consequence. But no claim was ever made about Mr Andrew's lack of professionalism or his lack of competence, so the question was asked: why has he gone? The responses to that question were, frankly, evasive and muddying, but then a line was settled on that he departed by mutual agreement. When we sought to test the accuracy of that claim, a claim that was put through the Parliament in official answers to questions, the truth revealed something a little different. That gentleman was called to a meeting with the Public Sector Commissioner and a member of the board of Lotterywest and effectively advised that he

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would be going. More to the point, a media statement announcing that same fact was being drafted a week prior to that meeting. I am not sure whether Nostradamus-like figures inhibit—not inhibit, but exist —

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** Inhabit.

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Inhabit—I thank the minister so much for the assistance; I actually needed that! The difference one vowel will make!

I am not sure whether Nostradamus-like figures inhabit the government media office; nevertheless, there seemed to be some capacity for extraordinary forecasting of events on behalf of a media officer in the Premier's office who knew before the CEO of Lotterywest did that he would be soon to be departing from that organisation under the cover of a mutual agreement. That is an interesting approach, but it was very clear from the outset that change was wanted at Lotterywest, change was wanted at its executive apogee and change was enacted. When members of the opposition had the temerity, the curiosity, to wonder why that might be, we were effectively fobbed off. It is part of the problem we encounter across government. The only recourse we have ever had as an opposition to get to the truth of any matter is to go through the freedom of information process, because we cannot rely on the quality of responses we receive from this government through the ordinary questions without notice process in this chamber, and it is even more desultory in the other chamber, as we have witnessed. I think it is very clear that Lotterywest has been politicised and it was politicised within the first few weeks of the formation of the McGowan government, so this comes as no surprise, as sad as that is. Charitable organisations, although they might not meet with the ideological favour of many in our community, nevertheless do good service, but if their conduct or the members who drive those organisations are somehow held in ill repute by an organisation such as Lotterywest, if they do not abide by its ideological niceties and predispositions, they will get rough treatment, because this organisation has been politicised. It quite clearly has an agenda.

Might I also recount a personal tale. It is often the role of a member of Parliament who is connected to their community, and wants to see their community organisations flourish, to support that organisation in its application for grants via Lotterywest. I had occasion to do this, I think, 12 to 18 months ago. The organisation was a community childcare centre in the northern suburbs; I will not name it. Both the sitting Labor member and I wrote letters of support to facilitate that grant application. When some months later I went back to that organisation and asked how the application was going, it said it was going well, but was advised that letters from MPs—this is the flip side of the politicisation coin—were not considered to be helpful.

When institutions like this are politicised, they start to take on a life of their own. No-one voted for any member of Lotterywest's executive or its staff, and that is correct. A board was appointed, but I am sorry to say that it is clear that the culture of the organisation has deteriorated under the term of this government, and it is too treasured an institution to be debased in this manner. The absolute example of this debasement is the inappropriate—I would suggest prejudicial—treatment of Margaret Court's organisation. It must stop. This rot must end.

**HON RICK MAZZA (Agricultural)** [10.34 am]: I rise to make a few comments on this motion that has been moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I have never met Margaret Court, but I have obviously read quite a bit in the newspaper about some of her views. She has had quite a profile and had a stellar sporting career over the years. Obviously, her church, Victory Life Centre, is doing some significant charitable work in the community, helping tens of thousands of families, so for Lotterywest now to deny this grant funding because of her views is reprehensible.

Margaret Court has been quite vocal about the fact that she did not support same-sex marriage, but we have had the public debate. It has been and gone. We should not be punishing people for a view they took in a public debate. The result of that public debate was that we had a quasi-referendum that was basically part of a survey. It was not compulsory for people to vote. As it fell at the end of the day, I think 60 per cent of people supported same-sex marriage and 40 per cent of people did not. Forty per cent is still a significant part of the population. Many people did not vote; they were just ambivalent about the whole thing. People should not now be punished for the views they held as part of that cancel culture that seems to be going around by which if people hold a particular view, they are punished for it. It makes me wonder what would have happened if the vote had been the other way and same-sex marriage had not been supported. Would that mean that everyone who supported same-sex marriage should then be punished?

Lotterywest has completely politicised this issue. For Lotterywest not to support Margaret Court, who is doing much good in the community helping tens of thousands of families, is absolutely wrong. Lotterywest should be non-political. I read a media article stating that Lotterywest supports the gay pride march, and that is fine. That does not mean that it cannot then support Margaret Court's Victory Life Centre, which is providing support to vulnerable people in our community. With those few words, I support the motion moved by Hon Peter Collier. Lotterywest really needs to be taken to task on this issue. Not to support a charitable organisation because one member holds a particular view is absolutely wrong, and I do not think it reflects the majority of the community.

**The PRESIDENT:** I give the call to the Minister for Regional Development. I assume that you are replying on behalf of the government.

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**HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Regional Development)** [10.37 am]:  
I am replying on behalf of the government.

We have listened intently to the debate, and I think there has been a very significant omission from this discussion—that is, what precisely caused Lotterywest to be concerned. The mover of the motion and all of the speakers so far have talked about this being a question of one's position on marriage equality. It is more than that. Susan Hunt, the CEO of Lotterywest, made that very, very clear in her interview, to which the mover of the motion referred. She made it very clear that it was not simply a question of the views on marriage equality. It was the views that have been expressed on many, many occasions by Margaret Court, the person who leads this organisation that applied for the grant and who has very, very vocally taken a particular stand on homosexuality and LGBT issues in general. She is entitled to do that. It is also incredibly important that organisations such as Lotterywest are cognisant of what is being promoted under the banner of this organisation. I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition would have understood that it can be very, very destructive to people in the LGBTIQ community to repeatedly hear that homosexuality is ungodly, that it emanates from a lust for the flesh, and that LGBTIQ tendencies in young people is the work of the devil.

In the quite proper view of the board of Lotterywest, these views are antithetical to the very aspirations of Lotterywest. I thought the Lotterywest CEO, Susan Hunt, put that very, very well in her ABC interview. She talked about the fact that she and the board saw the fundamental work of Lotterywest, taken in a holistic way, was to build a sense of belonging amongst the community of Western Australia. No-one is disputing that that organisation does some good work, but Lotterywest nonetheless has a view that the percentage of our population who identify as LGBTIQ are deserving of respect. I think that percentage is acknowledged to be five per cent; some people say that it is 10 per cent, but I think we can probably accept the figure of around five per cent. For Lotterywest to fund an organisation whose very strong views on the LGBTIQ community undermines the self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of self-worth of that percentage of the population would be fundamentally wrong.

I commend the board for its decision. It was a hard decision, but I will say that it had nothing to do with the state government; it came from the board. As I understand it, at a board meeting on 20 August the CEO sought guidance for a grant request. She was aware that this organisation, and particularly its principal, had on many occasions and very prominently expressed a view—a view it is entitled to—that says to a considerable percentage of the population, “Your fundamental orientation and the relationships that you enter into are antithetical to goodness”. That is amazing. There are certainly members in this chamber who are of LGBTIQ orientation; how demeaning is that to them, for that organisation to actually have those views? Should an organisation like Lotterywest that, in its essence, is about building a strong, inclusive community support an organisation that has been very prominent in its critique of those people and their lifestyle?

I read some fantastic news today —

**Hon Simon O'Brien** interjected.

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** Sorry, member? What was that comment?

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** You don't get it, do you?

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** I absolutely get it. I get why —

Several members interjected.

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** Under the banner —

**The PRESIDENT:** Minister, stop. It is really, really difficult for Hansard to do their job. They are no longer on the floor; they are above us, and if there are additional voices, it is hard for them to hear what the person with the call has to say. I ask members to listen quietly and let the minister finish what she has to say. If you have something to add to the debate, I will give you the call in due course.

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** There were 800 applications received during the COVID period. Obviously, Lotterywest could not provide money to all the worthy organisations that applied, so decisions had to be made about where to best place those funds. The board's view—I think, a quite reasonable proposition—was that it was appropriate for it to apply a filter to an organisation that fundamentally promotes itself as an organisation that says to around five per cent of the population, “Your lifestyle is not acceptable to us”. It is quite wrong to suggest that this was just about the organisation's position on marriage equality; it was not. The member has been deliberately filtering the board's resolution and the CEO's statements. I can understand why he might want to filter them out, but I have listened to the broadcast and heard the CEO very clearly correct the journalist, Nadia Mitsopoulos, when she proposed that it was because of marriage equality and LGBTIQ issues generally.

From concerns expressed by the board in the minutes of the meeting, it is clear that its concerns were about public statements made by the founder of the organisation, Margaret Court, on gay and lesbian issues and marriage

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equality. It was not just the organisation's position on marriage equality; it was the very prominent position taken by Margaret Court and her church on this issue.

There was some fantastic news today that Pope Francis has moved into the twenty-first century—hopefully, taking the Catholic Church with him. He has expressed support for same-sex civil unions, in some of the clearest language he has used in respect of the rights of LGBTIQ people. I think he has actually been inspired by Christian principles, and by the lessons of Jesus Christ. He is quoted in an article published today in *The Guardian* —

“Homosexual people have a right to be in a family. They are children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out or be made miserable over it. What we have to create is a civil union law. That way they are legally covered.

It is really important to understand that this is much broader than just an opinion on civil union. It is a much broader debate and concern about a whole history of declarations that homosexuality is wrong, ungodly and the work of the devil. That is of deep concern to an organisation whose very essence is to build strength.

Of course, board members are always appointed by government, but the current board has had an evolution of board members. Two of those members, still there after three and a half years, were appointed under the previous government. It is important to remember, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, that this was a unanimous decision of the board that includes board members who were appointed under the previous government.

Lotterywest is a fantastic organisation that is out there working hard with the community. I think listening to that contribution by Susan Hunt, the CEO, would give everyone great confidence that this organisation truly wants to work with and develop the community and provide a sense of belonging and inclusiveness, those fundamental Western Australian values. We always have to make some difficult decisions about what we are going to support. If an organisation suggested that certain ethnicities were ungodly, in this equation it would be inappropriate to give funding to such an organisation. It is not a decision of government; it is a decision of the board. Absolutely no reference was made to the government over this decision. There was no involvement of any minister in any way shape or form. It is important to understand the rationale of the board and not apply a filter or try to screen out the fact that this was a concern not even necessarily principally about the position on marriage equality legislation, but rather on the whole issue of LGBTIQ issues generally. That was the fundamental focus of the concern and I am surprised that we have not heard the Leader of the Opposition or any other member get up and acknowledge the real focus of this debate.

**HON AARON STONEHOUSE (South Metropolitan) [10.53 am]:** I am glad to rise to speak in support of the motion that is about the politicisation of government agencies and institutions, with specific reference to Lotterywest. Of course, I am referring to the news we have been debating today, which is that an outreach program run by Mrs Margaret Court was refused a grant from Lotterywest on the basis of her biblical views on same-sex marriage. That is deeply concerning for a few reasons. Firstly, I would like to point out an issue that has been ignored so far, which is the precedent that this sets, that Lotterywest will conduct a purity test. It will examine the personal views held by people applying for grants, and that will be a criterion on which grants are applied or refused. That is quite incredible. I wonder whether the government, which is so eager to endorse Lotterywest's decision to refuse a grant on Mrs Court's biblical views on same-sex marriage, is aware of the mainstream Muslim view on same-sex marriage, the mainstream Jewish view on same-sex marriage or the mainstream views of any other number of religions when it comes to same-sex marriage. I think it will find that quite a large portion of the religious community, whether they are Christian, Muslim, Jewish or any other non-Abrahamic religion, will be that of a so-called traditional view of marriage. Are we saying to the religious Western Australian community that they need not apply for grants, or that if they want a grant they will have to change their views and go back on perhaps thousands of years of religious doctrine if they want to apply for a grant? That is the implication.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! One person is on their feet.

**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** I know backbenchers are eager to engage, and I am sure they will have an opportunity to get up and express their views after I am done, but a concerning precedent is being set; it really is. I know that the so-called progressive, tolerant left—not so tolerant in this case, of course—likes to convince itself that all the various groups that make up its little intersectional alliances are somehow aligned on its progressive views on gender and sexuality. That is not the case, of course. Members will be reminded, I am sure they have not forgotten, that in 2015, Indigenous elders Pepai Carroll and Yumina Ken presented a bark petition on behalf of 46 Indigenous communities urging the federal Parliament to oppose same-sex marriage. They are entitled to hold that view, of course. But will these Aboriginal groups, which have a traditional view of marriage, be refused grants? It is very easy for us to point to Margaret Court, who said some things that I would think, while not necessarily out of step with the mainstream Christian doctrine, were certainly expressed in a way that was offensive. It is easy to single her out and say that her views are incompatible with modern progressive ideals, but what about Aboriginal



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communities and Aboriginal groups? Will we single them out too and refuse them grants based on their views on same-sex marriage? What about Muslims? I mentioned them, too. They are of course entitled to their views.

I point members to an ABC article from 2017, titled, “Same-sex marriage: Why have Muslims been so quiet in the debate?” A gentleman by the name of Ali Kadri, a spokesman for the Islamic Council of Queensland said —

“Unfortunately, in the current climate, the right and conservative side has attacked Muslims as terrorists and extremists, and naturally the left side has been allies in defending us for a long period of time,” he said.

“We are afraid if we come out with our opinion —

He is referring to their opinion on same-sex marriage —

then the left may abandon us for going against their view and we can’t be friendly with the conservatives because they have been bashing us for 15, 20 years every chance they get ... and that includes some Christian sects as well.”

It is not just Pentecostal Christians and Margaret Court who hold these views on same-sex marriage; it is a large portion of the religious community—Christians, Jews, Muslims and other religions. The precedent being set is deeply concerning. It is a rather terrifying idea that a community grant program will now be gate-kept by progressive puritans conducting their own witch-hunt, their own inquisition, with all the dogmatic zealotry of years gone by applied to a progressive mindset, and that they will filter out grant applications, apply purity tests, and sweat people and grill them about their views on modern gender theory, same-sex marriage and the gender pay gap. Based on their answers to those questions, they may approve or reject a grant. That is a disgusting view, and it is not a tolerant or inclusive policy to implement. I find it rather funny that apparently the reason that Lotterywest has refused this grant is that it likes to think of itself as an organisation with a commitment to equality and inclusion. How does it remain committed to equality and inclusion when its actions are to exclude a large portion of the community—that is, religious people with a view on same-sex marriage?

I found it rather funny when the Minister for Regional Development gave us the government’s view, which was a glowing endorsement of the board’s decision. That was not really much of a surprise, considering the Labor Party stacked the board with its own political hacks, including people like Jim McGinty. Talk about nepotism and jobs for the boys: “Don’t worry, former MPs, we’ll put you on the board —

*Point of Order*

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I have been listening to the honourable member’s contribution. I note that standing order 43, “Reference to Other Members”, states —

A Member shall only refer to other Members by their title of office or their name.

I understand that Hon Jim McGinty has retired from Parliament; however, I take exception to this member referring to Hon Jim McGinty as a political hack. I ask for your guidance, Madam President.

**The PRESIDENT:** There is no point of order. The member will find, when he has been here for a while, that those terms, sadly, get used frequently across the chamber. Although Hon Jim McGinty is regarded as, and has deserved the title of “honourable” as a result of being a minister in the other place, I do not think that is a title he would expect to use on a daily basis. There is no point of order on this occasion.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** I will of course try to use his correct title and honorific, although I have many more prerogatives if the government Whip would like to hear them!

Back to the point, I find it interesting that the Minister for Regional Development said that the various statements Mrs Court made in public were deeply hurtful. Actually, I am not so sure that they were public. I think giving a sermon to a church is not necessarily intended for broadcast out to the wider LGBT community. Nevertheless, these comments made their way into the public arena and the minister said that they were deeply hurtful. It is absurd and insane to say that to engage in a particular act is sinful or ungodly or hurtful and harmful to a group of people. A long list of things are considered sins and ungodly, which I am sure many of us engage in on a daily basis, but people do not take offence at. I will give an example. I am not a practising Muslim. I do not know for certain, but I assume the Muslim view is that I would probably be bound for hell as somebody who does not practise that way of life and prescribe to that faith. I am not offended by that view, of course. Why would I be? I do not believe in that particular religion or that religious doctrine or beliefs. How could I possibly be offended by something like that? It is almost insulting to think that people of the LGBT community are so fragile that the comments of one lady at her church are somehow a threat to their wellbeing. I would suggest that perhaps LGBT people have better things to do than run around looking at what Margaret Court’s views are on their lifestyle choices. I think that is rather ridiculous. If the test we are going to apply is, “Has a grant applicant said something that may hurt somebody else’s

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feelings or may make them upset?”, that is an insane and completely subjective test to apply. It is not an inclusive test. Is the concern here that Lotterywest needs to be internally consistent with its grants applications: it supports Pride; that is okay; that is fine; no problem with that; therefore, it cannot support Margaret Court’s organisation, with its views on traditional marriage? If so, how on earth does it give grants to the archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church and also give grants to various Muslim organisations or various non-religious organisations, Jewish organisations and various other Christian denominations—Protestants, Orthodox?

There is obviously no problem with giving out grants to various groups that have competing, differing or contrary views. This is quite clearly, firstly, a political hit job. Margaret Court is out of favour with the progressive elite. The progressive elite controls the Lotterywest board, so it will punish her for her wrongthink and for her controversial views—views, I might remind members, that were rather mainstream two or three decades ago. Secondly, it is more than politicisation; it is the weaponisation of a non-partisan institution to carry out the political will of the Labor Party of Western Australia. That is disgusting.

We passed a bill here months ago to protect Lotterywest from encroachment from competition from Lottoland. We did that to secure that institution, Lotterywest, to keep it preserved so it could continue doing its work in the community. I opposed that bill, and I am glad that I did. It is interesting that after the Parliament moved to protect that institution, it is now politicised.

**HON PIERRE YANG (South Metropolitan)** [11.04 am]: I want to make a very short contribution. If anyone was playing politics with government organisations, it was the former Barnett government. There were countless examples of the Barnett government trying to politicise government funding and grants to its advantage. I am not going to address the ridiculous argument that the Leader of the Opposition has put forward, targeting an independent government organisation, which has an independent board and conducts its own assessments. I want to stand up for the LGBTI community. The arguments we have heard from the right today are dinosaur views from the nineteenth century. They are ridiculous and they have no place in a twenty-first century Australia. I am proud to be a Catholic. I am proud to hear that the Pope has given his views on these issues. I am sick and tired of hearing people bashing the LGBTI community. It is totally disgusting. These views do not belong in this day and age. It is not right for people who put forward these views about the LGBTI community to say that people will not be offended by them. It is just not right. Words can be hurtful and harmful. People are demonising a community and they should be very careful with what they say. People have views, and they are entitled to their views. That is fine; we live in a democracy. However, it is not right to portray a community in such a way. People in leadership positions who have a congregation, if I heard correctly, 4 000 members —

**Hon Peter Collier:** No; they assist 4 000 members a week.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** Could the Leader of the Opposition help me—how many people are in her congregation?

**Hon Peter Collier:** I have no idea; I do not go to the church. That is not the point.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** It is exactly the point I am talking about. I am talking about the narrative that people are portraying about a community. People listen to their leaders. People can be influenced by their leaders. If the views being portrayed about a community are “ungodly” and all this rubbish put forward by certain people against the LGBTI community, I must say that I do not agree. I think the views I heard put by the right today are totally obscene and unbecoming.

**HON MICHAEL MISCHIN (North Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [11.07 am]: I wholeheartedly support the motion. Frankly, the position we have heard from the Minister for Regional Development and from Hon Pierre Yang, and the little thought bubbles from Hon Darren West across the chamber, highlight the problem. Apparently, people are entitled to any view they like in this free community under this Labor government, as long as it agrees with the Labor Party’s view. If people do not share the same view, if they want to get money out of an independent organisation, a statutory authority, using public funds, supposedly for good works within the bounds of its legislation, it is okay for the board to assume a role of support for government policy, support for government objectives and support for the political fashion of the time, but if you do not like that, change your views! Then, public money can be given to those members of the public who have contributed to that fund. As long as views accord with what the government and its stacked board thinks is all right, that is fine. We also have the pretence of the board being independent with maximum deniability. The Premier can say, “I’ve got nothing to do with that. Don’t ask me. Go and ask someone else.” Let us look at who is on the board—that is, Hon Jim McGinty. We know his position on things. Recently, there was a debate about the Corruption and Crime Commission and about the independence of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission in making nominations to the government about who ought to be the next Corruption and Crime Commissioner. What did he say about it? He said that that parliamentary committee ought to take direction from the leader of the government and the Leader of the Opposition. He said that it was a travesty that it should come to its own independent position and that it should be taking direction. The travesty is that under his legislation he set up a parliamentary committee

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that is, apparently, just going to follow the directions of its leaders. That is the travesty, and that is the same sort of thing that is happening under this government. We have seen it before. We saw it during the Burke years. There was the pretence of independence, but not the fact. It is all a question of who is put on these boards and who is appointed. That process is now being overridden for the CCC by the very idea that the Labor Party and the Attorney General have preselected the previous commissioner, Hon John McKechnie, as being the Labor candidate after the next election. They have preselected him for the seat of Corruption and Crime Commissioner.

**Hon Darren West:** You appointed him!

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** We did! We followed a process and we respected that process. We did not nominate someone and try to change the law to have that person appointed. Do not try that one on, Hon Darren West! There was a process and we respected it.

That is not the first time that we have seen the politicisation of institutions here. It happened right from the very beginning. Amber-Jade Sanderson was appointed as the Parliamentary Secretary of the Cabinet.

**Hon Pierre Yang:** The honourable!

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** She is not “the honourable”. Keep up!

She was appointed as cabinet secretary. After the Burke years, the Commission on Government recommended against that. It recommended that not a politician, but a public servant be appointed to that position. Even former Premier Geoff Gallop supported that recommendation.

**Hon Darren West:** The Court government had a cabinet secretary.

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** That is right. That was the last time. Even Geoff Gallop supported that recommendation. What is the first thing that Premier McGowan did? He appointed someone, gave them a pay rise, put them in that position and threw away that recommendation. That was politicisation of that position.

I refer to the appointment of the Governor. I have no criticism of His Excellency the Governor Hon Kim Beazley as a person or for the way he has conducted himself, but the fact remains that 70 years of convention was just kicked out the door and ignored. However members opposite dress it up, he is a Labor Party member—or he was up until his appointment—he was the friend and mentor of the Premier, and his daughter is politically active. So much for independence! The Premier absolutely destroyed the very concept and disregarded those conventions simply to give a job to someone he believes he owes a favour to.

Let us look at the way one of the industrial relations commissioners was appointed. I appointed some commissioners during my time as Minister for Commerce. What I did was unique and I thought that it would set a standard—that is, I advertised. I set out the job description, the job requirements and the key performance indicators for that position. I left it open for anyone to apply. I had applicants writing in from the unions and others. People were assessed independently and appointed. What did this minister do when he got into office? He appointed Toni Walkington, the head of a union. She was very quiet at the time about what the government had been doing to the public sector and she got a reward. When I asked questions about what process had been followed, the minister said that he had followed the process under the act; namely, he nominated someone and appointed them. He did not advertise, or set out any job description or expectations. When I asked questions, his explanation was that he thought it needed a union member. So much for a lack of politicisation! There is another institution gone.

I refer to the Lotterywest issue. I entirely endorse the comments that have been made by Hon Aaron Stonehouse about the precedent that it sets. I entirely support the motion before us. This sets a dangerous precedent. It now appears that Lotterywest is an arm of government. It now appears, worse than that, that under the pretence of being independent, Lotterywest will decide what is acceptable and not acceptable to the public. I would like to know how many organisations have expressed views contrary to the views that Hon Darren West, the minister and the government find acceptable but, nevertheless, received grants from Lotterywest. The principle at the moment seems to be that organisations can hold whatever views they like, but they have to be quiet about them because if the government notices, that organisation can forget about getting any money out of this independent organisation that should be looking at the merits of the case. No doubt I, Hon Aaron Stonehouse and others have said something today that will put us in the bad books. We can forget about trying to support an organisation for a grant from Lotterywest because it will look at it to see whether it has taken offence at it. I now have absolutely no confidence that it will operate in accordance with its charter and responsibility. It is all the fault of this government because this government likes maximum deniability. It sets up boards to run these organisations and then says, “Don’t look at us. Ask them!” How do we ask them? The government says that is not its problem. This is not the only institution that this government has facilitated in its politicisation. It appointed that board.

Instead of the government coming out and saying that it does not agree that that is a legitimate criterion for denying an organisation funds to do good work, and although it does not endorse that organisation’s views, Lotterywest ought to work towards its charter and maximise the use of the funds that the public has contributed to its coffers in a way

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that will benefit members of the community, it jumps up and defends its idea of how Lotterywest ought to have regard to an irrelevant consideration in accordance with its legislation and its charter—namely, the views that some or one member of that organisation has expressed. That is the precedent. It appears that in the future, Lotterywest will be entitled to check out who speaks on behalf of any community organisation and if it does not like what they say, the organisation can forget about the worthy cause that it supports. Quite frankly, for Hon Darren West to support that is a disgrace. He said it should change its views! That is the message that this government is sending out. Mind you, he is, after all, a parliamentary secretary, although he had his phone taken away from him once because he expressed views that the government could not abide. That is a disgrace!

**HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan)** [11.17 am]: The honourable Leader of the Opposition is well motivated in bringing this motion to the chamber. He made his case very well. I want to respond to some of the government's response to this motion and to call it out for some of its gross failures.

Firstly, it was suggested that the honourable Leader of the Opposition was quoting selectively. That is absolutely false. He was, in fact, quoting fully and in context from documents relating to transcripts of live radio interviews. I listened very closely to what the member had to say. The record will show that he did not engage in a process of disingenuousness in any way shape or form. In contrast, and with due respect to the member, I would say that the government has failed in a number of ways on this occasion. The government had the opportunity today to say, "No, we do not stand for politicisation of institutions. No, we do not stand for people being victimised because someone did not like something they said, or because someone in a position of power or a position to withhold funds decides to victimise someone. We do not stand for that." It did not do that. The minister got up today and, in effect, doubled down on the government's position, defending it as an appropriate use of power and influence.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Indeed, if that remark was picked up by Hansard, the Leader of the Opposition quite clearly did not rely on any such argument.

The honourable minister even quoted the Pope. I would suggest that she misquoted her presentation of Pope Francis's edict that was apparently issued the other day. He was not talking about endorsing same-sex marriage; he was in fact saying that we need to accommodate people in all sorts of family circumstances through civil arrangements, but that is not the point. The point is whether people should be victimised and whether whole charities should be victimised in the most specific case of Lotterywest grant applications, and apparently it is the government's view that yes, indeed, they should be. We now have that on the record. As I say, the government actually doubled down on this view today. That is to its very significant discredit. It is not about what someone might have said in temperate or intemperate terms from the pulpit or when doorstopped by interviewers trying to ambush her. No; it is about an application from an organisation seeking funds I think on this occasion to obtain a refrigerated vehicle to help in the distribution of foodstuff to the needy. That is, without any sense of a pun, bread and butter for a worthy charity that deserves Lotterywest support.

I do not know where this is going to end. The other day, I conveyed privately to you, Madam President, that I had a number of Lotto numbers come up on Saturday. I have been investing in Lotto products, as they are called, every Saturday for a very long time. In fact, one of my numbers is 31. That was my age when I first started buying tickets. A few numbers came up the other night, and, as far as I can see, even though I am a registered player, I have not seen any dividend, massive or otherwise, credited to my account. Is there now a cloud hanging over me because of the views that I express, and I am not a worthy recipient of Lotterywest funds? A dividend of \$24.60 may not seem big to a lot of people, but it is the principle.

Jokes aside, the principle here is very clear. It is well articulated by the Leader of the Opposition, and it is very much to the discredit of the government that it has chosen to deliberately deny the truth of the assertions of the Leader of the Opposition in moving this motion. I think it stands to its very grave discredit.

**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary)** [11.23 am]: In the dying seconds, I rise to show my absolute support for Lotterywest and the great work it does in the community. We are the only state that retains its lottery, and so we should. We should never outsource or privatise Lotterywest. Everywhere I go across the Agricultural Region, I see that it delivers much-needed funding to worthy community groups. I support Lotterywest and its board and I support its stance on this. I do not agree with the motion or the premise put.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.