

CORONAVIRUS — GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS — EASING

304. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Premier:

I refer to the overwhelmingly successful response to COVID-19 by Western Australians in stopping the spread of this virus.

- (1) Can the Premier update the house on the government's road map in easing COVID-19 restrictions?
- (2) Can the Premier advise the house what the phase 2 easing of restrictions that came into force yesterday has meant for Western Australians, in particular local businesses?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Murray–Wellington for the question and I thank all the small business owners and employees out there across Western Australia for their patience over the course of the last eight to 10 weeks. I know it has been very tough and very difficult for many businesses. It has been heartbreaking to watch what has taken place. We announced on Sunday a week ago a road map out of what has taken place. We implemented phase 2 yesterday. A range of businesses are now able to better trade in accordance with traditional trading than they were able to before that. We realise it is not perfect and there will be further stages of easing of restrictions, assuming low rates of infection in the future. But to recap from yesterday: everyone was encouraged to go to work unless they were unwell. It appears many people are taking up that advice. Western Australian cafes, restaurants and bars are able to reopen for dine-in services and this has allowed many to dramatically enhance and increase their trade. The number of people in the restaurants and cafes is double what is permitted in the eastern states and that reflects the great way Western Australians have taken up the case for more hygiene and better social distancing and the like. Double the number of people are able to attend cafes and restaurants in Western Australia compared with those in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia. Fitness classes, public swimming pools, community centres and libraries have reopened. School attendance is now compulsory. As of yesterday, we had 90 per cent attendance. That is back to normal levels, which is terrific. That allows for not only great education, but also parents to go to work. We have also put in place the COVID Safety Plan to assist businesses, and place training packages, particularly for people working in restaurants and in the hospitality industry generally. The COVID Safety Plan has had thousands of downloads. Elective surgery is now back above 50 per cent. We have taken a cautious, but I think responsible, approach. We could not open everything at once. Obviously, we will monitor the situation and continue to open up over the coming weeks, assuming low rates of infection.

One of the things I am constantly asked about is the hard border with the east. I am asked about it every single day. I have said constantly that that is one of the final things we will lift. Whilst people may not like it, including the New South Wales Premier and, it appears, some federal ministers, that is tough. We will keep it in place for as long as is necessary. We have had only one new case in Western Australia over the course of the last week. By contrast, Victoria has had 59 new cases that it knows about, New South Wales has had 15 new cases that it knows about, and Queensland has had 10 new cases that it knows about. I found it grossly irresponsible that the Leader of the Liberal Party would call for the border with the east to be brought down at this time. It is not the safe or right thing to do. It is not the right time for this to be called for. I urge the leader of the state Liberal Party not to follow the lead of the New South Wales Premier. Just because the New South Wales Liberal Premier calls for it does not mean that the Liberal Party in Western Australia should follow suit. It is not the right time or the safe time for it. It is contrary to medical advice that we bring it down at this time. If the Liberal Party wants to make Western Australia a less safe place, be that on its head.