

PUBLIC SECTOR — WAGES

529. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Treasurer:

I have a supplementary question. As the Treasurer, the minister who sets wages policy, is the Premier comfortable with the fact that he is too busy to front up and explain to these workers, who are opposed, why they must take a pay cut in real terms but shamelessly available to quaff expensive wine at dinners with a select few businessmen?

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

The Leader of the Opposition took off recently and flew to Sydney to attend some conference with some of her conservative friends rather than come to Parliament. That is what happened recently. I was attacked by the opposition for going to Collie and addressing the assembled workforces about the ongoing arrangements for the coal industry, which I just say to you all is not a pleasant experience to do. But I went down there and I did it, whereas the Leader of the Opposition took off from Parliament to fly to Sydney to catch up with some friends. So do not come in here running those arguments.

Ms M.J. Davies: Don't mislead the Parliament.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, that is what happened.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, Minister for Transport!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I attend a great many events and functions. The other week I did a roundtable dinner with the pharmacy industry. There was a range of businesspeople there. They served food and wine. Next week or the week after, I will be attending the Business Council of Australia dinner in Sydney as part of the national cabinet meetings. I assume that at that dinner, food and wine will be served.

Dr D.J. Honey: Yes, it'll be a \$20 bottle of wine.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know what wine will be served.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party, this is not your question.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is beyond pathetic that you do that, Leader of the Liberal Party, considering you want to use your taxpayer-funded office for fundraisers for the Liberal Party. That is what you do.

I will be attending the Business Council of Australia dinner, I assume with other Premiers and the Prime Minister and the like, in Sydney shortly as part of the national cabinet meetings, followed by the skills summit. I do not know what food or wine will be served. I do not control that. I think any reasonable person would understand that. But I will be attending, and I assume there will be property developers there. I assume there will be very high net worth individuals there. I do not know. Maybe I will meet them. Maybe I will talk to them. That is what you do in these roles. It is very naive not to understand that.

In terms of the workforce, as I said, our offer is three per cent plus three per cent, plus 0.5 per cent superannuation each year, plus a \$2 500 up-front payment, which is more generous than New South Wales and Victoria, and that is whilst the cost of living here is significantly less.

On top of that, we have brought many of our employees in health, in prisons, in transport and in Main Roads back in house, with more secure employment. We have converted around 15 000 to 20 000 employees, who for many years had very insecure work, to permanent positions, particularly in education and health. We have provided domestic violence leave. We have put in place workers' compensation reforms to assist the workforce, and cost-of-living improvements. One of the things we are most proud of is that when we came to office, we reinstated the cuts to the agriculture portfolio and provided additional staff. That was cut by the National Party. We also ensured that education assistants were re-employed and given greater permanency. They are the sorts of things that we have done in office. Not many of them get attention, but I can tell you that for the people involved —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Are you going to take off to Sydney again for a conference with your friends and miss Parliament?

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Are you going to take off and catch up with your friends over in Sydney and miss Parliament? That is what you do. You missed Parliament on Tuesday, I note.

These are the sorts of initiatives that we have put in place as a government to support the workforce across Western Australia, because that is what good governments do.

