

QUARANTINE ADVISORY PANEL — QUARANTINE FACILITIES

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

I refer to the Premier's suggestion yesterday that Exmouth and Busselton would be good locations for COVID quarantine facilities.

- (1) Has the Quarantine Advisory Panel met since its formation last Thursday; and, if so, when and how many times?
- (2) If not, why does the Premier keep plucking towns and locations for quarantine sites out of the air instead of letting his own panel do the work that it was convened for in a methodical and sensible way?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1)–(2) Obviously, the issues surrounding COVID have been going on for the best part of 18 months. Every day I get questions on it at press conferences. Basically, I do a press conference every day and I get questions on this issue, as I have for the best part of 500 days now. Clearly, every single state has had some issues with hotel quarantine; in fact, we had an issue this week, despite all our efforts. That is because hotels are not built for this purpose. One of the things that has been suggested many, many times by people across the community and by the Liberal Party and National Party in this state is that we need to look for alternatives. Then, when I come out and suggest some quite reasonable alternatives, members opposite come in here and attack me!

The Liberal Party's position on this is that the state should pay for the commonwealth's responsibility for hotel quarantine. This is the Liberal Party's responsibility—your alliance partners! The Liberal Party's view is that states should pay for the commonwealth's responsibility and that we should look for alternatives. The instant we suggest an alternative, the Liberal Party's view is that is not right—not in my backyard! The Liberal Party and National Party are nimbys. You are nimbys. You are conservative nimbys, which is not an unusual thing, I might add.

Obviously, when I think about it, when there are airports that can take large aircraft and they are in regional areas outside the CBD of Perth, they are worth considering. Everyone across the country, including the press, is always saying, "Come up with some new ideas!" That is what we have done; we are coming up with new ideas on how to deal with a difficult situation. That is what has happened. We will continue to work on this. Obviously, the best solution is for everyone to get vaccinated, but we will continue to work on this. I saw a news report with people in Busselton saying that this is a great idea. The only person who opposes it is the member for Vasse.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It might be a good idea, and we will work with the commonwealth—because quarantine is its responsibility—on these sorts of ideas to deal with the situation. It may well be that if, at some point in time, a facility is built that that facility may be able to be used beyond the pandemic for purposes such as worker accommodation in Exmouth. They have a shortage of worker accommodation across that region. A facility there might be able to be used for those purposes. I do not know if members have ever been to Learmonth, but it is a pretty isolated airport. It is a massive airport. It is actually an Air Force strip that was built by the Americans, I think, in the 1960s. It has gun emplacements there to protect them from whoever might attack Exmouth, but it has the capacity for security and all those sorts of things. In the case of the Busselton Margaret River Airport, it was recently upgraded and it has had a lot of money spent on it. It is in a community that is reasonably close to the hospitals in Perth, so it is worth considering. But all members opposite do is carp and whinge. They demand solutions to this, but when ideas are proposed, they say they are no good. That is the way members opposite act. The Liberals and Nationals are nimbys!