

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr David Templeman; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Jessica Shaw; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr John Quigley

MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION — PERFORMANCE

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Leader of the Opposition) [10.05 am] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be moved forthwith —

That this house calls on the Minister for Child Protection to resign for her maladministration of her important portfolios and the Department of Communities, placing vulnerable children at an unacceptable and completely avoidable risk of attack by known sex offenders.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney): Thank you, members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I believe that we have negotiated that the suspension will be agreed to by the government, and that the Leader of the House will speak to an amendment with respect to the time that will be allocated for this very important debate on this very serious issue.

Standing Orders Suspension — Amendment to Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [10.06 am]: The government will be defending this motion very strongly. However, I move —

That the following words be added to the motion after “forthwith” —

, subject to the debate being limited to 20 minutes for government members and 20 minutes for non-government members

Amendment put and passed.

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion, as Amended

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney): Members, as this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need the support of an absolute majority in order to succeed. If I hear a dissentient voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Leader of the Opposition) [10.07 am]: I move the motion.

The motion that we have moved today is very serious. We do not move this lightly.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, this is your last warning.

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call you for the first time, member for Swan Hills.

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call you for the second time, member for Swan Hills.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We do not move this motion lightly. We raised this issue yesterday, and, given the Minister for Child Protection’s indifferent approach to this issue, we felt we were left with no choice.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: This minister has failed the children of Western Australia. There is serious maladministration in her portfolio, and she should resign.

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr David Templeman; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Jessica Shaw; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr John Quigley

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Mr Acting Speaker, the member for Swan Hills made some comments that are very unparliamentary, and I ask her to withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney): Member for Swan Hills, I remind you that you have been called twice already, and I will be reluctant to ask you to leave the house, but I will if I have to. Carry on, please, Leader of the Opposition.

Debate Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: This is a really serious issue, and the opposition treats this very seriously. We have not called for the resignation of a minister, except until this point.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Kingsley, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I would hope that these members would listen to us prosecute our point. I will not be intimidated by the banshees on the backbench, because we have a very important matter to raise.

Withdrawal of Remark

Ms J.J. SHAW: I think that is unparliamentary language. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney): Leader of the Opposition, I ask you to withdraw that description, please.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Acting Speaker, I withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you.

Debate Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have a very important matter to raise. I hope that members will listen to what we have to say and that I will be heard in silence while I prosecute this point.

Mr M. Hughes interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Kalamunda, I call you for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Today, the opposition has moved a motion to suspend standing orders to call for the Minister for Child Protection to resign, and we have done that for a very good reason. This minister has failed the children of Western Australia. Last week, the Office of the Auditor General handed down a report, and that report identified that there were 53 individuals who were able to work with children for periods as long as six months in roles such as counselling services, babysitting services, overnight camps, tutoring services and one-on-one contact with children, and they were subsequently found to pose such a high risk to children that they were refused a working with children card. This is a really serious matter.

The opposition did not react immediately to that report from the Office of the Auditor General last week because we thought we would do our job responsibly and diligently and that we would ask additional questions. Quite forensically, we put additional questions to this minister via the Legislative Council and received even more alarming information as a result of those requests. As a result of the information that we requested from the Minister for Child Protection through the other place, we found out that the roles these individuals were in were found to have posed an unacceptable risk to children. The roles that gave them access to children included overnight accommodation, counselling services, tutoring services and one-on-one contact with children for periods of up to six months when they were subsequently found to be unfit to be with children.

The opposition put another question on notice. We asked the minister to reveal to us the reason these people had subsequently been found to pose an unacceptable hazard to children. We were shocked to find that seven of those 53 individuals had convictions for sex offences.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister, you will have your chance.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Seven of those individuals had charges or convictions for sex offences and were allowed to have contact with children. The Department of Communities is in chaos. It let them have contact with children for up to six months, but subsequently found that because they had been charged with or convicted of sex offences, they were unfit to work with children. This is a very serious matter.

The reason that we have raised this matter and called for the Minister for Child Protection to resign is that when we raised this issue yesterday as a matter of public importance, the minister was here with the support of one other

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minister. There was nobody else here supporting her defence of the indefensible maladministration of her portfolio. She said, “Fewer than one per cent of the applications that we process end up with this result.” Guess what, minister? If fewer than one per cent means that one of those individuals who is found to pose an unacceptable risk to children was counselling or tutoring my child, or any child in Western Australia, that is an unacceptable response. It is a serious issue. That is why we have raised it.

Let me go through what the Auditor General said. She said —

Since the Machinery of Government changes in July 2017 it has not been able to provide a breakdown of staff from the previous Department of Housing or Disability Services Commission who require a Card.

Furthermore, it does not effectively monitor or report to senior management on its own compliance with the Act. Communities does not know if it complies with the Act it is responsible for administering.

The minister is directly responsible for the machinery-of-government changes. We know from the sector that the MOG changes have caused chaos in the department. The minister must bear responsibility for this chaos, which is putting children at risk.

Let me read from page 207 of the 1995 Commission on Government report about the concept of ministerial responsibility. It states —

The Westminster —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I know the minister does not like it but she needs to be accountable. It states —

The Westminster model —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Tourism, you will have an opportunity to speak later.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will start again —

The Westminster model, which evolved to cope with a much less complex system of government and without a strong party system, is based on the concept of a single chain of accountability passing up through the hierarchy of the public sector to the minister, the parliament, and finally to the people.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Police, this is a serious matter.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Continuing —

Each public official in the chain is accountable only to the level immediately above, so that the minister alone is obliged to account to parliament, a notion that has become enshrined as the principle of ministerial responsibility. According to the traditional version of the principle, the minister is directly —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Water, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will start that again, Mr Speaker, because this is really important.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will start again —

According to the traditional version of the principle, the minister is directly responsible to parliament for everything that occurs in his or her portfolio, and is obliged to resign over any serious maladministration.

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, I call you to order for the first time.

Opposition members: Third time!

The SPEAKER: Sorry; third time. Thank you, members on my left.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: In bringing this suspension motion and calling for the minister to resign, the opposition is saying that the minister should take her responsibility under the Westminster system seriously. The Office of the Auditor General has found that there is serious maladministration in the minister’s portfolios in the Department of Communities as a direct result of the decision of her government to foist machinery-of-government changes on

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that department. There is no better description of maladministration or chaos in a portfolio than a department that does not even know whether it is compliant with the act that it administers! A department that actually allowed individuals who were found to pose an unacceptable risk to children to have one-on-one contact with children, including individuals who were refused a working with children card because they had been charged with or convicted of sexual offences, is maladministration any day of the week. That is why we are calling for this minister to do the honourable thing—that is, to resign and to allow somebody with the capacity and the passion for the portfolio to step in and clean up this mess.

We put to the minister yesterday that she could do one simple thing. For those individuals who need a greater depth of inquiry into their backgrounds prior to being issued with a working with children card, the minister should direct her department to say, “The ones that aren’t processed in the four to five days because they’re straightforward, the ones that we have a doubt about their history, you are banned from working with children until we can clear you.” Take the precautionary principle to protect our children. The minister has failed to protect our children. The minister has failed in the administration of her portfolio and she should resign.

MR A. KRSTICEVIC (Carine) [10.18 am]: Last night, I re-listened to last week’s ABC interviews of the Auditor General and the Minister for Community Services. In her interview, the Auditor General said that procedural fairness and natural justice are important. However, she said that procedural fairness does not override the importance of protecting children, and the department cannot forget that. She also said that the department is failing in this respect and that it needs to issue more interim negative notices so that these people do not work with children. That is exactly what was said in the Auditor General’s report as well.

When the minister was on radio, she used the words of the Auditor General. She said, “The Auditor General said that natural justice is important”, but, on the back of that, she defended her position. The minister did not portray the exact words of the Auditor General. She should apologise to the Auditor General for using her words incorrectly. She should also apologise to the victims who were subject to these sex predators, and the public more generally.

The report that was handed down discusses the 2018–19 year, and the minister indicated that it is going to take up to another eight months, until June next year, to fix it. What I want to know is right now, today, how many class 2 and 3 offenders are waiting to get these working with children checks with the department, and are they working with children. We already know that the system is failing. We already know it failed during 2018–19. I think that the minister needs to declare that an interim negative notice needs to be issued today to every class 2 and class 3 offender, because we know the system has failed us. Up to this point, there has been no attempt to improve this system. The minister is not going to do anything until June 2020. Is the minister more concerned about natural justice for the applicants than about the welfare of the children?

We also know that seven people who have been identified as sex offenders have had access to children for a combined total of over three and a half years—that is, each person had access to children for a minimum of six months before the department told them that they do not have that right. What I want to know is whether the minister will get the police involved. Is she going to make sure that every single one of those children is spoken to to make sure that they have not been the victims of these sex predators, who have been found to have some form of sex offence? It is very important to make sure that those children have not suffered because of this. I would hope that the minister will get the Minister for Police or the Department of Communities to talk to every single one of those children to make sure that nothing has happened. Is the minister more concerned about natural justice than about the impact on the children themselves? This minister has completely failed in this area. The Auditor General has clearly exposed that.

We know that the minister has failed in the homelessness sector. The problem is growing out of control. We know that the minister has failed with foster carers. We know that the minister is not capable of handling this portfolio, because on every single measure this minister has failed. As we know, even the Western Australian Council of Social Service, one of the biggest supporters of this government, has come out and said that this department is failing. The machinery-of-government changes have destroyed the effectiveness of the Department of Communities; it is no longer doing its job. It cannot even administer itself let alone administer the responsibilities it has with the broader community, and it is reporting to four ministers, none of whom are showing leadership and none of whom are taking responsibility for the failures of the department.

Someone needs to step up over there. The Premier needs to intervene, or is he going to do what he did in Rockingham on homelessness and avoid the issue until the public pressure becomes too much for him? He needs to show leadership on this issue. Let us not forget about the self-employed people who have totally slipped through the cracks. They are not even being looked at. As we know, the department is totally dysfunctional at managing its own responsibilities and benchmarks, and knowing whether it has the right checks and balances on its own staff, let alone what is happening beyond that. On every single measure, this is a minister for plans, strategies, forums and talkfests, but not a minister for action and not a minister for getting things done. This is a minister who finds excuses for why things cannot be done or will be done in the future or why they might be funded in the next budget. It is an absolute disgrace.

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Yesterday when we spoke about Roebourne, all she cared about was the exact number of victims. She did not care about the issue itself or what was being done to help those people; it was all about what was the right number. How many people have been abused —

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, member.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: — and treated in that respect? That is an absolute disgrace. On every measure, this minister needs to resign.

MR P.A. KATSAMBANIS (Hillarys) [10.23 am]: The Auditor General tabled the report in this place last week that made it very clear that the Minister for Child Protection has failed the people of Western Australia in one of the most important areas charged to any government in any place, and that is the protection of our vulnerable children. This is the minister responsible for working with children checks.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: This is the minister responsible for protecting our children.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Mines and Petroleum, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Tourism, I have warned you twice. I call you to order for the first time.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The sector has been crying out for this minister to pick up her game for a long time, but last week she was called out by the Auditor General. What was her response? It was “Nothing to see here.” What was the Premier’s response? Absolutely nothing—he did not even bother saying, “Nothing to see here.” He pretended this report did not exist. Behind this report are real people, real children, who were exposed to great danger. We have found out; we have teased it out of the minister, because she has not come out and said it herself.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: We have had to tease it out of her in the Legislative Council.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister, you will have an opportunity to reply.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: There were seven people who were found to not be eligible to work with children, who, because of this minister’s maladministration, were able to continue to work with children for more than 200 days, in each case, despite them having either been charged with or found guilty of sexual offences. That does not pass any test whatsoever. That is not protecting children; that is exposing our children to the greatest of risks. Why were those people able to work for more than 200 days with children despite them being charged with or found guilty of sexual offences? After the machinery-of-government changes brought in by this government, the processing times of the banning notices in the working with children checks system, which this minister is responsible for, have blown out by 54 per cent in one year.

This minister and her department do not even know how many people in their own department should have working with children checks. That is what the Auditor General told us last week. They do not even know how many people should have those checks, let alone how many people had actually bothered to get them. That is how dysfunctional this minister’s department is. Under her watch, she has clearly failed in an area in which the paramount consideration is the protection of our vulnerable children, and she has done nothing about it. If she had any decency and if she were genuine in her care and compassion for Western Australians and Western Australian children, she would resign, but she has not. She has pretended that there is nothing wrong here.

There were actually another 52 people who were found not eligible who worked with children for fewer than 200 days. I wonder how many of them were either charged with or found guilty of sexual offences. Perhaps the minister could tell us today because there are more people than just the seven people we know about. Those seven people, who we have been able to tease out—the most horrific ones; the ones who have worked with children for more than 200 days even though they should never have had one day working with children but were able to do so, under this minister. Clearly, this minister will not do anything. Clearly, the portfolio is too much for her. She is not even able to manage her own department for it to work out how many working with children’s checks it needs, let alone manage the system across the board or manage any of those other onerous issues in her portfolio—protecting children in Roebourne, homelessness and the rest.

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What is the Premier going to do? This is now a test of the leadership of the Premier. The Auditor General has told us, “The system is failing.” The Western Australian public is telling you. The sector is telling you that this minister is failing. This minister is not up to the task. Premier, it is up to you. You are the Premier of Western Australia; you are not the Premier for the union movement. You are not the Premier for protecting —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: —those ministers in your administration who are failing. You are the Premier —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: — of Western Australia. Be a statesman. Stand up! Ask the minister to resign. If she had any decency, she would resign. If she does not do the decent thing —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: —you do the decent thing, Premier. It is up to you. You got elected to protect the public of Western Australia, and you are —

The SPEAKER: Members, the question is the motion —

Mr P.A. Katsambanis interjected.

The SPEAKER: Sit down, please, member!

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [10.28 am]: The government will not be supporting the motion moved by the Liberal Party, and no amount of bullying or abusive language by members of the Liberal Party will convince us otherwise.

I have a few things around the history of all this. Only Labor governments have brought in initiatives to protect children in Western Australia. It is been only Labor. In government, we brought in the dangerous sex offender laws. Prior to the dangerous sex offender laws, there was no capacity to keep people, who may well have gone out or were at serious risk of committing more sexual offences, for longer in prison. A Labor government brought in mandatory reporting the last time we were in office, under the Leader of the House. The last time we were in office the Carpenter Labor government brought in the working with children checks laws.

If we look at the 8.5 years of the last Liberal–National government, we see that nothing was done. Working with children checks, dangerous sex offender laws and mandatory reporting were all brought in by Labor governments. Nationally, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was brought in by Labor government. In Western Australia, the endorsement of the royal commission’s recommendations was brought in by a Labor government. The Labor government in Western Australia is lifting the statute of limitations so that people who were sexually abused can pursue their abusers. That was opposed by the Liberal Party when it was in government! For the Liberal Party to come into this chamber and claim that it somehow has some sort of moral high ground is offensive considering it did nothing when it was in office—absolutely nothing!

The working with children arrangements that were brought in in 2007 were reviewed by the last government in 2012, and no changes were made. The regime that is in place requires organisations or employers to seek a working with children check in certain circumstances when an employee, volunteer or the like is working with children. Clearly, we need to do more work with organisations and employers to make sure they understand their requirements, and we accept that. That is exactly what the government is doing. We are looking at what we can do and working proactively to ensure that employers and organisations understand the obligations that sit upon them. The Department of Communities is doing that work and undertaking a blitz on all those people with outstanding applications currently awaiting assessment. Sometimes it is difficult to assess someone—a person may well have an issue interstate that we need to get information on. Generally, we try to get working with children checks in place as quickly as possible. If there are any questions, we try to get the information as quickly as possible to resolve any issues.

Currently, 370 000 Western Australians hold a working with children card. Obviously, there has been an enormous effort to assess all those applications and make sure that those people receive proper checking as part of this regime. Remember that before working with children checks were brought in by the Carpenter Labor government, there were no checks; there was nothing in place. The Carpenter Labor government brought in working with children checks and we are making sure that we work with employers and non-government organisations to enforce the laws as they currently stand. That is what has to happen. We need to have a sober and sensible response to what is going on.

The nature of child protection in any jurisdiction anywhere in the world is that issues come along and they need to be handled in a sensible, sober and responsible way. If there is anything I would say about the Minister for

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Child Protection, it is that she is sensible, responsible and reasonable, and she works through issues methodically in a genuine and sensible way. I respect her for that approach. She is widely respected for that. The child protection portfolio is difficult because it deals with myriad issues in the community when children may well be at risk. The portfolio requires someone who is hardworking and deals with issues as they arise, and that is what we have in this minister.

I repeat: working with children checks is a Labor government achievement; dangerous sex offender laws is a Labor government achievement; and mandatory reporting is a Labor government achievement.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is a Labor government achievement. Implementing the royal commission's findings is a Labor government achievement. Lifting the statute of limitations so that people can sue their abusers is a Labor government achievement. Most of those measures were opposed by the Liberal Party.

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Child Protection) [10.33 am]: I addressed some of these issues yesterday in the debate on the matter of public interest motion. I particularly want to take issue with what the member for Hillarys said about me not responding last week to the Auditor General's report. I did a brief ministerial statement.

Several members interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I hardly hid from it.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister! Members of the opposition were heard in silence. I called government members to order. I will do the same to opposition members. This is a very important issue; let the minister have her say. You have had your say.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I make the point that I did not hide from addressing the Auditor General's findings. I understand that the working with children check system can be improved, and we are working our way through that. The Leader of the Opposition raised some immediate issues that go to the practice of the department. I have asked the department to expedite any outstanding applications for working with children checks, particularly those that have taken some time to process. It is also about risk assessment and the issuing of interim negative notices. Importantly, it is completely irresponsible for the opposition to say that the working with children check system in Western Australia is in crisis.

I have said many times that working with children check cards are one tool in the armoury of keeping children safe. It is important that we have a rigorous system in place; that is true. The Auditor General raised the issue of issuing more interim negative notices so that while investigations are taking place people would not be able to work. I accept that critique and I have asked the department to expedite its criteria to make sure that it is focusing on those areas in which children might be at risk.

I also understand the public's concerns about the matter involving the South West Football League. Again, although the primary responsibility for compliance lies with employers and community organisations that are responsible for volunteers, the department can also do more to educate the public, employers and community organisations around compliance and work with them to improve systems. In particular, the Junior Sports Association has been quite proactive in doing that work across the state, but I accept that there is more to do. In fact, during yesterday's debate I drew to members' attention the prosecution of the Cottesloe Surf Life Saving Club. The department prosecuted a longstanding member of the club who did not have a working with children check card but was still volunteering. The department also prosecuted the organisation, which was publicised quite widely.

The Premier made the point that the previous Liberal–National government did very, very little, if anything, on child safety in its 8.5 years in government. I have been a minister for over 2.5 half years and I have not been asked one question in relation to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. I notice the member for Dawesville is shaking his head. Has he asked me a question? Has the member for Carine asked me a question? Has the Leader of the Opposition asked me a question? Not at all.

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, minister.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Members opposite have not made any effort to understand the breadth of the issues raised in the royal commission or how we need to work thoroughly and methodically through those issues if we want the implementation of the recommendations to be effective.

In 2012 there was a review of the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act and a number of recommendations were made. Did the then Liberal–National government implement any of those recommendations? No. When did that government lose office? In 2017. Did the former government implement or prioritise the

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implementation of any of those recommendations? No. In 2014 the Auditor General reviewed the previous government on compliance with the working with children check system. I will read from that report —

The Department is doing very little to check that employers and volunteer organisations are making sure that all of their people in child-related work have a working with children check card or an application in process. Only 11 audits of small employers have been carried out since 2010 —

This review was in 2014 —

most of which were in 2013. As a result, the Department is unable to give assurance that the scheme is working as intended.

There we go! What did the former government do about that? What did the Minister for Police at the time do about that? Absolutely nothing!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Ms S.F. McGURK: I remember sitting on the opposition side of the chamber when a private member's bill was introduced to remove the statute of limitations so that previous victims of child abuse could get some justice and some comfort that the government was listening to them on what they had been through. The former government voted against that private member's bill because its vanity stood in the way of giving justice to those young people. It is shameful. I am very proud of the fact that not only did we agree with and are working our way through implementing the recommendations of the royal commission, but also the Premier was the first state Premier to issue an apology to those victims of child sexual abuse. Some of those victims were in the gallery; they were touched by the Premier's statement. In contrast, the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Riverton, completely misunderstood the process and went on to make a political point about west Pilbara. A number of those victims in the gallery were appalled and upset by that. He completely missed the opportunity.

There is a lot to do; there is no doubt about that. I wish I could say that no child in Western Australia will ever be abused. I would like to do that; I cannot. We will put in place the most rigorous systems and best evidence of systems that are available to us. Working with children check cards are part of that armoury; I understand that, but they cannot give us all false comfort that we can take our eye off the ball on child safety. Members of the public, members of families, members of community organisations and employers all have a responsibility. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was the most thorough piece of work available of any jurisdiction in the western world that looked at child sexual abuse and how we build our systems and capacity to respond to that. We are working our way through those recommendations. We gave a report at the end of last year on how we were going in implementing those recommendations so that we were publicly accountable. I did not receive a question from the other side; there was no sort of query and no request for a briefing—no interest whatsoever. Do not come in here and say that I have been discredited by community organisations and that I have no standing with foster carers or child advocacy services. That is not my experience. This is not about me; this is about children.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you to order for the first time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: With regard to the revelations last week, I can say that a community organisation, the South West Football League, allowed one of its umpires—who came into the role halfway through the season, so he missed the beginning of season working with children checks—to work without a card, and it has admitted fault in that. That gives an indication that we have more work to do to increase education and understanding about and also compliance with the working with children check. In fact, prior to the Auditor General's report, I had been working with the department to improve its auditing and compliance capacity. A senior staff member from the Auditor General's office, Jason Beeley, has been placed inside the department to increase its auditing and compliance skills, particularly in relation to child safety but also in the area of child protection. That is exactly the sort of work that we do on an ongoing basis within the department.

As I said before, I wish we had a perfect system and I wish I could give the state an assurance that no child will come to harm while I am minister; I cannot do that. What I can do is look at the best evidence available for systems that will keep children safe, and work with government, my department that I have responsibility for, other government agencies, community organisations, employers and the public to educate all of us about what child safety means. We can improve the adherence to checking people's working with children check cards, and I accept

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr David Templeman; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Jessica Shaw; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr John Quigley

that there is work to do, but I do not accept that there are systemic failures across the system. Some improvements could be made to the legislation. We have accepted that, but the royal commission made 36 recommendations about working with children checks, and 34 were applicable to WA and 12 have been completed. The WA scheme has already complied with most of the national standards proposed by the royal commission. That is the work that we are doing. A hysterical response by the opposition gives no comfort to the public, but also is very, very shrill when in the two and a half years since this government has been in office and I have been minister, I have had no questions from the opposition, certainly in this house, about the royal commission work.

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler — Attorney General) [10.44 am]: Good morning, Mr Speaker. It was quite an effort to sit here and watch the Leader of the Opposition make her speech that was just dripping with hypocrisy. In 2015, during the previous administration, there was a review of the Dangerous Sexual Offenders Act 2006 and legislation surrounding sex offenders in our community, and what did the previous government do? Squat diddly! In fact, it said that the review did not expose any fundamental difficulties with the legislation that required any urgent or radical change. What did we do? We went to the public and said, “We’ll change it urgently. We’ll change it radically. We’ll reverse the onus of proof.” The Supreme Court has embraced that and, on the reversal of the onus of proof, is now detaining more dangerous sex offenders. As for sex offenders being monitored in the community, this is when the Leader of the Opposition turned the hypocrisy knob up to full, saying that the minister and the police were not properly supervising sex offenders in the community. Let us look at the numbers. Assistant Commissioner Gary Budge said —

WA Police ... are watching paedophiles and rapists closer than ever after a crackdown on sex offenders living in the community resulted in twice as many being charged for flouting their reporting obligations.

Look at what has happened under the minister who is now under this stupid pathetic attack from the Liberals. I will tell members what it is. An article reported in *The West Australian* of 17 October 2019—the Leader of the Opposition’s hypocrisy would not have had time to set yet; it is still running down her cloth—states —

Assistant Commissioner Gary Budge told *The West Australian* “more intrusive” monitoring of WA’s 3 500 reportable sex predators had caught 449 so far this year—up from 239 last year.

That figure just about doubled under the minister, and we are not even at the year’s end. The Leader of the Opposition can tell her constituents in Scarborough that under Minister McGurk, their children are far, far safer than they have ever been and far, far safer than they were under the Leader of the Opposition’s dilatory regime.

I will conclude with the hurt of hurts—that is, that the Carpenter government introduced a redress scheme of \$90 000 for these children, and the Leader of the Opposition went to a cabinet table as soon as she got in and cut that in half and spat in their eye. What a shameful performance. She went to that cabinet table and spat in the face of every victim who had suffered child sexual abuse. What a shameful and hypocritical performance she brings to this august chamber this morning.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (18)

Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr P.A. Katsambanis	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr V.A. Catania	Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr P.J. Rundle
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr A. Krsticevic	Ms L. Mettam	Mrs A.K. Hayden (<i>Teller</i>)
Mrs L.M. Harvey	Mr S.K. L’Estrange	Mr D.C. Nalder	
Dr D.J. Honey	Mr R.S. Love	Mr K.M. O’Donnell	

Noes (34)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr S.J. Price	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr D.T. Punch	Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr M. McGowan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr P.C. Tinley
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke	Ms S.F. McGurk	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr R.R. Whitby
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Ms C.M. Rowe	Ms S.E. Winton
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr S.A. Millman	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Ms A. Sanderson	Mr D.R. Michael (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr M. Hughes	Mrs L.M. O’Malley	Ms J.J. Shaw	
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr P. Papalia	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski	

Pair

Mr M.D. Nahan

Mr R.H. Cook

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr David Templeman; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Jessica Shaw; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr John Quigley

Question thus negatived.