

CONSTITUTIONAL AND ELECTORAL LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT (ELECTORAL EQUALITY) BILL 2021 — TIME LIMIT

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

I refer to the electoral reform legislation that the Premier denied was on the agenda before the election, that he refused to allow a parliamentary committee to review the detail of, and refused to allow the people of Western Australia to have a say on via a referendum and is gagging debate after only two days of discussion in this chamber. What explanation can the Premier offer for failing to meet his own promise to deliver a gold standard of transparency in government and is, instead, allowing the bill to be rushed through and is gagging debate and not giving appropriate consideration of something that will change the way that people elect representatives to this Parliament?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I reject every premise of that question—every premise. I am advised that there has been at least 15 hours of debate in this chamber, much of which has been repetitive by the opposition. But the minister has handled it superbly and has provided advice to the opposition that has been very straightforward and clear. The opposition was given briefings on the bill. There was a full inquiry before the bill was brought in to which the opposition and anyone in Western Australia could have put in a submission. Many submissions were put to that inquiry. The inquiry recommended an outcome, and that outcome is the one the government endorsed and has drafted legislation accordingly. If and when the bill passes this house, it will go to the upper house, where I am sure there will be fulsome debate as well. After that, if there are any amendments, it will come back here for further debate. That is the parliamentary process.

That is a lot of debate. If we compare debate on bills in this Parliament with that in other Parliaments, the amount of time spent debating legislation is far longer and far greater in this Parliament than other Parliaments around Australia. Just so that members know, when I first came to this place, time management was a regular occurrence; in fact, on a weekly basis. When I first came to this Parliament, Colin Barnett stood right here. He was the Leader of the House at that time and time management was a weekly occurrence, every single week. Sitting here all night was a weekly occurrence as well. I thought it was just normal and that that was what Parliaments did. These days, it is a little bit rare, which is a good thing. But, at the same time, there has been fulsome debate, and 15 hours is a long time in which members can make their points, whatever they may be, and the Attorney General has answered them.