

Ms Mia Davies; Mr Shane Love; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Roger Cook; Deputy Speaker: The Question Now Is That The Words To Be Substituted Be SUBSTITUTED.; Mr Zak Kirkup; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Mark McGowan

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## **CORONAVIRUS — GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

### *Matter of Public Interest*

**THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson)** informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the National Party, the member for Central Wheatbelt seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Nationals WA)** [3.07 pm]: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My sincere apologies for not including the appropriate salutation on that letter, through no lack of respect.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Try it again!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It is the Deputy Speaker now! How are you? I move —

That this house calls on the McGowan government to reassure Western Australians of its preparedness to respond to COVID-19 outbreaks appropriately while keeping key industry and businesses operating.

This is a very important issue that we raise today.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members! Can you please take your conversations outside, particularly those of you who are leaving.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is our last chance to raise this matter before the Parliament is prorogued and our last chance to determine whether we have the capability within the state government systems to match the rhetoric that we hear from the Premier and the ministers every day. It is our last chance to really raise the concern about two key matters that are raised with us on a regular basis in particularly regional Western Australia: the preparedness of the state government to respond to a COVID-19 outbreak and how that will be managed in a regional context, particularly given what we have seen happen over the course of last weekend, and the impact of ongoing labour shortages on key regional sectors. We asked a question in question time today of the Minister for Tourism about one of those sectors that we have grave concerns about. The answer I got fell short. There was a great deal of talk about talk, about how the government understands and how it can define the issue, but I did not hear a solution. I did not hear about the efforts of this government to address the concerns of those key sectors that are keeping our state moving: tourism, agriculture, horticulture and the pastoral industry. Those sectors sit alongside the mining sector and are made up of good, honest, working people who are very concerned that they will not be able to meet their obligations. We will raise a couple of examples today. This government needs to make sure that it has done everything it can to address those two matters and that it has a plan, because, once we leave this place, we will not have the chance to provide further scrutiny. The people in this state need to be reassured that if what has happened in South Australia happens in Western Australia, those living in regional WA will not be adversely impacted. We raised this two weeks ago, specifically with regard to the health issues we are concerned about. If we have a COVID outbreak in regional Western Australia, how are we going to cope when the health system is already under pressure? How are we going to cope when people come across the border? South Australia had an incident, the border closed again and we kicked into gear to respond. There has been an enormous amount of luck in how this has been managed. I do not for one moment say that the Minister for Health has not worked incredibly hard, but I think there has been a healthy dose of luck for Western Australia not to have had to deal with a serious COVID incident up to this point.

We all want our state to continue to operate without the restrictions we see over the border, and this is a chance for the government to provide us with a reassurance about contact tracers. I heard the minister on ABC radio this morning being asked how many contact tracers we have. I am not sure that he could actually answer that question specifically. We know that the number the government is aiming for is 1 000, but we have not quite got there yet. Will we have enough if we are faced with an outbreak over the next few days, weeks or months? I do not know. Why has it taken so long for us to get to this point when we have had plenty of time in the run-up to relaxing the border to put this in place? We can add that to the concerns we have raised about the record numbers of people with mental ill health appearing in emergency departments, the ramping of ambulances at our hospitals and the Royal Flying Doctor Service having the highest transfer rate it has ever experienced. We can see the stress that our emergency services volunteers are experiencing in regional Western Australia. We have seen Auditor General reports that reveal that the government does not have a plan for dealing with elderly patients in aged-care facilities should there be a COVID-19 outbreak. This is, rightly, an issue for us to raise in this place and expect a response to.

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We are also justified in walking in here and saying that we are in regional Western Australia, talking to the businesses that the tourism minister tells us he is having discussions with. We are also talking to the businesses that the Minister for Agriculture and Food continually tells us she is talking to, but we see no action. I talked to the owners of an abattoir in the member for Roe's electorate the other day, and they have tried to take advantage of the government's failed Wander Out Yonder program. They tried to employ up to 40 people, and not one of those people have stayed for more than two days; they paid them over the odds, provided accommodation and actually transported them out of Perth to the region. That program is an absolute failure, but the government continues to point to it and say, "Here's what we're doing." It is not working. We need something done to address the cliff face that is looming or is already present in the key industries of agriculture, horticulture, pastoralism and tourism. These are very, very important issues, and my colleagues have specific issues relating to their electorates.

I will let them flesh those out a little further as we raise this issue on the last day we have available before we prorogue this Parliament.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA)** [3.12 pm]: I would like to contribute to this excellent matter of public interest. It is very important, as this Parliament comes to an end, that we again raise the importance of preparedness for the COVID-19 situation throughout Western Australia. It is apparent in the country areas of Western Australia that our communities are greatly concerned about their health and safety.

As the Leader of the Nationals WA has outlined, the Minister for Health today spoke on ABC radio about the need to increase the number of people who are trained as contact tracers to follow up on the COVID-19 outbreak and to find out who might have been in contact with people who may potentially be a carrier of the disease. The government is pushing to put 1 000 contact tracers in place. Apparently, 640 contact tracers have been trained, or offered training. How many have actually been trained? There is a big difference between being offered training and being trained. This is the same answer that was recorded in the Auditor General's report that was released back in September; the same numbers were quoted there. Apparently, there has been no progress since the Auditor General's report, which I think was cited in debate as being a vindication of the government's actions. However, the Auditor General was very careful to say that it was not an audit; it was simply a response report, carried out at a lesser level than an audit would be—a quick look, a desktop study, of what the Department of Health has done after taking its assurances at face value. Back then we were told the same thing that the minister is saying today. For the last six weeks, there has been no progress reported in the developing situation of the contact tracing workforce. The situation in Victoria highlights just how important it is to have good contact tracing in place.

There was an excellent report over the weekend on the ABC's *Background Briefing* by Rachael Brown titled "Victoria's coronavirus restrictions lifting could be the first test of revamped contact tracing system". The report illustrates just how much more difficult it is to do contact tracing in a free-moving society. Victoria has been in lockdown and it has had trouble catching up with these cases after weeks and weeks of lockdown. These systems will not necessarily cope in a situation in which people are moving around freely. We have just opened up our borders; six weeks ago, we had the same number of contact tracers as we have now. The borders are open and people are moving around in our electorates. We do not have any assurances that the government has actually trained even the 640 people who have been quoted; they have been "offered" training.

We know from the Victorian experience that when people start moving around, the job of contact tracing becomes much more difficult. To do it properly, it is now going to three rings of certainty: known contacts, people who have been in contact with a known contact, and people who may have been in contact with those people. That is how to get on top of the disease, and we can do that only in a lockdown. That is very difficult when we have people moving around. Do we have any assurance that 1 000 is the right number? Do we have any assurance that these people are being trained in the appropriate way? We do not, because we are getting the same answer now that we got six weeks ago.

The government has become complacent. It has been patting itself on the back about what has happened in Victoria and other places and saying, "We're better than them." But we have been better than them because we are the most isolated community in the world. We are very isolated, so for us it has been relatively simple to shut the borders and control the small outbreaks we had. That has been our answer thus far. Now we are open to the rest of the country and have people wandering out yonder from Perth and from all over the country, and there are no assurances that we have in place the contact tracing systems necessary to quickly get on top of any potential outbreak. The answer in South Australia has been to lock the state down again. It is going to be hard to lock this state down when the country areas are full of tourists who do not actually live there. If we shut down in that situation, we will have all sorts of social welfare problems and people not being able to get services, food or medical treatment because they are in isolated areas. We need to get on top of this now.

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**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [3.17 pm]: I back up the comments made by the Leader of the Nationals WA and the member for Moore. I am worried on two fronts. The government should have been preparing since March. The only tool the government has in the toolbox is to shut the border, and we have seen that developing over the last few days. It has had six months to adapt and plan. We had smoke and mirrors from the Minister for Health between 2 May and 7 May when he introduced figures from April to say that we had the highest number of tests in Australia; it was actually the lowest. After six months, he has finally ensured that wastewater testing is carried out. He has now finally recognised that we need to train more people in COVID-19 tracing. These are all things that the Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel, pointed out as being essential in his federal government review. Finally, the Minister for Health and the government are recognising that people in our regional areas are the most susceptible. They need good communication, good aged care, and care for our frontline workers. That is my first worry.

My other worry is about the shires and towns on the front line. Over the last week, we have seen the Shire of Dundas, the Shire of Norseman and the Shire of Esperance on the news. They are on the front line because when people come along the highway from South Australia, they are the towns that have to deal with it and adapt to it. What we need from the minister, our police and the like is more communication and better quarantine facilities, if you like. The Shire of Esperance was trying to set up the Newtown–Condungup football oval for a quarantine centre, but was told, “No; that’s not what we need; we’ll take over and do something else.” This is why better communication is required.

Another thing I worry about is our workers in tourism, especially in Esperance. Every time I go to Esperance, I hear on ABC radio questions such as, “What is the government doing about worker accommodation? We’re really worried we’re not going to have enough workers in the tourism industry over this big summer coming up for Esperance.” That is a real concern for me. We are not getting any direction from the Minister for Tourism or from this government about accommodating workers and how we will deal with those shortages. To me, that is a real concern.

The other issue the Leader of the Nationals WA mentioned is our agriculture sector. Hillside Meat Processors, Narrogin, and Beaufort River Meats, just south of Beaufort River, are in my electorate of Roe. They are really vital employment sources for my electorate. They have tried to do everything they can. In fact, I have spent quite a bit of time trying to help them out with personal protective equipment, minister. I must admit that I have had some assistance from the Department of Health, so it is very much appreciated. However, those organisations are now having trouble sourcing workers. This is the sort of field our state government can really come to the fore on.

There have been issues, obviously, with harvesting, shearing and the like. Our farmers are just getting on with their harvest. The Work and Wander Out Yonder campaign has not produced anyone of any substance, but as usual, our farmers have adapted. They are out there getting stuck into harvesting the crop. They are running way behind with shearing. A couple of shearing schools have helped to a small extent, but learner shearers take a long time to come up to speed. These are the issues developing in my electorate of Roe. I am looking for support.

Minister, we can do better. One of the doctors in my region was sent a sandwich box with two masks in it. That will not address PPE shortages. These are the types of issues we face. I am worried about our aged-care and healthcare systems and about our frontline workers.

**MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central)** [3.22 pm]: Rolled-gold transparency—that is what the Labor Party said when it came to government. It said it would have rolled-gold transparency, yet there is no transparency whatsoever from this McGowan government, not Labor government, because that is the way it is campaigning now—the Labor Party has been taken out of the campaign! There is no oversight and no inquiry is being held. Every other state is inquiring into COVID-19 to make sure they have best practice—rolled-gold transparency. No risk analysis has been undertaken of the government’s Wander Out Yonder campaign. Of course people from Perth will wander out yonder, because they cannot wander anywhere else! Of course it will be a successful campaign—something that regional WA has been advocating for forever and a day.

**Mr R.H. Cook** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** It is a success because the borders have been closed and because no-one can go overseas. It is not a success when no risk analysis has been done when deaths are occurring in regional WA. Three people died on Mt Augustus because no risk analysis has been done. In the health system, the volunteer ambulance service is stretched because the small business operator or their workers are normally ambulance volunteers. They are struggling to fill the role of an ambulance service, whether it is in Coral Bay, Exmouth, Shark Bay or Kalbarri. Here we go: there is not even a nurse at the Cue Nursing Post for people who live in Cue, for passing traffic, for people from the resource sector or for tourists. The government has not put a nurse there to protect the residents or visitors in the case of an emergency. Absolutely no risk analysis has occurred.

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The Minister for Tourism; Small Business says that he has been to every regional town, but only a select few people were invited to sit down and talk to the minister. He selected the people he wanted to see and what he heard from them was, “We need workers, but if we could get workers, we have nowhere to house them. What are you doing about it?” He has acknowledged that there is a problem. The test of the Labor government—no, sorry, the McGowan government—is to address the issues that are arising in regional WA. The government calls itself a regional party! Let me tell members opposite, the north west knows that the Labor Party has left the north west well and truly out of its budget. It is well and truly not supporting the volunteer ambulance services and well and truly not supporting the health system. God forbid! God help us if an outbreak of COVID-19 occurs in regional WA, because, given the government has not done a risk analysis, there is clearly a gap in regional WA—a gap that will cost lives. We are seeing that because the government has not done a risk analysis of the impact on people going to regional WA. In a week and a half, three people died at Mt Augustus, but there have not been any changes to government practices. No-one is based at Mt Augustus, such as a ranger, to ensure that people are well prepared when walking up the largest monolith in the southern hemisphere.

The government needs to wake up. There is no oversight. Let me tell the government that after the March election, during the four years to the 2025 election, there will be a hell of a lot of undoing because people will wake up.

**Ms S.E. Winton:** You can see it already.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The member for Wanneroo should be bottling COVID-19 because, if it were not for that, the member would probably not be here after the March election.

We know about scaremongering with the rhetoric around the controlled border. It should be a smart border to ensure that people can come to work in regional WA and people can see their families, which is something the government has put to the side. Shame on the McGowan government because it has let down regional WA, and shame on the minister.

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health)** [3.27 pm]: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this, the most hapless of motions. It is an important issue that covers our preparedness to deal with COVID-19. I am sorry it petered out after just a few minutes of debate but maybe others will leap to the opposition’s defence in trying to provide a little bit of commentary.

First, in response to a couple of points that were made, it is not surprising to hear the opposition once again running down the efforts of the Western Australian people to keep Western Australians safe—to do all those things that have made us all so proud of the people of Western Australia to make sure we stay on top of this insidious disease. The member for Central Wheatbelt called it luck. The member for Moore said it is because WA is isolated. We make our luck, and we do that by having good, sound policies that look after the health of Western Australians and keep them safe so that we can make sure we have the opportunities to continue to expand our economy. As the motion says, we need to keep key industries and businesses operating, which is what the government has done.

The member for Moore said that it was simply because we are the most isolated state, yet Western Australia has received the largest number per capita of international people coming back to this country than any state in Australia.

We bring more people back than Queensland and South Australia. Of course, Victoria does not bring anyone back. A few are trickling into the Northern Territory through Darwin. Of course, New South Wales takes the lion’s share. We take over 1 000 people a week and we are bringing more people back to Australia per capita than any other state, so we are not isolated. On the contrary, we are in the thick of the action to make sure that we can bring Australians back to Australia while at the same time keeping Western Australians safe. To say that we are isolated given that our biggest risk is from international arrivals is, quite frankly, false, misleading and unsurprising coming from the mob opposite. Members opposite have taken every opportunity to run down the government and create negativity and fear in the community through their continued carping and criticism of what is a great achievement by the Western Australian people.

It is now over seven months since the state has had community spread of this disease and the government has continued to keep people safe and has addressed the risk elements associated with our airports and the maritime industry. Over eight ships have come in with COVID-19 on board and there has not been any spread of the disease in the community. At some point those opposite will have to concede that people working in the community are doing a great job to keep Western Australians safe. But no—every day they come back in here and say that it is simply a matter of luck; it is a matter of time; we are not ready; and the Department of Health is not doing well enough. Why do members opposite not concede just for a moment the amazing work that has been done on behalf of the community by the Department of Health and the police and all the other emergency services that are doing an amazing job to keep Western Australians safe? Everyone in Western Australia is thanking them for their efforts. Everyone in Western Australia is saying, “Thank you; we are really pleased with the situation we are in

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Western Australia”, except for one group in the community, and that is members opposite, the Liberals and the Nationals, who continue to detract.

Because the government kept on top of the health issues and made sure that it kept Western Australians safe, it has been able to keep our key industries going. Our oil and gas and mining industries have continued to operate throughout this entire experience. Indeed, even though we relied heavily on FIFO workers, the McGowan government sat down with the mining industry and asked: How can we make this work? How can we keep that industry going? How can we make sure that the wealth, prosperity and income it brings to this state continues, even though we face the threat of a global pandemic? We worked through those issues, making sure that we put in place DETECT FIFO, a program of asymptomatic testing of all FIFO workers to ensure that those industries kept operating. Tens upon tens of thousands of workers have been tested on a regular basis to make sure that those industries kept moving; to make sure that we continued to enjoy the wealth that brings. That has enabled our manufacturing industry to continue to operate as well, whereas across the world and even in Australia, economies have been decimated as a result of COVID-19. In Western Australia, jobs are back, families are reunited and communities once again are enjoying the quality of life that cohesive communities enjoy. That is something that societies right across the globe have been denied. Just for once we would like to see a vote of thanks from those opposite to the great people in the Department of Health and the police and for the great work that has been done by the people in Tourism to ensure our economy keeps moving.

The government has introduced a range of activities focused on agriculture workers. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and Western Australia’s closed borders, the access to backpackers, particularly international backpackers, has not been the same. The government has worked closely with industry since March to deal with this issue. We launched our \$1.6 million Work and Wander Out Yonder campaign and the regional travel and accommodation support scheme, a \$3.1 million program, to encourage Western Australians to fill those labour shortages, and we have had success. In phase 1 of the campaign, more than 50 000 people visited the campaign website and Work and Wander advertisements on Seek have had more than 90 000 views. We have connected more than 500 jobseekers to employers through the online portal for agriculture workers, Studium. There have been almost 600 pre-registrations for our travel and accommodation incentive scheme. Between 5 October and 18 November, 126 applications totalling \$153 500 have been paid out of the regional travel and accommodation support scheme and a further 162 applications are being assessed. We hoped the federal government would respond to our calls for further incentives for people on JobSeeker to work in agriculture. Although the federal budget did include some relocation assistance, which we welcome, we would not have seen any real action to incentivise those on JobSeeker into harvest jobs.

The McGowan government has continued to work with the commonwealth government to bring other international workers into Australia from places such as Vanuatu. We have a program of 300 seasonal workers from Vanuatu currently quarantining in the Northern Territory and taking up working opportunities there. We look forward to seeing them join our agriculture labour force and accessing those workers. However, at the end of the day safety is our number one priority.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** We have heard from the member for Moore. He calls it luck; we call it hard work. We call it a strong commitment to keeping people safe, and we have done just that. We have kept people safe and we have energised our economy.

Three important elements are associated with the fight against COVID-19: test, trace and isolate. We continue to test between 13 000 and 15 000 people every week. We continue to make sure that we get as many symptomatic people as possible to go to the COVID clinics and to remain vigilant to any outbreak of the disease. This week, as many people have attended our COVID clinics as occurred in March. People have heeded our call and understand the importance of continuing to go to the COVID clinics. In addition, as part of the new controlled border arrangements, people fill out a G2G PASS. Following the recent outbreak in South Australia, we were able to contact all those who had come from South Australia to get tested. They have not done that in Queensland because they do not know who those people are. Our controlled border arrangements have allowed us to reach out to those South Australians and say, “Get yourself tested, quick smart, because there has been an outbreak in the state from which you have come.” That has enabled the WA government to keep on top of the situation. We will continue to support improvements in testing. As I announced recently, the government has committed half a million dollars to systems piloting new technology that will allow rapid response, high-scale testing of people in the future so that potentially people can be tested upon approval and then tested over the next few days so that we can continue to live and open up the borders, as the member for North West Central said we should do, but that we have already done. He has not been here for quite a while, so he probably has not caught up.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup** interjected.

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**Mr R.H. COOK:** Sorry, member for Dawesville?

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** Usually we do not reflect on when members are on urgent parliamentary business.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** I was working in my electorate.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** So the member was not in Parliament; he was actually just in his electorate?

**Mr V.A. Catania:** I was working in my electorate, absolutely.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Anyway, it is good to see him in the same room as the Leader of the Nationals. I hope things work out for him.

The new ways of testing will guide us into the future and ensure that we can continue to have vigilance. Our wastewater testing regime is on track. That will be an important element, an extra part of our armoury, to make sure that we maintain that level of vigilance.

A number of members referred to the government's COVID-19 contact tracing. I am very pleased to say that, recently, Alan Finkel, as part of a national panel, said that overwhelmingly, the impression he had was that wherever he looked he saw excellence and commitment and that each jurisdiction runs its pandemic health response in its own way but we are willing to share and to learn. A number of members drew attention to the great work of our contact tracers and that they doing contact tracing for South Australia as we speak. We have 50 full-time contact tracers at any point in time. We have approximately another 640 staff who are on our surge register and we plan to have 750 FTE, or around about 1 000 staff, as part of our surge capacity. That will enable us to contact trace, essentially, 440 cases a day. Therefore, our capacity to contact trace is more than our need. As I said, we are doing some of the heavy lifting now, helping out South Australia with contact tracing.

Regarding isolation, not only has Alan Finkel given us the big tick on our contact tracing, but Jane Halton, former secretary to the commonwealth Department of Health, has said that our hotels are up to scratch. The only criticism she had about the hotels is that the rules were perhaps a bit harsh because we do not let people out to have a smoke or get some air. Our hotels are airtight and are an important element of making sure that we can stay on top of the COVID-19 risks. As the Premier has often said, our international arrivals are our biggest risk factor at the moment and our hotels, despite the fact that they have been operating since March this year, have not had any adverse outcomes with the disease escaping. We continue to learn from other states and to review our processes, which is the reason why this week we are bringing in mandatory testing for our high-risk employees at our hotels to make sure that our hotels can continue the work that they do.

I would like to impart two other important pieces of information to the chamber. One piece of information is about personal protection equipment. The doctor that the member for Roe referred to is what is known as a general practitioner. General practitioners come under the jurisdiction of the commonwealth government. It is the commonwealth government's responsibility to provide extra support to the GPs in relation to PPE, but we continue to work with WA Primary Health Alliance to make sure that it has the supplies it needs. We have supplies in Western Australia now to make sure that we can protect our frontline workers and that they can protect their patients. In addition to that, we will soon begin fit testing, which is a request from the health unions to make sure that their members have the support that they need. Not one healthcare worker in Western Australia has caught COVID-19 in a clinical environment and that includes all those people who were in the Joondalup Health Campus during the *Artania* crisis. That is how good we are. That is how good our doctors and nurses are, and our infection control is second to none. But we have not seen any acknowledgement from the other side about that.

We will soon be introducing new contact registers for all our venues, including the opportunity for them to access a digital version. That software is being worked up and we will continue to make sure that venues have an easy-to-access way of ensuring that we can properly trace people who have been to the venue in the event we get an outbreak. It is obviously a real possibility that there may be an outbreak. People experience that everywhere. What is important is not so much the outbreak, but how we respond to it, and I am really pleased that the Minister for Small Business is holding a consultation session this afternoon to work with the industry on the introduction of the mandatory arrangements on 28 November, to ensure that we are ready to go.

Everywhere we look we see members of this government working with industry, stakeholders and the community to make sure that we continue to be vigilant and ready in relation to COVID-19. This is great work. We have continued to keep our key industries open, such as our resources, transport and logistics, and agriculture industries. Our tourism industry is now enjoying times never seen before and that is because the McGowan government has looked after everyone's health and as a result of that everyone is looking after each other and bringing the economy back to life.

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The member for North West Central said that we are not being transparent enough. We have put all our processes up for national review, whether it is the Halton review, Finkel review or our own analysis by the Auditor General or by our panel, which looks at our preparedness. We are ready to go and we continue to improve our processes. People recognise that. People all around the community recognise what a great job we have done as a community to get this under control, and everyone recognises that—everyone except a very small group in the community and that is all those members opposite. For once, we wish opposition members would take a leaf out of the book of the Leader of the Opposition in South Australia and actually come on board and help us continue to play a constructive role, not this carping, undermining and criticising that we see from them all the time.

Western Australia is the envy of the world for how it has COVID-19 under control and how it has brought jobs back into the workplace and how it has brought communities back. We continue to work with industry and I should add that we will soon have a forum with church groups and other cultural groups about how we continue to improve their capacity, again, using the contact tracing principles. I think we have lots to be proud of as a community. I wish members on the other side would be equally proud.

*Amendment to Motion*

**Mr R.H. COOK:** In the spirit of that pride, I move —

To delete all words after “house” and substitute —

acknowledges the McGowan government’s efforts in responding to COVID-19 to keep Western Australia safe and strong.

Amendment (deletion of words) put and passed.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question now is that the words to be substituted be substituted.

**MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville)** [3.47 pm]: I appreciate the contributions that have been made by the Nationals WA members here today in moving the original motion, which was to call on the McGowan government to reassure Western Australians of its preparedness to respond to COVID-19 outbreaks appropriately while keeping key industry and businesses operating. I think the motion that was moved is important and reflects the growing concern in the community, which is nervous about what the future holds. Certainly, in the case of my district, I conducted a survey some weeks ago. Hundreds of people responded and more than half indicated that they were more concerned now about what the future held than they were prior to COVID-19.

We know that this is a concern right throughout our community and it is no wonder with the Premier yesterday or the day before during question time urging people not to panic buy. I saw on Twitter that people were once again struck with the fear of what was happening in South Australia and were panic buying at some suburban Coles outlets. If people in our state were feeling confident, I do not know whether we would see that same level of panic buying. I join with the Premier in making sure that people feel calm and safe here in Western Australia and in saying that people do not need to undertake that level activity in our state’s shops any more. It is not a necessary to make sure that they have months’ worth of toilet paper and the like, but the reality is we have to understand that there is a need for the community to be reassured and that is all that this motion is calling for. A level of reassurance is required in our community because in this ever-changing environment people are genuinely quite worried about what their future holds.

The Minister for Health has said in this place a number of times that the opposition has never congratulated the government. I will do that now. Congratulations to the state government for making sure that we, together with the national cabinet, have kept Western Australia safe from COVID-19. I think that is worth repeating time and again because, of course, everyone in this chamber is on “Team Western Australia”. Had the government not been successful, people would have died at an alarming rate. That is what we have seen in other jurisdictions. Everyone here wanted to make sure that we could continue to work with the government. That is why we have supported urgent legislation—more than a dozen bills through this place in an expeditious fashion to make sure that new laws could be introduced to help protect Western Australians. That was done so in a matter of days with a unity ticket from the Liberal and National Parties.

**Mr P.J. Rundle** interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** One of many, I am sure, member for Roe, that might come up in the next 114 days.

We saw yesterday in the report of the Procedure and Privileges Committee tabled by the Speaker that the Parliament of Western Australia was the only Parliament that continued to operate without an alteration to its scheduled sitting. That was because members of both the Liberal and National Parties continued to support the government in the legislative agenda that it was trying to pursue to protect Western Australians.

We stand absolutely ready to support the government however we can; we have done so and will continue to do so. The reality is, if members listen to doctors, nurses and people in the community, there is a need for reassurance.

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For example, doctors and nurses want to know when fit-testing for N95 and P2 masks will commence. We are still some time away from that happening, although it has been undertaken in every other state and territory in the country. There is a need to understand when QR codes will be implemented for venue check-ins. That has operated in New South Wales for a number of months, if not in other jurisdictions as well. There is a need to undertake sewer testing to get a better understanding of whether COVID-19 is running through towns or parts of Perth. That has occurred in every other jurisdiction, yet not in Western Australia. We need to make sure our hotel quarantine system has been reviewed—a review that is welcome, but there is still a level of concern in the community. That is not a reflection of anything other than people's fears. They need to be reassured that the government is in control and the health department is ready. People out there—most recently, doctors and nurses—are worried about the lack of personal protective equipment and the processes for fit-testing their masks, for example.

When people look to other jurisdictions in our country, they see measures have been undertaken to protect citizens there, which are not being undertaken here. When the government seeks to do that, we will support it and back the health advice every single day of the week to help keep Western Australians safe. The Liberal Party will support any measure the government wants to undertake to make sure that we keep Western Australia COVID-free because the Liberal Party and the National Party are part of "Team Western Australia". We want to make sure that Western Australians are kept safe today, tomorrow and in the future. The government's continual politicisation of this issue seeks only to try to divide the community at a time when it needs unity most. We stand united with the government to keep Western Australians safe.

**MRS A.K. HAYDEN (Darling Range)** [3.52 pm]: I would like to back up the comments made by my good colleague the member for Dawesville, and the motion moved by the National Party. I congratulate the National Party for this motion. I am perplexed about why the government would want to amend the motion, which reads —

That this house calls on the McGowan government to reassure Western Australians of its preparedness to respond to COVID-19 outbreaks appropriately while keeping key industry and businesses operating.

Why would the government be against that? Why would the government be against this motion? It makes no sense whatsoever.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** Politicising.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** Exactly, member for Dawesville. Members opposite are politicising COVID-19, which they keep saying they are not doing. Instead of standing up and saying, "National Party, you are right; opposition, you are right. This is what we are doing and this is our plan", members opposite stand up and amend the motion. Why did they amend the motion? It is because they do not have a plan. They are not prepared. They have sat on their laurels and all they have done is expect handouts and fix-ups from the federal Liberal government every single time. The Deputy Premier, even in his response to this motion, said he was disappointed because they asked for more help from the federal government but it did not deliver it. How much more do members opposite want from the federal government? They are getting handouts left, right and centre, yet they have no plan.

Right now, the heavy lifting is being done by the federal Liberal government and our small business community because this government is absent—absolutely absent—in supporting it. There are two ways to fight a pandemic. One is health and two is economics. Members opposite have just shut the borders, put their heads in the sand and thought: if we just do not look up and look out to see what is going on, everything will be dandy. It is not going to be dandy if they do not have a plan to back up their biggest employers.

Regarding unemployment, members opposite have stood in here for the last two days, pleased as Punch, pounding their chests saying that they are proud about their unemployment figures. They should tell Western Australians that they are proud that 96 200 people in Western Australia right now are without jobs. We have 29 900 unemployed youth. Go and tell the mums and dads that their kids do not have a job, but you are proud of it. Members opposite are proud that 123 300 people right now in Western Australia are underemployed. Why are they underemployed? It is because members opposite have done nothing to support small business. They have done nothing to help the sector that is the biggest employer in Western Australia. They have sat on their laurels while they collected GST income of \$3.8 billion this year and an iron ore royalty of \$7.4 billion for the year. The Bell Group settlement meant \$665 million this year. What have members opposite done? They have sat there with all that money in their pockets, with their surplus of \$1.2 billion, pleased as Punch, smiling away, saying, "Aren't we clever?" while over 96 000 people are looking for work. We have people who cannot pay their bills because of the government's increases in the cost of power, water and car registration. People are in mortgage stress but members opposite sit there with their pile of money, like the king in his counting house counting all his money, looking down at the poor people in Western Australia who cannot afford their power bills. They cannot afford their water bills. They cannot afford their car registration.



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Members opposite sit there saying, “Haven’t we done a great job?” The Premier has not done a good job of making sure that those 96 000 people have a chance of getting a job. He has not done a good job of making sure our youth have a chance of getting a job. Please, start making a plan. The federal government has tried to put it at bay. It has put in the JobKeeper and JobSeeker allowances but where is the government’s plan to keep businesses open when JobKeeper falls away in March? Those businesses have put everything on the line. They have propped themselves up to the hilt to make sure they can keep open their doors. What have members opposite done to support them? Nothing. Every other state has supported their small business sectors, except this state. Members opposite should all hang their heads in shame. Do not go out there beating your chests, saying you have done a great job in creating jobs because you have not. They have failed the Western Australian people in creating jobs. They have failed our small business community. They have failed on being prepared for what we are going to do with COVID-19. Members opposite need to come in here and simply be bipartisan, saying, “We agree. We are going to have a plan and we will reassure Western Australians that we will get them out of this.”

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is that the words to be inserted be inserted. I have to move that. All those in favour —

**Ms R. Saffioti:** Can I speak on this?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That is fine; I will move the motion then you can speak to it in a minute. All those in favour say aye —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Hang on. At the beginning of this, I said “the words to be deleted be deleted”. I then have to get this bit inserted, then we move that we —

**Ms R. Saffioti** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** You can speak on it if you want to, then I will move it all at the end, minister. I was just trying to clarify things. Go ahead.

**MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport)** [3.57 pm]: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. What are we seeking to insert? It is that we acknowledge the McGowan government’s efforts in responding to COVID-19 to keep Western Australia safe and strong. That is what we are asking—that we take a bipartisan approach to acknowledge the efforts undertaken by the McGowan government to keep the state safe and strong. I know it is beyond the Liberal and National Parties to look at this COVID pandemic in a non-party political way because every time we sit in this place, the opposition wants to play politics with a pandemic. That was again demonstrated today—again and again and again. The comments made by the member for Darling Range were that we pocketed the Bell money and have not done anything for electricity users. Well, we gave \$600 to every household from that Bell litigation money.

**Mrs A.K. Hayden** interjected.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I did not interject, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Quite so, minister; go ahead.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We have cut training course fees. We have more training courses than ever before targeted at young people to get them in jobs. The Nationals WA asked what we were doing? We want to train Western Australians. That is what we are trying to do—train Western Australians to work in our small businesses and throughout Western Australia. If there was an easy solution for workers in Western Australia and across the nation, someone would have thought of it already. It is a challenge to grow an economy during a pandemic. We are doing all that we can to support businesses. The Minister for Agriculture and Food is looking at the agricultural worker situation. We are undertaking new training courses that are targeted at young people so they can get jobs in our industries—that is more than in any other state.

The comments of the opposition—the Liberal Party and National Party—show that all it wants to do is to attack the government all along the way. I note what the member for Dawesville, who is currently not in the chamber, said just a few months ago —

“The Premier needs to harden up. I didn’t realise we elected a princess in 2017 ...

He went on and commented in relation to the Premier being “slimy”. That was replayed on the TV that night. I tell members what: I have never —

**Mr V.A. Catania:** You’re rich saying that.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I think you are a bit rich being in this place, mate!

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Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for North West Central and member for Wanneroo, that is not helpful. The minister is on her feet.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** The member for Dawesville made those comments. It was one of those things when, unprompted, people came up to me and said, “I can’t believe what that person called the Premier.”

*Point of Order*

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I note the member for North West Central continues to bully and abuse the Minister for Transport. Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members! Thank you, Premier. Please take your seat. Member for North West Central, you will not interject. It has been asked several times.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I note the minister did not interject on any members opposite and I ask the member for North West Central to desist.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Premier, that is exactly what I have just asked for.

Would you like to raise a point of order, member for North West Central?

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The minister is casting aspersions on the member for Dawesville —

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** No. I am sorry.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** If you want to stay in this house, take your seat.

**Mrs A.K. Hayden** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Darling Range, what would you like to add to this?

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** The Premier accused the member for North West Central of bullying, which is totally inaccurate. In this house we have robust conversation and I ask him to withdraw.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member, the Premier raised a point of order and I have said that it is not a point of order. We are going ahead with this discussion, please.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** They want to avoid what they have said in the past. That is the issue with the Liberal and National Parties. Of course, they opposed the hard border again and again and again. As a result, again and again on TV, when asked by Jacob Kagi whether she would reopen the interstate border if she were Premier, the Leader of the Opposition said, “I would.” She then said, “There doesn’t appear to be a valid reason to keep the interstate borders closed.” Then she said, “The Premier needs to show us the advice that there’s a constitutional issue because there clearly isn’t.” She also said, “It’s politically expedient to maintain the hard borders.” The Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Party were supporting Clive Palmer every step of the way on this issue. The Liberal Party was together with Clive Palmer. The Leader of the Opposition said, “I think the Premier is blocking Clive Palmer and it is political” —

**Mrs A.K. Hayden:** You’re a liar.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Darling Range, I call you for the first time, and you will take that back.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I take back that she is lying, but she is misleading Parliament.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the request is for a withdrawal. The member is simply to withdraw.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That is quite correct, Leader of the House. Member for Darling Range, I call you for a second time—no, a third time, I am sorry.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I withdraw.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member, you were already on three calls. Member, I think you need to take a break for rest of the day.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Darling Range!

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Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Enough! Stop pointing fingers. It is not primary school. Member for Darling Range, you are on your way out. Thank you. Minister for Transport continue.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I will keep quoting the Leader of the Opposition's comments in relation to Clive Palmer.

*Point of Order*

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Just to clarify, are you ejecting the member for Darling Range?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** She has been called four times. I am ejecting her.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Usually there is a procedure that the Speaker would read out to eject her.

A member interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am waiting to get the correct words, if you would like me to use the correct words. But I think the member for Darling Range understands.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo, you will be out too in a minute. Please, enough!

*Suspension of Member*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I think I have said this once before. The member for Darling Range does understand what has happened. She has been on four calls—actually five—and I have suspended her from the house for the rest of the day.

[The member for Darling Range left the chamber.]

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo, you will be close on her heels, crayfish or not.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I know the Liberal Party does not like to remember just how close it was with Clive Palmer. Members of the Liberal Party do not want to be reminded that they were there standing next to Clive Palmer all the way. They wanted to bring down the hard border again and again and again. The opposition was with Clive Palmer and it is still with Clive Palmer. The Leader of the Opposition said, "I'll let Clive Palmer do what Clive Palmer does best. He's got very deep pockets. He's probably one of the few people that can fund the challenge that he's funding." There we had the Liberal Party siding with Clive Palmer against WA.

I do not know what parallel universe opposition members are living in and I do not know who they are talking to, but we get feedback from around the state. Yes, people are always cautious. Of course, handling a pandemic is a challenge. It is constant and thousands of people—the police, those working in the health system and across the public service—are doing their best to keep Western Australians safe. The opposition comes in here all the time and tries to play cheap politics with it. It is angry that the government is getting the credit. Our job has been to protect Western Australians. We will continue to do that. The opposition's cheap political pointscore, its attempts to score cheap political points, has won it no favours. We would think that members opposite would learn, but, again, they have learnt nothing. I know the opposition has seen the polling. I know that that polling is completely disastrous.

**MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [4.07 pm]:** I want to conclude the debate. I want to pass on my thanks and regards to all those people who have accepted the rules and advice across Western Australia over the course of this year and done the right thing—that is, the vast, vast, vast majority of Western Australians who have behaved with dignity and understanding during a difficult time. We obviously have been through a stressful period. We have seen what has happened in other countries around the world and what has happened in other states. We have been a beacon, I think, of understanding and acceptance of the rules and restrictions that other places could have learnt from.

I would also like to pass on my thanks to all the people who made it work—that is, the police on the borders, the officers of other government departments on the borders, the police at the airports, the other officers at the airports, the staff in the hospitals, the nurses and other health, medical and ancillary staff. I also thank the Australian Defence Force officers who assisted us along the way and all those people over the course of this period.

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 19 November 2020]

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Ms Mia Davies; Mr Shane Love; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Roger Cook; Deputy Speaker: The Question Now Is That The Words To Be Substituted Be SUBSTITUTED.; Mr Zak Kirkup; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Mark McGowan

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I also thank the senior management in the public sector who made sure that issues were dealt with very expeditiously. I want to particularly thank our legal officers, both the Solicitor-General and the State Solicitor and their staff, who drafted directions and laws very quickly and very effectively, which made sure that the entire system worked very well. That was often at extremely short notice. I would like to thank the Parliamentary Counsel's Office for that as well. Overnight, it drafted laws that we needed to pass through this house. The staff have all been absolutely terrific over the course of this year.

The Solicitor-General and the State Solicitor had to manage some pretty serious court cases during this time. They had to go east and then come back and quarantine, in the service of the state. I would like to thank them for that. The COVID coordinator, Sharyn O'Neill; the Commissioner of Police; the director general of Health; the Chief Health Officer; and the acting head of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet have all done a marvellous job on behalf of Western Australia. It just shows me—Western Australia is my adopted state—that people here are very committed to the service of the state. I would like to thank them all for their work this year.

We do not know what the future holds but we will certainly do our absolute best to keep the virus out of Western Australia, to keep our people healthy and safe and to keep the state safe and strong. As long as we continue on our current trajectory and pathway, our state will continue to do extremely well.

I would certainly like to thank my ministers, the government and the caucus for being understanding and supportive over this period and for working incredibly hard. It has been a period of turmoil, but ministers, in particular the Minister for Health, did a marvellous job every single day over an extremely stressful period. On behalf of everyone across the state, I would like to thank everyone who has made the entire system work.

Question (insertion of words) put and passed.

*Motion, as Amended*

Question put and passed.