

PUBLIC SECTOR — AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

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

I would first like to acknowledge the commencement today of 16 Days in WA and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women—an important opportunity to stand together to work towards the elimination of violence against women. There is lots of orange around the chamber. I just wanted to acknowledge that.

I refer to the Auditor General's audit results report for 2020–21 that identifies 120 control weaknesses at 41 government entities that remain unresolved from 2019–20 and is still climbing. Why is the Premier ignoring the Auditor General's recommendations and failing to ensure that all departments have robust control frameworks in place to prevent and detect fraud, error and service interruptions?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. Obviously, we are putting in place measures to deal with it. Mr Paul Whyte got away with these activities for years before this government uncovered it. That is what happened. We uncovered what he was doing. He stole millions of dollars while the Liberal–National government was in office and he was never caught. He was caught while we were in office, so our processes work.

I might also add that we had to go through a period in which we could not reappoint the head of the Corruption and Crime Commission, because the opposition was blocking the reappointment of its commissioner. That is what happened. Our number one accountability agency and the person described by the Commissioner of Police as the finest corruption fighter in the history of Western Australia, John McKechnie, was blocked by the Liberals and Nationals! Why did they block him? They blocked him because he was investigating Liberal and National corruption. That is what happened. We had to pass legislation to reappoint him because the opposition was supporting corrupt Liberal members in the upper house. That is what happened. The reason they were supported is that they had the numbers. That is the reason why.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Apart from the opposition, I have got so many members of the Labor Party calling out that I can barely hear what the Premier is saying.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Obviously, subsequent to the Paul Whyte corruption scandal, we put in place a range of internal governance and audit arrangements that improved the situation across the public sector, as I outlined yesterday, ensuring the segregation of duties between the officer issuing an invoice and that officer paying the invoice, which was obviously a pretty important measure to put in place; the regular rotation of accounting firms conducting internal audits; mandating that agencies have independently chaired audit committees by a person external to the agency; and we have better resourced the Auditor General to uncover these matters.