

EXECUTIVE AND BOARD ROLES — WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

606. Ms L.L. BAKER to the Minister for Women's Interests:

I refer to a report in today's *The West Australian* titled "WA firms lacking top women fare worse", that cites research evidence that less than half of WA's biggest 50 companies actually have women in executive or board roles. What is the McGowan Labor government doing to set an example for the rest of the community and increase the number of women appointed to government boards?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I thank the member for Maylands very much for that question and for her ongoing advocacy on behalf of working women. I know it is an issue that she has taken up for much of her working life. It was interesting to read that article in *The West* today citing research by Conrad Liveris and an analysis of WA's 50 largest companies, which share a total market capitalisation of over \$130 billion and employ thousands of employees across the state and, in fact, across the country. That study looked at the first quarter of this financial year, and it found that 54 per cent of those companies have no women in executive roles and that only 24 per cent have more than one woman in management—28 per cent have no women in executive roles or on their boards. We still have a long way to go when it comes to —

Ms A. Sanderson: A bit like the Liberal Party.

Ms S.F. McGURK: That is right—women at senior levels, either on boards or in the executive.

Several members interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: It is interesting to hear members on the other side talking about the Labor Party's record —

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo!

Ms S.F. McGURK: — with respect to women in leadership.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough!

Ms S.F. McGURK: I have noticed that across the chamber you are more likely to get preselected if you shave your head than if you are a woman! I have nothing against shaved heads. In fact, we have our Attorney General and I live with one, so I do not have anything against them.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, for those who have hair like me, they are not upset.

Ms S.F. McGURK: That is right.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is not a really nice thing to say.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough, this is a positive thing for women. I thought you would be happy about it, but keep interjecting. I call you to order for the first time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: This analysis highlights that a large number of top companies in Western Australia have not only no women or few women on their boards, but also few women in executive positions.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms S.F. McGURK: It also highlights that those companies with a number of women on their boards have been faring better in their performance. Having women at a board level is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. That is why Labor took to the election a policy that would make sure that 50 per cent of government board members and committee members were women. Since the election, we have been moving towards that goal, so much so that of the appointments that the government has control over—noting that the appointments to some of the boards and committees we do not have control over; they are tied to either a certain position or other organisations, such as local governments, that might appoint people—two-thirds have been women. We are very determined to increase the number of women on government boards and committees. In order to do that and to make sure that we cast our net across the state, we have set up a website called OnBoard WA. That means that anyone who is interested in a particular industry or area can indicate their interest and download

their CV on that website, so that when government is looking to fill vacancies on boards and committees, it can draw from that area.

I was particularly pleased during estimates to hear the member for Kalgoorlie on the other side acknowledge that he thought this was a good idea, because it means not only that there will be more women on boards, but also that it will widen the closed shop, the closed circle and the closed environment that currently exists. Hopefully, we will get more diversity generally.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms S.F. McGURK: I urge everyone to go onto OnBoard WA, including the other side of the chamber.