

PUBLIC SERVICE — GENDER EQUITY

**641. Ms J.M. FREEMAN to the Minister for Women's Interests:**

Can the minister update the house on how the McGowan Labor government is promoting gender equity and supporting women to reach senior leadership positions across the public sector, and can the minister advise the house whether she is aware of any alternative approaches to gender equity that have been taken recently?

**Ms S.F. McGURK replied:**

I thank the member for her question. It is no surprise to anyone here that our party takes the principle of equity very seriously, within both our party and government. The state public sector workforce is 70 per cent women, but sadly, until recently, only 33 per cent of appointments to the senior executive service level were women. We are working hard to remove the barriers to women's leadership in the public sector. We do not want to be drawing from a smaller, limited cohort; we want to make full use of this state's talents. Announcements of recent appointments of women to important and influential roles in WA's public sector are very encouraging. Alongside WA's Auditor General, Director of Public Prosecutions and Public Sector Commissioner, we can now count two new directors general—Ms Rebecca Brown, director general of the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation; and Jodi Cant for the Department of Finance. These achievements are to be commended; they are fantastic appointments. I also want to acknowledge and give special mention to the lead the Attorney General has played in appointing women to judicial positions, including one woman to the Court of Appeal, two women to the Supreme Court, five to the District Court, three to the Magistrates Court and one to the Family Court of Western Australia—12 women appointed. There is no doubt that he is a modern guy! As I have mentioned, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions are women as well. As a government and as a party, we want to be proactive in addressing the representation of women in leadership roles. It is the kind of change that the McGowan government is all about. We are walking the walk and talking the talk to make sure that our public sector leadership team reflects the WA community.

I am interested in the federal debate that is going on at the moment about equity within the federal Liberal Party and within the National Party as well—the coalition generally. I would be interested to hear from across the chamber what the state parties are interested in doing to increase the number of women within their cohorts. Our party has had a proactive approach to that since the early 1990s and we are now starting to see the benefits—one need only look around this chamber and the upper house to see the number of women representing our party. I wonder what the other side is doing about it within their own ranks.