

CABINET REPRESENTATION — WOMEN

742. Ms S.F. McGURK to the Premier:

I refer to the announcement today of new appointments to cabinet and the poor representation of women in leadership positions in the Liberal–National coalition. To assist the Premier, four out of 17 ministerial positions are held by women, which represents 23.5 per cent—marginally more than the 22 per cent of coalition members across the government who are women. When will the Liberal Party take practical steps, Premier, to promote women within its ranks?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

I am sitting right next to a practical step in the Deputy Premier of Western Australia. The Deputy Premier is an outstanding member of Parliament who is doing a fantastic job. We have other women members and ministers here—pretty damn good!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I know the Labor Party relies on quotas—I know that is its policy —

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Okay; that is all right.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Liberal Party certainly encourages and wants to see more women in Parliament and more —

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Mr Speaker, what is the point? These are the blokes that put the quotas in place!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the second time. Premier.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the first time. I feel that we are going to have another run now.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Liberal Party does not have quotas, but —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the third time. Next time you shout out, you will leave the chamber.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Liberal Party does not believe in quotas, but we certainly have an approach of encouraging more women to be elected, putting more women into so-called safe seats and more women into positions of seniority in the Parliament. Mr Speaker, if you want to look at the issue, under the Deputy Premier; Minister for Women’s Interests, if members look at the figures quoted the other day, the representation of women on government boards has gone up strongly under this government. If we look at the senior levels—the most senior positions in our public service—women are highly represented in major government agencies, such as Water Corporation, Education, Training, and so on and so on. Our practical record of women in senior positions stands for itself. But if the opposition wants to make women in Parliament and women in senior positions an issue going into the next election—good luck to it!—let us line them up. Let us line up the Liberal and National Parties’ women against the Labor women and let the community make its own decision. We would be up for that anytime—anytime the opposition wants to!