

CORONAVIRUS — STATE OF EMERGENCY

253. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:

I refer to the Premier's announcement today to bring on urgent legislation to extend temporary provisions under the Emergency Management Act and comments from Western Australia's Human Rights Commissioner, Lorraine Finlay, who said, "The longer the situation goes on, the harder it is to justify the continuation of emergency measures"—a sentiment backed in by yesterday's Auditor General's report. How does the Premier expect to attract critical workers, tourists and business investment to our state when he is forecasting another six months of these extraordinary controls?

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Finance, the question is to the Premier, not you.

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

The reason the government is doing this is to allow us to keep in place measures that will save lives; that is what it is about. We will not keep the measures in place for any longer than we need to but, without these laws, which we have rolled over four times now, we would not have the capacity to require people to remain at home for seven days when they are COVID-positive, to wear a mask when they go out if they are a close contact of someone who is COVID-positive, to require daily rapid antigen testing for people who are close contacts, for restrictions on entry into Aboriginal communities, for restrictions on cruise ships coming into Perth, and for mask wearing in hospitals, aged care and disability centres. All these rules we have in place require legislative backing. These laws we are bringing in provide the legislative backing behind those rules. If we do not do what we are doing, people will die. I do not want people who are vulnerable, particularly in hospitals, aged care and disability care, to die or get very unwell. That is what these laws are about.

What I have found over the course of the last two years is that every time we try to do something to save lives, save jobs and save people's health, the Liberal and National Parties oppose us. That is what happens. Some of the commentary out there by people external to Parliament is frankly wrong. It is just wrong. We will not keep these rules in place for longer than we need to but, if we get rid of them, we will have adverse health outcomes and I do not want to see that. Members opposite can shake their heads and come up with all these models; I have people asking me, "Why didn't you legislate for each of these?" We would have to have legislation for mask wearing in hospitals, another bill to legislate for mask wearing in aged-care settings, another bill for legislation to provide daily rapid antigen testing for those people who are close contacts and we would need more legislation around cruise ships coming in. The existing laws allow for directions to be published that are nimble, quick and efficient to deal with circumstances as they come along. The opposition's model would require the Parliament to be on standby every day, just in case we have to come in with urgent laws every day for the next six months. It is just a preposterous suggestion. It is a preposterous suggestion and it does not reflect the reality of dealing with COVID. What do members expect from the political party—the Liberal Party—that supports Clive Palmer?