

CORONAVIRUS — RESPONSE REVIEW

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

I refer to the *Audit results report—Annual 2020–21 financial audits of state government entities: Part 2: COVID-19 impacts* released by the Auditor General yesterday in which the auditor suggests significant future benefit would be granted by WA undertaking a systematic impartial examination of the response to the pandemic.

- (1) Noting this is a process that is underway in other states, will the Premier undertake to initiate such an impartial review?
- (2) Given that the Premier intends to continue managing WA using state of emergency powers, can he confirm when he will begin governing in a transparent manner?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1)–(2) The second part of the question is stupid. We are obviously here and all the systems of government operate as normal. The Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Corruption and Crime Commission, the Parliament and the courts—everything operates as normal. The state of emergency powers allow us to enforce mask wearing in hospitals and aged-care facilities, daily rapid antigen testing for close contacts and restrictions on cruise ships. They are a very light touch, but they are designed to save lives. I might add that it is a bit controversial. I have other groups out there in the community demanding that everyone wear a mask virtually all the time. We have adopted a cautious but reasonable approach in the circumstances we face.

Today we have around 280 people in hospital with COVID. I think there are six to eight people in intensive care. Those figures are amazingly good compared with what was predicted over the course of COVID. The modelling suggested that it would be far more dire than that. The reason we are in that position is that we did difficult things as a state. That is why we are in that position. The two most difficult things we did were to close the borders to keep COVID out and mandate vaccines for large parts of the workforce. Had we not done those difficult things, the state would have been in a very dire position; many hundreds, if not thousands, of people would have died and many thousands of jobs would have been lost. We did difficult things to save people's lives and their jobs in Western Australia, and I am proud of the fact that we did that, despite the member's criticisms. Other states and countries around the world wish they were in Western Australia's position.

In terms of an analysis of what has occurred over the last couple of years, at some point in time I am sure that something will occur. I am unaware of what other states have done. I am certainly not at all afraid of any sort of inquiry into it. But we are not actually out of it yet; we have not finished dealing with it. We had 11 000 or 12 000 cases today. It is not over yet. Obviously, when it is over, we can look at what can be put in place. I am very confident about the outcome of any inquiry because I know that we did everything we possibly could to protect Western Australia, so much so now we have the best health outcomes in Australia as a country, the best health outcomes in the world and the best economic outcomes in Australia bar none, and I expect the best economic outcomes in the world. If you want to criticise that, fill your boots!