

CORONAVIRUS — CONTACT TRACING SYSTEM AUDIT

**332. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:**

I note the release of the *COVID-19 contact tracing system — application audit* yesterday. The Auditor General found that highly sensitive medical and personal information had not been protected to the extent the community has the right to expect. How does the Premier explain this shocking lapse of process?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

The Department of Health has responded to the inquiry and I am just trying to find its advice. It advised that there has been no evidence of anyone accessing anyone's personal information acquired through the contact tracing system. It has worked with and implemented many of the recommendations for this issue that were presented to Health by the Auditor General. If I could find the quotation from Health, I would be able to give the Leader of the Liberal Party the exact words of how it has responded to this matter, but, unfortunately, I cannot find it at this point in time. In any event, Health has responded to it.

I just want to comment on the broader issue. We had to put in place contact tracing very quickly over the course of 2020 in response to a pandemic that no-one in Australia or the world saw coming. We had to put in place a whole range of measures across the community, including contact tracing, with hundreds of people engaged to do it. The workload at various points in time was extensive, and sometimes it was not because we did not have COVID here at various points in time. But we trained up a huge number of people across the public sector as a surge workforce. We had various people working in Health who were working on the issue and at various points in time, including still now in some areas, we have contact tracing teams working on these matters. We also put in place the app at restaurants, sport centres and various buildings so that we could contact people should they have been at a venue when someone who was positive was there.

We have to put ourselves back into the situation we were in. There was no vaccine. On the television at night, we saw islands in New York being used as mass graves. I remember watching news bulletins on northern Italy with red over large parts of northern Italy, with basically people dying en masse. I remember in China there were people literally dying in the street with people stepping over bodies. This was going on. In Britain, they have had the best part of 200 000 people or so die. In America, as I said the other day, a million people have died. In its Civil War, 600 000 people died and 400 000 died in the Second World War in the American armed forces. It has had a million people die, of whom at least 900 000 died from COVID. That is the situation we have been confronting. It was not an easy situation.

If the Liberal Party wanted us to delay and say, "We have to work this through; we have to get all these things done. We have to have best practice and consultation on how we do it. Let's consult on how we do it and do tender processes, though it might take months, then work out all the fine points and protocols and so forth, so we get this thing right", it may have been six months or a year in order to do that. In the meantime, a great many people could have died. It is all well and good to be an armchair critic and look back and say, "You should have done this differently or that differently." Western Australia has had the best outcomes of anywhere in the entire world. On a planet of seven billion people, Western Australia came out on top. That is because we did difficult things and we did them quickly, against the opposition's objection.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** And it does not stop. The Liberal Party objected to what we did at the time, and now it retrospectively objects. It is pathetic that the Liberal Party does this. It is pathetic. Minister Cook, myself, the cabinet, but especially Minister Cook, myself and some of the senior public servants in Health and police went through some of the most stressful times one could possibly imagine. It was sleepless night after sleepless night in order to try to prevent the catastrophe that befell other parts of Australia and other parts of the world occurring here. You come in here, an armchair critic who did nothing to support us over the course of the last two years. You come in here tut-tutting. That is what you do. I think your approach to politics is beyond pathetic; it is absolutely shameful.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please! Member for Wanneroo! Supplementary question?