

WESTERN POWER — CONNECTIONS

281. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Energy:

I have a supplementary question. How can the minister suggest that this is a sign of a good economy when people are going bankrupt and others are struggling to find a roof over their head?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

I am not quite sure how that related to the answer I gave. The supplementary question should relate to the answer. I actually provided a detailed response from Western Power explaining to the member the action that it is taking. Instead of representing the interests of the people the member has spoken to on this issue, she has pivoted to politics. This is why she is not a successful member of Parliament. She needs to start thinking about what she is doing. She is the leader of a party with no policies. There are fewer than 700 days to the election. Not only does the member not have any policies to present to the people, but she is not even telling us what her policies will be about. I always say that the four-year election cycle goes like this: in the first year you rewrite history, the second year is the gap year, the third year you get ready, and the fourth year is the fight.

Ms L. Mettam: You're such an expert, aren't you?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, I am an expert on this issue!

Several members interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I spent 25 years at the heart of campaign infrastructure. That is the one thing that everybody knows about me. This is the year the opposition gets set.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! Minister, you were very correct when you referred to the relevance of the supplementary question. Whilst this may be a matter in which you have some expertise, I do not think this actually relates to either the supplementary or the main question.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: In the end, it is like this: there is a delay because the economy is so strong that the number of applications has doubled. That is why I say the challenge is a strong economy. I am not the one who increased the number of applications from 3 000 a year to 7 000 a year. Yes, Western Power, like every other business, is having trouble finding the equipment because there is a global shortage of manufactured equipment caused by the pandemic and there is a shortage of skilled labour. If we can overcome those two problems, we can shorten the time lines. The chief executive officer of Western Power made an interesting point to me recently. In conversation with a developer he asked, "What are you doing about the part of the infrastructure on your land?" The developer said, "I've got real problems. I can't find anybody to do the work." That is exactly the same problem that Western Power has. This is a very difficult problem and we need a mature government to solve it.