

Ms Mia Davies; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Deputy Speaker; Mr Roger Cook;  
Mrs L.A. Munday; Mr Simon Millman; Mr Shane Love

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## **CORONAVIRUS — VACCINATIONS**

### *Matter of Public Interest*

**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** informed the Assembly that she was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition)** [3.02 pm]: I move —

That this house notes the findings and recommendations in the Auditor General's report *WA's COVID-19 vaccine roll-out* and the *AMA (WA) COVID emergence plan* released last week and condemns the Labor government for failing to prepare or adequately invest in our health system or the state's vaccine rollout.

This government went to the last election with billboards and I recall them well. They were plastered all over the state saying, "We'll keep you safe." That mantra, "We'll keep you safe", was repeated at every opportunity. At every media conference and every policy launch and with every dollar spent by the Labor Party, it was saying, "We'll keep you safe." It was a four-word statement that rolled off the tongue of the Premier, the Minister for Health, his ministers and the candidates. Eight months later, the government is struggling because a four-word media grab is no longer enough to get it through the daily press conference. For five years, this health minister has been in charge of a system that is now in crisis. In an independent report, the Auditor General now says that not enough has been done in relation to the plans, which were the responsibility of the WA Country Health Service and the Department of Health, to roll out our vaccine program.

It turns out that the questions that the opposition has been asking about our failing health system for the last nine months, and the four years before that, and the vaccine rollout this year are actually justified and reasonable. Despite the first paragraph of the report that the Premier chose to read, but ignored the remainder, the Auditor General says that there were many holes in the Department of Health's processes, which were overseen by the Minister for Health and the Premier because they inserted themselves in every single part of this process, which were inadequate. That is why we are racing towards the deadline at the end of the year, trying to get the cohorts that were always going to be difficult to sign up to get vaccinated and to stay ahead of the curve that we know is coming, because our health system will not cope. The Minister for Health's response to the shadow Minister for Health's question on Albany Health Campus today shows how ignorant the government is about the concerns of the people who work within our health service, and the concerns within the community in general. We did not need to go down to Albany and rally up more than 100 people; they were flocking to our stand at the Albany Show and wanting to come along to the forum so that they could raise their real and valid concerns about the state of Albany Health Campus. We could have done that in Bunbury. We have had conversations with people who are concerned about the state of the hospital in Wyndham, but we still have the two issues that the government needed to do its absolute best on: managing our health system and rolling out the vaccine program. The government has been shown to have completely missed the mark.

This is a government that is starting to believe its own spin: say it, and it will be so. I do not think the community is prepared any longer to accept the four-word slogan: "We'll keep you safe." There are so many questions, and now the Auditor General's report reveals that there are gaps and we are now racing against time, because the government chose to rely on spin instead of doing the hard work itself. No-one could stand up and say, hand on heart, that this health system is not in crisis. We have record ambulance ramping; code yellows and code blacks; and staff leaving the profession because they are overworked, under-resourced and under-appreciated. The government's own data shows that, but we do not need to rely on that, because people are flocking to our offices and calling us to say exactly that—that they are concerned about their health and safety because they are not supported and because the government has not resourced our hospitals appropriately.

There have been cancellations of elective surgery, and more and more people are sharing their stories about their experiences of being in emergency departments with hardworking staff, and they can see that our health staff are under pressure. They are reluctant to criticise the doctors and nurses in the system, but they know that their own health is being compromised because there simply are not enough people on the ground. I know for a fact that Wyndham Hospital is operating at one-third the complement it is supposed to. It is supposed to have nine nurses on deck but it has only three, and an emergency call has been put out to try to get people up there. The paramedic the Minister for Health talked about previously who was offering support—it might not have been the Minister for Health; it might have been the Department of Health—has also left. This is not a sign of a healthy health system. That is the legacy of this government and the five years during which the Minister for Health has overseen a system in crisis. It cannot possibly survive another threat, yet it has been made so much more difficult because the government failed to make sure that the vaccine rollout was done appropriately. We have a system on its knees with regard to our hospitals, whether it is in Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Wyndham or Kalgoorlie. That is the legacy left by the Minister for Health.

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I turn now to the Auditor General's report and its findings on the vaccine rollout. I want to reflect upon some of the messages in the Auditor General's presentation last Thursday when the report was tabled. I went along to the briefing and took notes. The question I asked in question time about there being a shameful gap came directly from the Auditor General and reflected the fact that there are vulnerable cohorts in our state who have been overlooked or let down because the government did not have strategies in place to make sure they were dealt with.

I noted during the briefing that there is no evidence to show that the state government has been aggressively asking the commonwealth government for data to assist in its efforts to target vulnerable cohorts as part of the vaccination rollout. The Auditor General basically said that the state government should have been on the commonwealth government's tail, asking for the data it was collecting so that it could target its messaging and actions more specifically. The Auditor General said that the government focused on the low-hanging fruit instead of targeting the cohorts that are hardest to vaccinate, which tend to be the most vulnerable. It failed to maintain a focus on those who are most at risk. It failed to maintain the laser-like focus that was required to get those people over the line. After changes were agreed to between the commonwealth and state government in March—we all acknowledge that there were changes and that the goalposts changed—it was identified by government that it needed to clarify and document the new roles and responsibilities, but it did not do this. That is what the Auditor General said.

I will look at the findings. The Department of Health and this government set an 80 per cent target for double-dose vaccination, but they are silent on the higher risk subgroups. On page 8 of the report, the Auditor General states —

... the Department has not been specific about whether achieving the target —

That is, 80 per cent —

requires consistent coverage across cohorts, including those who are clinically vulnerable or hard to reach, and geographical areas.

They are questions we have been asking in this place and it turns out they were perfectly reasonable. The Auditor General has made a finding that has somewhat muddled the waters in trying to maintain a focus on getting those people over the line. The report states —

**Roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined**

**The WA Implementation Plan focussed on the early phases of the program, but key roles and responsibilities beyond Phase 1a were not set and key actions are still not done**

They were not articulated and the WA implementation plan had not been updated since March 2021. It continues —

The WA Implementation Plan lists several outstanding issues including clarity of responsibilities and definitions for population cohorts, some of which remain unactioned at the time of this review.

...

**The national strategy changed, which increased the State's responsibility, but plans were not updated**

This minister and this government are not asking the right questions of the department. They are the questions that this minister should have been asking when those decisions were made. He failed to do that and the outcome is that vulnerable cohorts have been left stranded. It is very concerning.

In question time, there was quite rightly a question around increasing the number of Aboriginal people who are vaccinated and getting this done in a very short period. At the time of the report on 9 November, only 31 per cent of Aboriginal people in Western Australia were reported as being fully vaccinated. That was not just in the regions. That was in the metropolitan area, where statewide clinics were rolled out. One of the comments made by the Auditor General was that, although hesitancy has been a problem, accessibility is more of a problem. The report goes through the decision to put a clinic at Claremont Showground but makes the observation that, after that, no detailed analysis of other locations was undertaken, despite the department's research showing that accessibility was one of the key issues that needed to be overcome.

There are some fairly damning findings in this report, which show that the Department of Health and State Health Incident Coordination Centre are obviously operating under pressure. The minister and the Premier consistently say that they are doing everything they can, but they were not asking the right questions and the buck stops with them. Why were those questions not asked of the department, especially when they were being asked by the opposition, the media and the public? The minister was not asking the department. The Auditor General's report says that the minister failed to do enough. He failed to ask the right questions. He failed to push the department and the State Health Incident Coordination Centre to plan and prepare. That has left this state hurtling towards a requirement to open up, with a real risk of COVID coming into our community, which has low vaccination rates in some of our most vulnerable cohorts and populations in Western Australia. It is an absolute disgrace.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party)** [3.14 pm]: I rise to support the motion, which states —

That this house notes the findings and recommendations in the Auditor General's report *WA's COVID-19 vaccine roll-out* and the *AMA (WA) COVID emergence plan* released last week and condemns the Labor government for failing to prepare or adequately invest in our health system or the state's vaccine rollout.

I turn to the government's lack of preparedness for the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and for when COVID-19 inevitably comes into the community. Nowhere is this lack of preparedness more evident than in our health system. It is a particular concern in our regional areas, something we have raised a number of times in this house. It has now been 21 months since the beginning of the pandemic, and the Premier has been well supported for the government's approach in stopping COVID from coming into the community. This government has failed to ensure that our hospital system is able to accept and support patients on a day-to-day basis and that our health system is better prepared for when COVID hits. It has been 21 months since this government said it just needed time to prepare so that our hospitals were battle-ready for the inevitable COVID storm. The government bought 300-odd ventilators but then sat back and closed the border, relying on Western Australians to do the heavy lifting. That is what we have seen. There has been no real planning on where the beds will come from or where specialist staff will be required to operate intensive care unit beds. I refer to the recent report in the *Medical Journal of Australia* that notes that WA has the lowest number of ICU beds in the country—fewer than we had 12 months ago. That again points to a lack of planning under a government that has had the gift of time to prepare. We saw an eleventh-hour commitment last month, finally, after a budget and an opportunity to invest in beds in our regional areas. There was a commitment by the government on 3 November for the healthy funding boost to further increase WA's hospital capacity. I quote the media statement —

- \$400 million investment to further expand the capacity of WA's health system
- Includes ... an additional 270 beds ...

We ask the questions: Why did it take so long to see such a commitment? Why was it not until today that the modular beds were announced for Bunbury? Where is the commitment for Albany? The announcement of 332 beds provided for in the recent state budget did not provide any additional beds for regional WA. We know the health system is on its knees, but we are seeing imminent service failure across our regional areas. The reason there was such a good show of support to hear concerns in Albany recently was that we have a health system on its knees. It is extraordinary that when the minister was asked about this in the house today, he had yet to provide any commitment for bed capacity for Albany. That has seen patients and health workers feeling under-supported and forgotten. As I stated, of the 332 beds announced in the budget, not one is in the country health service—not one. That raises questions.

Our regional health workforce is under extraordinary pressure. As the Leader of the Opposition has stated, in Wyndham the hospital services have been cut. Wyndham was operating with nine nurses and now is down to just three. Hours are being reduced. When we are meant to be battle-ready for COVID, we are seeing cuts to services across regional WA. That is quite an extraordinary and unforgivable situation. Patients in those areas in Wyndham have to travel an hour to Katanning —

**Ms D.G. D'Anna:** Kununurra.

**Ms L. METTAM:** My apologies; they have to travel to Kununurra for those services. Hours have been reduced to daytime only. That is completely unacceptable. We know the situation in Wyndham is not unique. We heard concerns in Derby and Halls Creek. We heard not just concerns from patients about the fact that staff feel unsupported in their working environment, but also that only 47 per cent of health workers feel supported in their workplace.

Just one in three feel comfortable speaking up. They have also raised a range of issues with the lack of safety of hospital accommodation. I point to some comments made by WA Country Health Service chief executive, Jeffrey Moffet, yesterday —

... further cuts to opening hours and services at regional hospitals may be considered as the government continues to battle a critical shortage of health workers across the state.

In reference to Wyndham, he said —

... staffing at a number of other regional hospitals was being monitored week-to-week due to similar issues.

He also said —

“If we need to reduce service levels, or we need to chance access to certain services, then that's what we'll do.”

Those who have been holding the fort have been doing an incredible job. The opposition applauds the fantastic work of our health workers, but how long can they continue to do more with less? They are doing double shifts and working overtime in an organisation that they feel does not have their back and is not supporting them.

I presented a grievance in this place just last week about Bunbury Hospital at South West Health Campus. Further to the comments about cutting services, there have been rolling cuts to elective surgery at Bunbury Hospital since July, with whole lists of category 2 and 3 procedures cancelled. One surgeon had their whole list of category 1 surgeries cancelled. I must state that those surgeons were absolutely disgusted with the response from the Minister for Health, who again tried to deflect attention away from this and stated that I had been untruthful with the information I had provided in the grievance. It was absolutely the case that the health workers at Bunbury health campus were told that one operating theatre would effectively not be in operation for the month of November and that there would be further ongoing cuts as well. It is a damning situation when we are meant to be battle-ready for COVID, particularly considering the ongoing concerns of health workers and surgeons about the implications of delaying surgery and the impacts on the health and wellbeing of patients. Many patients have been told that their surgery cannot be rescheduled until April at the earliest, and, even then, it might be a maybe as well.

I point to Albany Health Campus. The minister's assertion in response to a Dorothy Dixier in this place last week was extraordinary; he said that great things were happening at Albany Health Campus, and that the McGowan government was backing it because the campus supports the people of Albany. We heard in this place today that the McGowan government is not backing the community of Albany. We heard that one budget has passed and another \$400 million has been committed, but that not one new bed has been committed for Albany Health Campus. That is extraordinary, given the pressures there that we are hearing about. That is why the opposition supports the WorkSafe investigation into Albany Health Campus. More than a hundred people turned out, including representatives from the Australian Medical Association and the Australian Nursing Federation, and they had a very different opinion on the situation and the state of resources at Albany Health Campus. They were all in agreement that the staff are doing a fantastic job under extraordinary circumstances. However, according to the most recently accessed health worker survey, only 25 per cent of Albany staff believed that the decisions and behaviours of senior management were consistent with their organisation's values, compared with 54 per cent across the WA Country Health Service; only 25 per cent of workers believed that the organisation cared about their health and wellbeing; and only 19 per cent of Albany Health Campus staff believed that the organisation was making the necessary improvements to meet their future challenges. That was certainly reflected in the Minister for Health's response today. It goes on. The morale is dire. The opposition certainly supports the Albany community.

I turn now to the *AMA (WA) COVID emergence plan*. It backs up these concerns. The AMA believes that country Western Australians will face a higher risk of death in the event of a COVID outbreak, and that there has been a lack of planning. The AMA plan states —

- There must be a plan for escalation of care and transfer of critically ill and ventilated patients from the country.

It states also —

- The WA Government should consider providing additional medical and nursing support to rural hospitals ...

The AMA plan also points to the need to set a date for reopening for fully vaccinated people, to encourage vaccination. It states —

- The WA Government has the most up-to-date information on modelling data and should be the body that sets dates.

It is interesting that the AMA has called for a specific reopening date and has linked that to the impact on the vaccination rate.

None of these issues should come as a surprise to the minister. These issues are all rational and practical, and, in most cases, foreseeable. It is worth pointing out that the AMA also states —

- A more compassionate border should be enacted now for fully vaccinated individuals with appropriate pre-travel testing, testing on arrival, and while in quarantine.

We certainly believe that our state can facilitate and support this. As I have stated, these are very rational and foreseeable issues. It is unfortunate that the government has been focused on crushing and killing the virus but has been doing very little to properly prepare our health system. That is why we support this motion. It is extraordinary that there are still significant gaps in the government's response, as exposed by both the report of the Auditor General and the AMA's emergence plan.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [3.27 pm]: I rise to strongly support this important accountability motion. It is interesting that in this term of Parliament, we are seeing a government that does not think the opposition should exist. It does not think there should be any opposition. It does not think we should ask

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questions. The government thinks we should be a cheer squad for its mismanagement of its portfolios, in particular the health portfolio.

We know that Western Australia started off in a strong position. Why has Western Australia been in this strong position?

**Ms S.E. Winton** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** For a start, Australia is an island nation. The whole of Australia has done well, much better than the rest of the world. This state is isolated. We also have the good fortune that we have the financial capacity to close borders and sustain lockdowns. The opposition has said consistently that we support the government in those moves. However, unfortunately —

**Ms S.E. Winton** interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Wanneroo continually interjects and is annoying everyone in this chamber. Can you please tell her to cease?

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members!

**Ms J.J. Shaw** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Swan Hills!

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members! The point of order will be heard in silence. Thank you very much. There is no point of order. Carry on, Leader of the Liberal Party.

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The simple reality is that this government has wasted the gift of time. We have had a precious gift in this state. Members can debate who they think is responsible for that precious gift. That precious gift is that we have had time to prepare for when our borders will eventually be opened. We all know the reality of that, and this is now being discussed widely and publicly; that is, when the borders reopen—eventually they will but we are not quite sure when—we know that we will have COVID in this state and that that will put more pressure on our health system. The government has had an enormous period of time to deal with this. I go back two Februarys to when this virus inflicted itself on Australia and Western Australia. The government has had all that time, but it has not done it.

I reflect on what other members have said in this house about the vaccine rollout. The simple reality is the government was slow with the vaccine rollout and we are constantly seeing this finger-pointing—blaming someone else. It was interesting hearing the Premier say today that his government will work with the commonwealth; that it is not going to politicise it. All I have heard in this chamber up until this point is the Premier blaming the commonwealth and politicising it, saying it is the commonwealth's fault that remote communities do not have the correct vaccination rate. We have consistently said: do not finger-point, do not blame; get out there and do it. It has taken until now for the Premier to get out there and do it. That is the problem—it has squandered the gift of time that we have had in relation to vaccinations and vaccine rollouts.

There is a cruelty to all this, which relates to the pressure that regional health services are under. That cruelty, as outlined by both speakers, is around the impact on people. I attended the nurses' rally earlier this year and spoke to nurses at Perth Children's Hospital. It was distressing talking to them because they are simply so distressed; they are under so much pressure. They take their jobs seriously. They have been put under pressure because the government has not resourced this service properly. We saw a panicked reaction by the government a little earlier this year. All of a sudden it realised we had a crisis in the hospitals and it was going to spend money. The trouble is that in its first four years the government was boasting that it was cutting money to the hospitals. It did not do it with any sophistication; it just cut the budgets and said, "You cope!" The hospitals were run down, the resources in the hospitals were run down, and a number of trained staff were run down, and then the government came in at the eleventh hour and said, "We are going to spend all this money to solve this problem." We know the likelihood that that will happen is very, very low. We do not have the people and we do not have the time. It is likely the border will soon reopen and that our hospital system will be under enormous pressure. We will see the cancellation of not just elective surgery, but really important surgery, to deal with that increased hospital load. That is all because the government has squandered the gift of time that we had.

Members can debate who they think was responsible for that and congratulate who they think was responsible for that, but it was the government's duty to use that time to prepare our hospitals and this state for the time when the borders reopened because we all knew that was going to happen. Now it is imminent. By the time we come back to

Parliament next year, there is a fair probability that the borders will be open. The truth is the government squandering the gift of time is the reason people in Western Australia will suffer, and they will suffer in our hospitals.

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health)** [3.32 pm]: It is the last week of the Legislative Assembly for the year and it shows! At the end of the day —

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Carry on, minister.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** I get the impression their hearts are not in it. They want to carry forward the narrative. They wanted to find a report that was hypercritical and would undermine the government, but all they found was the Office of the Auditor General report, which pretty much gave qualified approval to the work done by the government, and the Australian Medical Association report, which emphasised a couple of points that it would differ on, but, by and large, said it would do things in a little more relaxed manner than the government. Ultimately, by and large, it commended the government for its approach in keeping people safe.

As the Leader of the Opposition observed, we said that we would keep people safe, and that is what we have done. One Western Australian has contracted COVID-19 from within Western Australia and, sadly, passed away. That record is reflected almost nowhere else in the world in an advanced and developed economy. It is an extraordinary record achieved by the people of Western Australia with their efforts to keep themselves safe by following all the best health advice. One person lost their life. If we had listened to the Leader of the Opposition and opened our borders when she said she wanted them to open, potentially thousands of people would have lost their lives, as we have seen in New South Wales. As we saw in New South Wales —

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

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Liberal Party, you have had your say; it is the minister's turn to respond. You might not like what he says, but he has the ability to respond.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** The opposition called for us to open the border and the government resisted, because, as the Leader of the Opposition reminded us today, we said that we would keep Western Australians safe, and we have. We absolutely have and we will continue to do so. We will only open up when it is safe to do so. We have a plan that has been worked through by the departments and is based upon expert modelling by the Department of Health. We know when beds will be needed. We know what we have to do to keep Western Australians safe so we can have a soft landing with the disease in our community. We accept that that will happen, but we have kept Western Australians safe. This is one of the safest places in the world. We have kept our promise. The Leader of the Opposition today accused us of not keeping our promises, but we have kept our promises. When the disease has come into our community, such as with the Bondi outbreak, we have crushed it and stopped it in its tracks. We have made sure that Delta has not dealt our community a fatal blow.

I remind the chamber that thousands of people on the east coast have lost their lives. It has devastated communities and destroyed economies and lives. We do not want that in Western Australia. We have been at pains to emphasise to the people of Western Australia that it is important to get themselves vaccinated, because this is a disease of the unvaccinated. Between June and October, over 1 000 people in New South Wales went into intensive care units—1 015 to be exact. Of those 1 000 people, only 47 were fully vaccinated. The vast majority of people in ICU in New South Wales hospitals were not vaccinated. This is the disease of the unvaccinated. Of those 47 vaccinated people, the average age was 82 years. They were already immunocompromised or had comorbidities and unfortunately succumbed to the chronic symptoms associated with COVID-19.

But that is not Western Australia's story, Deputy Speaker. Western Australia's story is one of being confident and making sure that we stop the disease in its tracks when it comes into the state—that is, until we can open up safely, at a 90 per cent vaccination rate. I am sorry if that is inconvenient to the Australian Medical Association. I am sorry if the AMA thinks we should be opening up our borders before we get to a 90 per cent vaccination rate, but that is what we are doing because it is part of our plan to keep Western Australians safe. It is a plan the government is determined to deliver on. The AMA made some observations about the treatment of patients in a regional setting, and I clarified those points in response to a question in question time today, so let us just dispense with this nonsense that somehow the AMA report is hypercritical of the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic or our plans to open up as part of the transition. It is not. It is a falsehood for the opposition to come into this place and make that allegation.

The Office of the Auditor General report provides a valuable insight into the frustrations that the government has felt about the vaccination program all the way along. The Office of the Auditor General said that we had constrained supplies early in the vaccine rollout and that we did not have insight into the weakness in our system. That is true. We did not get early vaccine supplies; they predominantly went to the east coast, where there was a massive outbreak, including many deaths. There were holes in the insights that we had into the vulnerable cohorts, particularly in

culturally and linguistically diverse communities, because we were relying on commonwealth data through the Australian Immunisation Register, which it was not providing. As the Auditor General said, that data has only recently become available, and that has allowed us to make sure that we could nuance our vaccination program. We have always made sure that we had a very strong target of those vulnerable communities consistent with the supplies of vaccine that we had. Let us not forget that the commonwealth did not provide us with the supplies that we needed in the early days. It botched the ordering of the vaccine. It botched the rollout in aged-care facilities. It was found wanting in the work that it was doing under the national plan that it put in place. The work that it was doing in our Aboriginal communities was not sufficient. We obviously had to take a much more significant role to make sure that we could get better coverage in Aboriginal communities. At the moment, the vaccination rate in Aboriginal communities is rising at a faster rate than it is in our mainstream community. We are making progress, but the rate is, unfortunately, far too low. A lot of work has been done, and that work was acknowledged by the Auditor General in her report—a point that the opposition’s analysis has of course overlooked today. I think the Auditor General made that very clear, under the rather trickily titled heading in the report “Conclusion”. This is the primary finding of the Auditor General —

In an environment of uncertain supply and demand, the COVID-19 vaccination program in WA has been largely effective in delivering injections for the vast majority of people.

Yes, the Auditor General is there to find ways that that can be improved, but I am not quite sure how that earns us the honour of being condemned. Quite frankly, this opposition has been ignoring the facts and ignoring our answers, and has been coming in with the same debate day in and day out. It does not surprise me that it has overlooked the primary finding of the Auditor General. It does not surprise me that it has once again come in here to undermine the vaccination program. On 9 October, the Leader of the Liberal Party said that setting a target of 90 per cent vaccination before we started to open up this state was in fact saying that we had no plan to open up this state. He said that no significant jurisdictions in the world have achieved that level of vaccination—other than potentially Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory! He went on to say that given the appallingly low level of vaccination in Western Australia, the government knows that we will not achieve 90 per cent until sometime—a long distance into—next year, probably into the second part of next year. Today we have a single-dose vaccination rate of over 85 per cent. In the coming fortnight, we will achieve a single-dose vaccination rate of 90 per cent and then, potentially, move forward from there. It will be a great outcome for the Western Australian community. It will not be easy to get to these final cohorts, but it is an outcome we are determined to drive home. With the support of the community and all those important institutions in our community such as Parliament, we will get there, but not, sadly, if people choose to undermine that process.

Of course, the other side has failed to promote the vaccine. The entire state is focused on increasing the vaccination rate, except for one important entity—that is, the Liberal Party of Western Australia. Despite the efforts of the Leader of the Opposition to promote the vaccination in her social media utterances, we have heard nothing from the Liberal Party. In fact, what we hear from the Liberal Party is the shadow Attorney General going out dog whistling to the anti-vaxxers, trying to provide comfort for those who are threatening the lives of the Premier and his family as a result —

*Point of Order*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** That is a clear imputation under standing order 98. I suggest the words the member is using in alleging that Hon Nick Goiran is encouraging people to threaten the Premier are an absolute disgrace and an imputation on his reputation. They are utterly false.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, members! There is no point of order and there was no imputation by the minister. Carry on, please, minister.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Hon Nick Goiran is no orphan in this. We need only look at Senator Canavan or maybe the Prime Minister to listen to other versions of this dog whistling, so I would not get too worried about Hon Nick Goiran. The member for Cottesloe might wonder about some of his staff as they stand out the front of Parliament House encouraging the protesters who were intimidating and harassing members of Parliament coming into this place.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** That is untrue.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** I saw it with my own eyes in the media that was covering events that day. “Good on ’em”; “Good on ’em”, he said to those protesters. Many people in the Liberal Party, particularly the member for Cottesloe, are busy reading the WhatsApp messages from Mathias Cormann and Hon Nick Goiran. The member for Vasse

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is equally busy, but not too busy to promote the vaccination program. Members were shocked to hear that the member for Vasse, the shadow Minister for Health in the opposition, did not make a single social media post encouraging Western Australians to sign up. We highlighted this fact in Parliament last week. Surely, after once we had pointed this out, we would have seen the member for Vasse, the shadow Minister for Health, change her ways. She is chasing sharks in the south west in relation to school leavers, but she cannot bring herself to actually tell Western Australians to get vaccinated.

Yet again, I am in a position to advise the chamber that there has not been a single social media post, not a peep, encouraging Western Australians to get vaccinated, so I want to update the house from last week. The opposition health spokesperson has now had 296 Facebook posts this year.

*Point of Order*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Under standing order 78, how is talking about the opposition's Facebook relevant to the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition? This is about the health minister's failures.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for North West Central, thank you.

**Ms S.E. Winton** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members! Member for Wanneroo, it is a point of order and it will be heard in silence. Member for North West Central, do not come back in here and try to stir everything up. There is no point of order. Carry on, minister.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr R.H. COOK:** There were 296 Facebook posts this year and not a single one telling people to get vaccinated. The shadow minister has now had 322 tweets this year. How many of those tweets were encouraging people to get vaccinated, members? Zero. We have now seen from the shadow Minister for Health 618 social media posts or tweets this year and not a single one actually saying to people, "You know what, we should get ourselves vaccinated. Everyone do the right thing, get yourselves vaccinated." But we know that that is not a focus of the Liberal Party. They are too busy trying to walk both sides of the street. They want to encourage the extremists within the Liberal Party and keep them good. But they do not want to inflame Hon Nick Goiran because we know that he and Hon Peter Collier control the numbers, and the puppet over here, the member for Cottesloe, will be in trouble if he even criticises these things. We know that they do not want to say to people, "Get yourself vaccinated," because that would inflame the very people upon which they —

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** This is not the Liberal Party of old; this is the Liberal Party of today—a bunch of extremists, dog whistling to the anti-vaxxers out there who are unable to do the right thing.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for North West Central!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** The other side are a disgrace. They are not supporting Western Australians; they are supporting the anti-vaxxers and they should hang their heads in shame.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members! Deputy leader!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** They should hang their heads in shame about their lack of support of Western Australians in the vaccination program. The McGowan government is employing more doctors and more nurses and has more beds than any state government in this state's history. We are making sure that we continue to grow our health services as we anticipate, under the modelling developed by the Department of Health, an increasing need for beds as a result of COVID-19 in the middle to the second half of next year.

That is the reality we are dealing with. That is why we have this \$400 million investment to create an extra 270 beds over the next 12 months as part of the process of getting ready for COVID-19. Those opposite can continue to drag people down and drag our health system down. We will continue to go out there and employ more doctors and more nurses to make sure that we have the health services as we transition to an open border. We will not listen to those who say that we should open up early. We will not listen to those who said Western Australians would fail to get themselves vaccinated, and now we have demonstrated that they are doing the exact opposite and Western Australians are rolling up to get vaccinated. We will not listen to those who continue to try to defend the anti-vax dog whistling of their Liberal Party colleagues. We will not listen to those who continue to come into this place, day in and day



out, and ignore the facts, ignore the science, and just continue to try to pull down the McGowan government and its efforts to keep people in Western Australia safe.

The Leader of the Opposition in her opening remarks said it all: the McGowan government at the last election committed to keeping Western Australians safe. As we know, we have been outstandingly successful in working with the people of Western Australia to make that a reality. We will continue to work as we roll out our transition plan with the funding, resourcing and science, and with the help of the Western Australian people and not with the help of those opposite.

**MRS L.A. MUNDAY (Dawesville)** [3.53 pm]: I rise to make a comment on the matter of public interest today. The shadow Minister for Health asked whether we are battle ready for COVID. I think a one-dose vaccination rate of 85 per cent for people aged 12 years and over and a two-dose vaccination rate of 72.9 per cent for people aged 12 years and over at the moment puts us in pretty good stead to be battle ready. Before there were vaccinations for COVID-19, I was working as a paramedic in the back of an ambulance transporting COVID-positive people. Some people had come back from holidaying on the *Ruby Princess* and had brought COVID to Western Australia.

I remember sitting in the back of an ambulance, with my full gear and respirator on, transporting a gentleman to Fiona Stanley Hospital. He was absolutely terrified. His family was upset and scared. I remember taking him from his home, talking to him and having to say to his wife, “I’m sorry. You can’t come in the ambulance because we transport people who have COVID on their own.” COVID-positive patients do not get to bring their families members with them. They do not get to see them in hospital. People with COVID go into clinics with pressurised areas, and if they are very sick and they die, they die alone. I do not think that a lot of people have taken on board that if they have COVID, they will go into a hospital and say goodbye to their loved ones outside the hospital. They will not get the opportunity to hold their loved one’s hand and they will die alone. Yes, there is FaceTime and opportunities to text and see people, but I do not think people understand that of the 19 people who died in Victoria today, 17 were not vaccinated, and they all would have died alone, other than being with the great nurses and doctors. A big difference that we need to understand between Western Australia and the rest of Australia is that we have had 12 days of COVID lockdown in total, whereas I think Melbourne was rated as having had the longest lockdown in the world. Correct me if I am wrong.

We are getting ready and we are getting supported. The Premier has given us a hospital package like no other that will keep us ready. The government has invested \$398 million to further expand the capacity of Western Australia’s health system. That is a massive investment. We can do these things due to the fact that we have a fantastic economic situation. State-run vaccination clinics have been made available in more than 100 locations across Western Australia. We have had mass vaccination clinics and pop-up clinics, we have reached into workplaces and gone to schools and prisons, and we have partnered with organisations like Bunnings to make those sorts of things happen. We are making ourselves battle ready for COVID.

We have bolstered the federal government’s rollout to Indigenous populations. My great friend the member for Kimberley told me that the Beagle Bay community is 90 per cent fully vaccinated. The Warmun community also has a high vaccination rate with the support of the WA Country Health Service. The staff at Beringarra have said that only five eligible community members have not yet been vaccinated. Our Indigenous population is being looked after and supported as best we can. We have supported the federal government. It was a bit slow, but it is on the uptake and we are continuing to support the federal government. We have had the Super Vax Weekend. The total number of vaccines administered at the state-run clinics over the Super Vax Weekend was 15 484 people, of which 1 580 were in regional clinics. The top three centres were at Joondalup, Claremont and Midland. The work the state has done to make us COVID ready is incredible.

I was a community relief paramedic at Wyndham and I played a big part in preparing the Indigenous population for COVID there. They have a lot of comorbidities that make them a lot more vulnerable, so it is really important that we join the federal government. I appreciate the Minister for Health’s work in making sure that we are doing the best for our Indigenous population.

From a health perspective, I think the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that the community paramedic in Wyndham was leaving. I have just been speaking to his wife. Apparently, he is on relief for nine weeks, on a well-earned holiday break. He is not leaving the area; he is leaving for a holiday.

Several members interjected.

**Mrs L.A. MUNDAY:** He is all good to go. He is on a well-entitled break.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Is there someone there now?

**Mrs L.A. MUNDAY:** Yes. He is still there at the moment, but relief will be coming for the nine weeks while he is on leave.

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Mrs L.A. Munday; Mr Simon Millman; Mr Shane Love

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Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mrs L.A. MUNDAY:** Of the 270 new beds that are coming in —

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for North West Central!

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition!

**Mrs L.A. MUNDAY:** We have 270 beds costing approximately \$206.8 million coming into WA, albeit, like the Minister for Health said, the tertiary hospitals will take COVID patients because regional hospitals do not have the pressurised units to take care of people. I know from a regional perspective that if it were my loved one, I would want them to have the best treatment, and if that is in a tertiary hospital, so be it. The Royal Flying Doctor Service will provide its support and the ambulance service will provide support by taking people to the places where they will receive the best care.

**MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley — Parliamentary Secretary)** [3.59 pm]: I want to thank the member for Dawesville for eliminating some more Liberal Party lies. I am astounded at the incredible hypocrisy of the motion that has been brought to the house by the opposition. On the face of it, it appears that this motion criticises the way in which the state government is handling the vaccine rollout. This is from an opposition that has provided comfort and support to the anti-vaxxer movement.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** That is just an outrageous comment. Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask that you ask the member to withdraw that. That is an imputation that we have actually acted in a particular way that we have not.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Deputy leader, there is no point of order. Carry on, member.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** The shadow Attorney General, the person who would become the chief law officer in the land should this rabble win the next election, has posted on his social media encouraging anti-vaxxers with his hashtag “rule of law” and his definition of “coercion”. This is outrageous and disgraceful behaviour. This is exactly the sort of behaviour that we have come to expect from the Liberals and Nationals.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** You’re just telling lies.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** Member, do you know Senator Gerard Rennick from the Liberal Party? Do you know Senator Alex Antic from the Liberal Party? Do you know Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Matt Canavan and Sam McMahon? These are all federal senators from the Liberal and National Parties who crossed the floor to vote with Pauline Hanson’s One Nation to condemn the work that has been done, state and federally, to roll out the vaccine mandate. You are playing footsies with the far right. You are in bed with the fascists. You are supporting these people. Do you know what you should be doing? Unequivocally, you should be coming out and condemning these people.

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** I will come to the hospital system. Pat Dodson has condemned fringe Christian groups for promoting anti-vaccination propaganda in remote Western Australia, saying people who spread fear and misinformation around coronavirus vaccines are evil.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Read the report.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** I have read the report, member for North West Central. You are furiously wrong.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for North West Central, you were given such a long rein today. It is about to come to an end. Please stop doing it. Members of the opposition, you have had your say. It is now the government’s time to respond. The member for Mount Lawley has the floor. Carry on, member.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** I have read the report. Page 11 states —

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Mrs L.A. Munday; Mr Simon Millman; Mr Shane Love

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The State also had the additional challenge of managing the impact of Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation ... advice around the use of AstraZeneca.

Aboriginal people were prioritised as a category for access to vaccines when AstraZeneca was at the forefront. It continues —

The Department decided, following the announcement on the ATAGI advice, to cancel all AstraZeneca appointments —

Around 13 000 appointments had to be cancelled —

... for people aged under 60 on 18 June 2021. The impact of the change in advice was not limited to the affected age groups. Between May and August 2021, around 10,000 bookings for AstraZeneca were cancelled by people aged 60 to 69. This was despite ATAGI still recommending AstraZeneca for this age group. The change in advice led to hesitancy that has been a barrier to people getting vaccinated throughout the program.

These are the facts, members of the opposition. If we compound vaccine hesitancy with these born-again fringe Christian groups, which are exactly the sorts of groups that are represented by Hon Nick Goiran and Hon Peter Collier —

**Dr D.J. Honey:** By the Catholic Church?

**Ms R. Saffioti:** Did you hear what he said?

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** No, I did not hear it.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** Listen to it. Take the interjection.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** What did he say?

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Like the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church. Is that who you are referring to?

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** No, because they have not done it. That is a fundamentally stupid interjection. Sorry, I am running out of time.

Archbishop Tim Costelloe came out and condemned the principal of the primary school who said, “We’re not going to —

**Ms A. Sanderson:** That’s leadership.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** That is the sort of leadership we would love to see from the Liberal Party and the National Party. Stop giving a platform to Nick Goiran as the shadow Attorney General. Stand up to him, strip him of his portfolio and do the right thing. Get on side! Let us help “Vax the Outback”. This is a campaign that Ernie Dingo is trying to run. This campaign is being run by the Liberal commonwealth government, and members opposite are not supporting it. I do not understand why not. Poor old Ernie Dingo is now experiencing violence and death threats from anti-vaxxers who are given comfort and support by people like Senators Gerard Rennick and Concetta Fierravanti-Wells and Hon Nick Goiran. It is a disgrace. Members opposite should be ashamed of themselves.

*Division*

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Ms R. S. Stephens) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (6)

Mr V.A. Catania  
Ms M.J. Davies

Dr D.J. Honey  
Mr R.S. Love

Ms L. Mettam  
Mr P.J. Rundle (*Teller*)

**Extract from *Hansard***  
[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 23 November 2021]  
p5775d-5785a

Ms Mia Davies; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Deputy Speaker; Mr Roger Cook;  
Mrs L.A. Munday; Mr Simon Millman; Mr Shane Love

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Noes (49)

Mr S.N. Aubrey  
Mr G. Baker  
Ms H.M. Beazley  
Dr A.D. Buti  
Mr J.N. Carey  
Ms C.M. Collins  
Mr R.H. Cook  
Ms L. Dalton  
Ms D.G. D'Anna  
Mr M.J. Folkard  
Ms K.E. Giddens  
Ms E.L. Hamilton  
Ms M.J. Hammat

Ms J.L. Hanns  
Mr T.J. Healy  
Mr M. Hughes  
Mr H.T. Jones  
Mr D.J. Kelly  
Ms E.J. Kelsbie  
Ms A.E. Kent  
Dr J. Krishnan  
Mr P. Lilburne  
Mr M. McGowan  
Ms S.F. McGurk  
Mr D.R. Michael  
Mr K.J.J. Michel

Mr S.A. Millman  
Mr Y. Mubarakai  
Ms L.A. Munday  
Mrs L.M. O'Malley  
Mr P. Papalia  
Mr S.J. Price  
Mr D.T. Punch  
Mr J.R. Quigley  
Ms M.M. Quirk  
Ms R. Saffioti  
Ms A. Sanderson  
Mr D.A.E. Scaife  
Ms J.J. Shaw

Ms R.S. Stephens  
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski  
Dr K. Stratton  
Mr C.J. Tallentire  
Mr D.A. Templeman  
Mr P.C. Tinley  
Ms C.M. Tonkin  
Mr R.R. Whitby  
Ms S.E. Winton  
Ms C.M. Rowe (*Teller*)

Question thus negatived.