

CORONAVIRUS — G2G PASS APPROVAL PROCESS

Motion

MR P.A. KATSAMBANIS (Hillarys) [5.04 pm]: I move —

That this house notes that the lack of transparency and consistency of the G2G PASS approval process has caused significant stress, anxiety and distress to Western Australians who are trying to legally return home, and calls on the government to create a clearer, simpler and more consistent process to allow local residents to return to Western Australia whilst continuing to protect our state from COVID-19.

I want to make a few comments at the outset to make sure there is absolutely no misapprehension in anyone's mind about what we, as the opposition party in Western Australia, are trying to achieve by this. We all pay our respects and give our thanks and gratitude to the police officers who are working over and above the call of duty to protect our state in this difficult time. We have been through the arguments about the numbers of police and the like, but we know that on top of their already onerous duties, as soon as COVID struck, our police officers were asked to take on additional duties. They have done so without complaint and have tried to do their absolute best job, and they are continuing to do that despite the stress it places upon them both professionally and personally. We all thank them. It is not an us-and-them situation. Every Western Australian is grateful for the job our police are doing, especially in removing themselves from their usual ordinary duties and undertaking the task of dealing with the COVID pandemic—the 400 or so people who have been commissioned to a special COVID unit and all those other police officers who have added occasional checks on self-isolators to their ordinary everyday duties. We thank them for the work they are doing and we appreciate the effort they are putting in, and hopefully they will get some respite soon.

The other thing that is clear is that we accept that at a time when there is a border closure, there must be a process to allow people into and out of our state for an understandable purpose and reason. Those debates have been had in other places. There is no debate in this place about that. We are not arguing in any way to remove that. However, what we are saying is what we are hearing from members of the public of Western Australia who have had to go through the process of applying for approval to return to Western Australia. We are talking primarily about residents of Western Australia—people who have their home and family here and who see themselves as and understand themselves to be Western Australians. At a time of crisis and difficulty, it is understandable that people want to return home. They want the comfort of home and their loved ones. They also want, of course, if they are concerned about other parts of the world, the comfort of knowing that a place like Western Australia has not had community spread of COVID for a serious amount of time and is seen as one of the safest places to be. So why would Western Australians not want to come here?

In order to come here, they need to apply for approval and the government has set up a system that is colloquially known as a G2G PASS—Good to Go PASS. People apply through a portal; it is really an online application process. They provide their information and they are told yes or no. We are seeing a number of anomalies arising in this process the longer it continues. Western Australians are coming to members of Parliament—I know they are coming to members on both sides of the house and to the Nationals WA—usually to their local member of Parliament, and saying, “This process is not working.” The process is confusing and difficult. It is inconsistent and is producing anomalous results. Some people are given some advice and others are given different advice. Some people in very similar factual circumstances are allowed to do certain things and others are not.

We know from experience that no matter what process is set up, once it becomes convoluted, and once people see inconsistencies in it and feel that it is too cumbersome or too difficult to navigate, they start losing faith and trust in the process. We have also seen those rare individuals—thankfully, they are rare—who thumb their nose at any process. We have seen it with the young woman who smuggled herself into Western Australia in the back of a truck. We have seen it with the two women who went back to South Australia after coming here to visit a rapper. We have also seen it with several others who have found novel and unique ways to try to circumvent the hotel quarantine process. No-one is standing up for those people. In actual fact, we want to free up the process so that our authorities—our police and all the people involved—can focus on the rule breakers. What we do not want to do is unfairly inconvenience law-abiding citizens. We want to help our law-abiding citizens; we want to help our law-abiding Western Australian residents return home. What we are hearing about on a daily basis in our electorate offices is a process that may have been well-intentioned, but it may also have been put together in a rush and it is inconveniencing people. In many cases, it is causing significant distress to people, and, beyond inconvenience, this process, unfortunately, is harming families. It is harming them in many ways. It is separating them from loved ones and causing anguish and mental health issues, and, in some cases, it is stopping people from obtaining the care or treatment that they need, whether it is medical care and treatment or simply the assistance of loved ones that can be provided here in Western Australia. They are being denied that opportunity.

What we are asking the government to do is not difficult. We are asking the government for a clear process without inconsistencies, a simple process that assists people to get through the first time so that they do not have to make

multiple applications at the same time as they are juggling flights, which, as we know, are extremely rare. People book a flight and they apply in good faith for a pass to come in—if they do not have a booking for a flight, there is no point in applying for the pass—but they do not get information about whether their application has been approved until the time for them to confirm or rebook their flight expires, so they are trapped. They book a flight for a Friday and apply for the pass and they continue to wait and wait. If they do not cancel or move their flight by the Thursday, they lose the flight. In some cases, people pay a lot of money for their flight because they are as rare as hen's teeth; indeed, some people have to pay for a business class seat when they do not want to do so because it is the only seat available. They wait on Thursday afternoon and they do not hear from the G2G people about whether they have a pass. As the clock is ticking, they have no option but to cancel their flight and rebook another one for the following week and they have to start the process of getting approval based on a new flight. They are trapped in a vicious cycle because the process is convoluted and difficult. These same people hear about others who, in very similar circumstances, get to come here with no exception.

During the last set of sittings in August, before Parliament rose, we were told that about 7 000 people had obtained exemptions from quarantine and self-isolation, yet ordinary Western Australians are saying, "Why is it that some people can get exemptions and we can't?" We have seen high-profile businesspeople apparently moving in and out of the state with ease. I am not criticising that, but what gives them the ability or opportunity to get that exemption when other people cannot? We have seen high-profile models and musicians come to Western Australia, some to return home, and others to attend funerals, without the need to quarantine and self-isolate. Apparently, they have done this under strict conditions, and that is understandable. We understand that when someone comes here with an exemption from quarantine and self-isolation to perhaps attend a funeral, they are placed under strict conditions. They spend an hour or two at the funeral and then go back to their hotel where they stay before they get on a flight to return home. We understand that. But why cannot other people, such as Western Australian residents, have that same right? Why do some people have that right but not others? That is the lack of transparency and the risk is—apart from the terrible outcomes for the individuals involved, which is bad in itself; and we should acknowledge that this is a terrible outcome for people who are struggling with anguish and grief—that when people see these inconsistencies, they lose faith in the process. They say, "This process isn't working for us" and they look for workarounds, which, in itself, causes a much bigger risk to the public health of all Western Australians. We do not want to see that happen. We want people to follow the law but the more complex and difficult the government makes it, and the less transparent it is, the harder it is for people to comply. That is what we are getting on a daily basis in our electorate offices. I hear these stories in my office on a daily basis and the members I have spoken to from both sides of the house also seem to hear them on a daily basis. The longer our borders stay shut and the longer there are significant restrictions on people entering and leaving Western Australia, the more people are going to look to make these applications and the more they are going to have understandable human needs to travel to look after family in other places and attend significant family events, particularly ones they cannot avoid such as, unfortunately, funerals or to visit dying parents, siblings or other relatives. These people need to know that the process will look after them; that it will not unusually and unnecessarily inconvenience them. Yes, there will be strict rules, but those rules will be clear and transparent; and, if they do not apply to everyone, there will be clear guidelines as to why they apply to some and not others so that everyone understand the rules.

Let us look at some of the inconvenience that, unfortunately, I have experienced through my office—I am sure other members have many examples—just to put a human face to this issue. A young family from Padbury, which is in the northern suburbs of Perth, left Western Australia in early July. The mother and the children left first and the husband left a few days later. They flew into Melbourne and immediately hired a car and drove to Mooroopna, which is a very small town in the Goulburn Valley in the northern part of Victoria, to attend the grandmother's funeral—that is, the mother of the lady. It is understandable that if someone's mother dies, they would want to attend the funeral. Tight-knit families will want to come together for a funeral, especially at this time of COVID, when people are already feeling that need to cocoon and be close to their family, and so they did that. The family then applied to return back home. They did not have a house over there; they had driven over for the funeral, gone back to the hotel, and tried to come back home. They could not get an answer. They made application upon application and had no response. The family could not get an answer. They contacted my electorate office in an absolute blind panic. They were living in a small motel room, waiting to get the go-ahead. They were obviously worried because they were living in an area where COVID was rife, so they did not want to go out. They were essentially trapped in their room, waiting for an answer that did not come. They had to book flights and cancel them; book flights and cancel them. Eventually, this family of five—husband, wife and three daughters aged nine, seven and four—were given the go-ahead, after a lot of running around and a lot of rebooked flights, and were forced to quarantine in a hotel room in the centre of Perth for two weeks. This is a family of five, including three young, active daughters, who had a house in Padbury that was empty. They could have gone there and self-isolated. We know there are other people in very similar circumstances who have been allowed to self-isolate.

Another example is a young couple—again, constituents of mine from the suburb of Padbury—who flew to Sydney and then travelled to Albury. They flew to Sydney specifically to avoid flying through Melbourne, which was a COVID hotspot. Anyone who understands the geography of Australia will know that although Albury is in New South Wales, it is only about two hours' drive from Melbourne airport. It is about six or seven hours' drive from Sydney airport. The couple flew into Sydney and drove to Albury to visit their ailing parents. That is what families do—they visit their ailing parents. They stayed on a farm that was 15 minutes from Albury on the Victorian side of the border. At that time, passage between Victoria and New South Wales was humdrum. I think it is again now, as long as someone does not come from Melbourne, and anyone who has been in a rural situation or these border communities will understand that. They stayed at the farm. They had not been anywhere near Melbourne or the hotspots. They kept getting refused entry back into WA, even though there had been no outbreak in New South Wales at the time.

This couple eventually managed to get their passes, which enabled them to self-isolate and quarantine at their home in Padbury. They booked separate flights because, as we know, seats are very, very limited, so when one seat became available, the husband said to the wife, "You take that seat and I'll come the next day." The woman arrived in Perth. She was good to go—tick!—and went home to self-isolate in Padbury. The next day, the husband arrived on a flight. Did he get the tick to go home to self-isolate with his partner? No; he was sent into hotel quarantine for a fortnight. How does that make any sense at all? It does not. That is the risk that I keep highlighting. Remember, what we are saying here is that this is unusual and unfair inconvenience to people, and it runs the risk of destroying faith and trust in a process that has been set up for the right reasons.

There are many other examples. A lovely lady from Hillarys went to Melbourne to assist her daughter, because her daughter had had problems with her first pregnancy, was pregnant again and about to give birth, and the lady's two-year-old grandchild needed care. The daughter, I think, lives somewhere in Victoria, just outside Melbourne. The daughter did not have much support over there; she is a Western Australian girl living in Melbourne, and she wanted and needed the assistance of her mother to look after her two-year-old while she was giving birth to her second child. The lady was refused entry to return to Western Australia three times, despite needing to return here for significant treatment. I will not mention what that treatment was; I like to respect people's privacy. The first time the lady was refused entry was because she did not provide enough evidence that she lived in Western Australia. She had provided her driver's licence with her address stating that she lived in Hillarys. She was told that was not enough evidence that she lives in Western Australia. She applied again, and provided her rates and car insurance notice, a letter from her employer and lots of other documents to prove that she lives here in Western Australia, thinking that was all well and good. The refusal came back, and this is the sort of silly bureaucracy that drives people absolutely and justifiably mad. She was rejected because she had not provided primary proof such as a driver's licence. She had already provided the driver's licence in the first application and rightfully thought that someone would have noticed that it was already on her file, but she got a refusal on the basis that she did not provide her driver's licence, even though it was sitting on some file somewhere. It had already been provided. Clearly, if this is happening, there is a breakdown in the process. This occurred only in the last few weeks, so it is not teething problems.

The lady applied again, and she was refused because she could not prove that she would suffer from significant personal hardship if she was not allowed to return home. This lady, who is undergoing significant treatment, as is her husband, could not prove that she had significant personal hardship, yet we see other people coming in and out of the state almost at will—business people, celebrities and the like. Eventually, she got her approval, but, of course, as is happening with other people, she kept booking and rebooking flights, and the earliest flight she could book is 14 September. Obviously, her family are awaiting her arrival.

There are many other examples. Another lady in my electorate is the mother of a newborn and is suffering from really severe postnatal depression. Her psychiatrist in Melbourne suggested that she return home to Western Australia for support. As we know, there are a lot of young Western Australians living in the eastern states; we know that. This lady was living in the eastern states, but she is a Western Australian, and her psychiatrist said, "You're suffering severe postnatal depression; the best place for you is to be supported by your family over in the west." She applied for a pass. Understandably, she wanted to quarantine at home, because she was coming home for the support that her psychiatrist said she needed. Her parents are both medical professionals, and they provided a documented plan for quarantine in their very large home, indicating that this lady would essentially be living separately, with a separate kitchen, separate bathroom and separate living area—completely separate arrangements. Her parents are both professionals in the medical field. Unfortunately, she was told that she could not do that. Through the intervention of my office, at least this lady was provided contact information for an on-duty triage nurse and links to Think Mental Health WA, Beyond Blue, and the King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women, so that she could do her quarantine in hotel isolation.

Another lady who was suffering from postnatal depression arrived in Western Australia and was in hotel quarantine, but she was not coping with it because of her postnatal depression. Her mother contacted our office for help. She was distraught that her daughter, while suffering postnatal depression, was sitting in a hotel room in quarantine. The mother told us that her daughter had not been provided with any information about medical help when arriving in Western Australia and that no medical assistance was provided when she asked for it at the hotel. I will not name the hotel at this stage, although I am happy to tell the minister offline if she is interested. My office intervened. I have to say that the offices of the Minister for Police and the Minister for Health quickly got onto it after we alerted them to it, but it should not have to get to that. Obviously, the daughter has now spoken to a doctor and people are following up her case. We are also following it up through my office.

I have dozens of examples that I do not have sufficient time to get to today because I want to give other members the opportunity to highlight the issues that they have come across. However, I will highlight one last anomaly that I came across very recently to show what is happening in Western Australia and convey why people are concerned. I saw a message on Twitter from a lady named Chloe-Amanda Baily, who is a television presenter for Channel Seven in the eastern states. The Twitter message reads —

So my mate gets a call to fly home to Perth from Melbourne because his mum's become really sick. He flies in and has to quarantine for two weeks but things go downhill for his mum. He applies to get out four times and is rejected. She died a couple days before he is free.

Chloe-Amanda Baily follows on and says —

Now he has to live with that the rest of his life. SURELY there has to be SOME leniency for cases like this. He will never get over this. My heart bleeds for him.

In that case, the man was quarantining while visiting Western Australia to see his ailing mother when his mother took a turn for the worse. The man applied four times, I think it said on Twitter, to get out of quarantine but he was not permitted to get out. If that approach were consistent and that was the rule that applied to everyone, we would say that it was unfortunate, but that we are living in difficult times. However, someone told me today—I am pretty sure it was the member for Nedlands, but I do not want to put words in his mouth—that he came across a constituent who was in a similar circumstance but who was allowed two very short five or 10-minute visits with their ailing relative, even though they were in hotel quarantine. So we have one Western Australian in hotel quarantine who was not allowed to visit his dying mother and his mother passed away before the quarantine period ended and another Western Australian in almost identical circumstances who was allowed two short visits. Again, that highlights the complete and utter inconsistency of the application of whatever rules apply. They are significant inconsistencies and heartbreaking stories.

If we took an overriding view of the situation, we would say that all these rules are in place to protect Western Australians from COVID. If we became extremely flowery like the Premier sometimes does in question time, we would, essentially, warn about death and destruction. Today the Premier again talked about killing people. That is a little extreme, but there is a significant risk, particularly to certain cohorts. I do not want to single out the Minister for Sport and Recreation, because I am also in one of the susceptible categories, given my heart condition and lung issues.

Mr M.P. Murray: I had mine tested in the last couple of weeks and they said I've got another couple of hundred years at least!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: They tested mine and surprisingly told me that I had a heart, which is probably news to some of you!

We can allow a little bit of levity, but at the heart of it we know that this disease can cause significant harm and death. We understand that. As an overarching understanding, we all know that we have to have strong border protections. Some people like to call them hard borders or whatever you want to call them—go crazy in your nomenclature. They certainly are not hard borders because people are getting in and out all the time. Some travel with a G2G PASS, some have exemptions and some use whatever method it takes. We have seen high-profile cases of individuals coming into and out of our state and returning again in some cases and in other cases just coming in and going out on only one occasion with, apparently, very little difficulty. We have seen flight crews, including flight crews from Melbourne, come here and not be restricted to their hotel, although their movements have been curtailed. They are not able to go too far, but they can go to a restaurant for a meal or a bar for a drink and they can go to the supermarket to shop. Flight crews from Melbourne can do that and truck drivers can do that. Truck drivers can come here. I think they are asked to wear a mask when they are out in public. I do not know whether it is a requirement for some or all of them or even whether it is a requirement placed upon them by their employer or by the state, because a lot of these rules are opaque. We are not told what they are. We know that truck drivers can cross the border and come here. They might have come from Melbourne—there are massive distribution centres there—or they might have come from Sydney. In the early days of the second wave that broke out in Victoria and

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reached Sydney, some of them might have been at the Crossroads Hotel in New South Wales. They could come here, go to their hotel and then go out for a meal or a drink or go to a supermarket to buy provisions, although, obviously, there were some restrictions on them. They might have had a territorial restriction, but we do not know because we are not told about that. The public sees that happening and they also see these genuine cases of hardship. They see the families who have been inconvenienced. They see people having to apply again and again every single time, and having to book and rebook their flights every single time, while not knowing whether they will get permission to come to Western Australia. These people are not seeking to come to our state because they want to move here or they want a holiday or to have fun; these are Western Australians who have been out of the state for legitimate reasons and want to come back home. They are prepared to quarantine and self-isolate and they are prepared to undertake COVID testing or any other type of health test. What they do not want to do is go through an elongated process and experience a long period of uncertainty about whether and when they will be allowed to return.

I know and appreciate that the process that has been set up is resource intensive. I recognise that the minister will say to us that we as an opposition are asking for more resources. I think that the record number of applications that we have seen in our office is six or seven applications. I put it to the minister that looking at an application once rather than three, four, five, six or seven times and ironing out the minor issues would be less resource intensive. Emailing an applicant and asking them to send a rate notice as well as a driver's licence to confirm that they live in Western Australia is preferable to saying sorry, rejected, try again. That would free up the offices that are doing this work to process more applications in a timely manner. Currently, it appears to outsiders, particularly the people applying for the permits, that an opaque, Byzantine system is being applied in a manner that a Byzantine bureaucracy entails. As a result, what are we getting? We are getting families who are separated and people who require treatment and care and who are struggling to return to Western Australia to receive that care. The general public is recognising that different sets of rules apply to different people in extremely similar circumstances. If this continues, we will see more of a breakdown in respect and trust for that system. We are moving this motion in good faith. We are not condemning the government; we are not yelling at the government; we are not even saying that the government has got this wrong. We are saying that there needs to be an approvals process if we have a border that is policed. We are told that this will probably continue well past Christmas, because the government has said that it is not participating in the national commonwealth government scheme to open up by Christmas, so the inference is that this will probably apply beyond Christmas. In that Christmas period I think there will be more applications rather than fewer. More families will want to be reunited, for understandable reasons, including that people who might be working on a contractual basis in other places interstate, or overseas for that matter, might have their contract expire towards the end of the year and might want to return to their home—to where they usually live and work, and that is Western Australia. We need to get this right. This will be around for a while. We need to make it easy; we need to make it open; we need to make it transparent and, in many ways, we need to make it more user-friendly. If there is a small technical glitch in the application, do not go with that hard-hatted rejection; have an interaction with the people; send a quick email or even a text message if the systems are available in the unit processing these applications. Interact with people and help them get through this process. This is a difficult time. This is an emotional time. People are struggling. Families are disconnected and are being separated for what appears to be inconsistent and sometimes ridiculous reasons.

We thank the police officers and other staff who are doing this work; it is important work keeping us all safe. We are asking the government to ensure that there is a process in place that is open, transparent and simple—a process that is user-friendly and that is calibrated to help people get back home, not one that shuts the border on them, not one that shuts them out from their home in Western Australia. If the government can do this, I think we will go a long way towards having this system well respected, well regarded and adhered to by people. If the government does not achieve this, the longer we go, the more this is going to fray—the more dislocation and uncertainty there will be, the more distress will be caused to Western Australian families and, unfortunately, the more this will empower some people to try to get around the system. That is the last thing we want or need in Western Australia.

MR K.M. O'DONNELL (Kalgoorlie) [5.43 pm]: Mr Acting Speaker —

Mr W.J. Johnston: Are you going to be nice to us?

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes, always. Then I will get spoken to later and told not to be!

Greetings, Mr Acting Speaker. I thank you for allowing me to speak. I am speaking on the motion that this house notes a lack of transparency and consistency in the G2G PASS approval process and so on. I firstly would like to say to the Minister for Police that her police department is doing an outstanding job. It is. I do not think anybody would say any different.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Best force in Australia!

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes. I miss it!

Mr W.J. Johnston: You might be back there soon!

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I know! I have mentioned that we bring back the police reserve.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I have said he is very welcome back any time!

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: If you came back at your substantive level, I do not think that would be a problem!

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: The police department has had to do something it has never done before. The government has had to do something it has never done before.

One of the hard borders is at Eucla, in my electorate of Kalgoorlie. I have tried to fly out there a few times now, and each time we have had to cancel, because if there is any amount of water on the airstrip, we cannot land. On Wednesday, I drove from Perth to Kalgoorlie. On Friday, I drove to Eucla. It took just over nine hours. It is a very long trip. I got to see it, and then the following day I drove back for nine hours. The quarantine staff and the police out there are doing a fantastic job. It is the first time I have ever worn a mask, and I am so glad we do not have to wear them.

Before the G2G came into being, residents in my electorate had to drive to The Lakes with travel documents to verify what they were doing—this is when we had the regional boundaries—and then had to find out whether they were allowed to continue on. In some instances, they would drive up to 500 kilometres, and even up to 1 000 kilometres, and still not know whether they could get through. When the G2G came into being, people started to apply online. This is not a witch-hunt in any way, shape or form on the G2G, the police department or the government. When people apply through the G2G, an issue is that they are getting rejected and are given a reason; for example, they have not verified where they live. Then the person responds by verifying in the second application. Then they get a message saying that they need medical proof of why they need to travel. They keep going back and forth and that causes grief, anxiety and other issues.

The Premier has been on record several times saying that he wants a reduction in the number of fly in, fly out workers from the eastern states, but workers and their families who are uprooting their lives to move here are being knocked back for various reasons.

I will highlight the predicaments of stranded travellers, but I would like to say to the Minister for Police that my aunt suffered a heart attack recently. I managed to see her before she passed away. Her daughter, Justine, was living in Dubai. She raced home. She had to go into two weeks' quarantine. While she was in quarantine, she was given permission to visit her mother. That was outstanding. I even offered to play the call-in-a-favour card, but I did not have to.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I did not know you had that card!

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: The jury will disregard that last comment!

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: You are not the judge here. You are not able to direct the jury!

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: No!

That was a situation in which commonsense prevailed and the police department allowed her to see her mother for half an hour, and her mother died a couple of hours later. That was very good.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I am pleased they had that opportunity.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes, correct.

Just because I mentioned that call-in-a-favour card, in every instance during the COVID-19 pandemic, I have not once asked my friends in high positions to do anything on behalf of my family, friends or anybody. It has been professional. The police have been very professional, too. Again, I want to praise the police for how outstanding they have been.

Just while I remember, minister, a few months ago we asked whether there was any chance we could visit the COVID-19 centre to have a look at it, not to criticise anything, but I have not heard a response. I might try to send another request asking whether we can do that.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It is always subject to operational requirements.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes, but if there was a time when we could do that, perhaps when we are here in Parliament, it would be appreciated.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I will find out, yes.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I thank the minister.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 9 September 2020]

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Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr David Honey; Mrs Michelle Roberts

In the few minutes I have left, I would like to highlight a couple of people. Again, this is not to criticise. This is a bit of a debriefing that we can use to improve things and make them better. We never know; this might never happen again, but, if it were to happen again in the future, we could learn from this and be prepared.

Colleen and her husband moved to Victoria for work. They took their son Adam with them and left their other sons here. They kept their family home in Western Australia. After they had been in Victoria for a short time, the father passed away. His body was returned to Western Australia for the funeral, because that is where all their family members lived. However, the G2G applications of the mum and her son were rejected. They reapplied a couple of times, and they were again rejected. They approached my office, and we assisted them to get a G2G PASS.

Keenan wanted to move to Kalgoorlie–Boulder permanently from Victoria. He had managed to get a mining services job in Kalgoorlie and had resigned from his job in Victoria and not renewed his accommodation lease. His G2G application was rejected twice. He was jobless and homeless, and under mental stress. He contacted our office, and he got his G2G PASS.

Ariel is a heavy duty diesel mechanic from Sydney who had been offered employment in Kalgoorlie as a specialist in the mining industry. Heavy duty diesel mechanics are very hard to find. They are not a dime a dozen. They are a diamond. They are as rare as hen's teeth. He applied for a G2G PASS five times. Each time he applied, he was told that he had not done this or that, and his employer rectified it, but each time a new reason for rejection came out. They approached my office, and we were able to assist him to get his G2G PASS. He is now in Western Australia and hoping that his family will be able to relocate to Kalgoorlie–Boulder.

Geoff and Julie Bernhardt have lived in Kalgoorlie for more than 30 years. They had retired and were holidaying in northern Queensland when the border was closed, and they could not get back into Western Australia. When they applied for a G2G PASS, they kept getting knocked back. This was an issue of commonsense. Despite the fact that they had lived practically all their lives in Kalgoorlie–Boulder, they were not allowed back into Western Australia.

Jason had been working in Kalgoorlie as a fly in, fly out worker. He went back to Victoria to pack his belongings so that he could live in Western Australia permanently, based on the Premier's advice that he should relocate rather than be a FIFO, and he was granted a G2G PASS. However, while he was in Victoria, everything changed, and his pass was cancelled. He made two more applications to get back into WA, and they were rejected. We were able to help him to get back to Western Australia.

Emma was in Brisbane because her brother had brain cancer, and she had been helping her brother and his wife to look after their children for a few weeks to give them respite while he underwent medical treatment. On 6 July, she had applied for a G2G PASS to go to Brisbane and come back to Western Australia. She had waited until 10 July, and she had not heard a thing, so four days later she left for Brisbane. On 16 July, six days later, when she was in Brisbane, she was told that her application to come back to Western Australia had been refused. She had helped out her brother, and she had children back in Western Australia, but her application was knocked back. We were able to help her get back to Western Australia.

The McPhee family, Mandy and Luke, were living in Victoria, and dad got a job in Kalgoorlie. He had been driving through South Australia to pick up his wife and kids in Victoria and return with them to Kalgoorlie–Boulder when the border was closed. He had to make a decision there and then to return to Western Australia, because he was worried that if he kept going to Victoria, he might not get back. He went back to Kalgoorlie, and his wife was stuck in Victoria with two kids and had to live in a caravan for numerous weeks. That was very harrowing and caused a lot of anxiety for his wife and kids. They tried to get their G2G PASS but were rejected. We managed to assist them to fill in the forms correctly, and their passes were approved.

Shane and Elizabeth had their applications rejected five times. They are Western Australians. They had gone to Tasmania on a bit of a working holiday. When everything went pear-shaped, they went to Victoria so that they could try to get back to Western Australia. However, the border was shut. They had nowhere to stay and risked being homeless. They were also in financial hardship because they had no means of support. They were struggling. They got to South Australia, and the South Australian police said that they could go to the border. They then had to sleep in their car for days on end waiting for their G2G PASS, which kept getting rejected. We were able to assist them.

I reiterate that this is not a witch-hunt. I am not headhunting. The police are doing a fantastic job. This has never been seen or done before. The police are trying to do what they can. Problems will occur with the tens of thousands of applications that are coming in. There are no complaints whatsoever from me or my party about the job that the police are doing.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood) [5.55 pm]: I also want to make some remarks on the motion that has been moved by the member for Hillarys. I reiterate the point made by the member for Hillarys about the spirit in which this motion has been moved. The purpose of this motion is to highlight some of the challenges. In no way is it

questioning the scale of the task and, indeed, the objectives that the government is trying to achieve in putting in place appropriate barriers to ensure that we protect the people of Western Australia from this very challenging pandemic.

Some time ago, I called for a hotline for members of Parliament. I think I even asked a question of the Premier about this matter. I still believe that should be the case. Members of Parliament should have access to a direct path—a hotline, if we like—through which we can raise the issues that are raised with our office and put on the table things that our constituents are not able to put on the table and take up the sometimes very compassionate cases that are put to us.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: The federal government does very well with hotlines on matters such as migration and social security.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: When the lockdown was on with the intrastate barriers, there was a hotline for members of Parliament. That was a really good platform through which to raise issues and get a quick response. We also need a hotline for this issue, because it is being increasingly raised by constituents who come into our office. If I can go back one step, in the absence of a hotline, my office has effectively taken up this issue with the office of the Minister for Police. I highlight that the response that we get from the minister's office is outstanding. We get a good response from the minister's office, and things are turned around quite quickly. However, a hotline would be appropriate, given the issues that have been raised by my colleagues and the many challenges that are coming through our door. I am sure the last thing the Minister for Police wants to deal with is these very challenging circumstances that are quite unique in their own right.

The strategy is to have a clear process that can be articulated to those who need to use it. I have looked at the online application process, and it is not terribly easy to understand. I know that will change from time to time as the rules and the thresholds change because of the issues that present, but it is important to have a clear process and to articulate that process. I repeat that a hotline for members of Parliament would add to that and help the government to process the many issues that come through our door. However, we cannot help but have some ministerial intervention. We cannot get a process that is well defined and in which the people in the police department and the health department make decisions based on a set of criteria, and we get the consistency that comes from that. We simply cannot achieve that. There will be examples and circumstances that fall outside the guidelines as they are defined. Therefore, we cannot avoid having some sort of ministerial intervention—the minister or the Premier looking over this process and saying, “I think the decisions that have been made here are wrong. We need to intervene and change it.” I think the example of the nurses is a good example of that. Western Australian nurses went to Victoria to help with the COVID challenge there. Evidently, as we heard through the media—I have no way of affirming whether this was the case—they were told that if they happened to contract COVID, they could return to Western Australia. The first response they got was, “No, you can't.” Then, obviously, there was some sort of intervention and that was changed, and probably appropriately so. It was the wrong decision and clearly there was some sort of intervention from the Premier. I do not think we can avoid having ministerial intervention in these sorts of issues, because they are many and varied. In a lot of cases, people are in very, very unique circumstances and the rules simply do not apply, and there needs to be some sort of intervention to make a decision.

However, the most important point, as we work through this issue, as highlighted by the member for Hillarys—I made comments on this during the member for Dawesville's motion in private members' business a little while ago—is getting Western Australians back home. These are our people—Western Australians—and this is their home. Getting them home is and should be a priority. The government should be putting its resources into getting our people home. That should not be questioned. They are our priority. In many cases, people are away from Western Australia for a whole heap of reasons that are outside their control. The Premier made a comment in the media a couple of times—I have heard it twice at least—that I do not think is the right comment to make; it was about people having had six months to get home. That does not cut it. People are away from Western Australia for a range of reasons, including personal, work, the rules changing, stress and the circumstances in which they find themselves. They want to get home now and it should be a priority for the government to work through that.

Whether it is sick family, friends, work-related matters or bereavement, people want to get home to Western Australia, and that should be a priority.

I asked the Premier whether there is a cap on the number of Western Australians allowed back into Western Australia. I struggle to see why there cannot be a cap when we look at the number of people, expats, who have applied to come back into Australia. At one stage, I heard that it might be something like 14 000 people a day. That is quite a substantial number of people and it is not hard to realise that a substantial number of those people want to get back to Western Australia, so I understand why there probably should be a cap. There is certainly a cap on the number of people coming back to our state from overseas. I understand that we have a share of 500 of the 4 000 or so that the nation takes in, but we have limited hotel quarantine accommodation and we have the challenge of health resourcing to meet the needs of those choosing to come in—whether that is testing facilities or processing or whatever—so there has to be some sort of cap on that. The Premier said that there was no cap, yet the application

process for those seeking to get into Western Australia is fairly challenging. It requires them to get a G2G PASS and work out whether they have to go into quarantine. If they have to go into quarantine, does it have to be in a hotel or can they do it at home? There are inconsistencies, as highlighted by some of my colleagues and certainly in the examples that I have seen. It would suggest that perhaps—maybe it is a long call to make or maybe it is a conspiracy theory—that government is trying to slow this down. It has the foot on the hose to stop people coming back into WA because it is managing people as they come in our door. I would think resourcing our people to get back into Western Australia should be a government priority and it should take the necessary steps to ensure that they get through the process efficiently in order to get back home.

I want to go through a couple of examples. I will not go through a lot because many of the examples members have raised are consistent with the ones I have, but I have a couple of different examples that I think deserve our attention. This example is not actually a constituent of mine but it is someone who was in the bed next to me when I had some heart surgery about three years ago. I befriended this fellow, but I have not had a lot of contact with him since. He is in the Australian Defence Force over in Afghanistan and he wants to return to Western Australia to have some time off with his family. He has to go to Darwin because it is the home base for his brigade, division or whatever the group is. In Darwin, everyone who returns to Australia has to undergo two weeks in quarantine. That is appropriate. In his case, that is at the cost of the ADF. Of course, he wants to get back to Western Australia. Under the rules, he will have to quarantine once again in Western Australia. He will have to have two weeks' quarantine in Darwin, which probably has a better record than we have on COVID, and when he comes into Western Australia, he will have to do two weeks' quarantine again. In Western Australia, the quarantine time will come off his leave tab. I do not know the outcome of this yet, but I hope he can quarantine at home. If it happens to be in a hotel, he will not be with his family. He makes the point that if that time has to come off his leave tab, it is unlikely he will be able to come home for Christmas. To me, for someone who is overseas with the ADF in Afghanistan to have to work through that process to get back to see his family and may not be able to come home for Christmas is terribly challenging. We are told—I have no way of seeing how the process is going—that if there is a 48-hour gap between finishing his quarantine in Darwin and coming into Western Australia, he can self-quarantine at home. That would be much better than having to quarantine in a hotel. I guess that it is an example of a situation that is a little different. I am sure it does not quite fit the rules, but the rules as they are defined would be a terrible imposition on this person who is representing our nation with the ADF in Afghanistan.

I have another very recent example of a case we took to the minister's office. Again, I acknowledge the help of the minister's office to work through it, and we hope we will get a good outcome. I refer to an 87-year-old who wanted to come back into Western Australia. The 87-year-old drove from Darwin down to the border, not far from Kununurra. He sought to get a G2G PASS before he drove to the border. It is a five-hour drive from Darwin to Kununurra and the border is not far from Kununurra. It is quite a substantial drive. He had his G2G PASS, hit the border and the G2G PASS was not accepted. The police at the border said, "No, we do not accept your G2G pass." Of course, the 87-year-old who, for all intents and purposes had what he thought was an approval to come into Western Australia, was then stuck quite remotely on the Northern Territory side of the border with Western Australia. He would have had to quarantine in Kununurra. That was accepted. We talked to the minister's office. I hope and I think that the minister's office intervened, and within a short period of time, he was able to get a pass and come into Western Australia. I guess that highlights that it takes the intervention of a member of Parliament going through the minister's office to achieve that outcome. In this case, the person had a G2G PASS. Once again, we see examples of what appear to be inconsistencies. We recognise that they are challenging. As I said, one thing that would really help is to have a go-to point that members of Parliament can ring, with the same people answering who have pooled the issues that have come in to make sure we get some consistency in applying the process, so we can get our people—Western Australians—home to Western Australia.

There is no appeal process. I suppose going through a member of Parliament's office is one way to appeal a decision if someone does not get the right outcome, as has been highlighted by the many people who have applied to come into the state. Some have had to apply three or four times, if not more. The strongest advice we give them is to include as much information as they can when they put in their application, and then many of them get the right outcome at the end of the day, but we would like to think, as mentioned by the member for Hillarys, that if there was one application, one process and all the right information is attached, it will get passed and away we go. Applying for something three, four or five times would seem to be a terrible waste of resources. There needs to be some clarity around exactly what people need to know to ensure that when they go online to make that application, it is understood, and they can achieve the outcome on their first go. In some cases, as with the 87-year-old I talked about, people can be isolated in a very remote part of the state. Western Australia comprises one-third of the nation, and it does not border on to too many other towns and places that have high population numbers. Where we finish up is a fairly isolated spot. If a person has driven, as in this case, 500 kilometres to get to that point and they cannot come in, that is a pretty big imposition and it is not right.

One more example relates to someone I know quite well from Kununurra whose business entails pest control. He does a lot of work on remote pastoral leases in the Kimberley and the Northern Territory. Prior to COVID, his job was to drive many thousands of kilometres over the Northern Territory border to deal with pest control on pastoral leases and other services that he provides along those lines. Supposedly, he would be 3 000 kilometres from the nearest COVID case, and he has no way of managing that other than the minute he steps over that border and comes back in, he has to quarantine for two weeks, which essentially means he cannot do it. There are many unique circumstances and we need some ministerial intervention on many of these cases to make it work, because as time goes on, tension will build on this front. I think there is very strong support from the Western Australian community. My electorate is exactly the same as has been articulated in our newspapers, that no-one wants to see the hard border lifted, but as time goes on that tension will build. We are seeing it play out in some other states and we need to be ready for that. I, for one, and certainly my colleagues share the view that we want the Western Australian government to succeed in this. We do not want it to get it wrong. Heeding the views of opposition will be important in navigating that. We are the litmus paper for many in our electorate and as those views come through we will certainly take them up and in the right spirit. Having some good processes to help the people who come to us in very unique and difficult circumstances is something we should work on to ensure that those Western Australians can get back into our state to be with their family, friends and loved ones.

On behalf of the Nationals WA—I do not know whether my colleagues will talk on this—we certainly support the motion and hope that the spirit of what we are putting up is consistent with what happened at the start of the lockdown. We got changes on many of the issues that we raised out of the media straight through to ministers and/or the Premier, because Parliament was not running, to make it work. We hope that the spirit of that is taken up, because there are many varied issues that are very challenging, and it will take some good head space and good thought to get processes that ensure that our people, Western Australians in particular, are able to get back into Western Australia.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [6.14 pm]: I, too, join the Liberal and National Parties to add my voice to the motion moved by the member for Hillarys —

That this house notes that the lack of transparency and consistency of the G2G PASS approval process has caused significant stress, anxiety and distress to Western Australians who are trying to legally return home, and calls on the government to create a clearer, simpler and more consistent process to allow local residents to return to Western Australia whilst continuing to protect our state from COVID-19.

When the border arrangements were first put in place I think all of us would have undoubtedly been confronted and inundated with messages from constituents and others trying to return to Western Australia, or we had to help those in our communities better understand the restrictions put in place. Ultimately, with the border arrangement now in operation, there has to be a capacity for people to return home to our state. More often than not the constituents I have spoken to are people who have been stranded in the eastern states who do not have the capacity to return home and for whatever reason have not found the process to be straightforward or offer much clarity. In the first number of days, weeks and months since the border arrangements were first put into place, I understood that it would take some time to establish a clear process for those entrants who would and would not be allowed into the state, but in that time I have found a number of inconsistencies with how it has been applied or a lack of certainty. Every single speaker has echoed that in this place, and that is not at all a reflection on the work of the Western Australia Police Force or, I would argue, the very many public servants and defence personnel who serve alongside at the State Health Incident Control Centre. It really is a reflection on the lack of certainty that people face in these uncertain times.

The pandemic already presents a level of anxiety for members in the community. Recently, I had the opportunity to provide a survey for people in my district, which had nearly 650 responses. I asked a number of questions to people in my community to effectively get a feeling for how they have felt during the COVID-19 period, and a couple of things might stand out to this chamber. When asked whether they felt isolated, five per cent of people surveyed said they felt isolated prior to COVID-19 and 10 per cent say they feel isolated now. Five per cent of people said they felt they had financial difficulties before and 10 per cent say they have financial difficulties now. On a positive note, I suspect perhaps even in the Acting Speaker's (Ms J.M. Freeman) district, which has very identified communities who work very closely together, this figure would probably be at a higher level, but in my district 13 per cent of people said that they felt close as a community before and 46 per cent of people believe they are now closer as a community. That is probably one of the silver linings, if we can use that term during a pandemic. The question about how people felt about the future is concerning because it shows a level of anxiety in the community. In my district, 13 per cent of people said that they were worried about the future prior to COVID-19, and now that is 53 per cent. More than half the people who were surveyed in my community felt concerned about the future and what that looks like. When we add to that level of anxiety the lack of certainty about whether people can return home and what that looks like, that is a significantly added burden and a very real stress.

I have zero concern for those who have gone away on a holiday since COVID hit and found it difficult to return. They were advised by both the Premier and Prime Minister that people should not undertake any unnecessary travel. Indeed, in the statement made by the Premier, which I read into this place in an earlier debate on 17 March, he said very specifically that people have been warned not to travel outside for unnecessary reasons. Since the border arrangements have been put in place, if someone has undertaken recreational travel and somehow complains that they cannot get back into the state, they are really on their own. But there needs to be a clear and certain process for those who had to travel for compassionate reasons such as work, education and training, or for reasons that help sustain any number of mitigating factors that are not the normal holiday-type travel. There are people in my district, for example, who are not sure whether they can leave Western Australia to visit someone who might be terminally ill and very close to death.

The first case that comes to mind is a lady called Annette from Erskine who returned to Western Australia after travelling to Victoria to visit her daughter who was very ill. At the time, she had approval, so she decided to travel home to Western Australia. When she arrived at Perth Airport, she was told that the approval had changed—there and then at the airport. We can all imagine that if people have a lack of certainty and there is already a high level of anxiety and stress, a lot of them will feel overwhelmed, isolated and concerned about the future. Annette told me that there was no way that she would have travelled from Victoria and left her daughter had she known that she would have to go into hotel quarantine in Western Australia. She did not have the capacity. In her representations to me, she said that she was expressly told that she would be able to isolate at home, but that was not the case. She told me that the approval was effectively changed upon her arrival at Perth Airport and then she was forced into hotel quarantine. I spoke to her a number of times while she was in hotel quarantine to understand how she was going and to give her a bit of emotional support. There was a very real level of stress. She was very concerned and upset. She was crying on the phone about the circumstances she was facing.

I do not think any of us have any concerns with the understandable situation that we have to have a hotel quarantine process. That decision is reflective of a national cabinet-led approach. We need to ensure that people are adequately cared for in a hotel setting if there is a particularly high risk of transmission in the community from where they hail. Of course, that means Victorians and, in some cases, people from New South Wales. All members in this place will have family members who assume that they have a high level of understanding of the intimate details of the government's inner workings. My family members are asking me whether they can travel to see a very sick individual in Victoria and New South Wales and then come back. I simply do not know. I cannot provide them with that advice. The situation can change quickly and there is not much certainty about whether they can return. I have suggested that they should not do that until they effectively get approval. They should provide the date that they would like to return to Western Australia and if the approval is granted, they will have some certainty about returning to WA.

The reason the opposition has moved this motion is that there is a lack of transparency and consistency. We have heard over and over again about people who have been denied entry into Western Australia five or six times, but on the seventh time, even though their circumstances have not largely changed, they are granted entry. That is not an unusual process. All of us support the work of the Western Australian police and will uphold any measure the government takes to protect the health and wellbeing of Western Australians. In that respect, all of us are on team WA. But there has to be a way to offer a level of certainty to people who need to get home. The member for Warren-Blackwood, the member for Hillarys and I have spoken about this a number of times. We need to prioritise the return of stranded Western Australians. We need to make sure that if people from our state who have been overseas need to come home, they have the opportunity to do so safely. That is important. We are not talking about opening up the already porous hard border to a greater number of people. We are saying that if Western Australians need to come home, they should be provided with a level of certainty and security about what requirements they have to meet to return home safely.

There is already a significant level of stress and anxiety in the community, and that has been demonstrated by the people who filled out my survey. They are worried about their future. I do not think we should add to that in any way, shape or form. All we are really asking is that the government say that if people meet a certain level of requirement, and fit within some framework, they can be certain that unless something deteriorates quickly, they can return home. Depending on the locality from which they have departed, they may have to go into hotel quarantine or stay in isolation at home for 14 days, but that has to be a sustainable circumstance going forward. At the moment, Western Australia is maintaining seven hotels. New South Wales Premier Berejiklian has suggested that other states are not picking up enough of the slack. By capita and by gross numbers, Western Australia is looking after the second largest number of people in our hotel system at the moment.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: And we are taking the second highest number of international arrivals as well.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I suspect that is because we are on the west coast.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: When someone compares us with South Australia, they neglect to consider that South Australia does not take the international arrivals that we take.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: That is right. Of course, because we are on the west coast and we are a gateway to Africa, Europe and anything to the west of us really, we are that international port. Similarly, because Sydney is the largest major airport and a lot more flights go into and out of that city, that is why New South Wales is picking up a large share of the burden and Victoria is not taking any international arrivals at the moment; they are all going to South Australia or New South Wales.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: No, mainly Sydney and Perth.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: There we go. At the moment, Victoria is not taking any. Western Australia is picking its fair share. We are suggesting that Western Australian residents should be able to get home with a level of certainty and security.

Recently, I was at an event at the Port Bouvard Recreation and Sporting Club and a gentleman named Mick spoke to me about some ideas he had. One that I thought had quite a lot of merit was the idea of offering people who come from low-risk states the option to do hotel quarantine or wear an ankle bracelet at home. In that way, they would have some level of certainty and would not be putting a burden on the hotel system. We are already almost at capacity. I know that the government is looking at expanding that cap and including more hotels. In the long term, we need to make sure that if Western Australians can do so in a safe manner, they can quarantine at home and not stay in a hotel. That is one of the issues that Annette has. That is one of the issues my mother has. She is not sure whether she can go to Queensland and come back to Western Australia. To be perfectly frank, she cannot afford to pay for the cost of the hotel quarantine that would come with it. She certainly cannot afford it as part of her employment, as her leave has already been depleted. There needs to be a level of certainty so that people can plan their lives, particularly in stressful events, such as Annette is experiencing with her very ill daughter.

We appreciate that the minister will undoubtedly go through the process by which people can enter Western Australia. I think quite a significant process is undertaken as part of the G2G PASS app. I had interaction with the G2G PASS app only when there were intrastate border restrictions, and I had the app on my phone because I had to travel to the south west region for training.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That is what it was developed for, yes.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Yes, and now we have opened that up more broadly and that scale may have created challenges initially. I imagine it is working relatively well. It is just that at different times, constituents have said to us that they were told one thing but found something else upon arrival.

What I found interesting after recently delving into the app is that mobile phone reception is required for the app to operate, which is quite difficult—the member for Kalgoorlie would attest to this—for those who live near our more remote border with the Northern Territory and South Australia. That presents a challenge in itself if we have to rely on an app that requires a level of mobile phone reception, as people cannot get reception in some areas.

Again, this is really just suggesting that at this time it is important to provide better certainty, clarity and transparency in how a G2G PASS application is processed. We cannot continue to expect people to feel that they are being dealt with unjustly or that they are not fully aware of the circumstances that they will face when they return to Western Australia. We need some clarity and assurance from the government. In all other respects, the government is quite prescriptive about many things to do with COVID-19. There are a lot of prescriptions, including medical and clinical advice. I know that there is a lot of clinical advice. Everything is very clearly stepped out: if this happens, this must be undertaken; if the person does this, this must occur. That is why the opposition has been keen to understand what will happen with the outbreak plans. The outbreak plans very clearly dictate that if something happens in a congregated living environment, such as a residential aged-care facility, a prison, a commercial vessel or an offshore resource processing facility, certain events will be triggered and actions will be undertaken. These plans are in place and very prescriptive action will occur if there is a COVID-19 confirmed patient. Similar detail must exist and we ask that it be provided to the people of Western Australia so that they can have a better understanding of the level of transparency and what is required of them so they can come home. Thankfully, our WA nurses will return home after 14 days of isolation in Victoria. We all want that level of certainty. We need to make sure that we can get our Western Australians home safely and in a manner that is consistent with the advice of the Chief Health Officer. An important part of that is better clarity about how the G2G PASS and the associated approvals system works. I look forward to hearing more about that from the minister.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [6.30 pm]: I clearly will not go through the whole issue, but I rise to support the motion. As has been indicated by all parties in the debate to date, we hold the police in high regard but it seems, minister, that some disjoin is preventing them from doing their work. I will talk about only one example but it reflects the examples that we have already heard. It just seems that the decisions do not make any sense. After lodging multiple applications, approval to travel is given, even though the same information is often presented each time.

I refer to a family comprising Jessica, Chris and baby Grace. Since giving birth to Grace, Jessica has been struggling and has not been able to cope. They are interstate but the families of both Jessica and Chris live in Perth. They have no support network at all. Grace has been having trouble feeding and is not putting on weight, which has added to the considerable distress that her mother is experiencing. Jessica's partner's job was significantly curtailed. They were in significant financial stress and because of that, they applied to come back to Perth. It took four applications to get through. The first three applications were rejected. It is enormously distressing for these people. The fourth application was accepted. The support from the Western Australia Police Force and its officers has been excellent, and I am grateful for that support.

I guess we would hear the same story in other cases. It seems as though it is idiosyncratic because each time an application is considered, it is considered new and afresh. If the minister looked at these cases, I am certain that she would say, "No, this is crazy. Come on, let's just sort this one out", and I am sure she does that when she is approached. It seems to be either one of two things: first, the criteria and qualifications are not clear and individual police have to make an interpretation themselves; or, second, they are so overwhelmed with this activity, they are making decisions on the run and that sometimes means that situations that are very obvious should be approved. Do we need to use police resources? Can we use other resources rather than the police? Police are highly skilled, highly trained and expensive resources. Can we use better trained and informed people? Otherwise, is it possible to revisit and codify? I will not say that this issue has swamped my office but it is occupying a large amount of my time. As I said, minister, we are very grateful for the support that has been given but it does not make any sense that we are getting multiple applications and that Western Australian citizens cannot get home and get the support that they require. With that, I thank the minister for her time.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland — Minister for Police) [6.34 pm]: I thank the opposition for raising this topic. I do not agree with the motion but I certainly think it is an issue worth airing in this Parliament. A lot of people have commented that we are living in unprecedented and challenging times. These are very shocking and terrible times worldwide for so many people and their families. So many people have been through phenomenal hardship. Earlier in the year, we saw images of people dying in villages and in hospitals in the north of Italy without any family around them. Families were not informed for one, two or three days that their loved one had died. We saw scenes of mass burial sites in villages in the north of Italy. We saw scenes of people in New York digging large gravesites, and the banking of coffins and the like. It was very, very shocking.

My heart goes out to the people in Victoria. I feel for those people with family members in nursing homes whom they have not been able to visit, they have not known what was going on, they could not clarify whether their loved one was still in a nursing home or had been moved to a hospital and they could not make their own arrangements to transfer their loved one to a hospital. There are so many shocking issues.

I, too, acknowledge that some Western Australian families are doing it tough and that they have faced more than challenging circumstances. I have great empathy and compassion for all of them. I do not think any office has received more phone calls and correspondence about the challenging circumstances that families are facing than my office. This is a very serious illness and pandemic. I started by talking about people right around the world, especially those in Victoria who are doing it tough. We are fortunate here in Western Australia because we have largely kept COVID out of the community. We have not had community transmission for months. Most of the issues occurred early on with the arrival of cruise ships, which the McGowan government dealt with more effectively as a result of the measures it took compared with most other governments.

I am incredibly empathetic to the circumstances that I have heard outlined in various cases today. I cannot imagine what it would be like to not be able to see a loved one—a mum, a dad, a sister, a brother or a child—because of COVID restrictions. I understand that it is particularly challenging for people with mental health issues or those who are pregnant to be forced into hotel quarantine. It is also a hardship for those who are healthy and who have to be cooped up for a couple of weeks with a couple of young children in a hotel room that does not have a balcony and with no opportunity to go outside. It is challenging. I know that it has been really difficult for people and that they have faced a burden because of it. We have taken those precautions for the benefit of the whole community because we do not want to deal with the consequences of COVID getting out of control. We do not want to have a situation such as the one that has evolved in Victoria, which is not as bad as it is in many other places around the world. The challenges and hardships that families and the community would suffer should there be an outbreak would be a next level quantum leap. It is all a matter of balance, and it is about trying to get things right. I also understand that many people are in financial stress, and their financial stress may be further exacerbated by being rejected for a G2G PASS or forced into hotel quarantine. We have made all the decisions that we have—some of them are pretty tough decisions—for the greater good of the whole community. We have made those decisions, based on health advice, to keep COVID out of Western Australia.

With respect to our police, people have said that they are very supportive of the police and do not want to criticise the police, yet there has certainly been criticism of some of the decisions that have been made by the police on

G2G PASS applications. Western Australia Police Force officers have rejected a significant number of travellers because the Quarantine (Closing the Border) Directions exist. It is not because our police officers lack compassion or transparency in their decision-making.

We are in a state of emergency, and we are continually reviewing the restrictions and directions. Our State Emergency Coordinator, Commissioner Chris Dawson, has done a stunning job. He has done an amazing job. He is a highly competent and most hardworking individual. He has just come back from a three-week break, and Deputy Commissioner Dreierberg acted in his absence. He, too, did an outstanding job during that period. Like other senior police, he also has key responsibilities in dealing with our COVID situation on a day-to-day basis.

As part of the process to safeguard our community, the state border closed on 5 April 2020. Advice was provided to the community that the border was closing, and those people who were outside Western Australia were advised to return by 5 April 2020 if possible. The Western Australia Police Force developed the “good to go” or G2G PASS, which is a world-leading system. The state should be very proud that it has been incredibly effective in assisting the Western Australia Police Force to keep our community safe. As I interjected earlier, the G2G PASS was initially developed to facilitate the intrastate borders. That was a very innovative thing we did here in Western Australia. We were desperate to protect the Kimberley and the Pilbara and all our regions and to keep COVID out of them. Because of that early work that the WA Police Force did in developing the G2G PASS for people to travel intrastate, we have now been able to use that to assist with our state border. I hasten to add that Tasmania has now adopted our G2G PASS, and I understand that Queensland is also looking at using it. I note for the record that the WA Police Force owns the intellectual property associated with the G2G PASS. This is a different way of doing things. It has meant a much quicker and smoother transition of people through our border and airports than has existed in other states and territories.

At all times during its development, the primary objective of the G2G PASS has been focused on ensuring that the best information is obtained from an applicant to ensure that their travel is essential, the risk associated with them is identified and appropriate risk mitigation strategies and formal directions are applied to manage that risk. The G2G PASS and approval process has been central to protecting the community of Western Australia from COVID-19. It is a big part of why we have had 150 days without community spread.

These processes do restrict entry and necessitate quarantine requirements for those wishing to enter the state. The G2G PASS and approval process has been heavily supported by industry and business as an effective tool to keep the state’s critical industries operating and enable supporting staff who work within those industries to continue working. Compassionate applications are received by the Western Australia Police Force. They are assessed on their merits, with requirements for supporting evidence and justification of significant hardship. The Western Australia Police Force is open and accountable and prepared to review any decision made for a G2G PASS application. Although I think there has been a little criticism that some people have had to apply two or three times to get a pass, it is a matter of the police taking a safety-first attitude to applications. The fact that someone can provide further information with a further application is an indication that the police are not lacking in compassion; they are not just making a hard and fast arbitrary decision—they are prepared to consider further evidence and further information.

As I understand it, the quality of applications, as for any application-based process, varies dramatically. Everyone’s capacity to be able to state their case is going to be different. People’s idea of what they need to attach will be different. Some people who no doubt have a very meritorious case make poor applications in the first instance. Upon providing further information, with a bit of assistance, they are able to make a better application that better describes their need to travel into Western Australia. However, at the opposite end, there are no doubt less worthy cases whereby people write stunning applications, and not all the information in the application will necessarily be true. That information will need to be independently verified.

Of course, another thing that changes is the current health advice. When we first heard of that outbreak in Victoria, we moved very quickly, and a number of applications from Victoria were effectively automatically rejected. People were advised that they would need to apply again because, effectively, the ground rules for Victorians entering Western Australia needed to change.

A person seeking approval to enter Western Australia must provide information to justify the travel as essential, as defined within the Quarantine (Closing the Border) Directions. The categories of essential travel are defined within the directions. A returning Western Australian resident is not a category of traveller within the directions; it is information that contributes to the assessment of an application for entry. Assessment and approval of applications is based on individual assessments by a person with the requisite authority defined within the directions to assess the category applied for. WA entry processes have always focused on individual vetting and assessment of every applicant. The G2G PASS was developed to improve the application processes to remediate inefficiencies associated with the previous WA manual entry application processes. I understand that some of the other states are still dealing with a range of things manually, which makes data checking very, very difficult.

The G2G PASS provides a single system approach, which has provided significant efficiencies to the state and the community of Western Australia. The implementation of the G2G PASS has reduced inconsistency in the assessment process by improving the systematic approach to information collection and collation. Information requirements are subject to change, and changes in policy and direction may occur as a result of environmental factors, such as an increase in community transmission in another jurisdiction. For example, if there was an increase in community transmission in New South Wales tomorrow, the Department of Health would provide information to police. Some people might criticise that as changing the rules or standards, but it is an important flexibility if we need to be stricter on people coming from one area rather than another.

The G2G PASS is world-leading because it is readily accessible through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet website and app stores. It is able to be tracked and reported against and it provides a user-friendly application with instructions on how to conduct the process and meet the information requirements. It enables the entire application process to occur utilising a single device, such as a telephone, without the need to print and scan documents. The traveller makes the application through the system depending on their category of travel and completes the necessary declarations online. The application prompts the traveller to provide information. The application is then triaged, assessed and responded to within a single system. The information is captured and presented to the assessor in formats that align with checking against police indices to verify the veracity of the information, improving the thoroughness of the assessment process. When rejected, the traveller receives notification of the reason and instruction on what further information might be required for further assessment. When approved, the traveller receives notification and instruction on what directions will be applied on entry into Western Australia, along with a QR code. On arrival at the airport border, the traveller produces the QR code on their mobile telephone and the code is scanned by the greeting officer. The officer conducting the scanning can immediately see any internal notes or comments relating to the application and the applicant to identify the directions and conditions to be applied. The scanning of the QR code creates a reportable arrival event that automatically feeds into the compliance and assurance system, identifying the arrival quarantine requirements and quarantine location. The record created provides a historical time line of travel for the individual, assists consideration by reviewers for future applications for travel, and identifies any inconsistencies in applications by the same individual. The record of reportable events relating to the application, assessment and arrival provide for the easy identification of the parties involved in the entire process and also supports any investigations into possible breaches of the Emergency Management Act. The G2G PASS is currently utilised by the vast majority of travellers arriving in Western Australia by air. It has significantly streamlined the applications and arrival processes at airports and borders. Travellers have chosen to move to this forum based on realised time savings and its relative ease of use.

Any system that requires an individual assessment is going to be open to subjectivity and therefore questions of inconsistency. The implementation of the G2G PASS has reduced inconsistency by improving the systematic approach to information collection and collation. The time frames associated with the G2G assessment process are less than half of those associated with the previous manual process. The G2G PASS provides reporting capabilities that were unavailable before its implementation, including the ability to track individuals and transactions within an application. Airport and border operations have been enhanced, with Western Australia Police Force processing time being reduced by an average of 50 per cent. This has translated to a better customer experience with the arrival process and an increased ability to assess and check applications prior to the traveller arriving in the state. The overall risk to the Western Australian community has been significantly reduced because of the G2G PASS. The ability to collate, collect and report on information relating to travellers has been greatly improved. Better information capturing in the first instance has provided for an improved assessment and identification of the risks associated with individual travellers. The system then provides for the definition and communication of appropriate directions to be applied to manage identified risks and to keep our community safe.

I also thank those members who acknowledged the work being done in my office. My main point of contact with people has been Mr John Gangell, who has been doing an amazing job around the clock. He knows more about who is accepted and what the circumstances are than I do because he hears about it every day. He raises the issues directly with police in an attempt to assist people through the process as much as he can. I think he has been doing an outstanding job. The WA Police Force, too, has done an outstanding job. The development of the G2G PASS is world-class. A small company in Western Australia has worked with police on this. As I said, it has been adopted by Tasmania and it looks as though it will be adopted in Queensland. I suspect that it might be taken up internationally in the future because I think it is a very good system.

A couple of other questions were raised on the way through. The member for Hillarys said that there were not proper restrictions on flight crews. He suggested that flight crews could go to a hotel and then go out for a meal and perhaps somewhere for a drink and then to a convenience store to purchase something. I do not know where the member got that information from, but domestic and international flight crew have to remain inside the allocated hotel. That is the direction. They can leave their room to receive urgent medical attention at a hospital

Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr David Honey; Mrs Michelle Roberts

or to escape an imminent threat to their safety but, effectively, they have to stay at the hotel for the duration of their layover.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: What if they are based in WA and fly here from over east?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They would get a direction and they certainly cannot go out for meals and so forth. They cannot go out for meals and down to the shops or whatever.

It was also suggested that people other than the police could do these assessments. There are some very good reasons for police doing the assessments.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis: I did not suggest that.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No. I think maybe it was the member for Cottesloe. Someone suggested that police were an expensive resource.

Dr D.J. Honey: I said that the police were an expensive resource.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The point I will make is this: I suspect that those people who have been in touch with members of Parliament are probably all very genuine in their cause of concern. Unfortunately, though, as we have seen through some of the breaches, some people in the community lie on their forms, produce false documents and say that they will do one thing but then do another. There are people in our community who we know cannot be trusted and who provide false information. The police are in the best position to make an assessment of that. As part of their training from very early on, our new recruits are put on the booze buses where they must deal with the public and get exposed to and become very experienced in dealing with people who are trying to spin them a line.

Another reason is that the police have access to the police database. I am confident that if someone with a significant criminal history was given approval to stay at home, no matter what their circumstance, and then something occurred, people would say that surely we should have known that that person was an incredible flight risk. Police have the capacity to examine their own internal databases. Those databases are not open to other people to look at. Someone's criminal history and other history that the police might have recorded is relevant to the assessment of an application, particularly when making a decision about whether someone can be trusted to quarantine at home or whether we believe any of their story and want them in the state at all at this time.

I am very proud of the way WA Police has responded to this. It is working on other future innovations. I think there is a very exciting prospect for people to use utilise their mobile phone while at home quarantine. People will set a designated geographic boundary via GPS and we will know whether people have taken the phone outside that boundary and also be able to contact that person via an app or by ringing their phone and requiring them to show a live picture of their face—not a photo—on the phone so that we can check whether they are at home. Police have conducted over 40 000 home-detention checks since the COVID-19 pandemic began. That has been very onerous on WA Police Force. More people are now required to be in hotel quarantine, which is less intensive for the Western Australia Police Force to check.

Technology can be our friend, and I believe that the Western Australia Police Force is well advanced in that. If we move to that new application for suitable applicants who agree to trial this system for home quarantine if they use an app on their phone, it will save a lot of police time and return more police to their regular duties because they will not be required to do door-to-door home checks if it can be done electronically. Whatever number of people we determine can do that, they might be requested to show their face on their phone at their geographic location four or five times a day.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
