

GENDER EQUITY

956. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Minister for Women's Interests:

I refer to the McGowan government's commitment to address gender inequality in Western Australia. Can the minister outline how this government is listening to Western Australian women to develop a long-term plan of action to improve outcomes for women in all walks of life; and is the minister aware of any barriers to women's full participation across the community?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I am very pleased to answer this question and I am very pleased with the member for Belmont's interest in this issue. Members might be aware that we released a three-year report into the status of women in Western Australia. It contains a range of more than 200 indicators of how women are faring in this state and provides an important snapshot of how we are going. When I look across the chamber now, it is interesting to see the level of interest in this issue. The member for Dawesville has just lifted up his head, but apart from that, not one eye is looking at me and not one member is listening to this debate. They are all looking at their phones. I know that not many women are over there but —

Point of Order

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Point of order.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Ms S.E. Winton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, do you have to have a comment on everything? Members, it is a point of order. I will hear it in silence.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: The minister is clearly misleading the house with her statement about members on this side of the house. She should withdraw those lies that she is making up.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Start again.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I said that the minister is obviously misleading the house and she should withdraw her statements.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. We have people who sometimes say that other members are not in the house, which is a point of order, but that is not.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Ms S.F. McGURK: We know that the Liberal Party's record on women's interests is poor, and that is indicated by the fact that only three women represent that party on the other side.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you to order for the second time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: The member for Carine would be well placed to listen for once.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: The minister is on her feet. She has something to say. If you want to have something to say, put a question up.

Ms S.F. McGURK: On a range of different issues regarding how women are faring in this state, there are some areas in which we are doing well—for instance, on a couple of health indicators. The five-year survival rate for women with cancer is more than 91 per cent, which is a fantastic achievement, and since 2002, the number of teenage pregnancies in our state has halved. They are some fantastic health indicators. However, on many economic indicators, we are not doing well and Western Australia is at risk of being left behind. Certainly, if it were left to members on the other side of the house, we would be left behind. We have the highest gender pay gap in the country, at 22 per cent. South Australia and Victoria are both at nine per cent. Reducing that gender pay gap is achievable, but we need a specific plan and we need to work hard and put our shoulders to the wheel if we want to effect change. Another indicator is the number of women in Parliament, which has not changed in the last 10 years. It is about 30 per cent. There is no doubt that this side of the house, the government benches, is doing the heavy lifting. Forty-one per cent of government members are women, as distinct from the Liberal Party, which has 17 per cent. It is appalling. We had a plan and we debated that plan within our party 25 years ago, in the early 1990s. We decided that, in alignment with our values, we wanted more participation of women in representative ranks in our party.

We changed our rules and the results are now very clear. We are calling on the community and corporate industry to do that as well.

If we look for instance at BHP, we see that it has an ambitious target of employing 50 per cent women by 2025. It has a specific target and it will be held to that target, and I applaud it for that. There are some good signs of employers in this state doing some good work. They understand that they need to access the full human resource that is the women of Western Australia and make sure that they remove the barriers to doing that, and I thank them for that. We need to celebrate and acknowledge those changes.

With respect to the women's plan, we decided that it was worth going out and asking women throughout Western Australia what the issues are for them, not just in a statistical sense, which we have done through the "Women's Report Card", but also by actually having conversations, and we did that throughout the state. We had over 2 000 responses either through surveys or from people attending workshops. We have had some fantastic interest in this issue. I look forward to releasing the outcome of that plan from this government early next year. There is a lot work to do but I am very proud to be a part of the McGowan government and the Labor Party that takes women's participation and gender equity in our state seriously.