

ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

**573. Mr B. URBAN to the Minister for Tourism:**

I refer to today's announcement that the McGowan Labor government has secured the massive and widely sought after Ultimate Fighting Championship main event, which is UFC 221.

- (1) What impact will this have on the WA economy?
- (2) Can the minister explain why this is a massive coup for the state?

**Mr P. PAPALIA replied:**

(1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. It has just been revealed to me that the member is a mixed martial artist. I was not aware of that and would not have picked him for it, but there you go; that is an indication of the —

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** What did you call him?

**Ms S.F. McGurk:** "Lethal Barry".

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** "Lethal Barry"! That is an indication of the extent of the reach of mixed martial arts and, indeed, the extent of the fan base of UFC in Western Australia. It is extraordinary. I was down at the Perth Arena a couple of hours ago announcing, as the member indicated, the arrival of UFC 221 in Perth next year on 11 February. That will be one of the biggest events ever to hit Western Australia. It is an extraordinary coup, really, to achieve only the fourth UFC pay-for-view event in Australian history. In coming to Perth, it will give us the opportunity to, obviously, attract thousands of visitors from interstate and overseas. This is a sport that has a huge following—56 million people on the social media base with 40 000 members or followers in Western Australia and tens of thousands of mixed martial arts participants in that sport in Western Australia. Thousands upon thousands around the world, particularly in the nations to our north—in those target markets for our tourism industry to the north—and hundreds of millions of people will be watching and will receive promotions of Perth and Western Australia during the bout as well as in the lead-up to the bout. As we heard from Dana White, the president of UFC, via video presentation this morning at the press release, they will be promoting it. UFC has a bit of a media machine; it is very good at promoting things. It will be promoting UFC 221 right around the world. It will result in a direct spend of around \$7.5 million as projected by Tourism WA, but Dana White reckons it will bring about \$20 million more to the economy more broadly. It will be a huge return.

The only reason it can happen in Western Australia is because this Premier in opposition made the commitment to make mixed martial arts safer in Western Australia. For some extraordinary reason his predecessor chose, of his own volition, to impose a ban on the octagon fencing, which makes mixed martial arts safer. He banned that, making mixed martial arts less safe and more dangerous for thousands upon thousands of Western Australians who participate in the sport. It was a bad move. It was dangerous and compelled mixed martial arts fighters to use a boxing ring so they could be pushed through the boxing ring often allowing a significant fall onto a cement deck, imposing potential damage. The Combat Sports Commission wholeheartedly endorsed returning the octagon. The Premier committed to it and the sports minister delivered that in June. Now we are delivering on UFC for the first time ever in Western Australia on 11 February at Perth Arena.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! I know you are the senior member of the house, member for Cottesloe, but there is no need to take charge.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Yes, I know. Member for Dawesville—let some young blood in.