

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION DETERMINATION —
MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

155. Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI to the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations:

I refer to the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission decision to give our lowest paid workers an extra \$16 a week. How does this determination help low-paid workers, or is the opposition correct when it says that an increase of just one per cent would be enough to help those workers cover their bills?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

I think this is an excellent question, and I thank the member for Kingsley for the question.

Mr S.K. L'Estrange: You wrote it!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I did not write it.

The member for Kingsley is one of our giant slayers, having defeated a minister to get into this chamber. And, of course, she is a working mother who knows what it is like to struggle, which is something that the opposition does not seem to understand.

The McGowan Labor government welcomes the WA Industrial Relations Commission state minimum wages decision. We believe that it is a fair and balanced decision, and it rewards low-paid workers for the efforts that they make in their life each day.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

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

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I remind the house that low-paid workers spend all their money. When the minimum wage increases, the economy benefits. As all the research shows, including from the Chicago School, a regular and modest increase in minimum wages has an overall benefit on the community. It is particularly important, and if members read the reasoning of the commissioners, they make it clear that one of the reasons they made this decision to provide a \$16 a week increase was the net benefit to the economy that it will have. Sometimes, including yesterday, there are allegations of class warfare in this chamber. We have seen that class warfare from the member for Hillarys, who does not want to give hardworking low-income earners a wage rise. He says that one per cent is all they should be given.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Hillarys!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is it not interesting that the member for Hillarys complains about the state government's wages policy in which it gives \$1 000 as a capped increase.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, second time!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: But then he complains about just \$16 a week for the lowest paid workers. There is a class war going on in Australia; it is the Liberal Party's hatred for working people—people who rely on the award system and minimum wages. The opposition does not get it, and its members do not like it. They will always continue to oppose it. Let me make it clear that we are very happy to see regular increases in the minimum wage, because, as the research shows, and if members read the commission's decision, the commissioners make this point themselves, regular increases in minimum wages is a net benefit to the economy and will assist small businesses because it ensures that there are customers with money to spend in small businesses.