

LIVING WAGE PROPOSAL — FEDERAL LABOR POLICY

**178. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Treasurer:**

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** Mr Speaker.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Mr Speaker!

Several members interjected.

**Mrs L.M. Harvey:** I've got a broken knee!

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members, we have the “Battle of Wounded Knee”! Member for Scarborough.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I refer to today's statements by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia that Bill Shorten's promise to enact the Australian Council of Trade Unions' living wage proposal would cost Western Australian jobs.

As the Treasurer who is overseeing the highest number of Western Australians without a job in the state's history, I ask the Treasurer whether he will call on Bill Shorten to abandon this policy that will result in even more Western Australians being without a job?

**Mr B.S. WYATT replied:**

I am not entirely sure what the question was. Does the member want me to call on Bill Shorten? Sorry, I missed the question bit.

**Mrs L.M. Harvey:** The CCI said that Bill Shorten's policy to enact the ACTU's living wage proposal will cost WA jobs. That is what the CCI said. I am asking the Treasurer whether he will call on Bill Shorten to abandon the policy in the interest of WA jobs?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** No, I will not. Obviously Bill Shorten and the federal Labor opposition will develop policies and take them to the election, very soon, I suspect. The people of Australia and Western Australia will make their decision. That is the beauty of an election—a campaign based on ideas. To be honest, what federal Labor has done has been very impressive. It is not a small target. Interestingly, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia has raised with me and made public comments about the problems of weak wage growth. This is something that has been broadly identified from as high up as the Governor —

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Hillarys!

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** The Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia has made comments about the problems more broadly across the nation around persistent weak wages growth. Indeed, I am critiqued in this place by the opposition about the data around retail for example. What do you think, opposition—for your benefit, Mr Speaker, as a hypothetical question—one of the main reasons for weak retail trading data is about?

Several members interjected.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** If I could float a —

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis:** He asked us a question!

**The SPEAKER:** Yes, but he wanted only one answer, not 100.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** If I could float a hypothetical answer, I suspect money in people's pockets might have an impact around that.

Several members interjected.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** What I heard —

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Hillarys, you are very excited today.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I heard by way of interjection, I think from the member for Hillarys, about the data being around confidence. I want to make some comments around confidence. When I became Treasurer, after the final year of the former Liberal government, the confidence level in the business sector was at the same level that it was during the global financial crisis. The point I have made in this place before is that when the businesses of Western Australia were asked the question, “Do you prefer the current Liberal state government or global financial Armageddon?” they chose global financial Armageddon. That gives members opposite some idea some idea what

they thought about you mob! We have seen confidence figures growing at record rates—yes, off levels that the former Liberal government left that were diabolical.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I want to make one final point. Ultimately, if members opposite want to advocate to Bill Shorten, they can go for it. However, I suspect that, ultimately, Scott Morrison will provide a suite of policies and Bill Shorten will provide a suite of policies and in due course we will go to the ballot box and make a decision on that. One point I made time and again when I sat on the opposition side of the house—at the time, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia did not have much to say, to be honest—was that if a government like the former Liberal–National government makes decisions around debt and spending and pushes us into large operating deficits for consecutive years, it eats into the capacity of future governments to make decisions based on the economic circumstances they might find. That is why in the first two budgets—we are in the middle of the third one—we have spent a lot of time repairing the balance sheet so that when I finish my time as Treasurer, I do not leave the next Treasurer with a balance sheet that does not allow them to respond to the economic circumstances they find. We will continue to do that. It is not easy because we have to make decisions we prefer not to make. But I know that, more broadly, Western Australia wants a government that leaves the finances in a much better position than they were when it found them, and that is what I am determined to do.