

CORONAVIRUS — STATE ECONOMY

**660. Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI to the Premier:**

I refer to Western Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the McGowan Labor government's decision to maintain the hard border while community transmission continues in the eastern states. Can the Premier outline to the house what WA's success in stopping the spread of COVID-19 has meant for the state's economy, and how WA compares with other states when it comes to the economic restrictions that may be in place?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question. The clear evidence around the world is that the best economic response to COVID-19 is a strong and effective health response. The countries around the world that have managed the health impacts inevitably have the best economic outcomes. In Britain and the United States, where there have been very, very poor responses in a health sense, the economic consequences have been dire. In those countries where there have been very strong health responses, the economic consequences have not been as significant.

Western Australia has had, touch wood, no community spread of the virus for around 155 days, and that means we now have the most open economy of any state in Australia. We do not have to constantly change restrictions; we are not shutting down businesses as we respond to outbreaks; and we are not doing all the chopping and changing that other states are doing. I want to outline for members, so they understand, what is happening in other states versus here. In respect of gatherings, in New South Wales there is a limit of 20 people, whether inside or outside a home. In Queensland, gatherings in homes or public places are limited to between 10 and 30 people. In South Australia, there is a 50-person cap on a residential property, which means that if you want to have a barbecue or a party, only up to 50 people are allowed. In Tasmania, household gatherings are limited to 20 people. Here, it is the two-square-metre rule; that is one person per two square metres, which obviously means we do not have anywhere near the restrictions on gatherings that they have in other states.

With regard to hospitality venues, Western Australia is the only state where you can drink alcohol while standing up! Government members: Hear, hear!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** In New South Wales, there are all sorts of restrictions. New South Wales businesses are subject to the four-square-metre rule, and a cap of 300 people. That means that a major pub or a major function centre is capped at 300 people and there is a four-square-metre rule in place. Bookings for tables are limited to 10 people; I do not really know how that is a gold standard, but apparently it is. In Queensland, the rules are different for different-sized venues. There is a plethora of rules in Queensland. In South Australia, all venues are restricted to seated services, so you cannot go to the bar and have a drink in South Australia.

In respect of weddings and funerals, New South Wales and Queensland have capped the number of guests at 100 people. Obviously, we do not have that rule; we have the two-square-metre rule, which basically means generally unlimited numbers of people at both those sorts of events. When it comes to dancing, Western Australia is the only state where there are no restrictions on dancing at a bar or nightclub. Dancing is currently banned at venues in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania. In South Australia, dancing and drinking are banned; I always thought the two were intrinsically linked! We do not have those restrictions on dancing.

What this means is that if we were in the same position as the other states, we would have all sorts of restrictions and rules around these sorts of events. All those people over east—commentators and the like—are demanding that our borders come down. All that would mean is that if we were to have an outbreak, we would go into the environment that New South Wales is in, where there are all these rules and restrictions. I do not get it. I do not get why there is such an appetite amongst some of the commentators in the east for the virus to come here. I do not get why they say it would be better that we have the virus, and then clamp down on it at various locations and venues and the like, than the arrangement whereby we do not have the virus, but we have some restrictions on whether people can come into or leave the state. I do not get it. I think most Western Australians understand that having a strong economy with vibrant retail, hospitality and tourism sectors is a better outcome than the restrictions that are in place in other states of Australia.