

SMALL BUSINESS — COST-OF-LIVING INCREASES

**271. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Small Business:**

My question is to the Minister for Small Business.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister for Transport! Start again, member for Vasse. I could not hear because there was a bit of muttering going on here.

**Ms L. METTAM:** My question —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister for Transport and member for Darling Range, I call you both to order.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to the comments of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry CEO, James Pearson, which state —

Labor's living wage plan will push up the cost of wages for many small businesses, without any regard for the capacity of these businesses to pay the increased wages or pass on the increased costs to customers.

Why is the member supporting Bill Shorten's job-destroying wages policy —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Ms L. METTAM:** — rather than Western Australia's struggling mum-and-dad small business operators who have already been impacted by this government's mean-spirited cost-of-living increases, and the people working for them?

**Mr P. PAPALIA replied:**

It was almost exhausting listening to that! I have got to say that James Pearson is a good bloke. I quite like James. He was a lovely chap when he was here in Western Australia at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia. He was very helpful and supportive, but never necessarily had that great a depth of knowledge about small business. He was always the advocate for the big end of town. He is always advocate in his new role for the big end of town. People know that, as I said last week when the opposition raised this issue about a reasonable wage for working people who support our hospitality sector—our cafes, hotels and restaurants—those people are customers of those businesses. The people who work in those small businesses are also customers. In Western Australia most of the huge number of small businesses are sustained by our local economy. We are growing visitor numbers successfully, thanks to our focus on tourism, which was completely ignored by the member's government.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Vasse!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is the fastest rate in the country. Only a week ago we saw incredible statistics confirming that Western Australia's international holiday numbers are growing at twice the national average.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Vasse!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is the fastest in the country. Our interstate holiday-maker numbers were growing at 21.4 per cent the last time we got statistics. We know that it is amongst the fastest in the country, but those numbers will never sustain the vast majority of small businesses in the hospitality sector in particular—the ones the member for Vasse is talking about.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

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

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Those businesses need locals to spend. They will not spend discretionary money unless they have the capacity. If they get a greater wage and feel more comfortable that they are able to sustain themselves, then they will be able to buy a coffee at someone's cafe and sustain small businesses.