

COST-OF-LIVING WAGE INCREASES

Statement

HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [6.27 pm]: Like other members, I am keen to be elsewhere, but this is important. Like many members, I am sure, I received an email from Owen Whittle, the secretary of UnionsWA, highlighting the very real problems facing those on declining wages across the Western Australian public sector. These impacts have been felt daily in our schools, our police stations, our firefighting stations, our hospitals and across other services vital to our wellbeing. It has to be said—I will make no friends across the chamber—that the WA Labor Party is failing our essential workers. Many of those key workers have seen a 10 per cent decrease in real terms over the past five or six years. If we look at the consumer price index and wages, our teachers have \$12 500 less than they would have had had wages kept up with CPI, child protection workers have \$13 000 less, firefighters have had a real reduction in wages of 13 per cent or \$10 300, and police officers are \$8 660 worse off. These are the figures that I have received.

Although we may take pleasure in seeing what the Matildas are going to do tonight, we also have to bear witness to the fact that people in our society are suffering because their wages are not keeping up to date. This is a simple statement on this matter this evening. The Legalise Cannabis WA Party stands behind those workers, behind the United Workers Union, the Community and Public Sector Union—Civil Service Association of WA, the Civil Service Association, the United Professional Firefighters Union, the WA Police Union, the State School Teachers' Union of WA, the Health Services Union of WA and other affiliated bodies. I stand with them in their coordinated call for a seven per cent pay rise now and a further five per cent in 2025.

Before members ask how we can afford this, we will give them an answer. Did we not point out that part of that funding could come from \$1.25 billion in the four-year forward estimates simply from legalising cannabis? Were we to carry on and have hemp available, free from concerns about THC, we would have about \$20 billion available to help us allow people to have a wage commensurate with the cost of living that would allow them to live decent lives.

We are showing the way—please follow. Will members not listen to what is happening just now? Members of the Legalise Cannabis WA Party believe in the public service and supporting the public service. I believe that the Cook government would also be able to say the same thing: will you not support this? We believe in a fair wage for those who set the standards for keeping our society safe. We have identified the resources necessary to make these pay increases a reality. Minister Bill Johnston stated today that the government could afford to be fair. I am sure all members share this point of view, so stand with us as we stand with the workers against this deliberate policy of wage suppression that, I hate to say, has been a hallmark of this government since it was first elected. We are in favour of an honest living wage in return for honest, much-needed work. Will you not stand with us?

House adjourned at 6.31 pm