

PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES POLICY

694. Ms C.M. COLLINS to the Minister for Industrial Relations:

I refer to the state government's responsible and fair wages policy that will deliver a \$3 000 cost-of-living payment and bigger pay rises for our lowest paid workers. Can the minister update the house on the agreements that have been reached so far under the state government's wages policy and outline what this will mean to those workers?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

Thank you very much, member.

On 20 September this year, the McGowan government announced a revised wages policy in light of the prevailing cost-of-living pressures. Public sector employees earning below \$104 000 per annum can now receive a \$60 a week increase, and those who earn above that will get a three per cent per annum increase. Aside from wage increases, there is also a \$3 000 one-off cost-of-living payment, which was increased from the original \$2 500, and will be paid pro rata for casual and part-time employees. This policy also allows conditions to be negotiated to support the government's priorities and they can be funded through existing arrangements. The policy has now been widely accepted, with over half of public sector employees already covered by agreements. We have agreement with 28 700 teachers and principals, 22 700 health professionals, over 12 000 education assistants, just under 6 000 doctors, almost 5 000 cleaners and gardeners, nearly 5 000 hospital support workers, over 2 500 enrolled nurses, 2 500 TAFE lecturers and several other occupational groups, totalling 85 000 employees who will receive this extra cash injection.

The SPEAKER: Excuse me, minister. In the gallery, you are not permitted to take photos of the chamber from there.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Union ballots are quite interesting. The State School Teachers' Union of WA had 70 per cent support, the Health Services Union had 80 per cent support and the United Workers Union had between 97 and 98.7 per cent support depending on the classification. It is clear that the government's policy is working, and we will continue to negotiate with unions in good faith. I want to particularly congratulate the Minister for Health and her department and the officials at the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety who have been working through negotiations with the nurses' union. I am very pleased to hear that the outlines of an agreement will be put to members and that now there is a pathway forward. The threat of industrial action disrupting our health system is no longer in front of us. The workforce has a pathway for those 37 000 public sector nurses to receive their wage rise in short order once all the paperwork, if you like, with the union is complete. It just goes to show the enormous support that our wages policy has received. I look forward to a couple of other unions that we are in deep negotiations with also joining in the wave of support.