

CORONAVIRUS — STATE OF EMERGENCY — TRANSITION

685. Mr S.N. AUBREY to the Premier:

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the student leaders from Deanmore Primary School in the gallery today and thank them for their leadership and service to the Scarborough community.

I refer to Western Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic that has delivered some of the best health and economic outcomes in the world. Can the Premier update the house on WA's transition out of the state of emergency and outline how the government is managing the current stage of the pandemic?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Scarborough for the question.

On 4 November, we transitioned out of the state of emergency that had been in place for two and a half years, and the public health state of emergency was also revoked. However, COVID remains in the community and I understand there are some concerns among the public. We urge members of the public to please wear a mask, should they wish, and make sure to stay home if they are unwell. People should not go to work if they are sick. This will protect other people and themselves. I note in the community that older people in particular are wearing masks. I think that is entirely admirable and appropriate should they choose to do so. At this time, we have no advice that we need to reinstate mask wearing, and I do not expect we will. It is not part of our plans or agenda. I do not think it will happen, but obviously we cannot rule anything out with COVID because it is completely unpredictable.

Going forward, we will commission an independent review into COVID, as was called for by many people, so we can look at what lessons were learnt and at what should happen in five, 10, 15 or 100 years if there is another pandemic so people can deal with a future pandemic. We want to make sure there is at least some sort of road map for future governments and people to deal with pandemics based on the experience of the last one. Members will recall that on 16 March 2020, we were preparing for the worst, including tens of thousands of deaths, mass unemployment and an economy that was heading for what was potentially the same result as the Great Depression of 1929. That was what we were advised, at the national level, was going to happen. Fortunately, due to a range of things both nationally and at the state level, we avoided all that. Because of our public health measures, border controls, vaccinations, and strong testing and isolation requirements, we managed to massively reduce hospitalisations and save lives. It is because of all those things and a range of other measures that we managed to protect the economy and ended up with the strongest health and economic outcomes in the world. That is a credit to all Western Australians for doing the right thing during a difficult period. In closing, I will say that we have the temporary COVID laws available to us—to invoke if necessary—to put in place measures again should they be required. I cannot foresee that is required at this point. We are not planning for it. We do not expect we will need to, but at least we have the backup should we need it.