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Thursday, 21 October 2021

DR MICHAEL LIVINGSTON*Statement by Member for Roe*

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [12.56 pm]: Firstly, I welcome Michael, Rachel and Lillybelle Livingston, along with my wife, Andrea, to the Speaker's gallery.

It is my pleasure to announce that Dr Michael Livingston has been nominated for the 2021 Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine's Distinguished Service Award for his significant contribution to rural and remote medicine and general service to the community. Dr Livingston is the local general practitioner and emergency physician in Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun. Since 2014, Michael and his team have travelled across the region to bring medical services to remote and small communities, with three new clinics in Jerramungup, Bremer Bay and Varley. In addition to his general practice, he has employed a new GP registrar and a new female GP; supervises and teaches registrars and students; provides support and encouragement to rural doctors; and welcomes allied health professionals to work alongside him.

By positively promoting the benefits of COVID vaccinations, Livingston Medical's clinics have reached almost 100 per cent vaccination coverage in the local area. Michael and his team proudly share good news stories and promote the benefits of living and working in rural practice in the hope of attracting more doctors to the bush, but he is not afraid to highlight the issues and advocate for better services in regional areas.

I wish Michael and his wife, Rachel, all the best in their journey and once again congratulate Michael on being nominated for this esteemed award. I believe he has a very good chance.

LEEMING NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH*Statement by Member for Jandakot*

MR Y. MUBARAKAI (Jandakot — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.58 pm]: I rise today to thank a local hero for his role in keeping our community safe. In my time as the member for Jandakot, community safety has always been a high priority for my constituents, and I take it very seriously. Last year, one of our amazing Leeming Neighbourhood Watch volunteers, Mr Bob Taddeo, got in touch with me to let me know that after a vicious assault of an elderly man in Cannington, some of the seniors in his social group were feeling frightened in their homes. On behalf of my constituents, we campaigned all across Jandakot to reinstate the safety and security rebate that had been ripped out by the Barnett government in 2015. I extend my gratitude and thanks to the Premier, Minister Punch, Minister Papalia and Bob Taddeo for their roles in the campaign to restore the seniors' safety and security rebate.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind seniors in my electorate and across Western Australia that Seniors Card holders are eligible for a rebate of up to \$400 for the purchase and installation of security devices. One of my favourites is the wi-fi video doorbell—it is a good one to grab! It is most important that all our seniors feel safe in their homes, and thanks to the McGowan government and local heroes like Bob Taddeo, we are much closer to achieving that today.

*Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm***VISITORS — CARRAMAR PRIMARY SCHOOL***Statement by Speaker*

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [2.00 pm]: Members, on behalf of the member for Wanneroo, I would like to welcome leadership students from Carramar Primary School and their teacher, Susan Block. Also, on behalf of the member for Riverton, I would like to acknowledge the guests who are in my Speaker's gallery.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**CORONAVIRUS — MANDATORY VACCINATION POLICY****641. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

Before I ask my question, on behalf of the member for Roe I acknowledge Dr Michael and Rachel Livingston, who are sitting in the Speaker's gallery. Dr Livingston is an excellent general practitioner in the Ravensthorpe, Hopetoun and Jerramungup area who has been nominated for the 2021 Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine's Distinguished Service Award.

I refer to the advice from the Chief Health Officer regarding mandatory vaccinations, specifically to the third last paragraph of his letter dated 19 October where it states —

Attachment 1 provides further guidance on current groups mandated, the next groups planned to be mandated (Group 1) and further groups where it is anticipated that further mandates may be required, either in the advent of an outbreak and subsequent lockdown or in preparation for opening of interstate and international borders, with subsequent outbreaks (Group 2).

- (1) Can the Premier confirm that the full advice, including attachment 1 as sent to the Premier by the Chief Health Officer, has been published?

- (2) Can the Premier explain why the Chief Health Officer advises that only further groups—that is, group 2—may be considered for mandates when the table he calls attachment 1 states that they must be vaccinated by 31 January 2022?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1)–(2) Obviously, we had a lot of discussion about this between the Chief Health Officer, the Minister for Health and me. The Chief Health Officer is in full agreement with the table that we published that all those groups must be vaccinated by the time frame we have indicated. As the member correctly quoted, the letter does indicate that it is in the lead-up to the opening of the international and interstate borders. At some point in time, the commonwealth will open international borders and the state will open interstate borders to New South Wales and Victoria. Clearly, having all these groups vaccinated is absolutely necessary.

I urge the opposition to be supportive and constructive about what we are trying to do and to stop undermining it.

CORONAVIRUS — MANDATORY VACCINATION POLICY

642. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. I thank the Premier. Can the Premier confirm absolutely that his government has not gone beyond the advice provided by the Chief Health Officer in his letter to the Premier of 19 October because he has repeatedly said that his decisions reflect the advice of the Chief Health Officer?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I just told the Leader of the Opposition that we had a whole range of conversations between me, the Chief Health Officer, the health minister and the police commissioner in relation to all these matters, and the announcement made yesterday was fully agreed to by the Chief Health Officer and all parties as absolutely necessary to protect the health of all Western Australians.

I urge the Liberals and Nationals to stop undermining the efforts we are putting in place to keep this state safe. You have done it now for two years—you need to stop. All you do is undermine everything we have tried to do to stop people getting sick and dying in Western Australia. You need to stop!

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: You give support and encouragement to those people out there who want to undermine the vaccination program and you come in here and come up with silly and spurious questions on every single occasion to undermine everything we are trying to do. You are the worst opposition, the most irresponsible opposition ever seen in Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members of the opposition, you do not actually get much cut through if all five of you interject at once. We then have other people interjecting and it is just a wall of noise; it does not actually add to anything.

CORONAVIRUS — MANDATORY VACCINATION POLICY

643. Mrs L.A. MUNDAY to the Premier:

I refer to the state government's safe and proportionate approach to preparing Western Australia for the expected transmission of COVID-19 in our community. Can the Premier update the house on the response to the COVID-19 vaccination mandate for certain workers and certain industries?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Dawesville for the question. The mandatory vaccination policy we announced yesterday is safe and proportionate based upon expert health advice and is a clear framework for industries and workers across Western Australia. We want to be as safe as possible before such time as we have any introduction of COVID into Western Australia, and the way to do that is to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible. I especially do not want to see people die in Western Australia and we want to make sure that we avoid the problems that New South Wales and Victoria have gone through. The danger from Delta is very real; therefore, I say to all Western Australians, do not wait to get vaccinated; do not wait for another outbreak. Please get vaccinated now.

We have seen that a majority of Western Australians understand this message—a vast majority of Western Australians understand this message. Today Australia's three major supermarkets, Coles, Woolworths and Aldi, announced vaccination mandates for their workers, but in any event, we have announced an overarching one for supermarket workforces. We have seen Wesfarmers back WA's vaccination mandate and that includes businesses like Bunnings, whose workers will also need to be vaccinated by the end of January. Its managing director, Rob Scott, has indicated his support for the policy. We saw support for the policy from the Tourism Council of Western Australia, the Chamber of Minerals and Energy and the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. They all indicated their support. The Australian Hotels Association has recognised the benefits of the policy. According to my notes, Bradley Woods told the media yesterday that he, and I quote —

understands why mandatory vaccinations are critical to keeping the industry open.

We are making extraordinary investments in public housing—an \$875 million injection. It is \$2.1 billion. There are more than 600 homes under construction right now, including using modular and timber. You need to write your own questions, sir, because at the moment it is very clear that you are not well researched at all.

SYNERGY — RENEWABLE ENERGY

652. Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE to the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's work to deliver a sustainable energy future for the state through its significant investment in renewable energy technology. Can the minister update the house on this government investment in the state's biggest battery, and outline how this will deliver better energy outcomes for Western Australian households and businesses?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

I am very pleased to answer that question. We have already delivered community batteries embedded into the distribution network. We are delivering our energy transformation strategy to make the electricity system take account of distributed energy—that is, solar panels and other equipment that people put into their own homes. We have the trial of Project Symphony down in the south-eastern corridor, in the electorates of the members for Jandakot and Southern River. We also have this new announcement that the government, through Synergy, has awarded a \$155 million contract to New Horizons Ahead to build Western Australia's largest battery. It will be a 100-megawatt, 200-megawatt-hour battery that will be able to power 160 000 homes for two hours. This battery will be operational by the end of next year and will be an important part of balancing our electricity system. It will allow us to store some of the excess solar that is being pushed into the system from solar panels on people's houses and use that to help deal with the evening peak. It is a very important step forward in the decarbonisation journey of our electricity system.

I want to emphasise that the electricity system in Western Australia now has as an objective to decarbonise the entire electricity system. This battery will be an important step forward in that process. I particularly want to acknowledge the \$50 million contract to GenusPlus Group, a Western Australian company based in Belmont. It will have 50 local people working on the project. I acknowledge that \$15 million of the \$155 million is a contribution from the commonwealth government. I note that it is spending billions on the east coast, but we are certainly happy to have the \$15 million co-investment. One in three households in Western Australia already have rooftop solar, and we expect that to get to one in two within 10 years. Putting that in context, at the moment, every day we have one megawatt of additional rooftop solar going into the south west interconnected system. Just for this year, we will have over 350 megawatts of additional rooftop solar going into the system.

This is another important step forward. I encourage the private sector to look at what the government has done here and also invest in large-scale batteries. There is now clearly an opportunity to get rewarded for that type of investment. I want to congratulate Synergy and its partners in this project.

CORONAVIRUS — REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

653. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I refer to reports of the drastically under-resourced Wyndham Hospital, where staff have been rostered on for more than 110 hours a fortnight, and that the Safespear portable isolation equipment at Geraldton Health Campus is unusable, as revealed in the other place. Given that the minister has had more than 18 months to prepare regional health services across Western Australia for COVID, why do these dangerous conditions persist?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I would like to begin, on behalf of the member for Roe, by acknowledging Dr Livingston in the Speaker's gallery today, and wish him all the very best for the awards. I hope that he comes home a winner, but we are all very confident.

We covered this issue in some detail this morning in response to the member's grievance, and I am not quite sure why she has come back to seek further information. I am unsure of the connection between the Safespear negative pressure room add-ons at Geraldton Health Campus and the situation with staffing at Wyndham Hospital. Suffice to say, over the last 20 months we have worked very hard in Health to make sure that we keep Western Australians safe and that we have a health system that continues to respond to the changing and dynamic situation we have in the fight against COVID-19, both with the surge in demand we are experiencing at the moment, like all other health systems, and the impact of a constrained workforce as a result of the borders.

I am very proud of the work that has been done. We continue to have an outstanding health system that has guided the government through one of the most internationally recognised and successful campaigns against the COVID-19 pandemic. I am not quite sure why the member sees fit to continue to undermine people's confidence in that system. I would have thought that she would join us in acknowledging these difficulties and the great work that the department, doctors, nurses and allied health and support staff are doing to take us through this difficult period.