



13 MAR, 2021

MAKE A WISH.

The West Australian (Saturday edition), Perth

The main magazine cover features a man in a dark suit and red tie, with his arms crossed, floating in a cloud of red dust against a blue sky with white clouds. At the bottom right, a golden magic lamp is shown. The word 'AGENDA' is written in large blue letters at the top, with 'thewest.com.au' below it. The text 'MAKE A WISH...' is written in large black letters in the lower half, followed by 'WA business and community leaders offer up their post-election desires' and 'SPECIAL REPORT PAGES 138-141' in bold black text.

AGENDA

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MAKE A WISH...

WA business and community leaders
offer up their post-election desires
SPECIAL REPORT PAGES 138-141



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TIME TO ROLL UP THE SLEEVES MR PREMIER

The worst of COVID-19 — hopefully — is in the rear view mirror. But the work never ends for Mark McGowan, who now faces rebuilding WA for a post-pandemic world. Luckily for the Premier, there are no shortage of suggestions on where to get started from the State's business, community and union leaders.

JOSH ZIMMERMAN & PETER LAW

A global health emergency does a remarkable job of focusing the attention of leaders and pushing other problems to the periphery.

But that doesn't mean they don't still exist — and in some cases threaten to escalate to crisis status in their own right.

Mark McGowan has been widely lauded for his willingness to consult widely, taking into account the views of leading voices from a diverse range of fields before charting a course of action.

Because the Premier has had his hands full recently juggling bushfires, campaigning and a vaccine rollout, Agenda has done the information-gathering for him, approaching prominent leaders in their fields and asking what they consider the biggest issue facing the State — and how to fix them.

Their responses produce

some consistent themes: diversification of the economy, promoting regional WA as a destination to work and live, addressing the rapidly developing housing shortage and generating meaningful wages growth after years of stagnation top the list.

The domino effects of

COVID-19 loom large, and the damage caused by border closures — particularly for the tourism and international education sectors — will need to be addressed before critical wounds turn fatal.

And the Premier has a battle brewing in his own backyard, with the unions from which Labor draws much of its power base becoming increasingly frustrated with a \$1000-a-year public sector wages cap they feel has forced the likes of teachers, nurses and police to shoulder the brunt of Mr McGowan's much-vaunted budget repair.

Elizabeth Gaines, FMG chief executive

“Climate change is the most pressing issue facing the planet and if we are to achieve the targets established by the Paris Agreement, the broader energy transition will need to happen far more rapidly than the middle of the century.

“Fortescue has set ambitious targets and our journey to net zero emissions is well under way, including our move to establish a large-scale renewable energy business.

“Green hydrogen represents significant opportunities to achieve our emissions reduction targets. With the support of the WA Government, Fortescue is confident WA will be at the forefront of the establishment of a global renewable hydrogen



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industry. Regional towns are vital to the ongoing vibrancy of WA. The pandemic has demonstrated the benefits of working flexibly and remotely, with location now no longer a barrier to people's careers. It is critical that government considers infrastructure and public services to ensure we continue to drive growth in regional communities."

David Southam, Mincor Resources managing director

"One of the top priorities over the next four years is to address skills shortages, which are already beginning to impact the resources sector.

"The pandemic has already highlighted how reliant we are on skills which have to be supplemented from interstate labour, and we need to take urgent steps if we are to avoid a situation that could restrict our ability to capitalise on the next commodities super-cycle.

"We need to see incentives and significant investment in infrastructure, childcare, high-speed internet and community services to attract families to WA, but particularly to regional WA. Regional investment will help reduce the FIFO workforce, and provide a viable choice of residence. If the Premier can strike the right policy balance, the State could be on the cusp of a wonderful period of growth and opportunity not seen in over a decade."

Chris Ellison, Mineral Resources managing director

"Mark McGowan and his Government did a tremendous job keeping the State safe from COVID while protecting much of WA's industry — and therefore jobs.

"The biggest challenge facing the McGowan Government in its second term will be to gradually and safely re-open WA's borders without compromising the sustainability and well-being of our economy.

"I encourage the Government to deliver on its program of economy-building projects at the same time as removing obstacles to private-sector investment, for example through improving the pace of regulatory approvals processes without lowering standards and quality. Combined, the State and the private sector can further unlock WA's resources in a socially responsible way to deliver lasting benefits."

John Van Der Wielen, HBF managing director

"Our largest challenge is for political and corporate leadership to reimagine the post-COVID world, reducing our economic reliance on the current iron ore price.

"The Government

allocation of surplus must focus on alternative areas of the economy, providing incentives to foster entrepreneurial developments here in WA. This includes through the use of innovation funds, with a brilliant example being WA's new Future Health Research and Innovation Fund, which is designed to promote health innovations. WA could also develop the capacity to house more international students than before COVID by developing a major plan for student migration and look to welcome back students."

Paddy Gregg, Austal chief executive

"For years successive governments have talked about, and have made some inroads into, diversifying the economy, but WA's economy still remains highly susceptible to boom and bust cycles of the mining industry. That needs to change.

"Sovereign shipbuilding is a great opportunity for that diversification. Using the Australian Navy's Force Structure Plan and the expertise already here in WA, we could establish Western Australia as a global centre of excellence for the design and



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build of next generation autonomous and low carbon emission defence and vessels. This isn't limited to welding ships. It includes the software and hardware systems to run them as well.

"This would combine the existing, world leading expertise WA has in both shipbuilding and remote mine site operations, such as autonomous trucks and rail, to create a new high-value export opportunity."

Diane Smith-Gander, CEDA national chair

"The WA economy is mostly a success story, but there remain headwinds and downsides. As we see booming housing construction, sales and increasing rents there is a significant problem looming with affordability. Over the next term, the State Government must act to increase social housing. Increasing stock will take time, but there is an immediate need as the rental moratorium ends this month.

"The Government will need creative solutions, such as repurposing existing dwelling stock or modular accommodation to deal with the lack of housing and homelessness in the short term. Moves to transition from Stamp Duty to Land Tax in ACT and NSW should be copied to increase flexibility in the market.

"And we need a wonderful new Treasurer to continue the strong performance of Ben Wyatt who will be much missed by the business community."

Bill Beament, Northern Star chairman

"The interwoven issues of unemployment, under-employment and skills shortages need to be tackled.

"Strategies to address the problem include making it more attractive for families to relocate from Perth to the regions, where there are job vacancies and skill shortages.

"Measures to help achieve this could include increased investment in education in these areas and removing the FBT on child care, which would encourage companies to pay for it. The Premier could work with business and the Federal Government on both these fronts.

"Families could increase their incomes, more women would be able to join the workforce, particularly in the resources sector, the resources industry would benefit from the additional workers and regional communities and businesses would benefit from having more families in their cities and towns. In summary, the personal, economic, social and community benefits of encouraging more people to relocate to the regions would be enormous."

Paul Everingham, Chamber of Minerals and Energy (WA) chief executive

"We'd like to see government continuing to work with industry to

ensure WA remains safe, globally competitive and has the capacity to grow. Key priorities include delivering on the Government's streamlining reform agenda to reduce duplication and administrative burden, while maintaining robust approvals oversight. A six to 12 month delay on a major project could cost billions.

"The 135,000 people employed in resources is a sector record. While industry is focused on creating jobs and training West Australians, we'll seek Government support to ensure access to the right people, with the right skills, at the right time to seize current opportunities."

Andrew Hagger, Tattarang chief executive

"Australia's post-pandemic economic recovery, and WA's short and medium-term outlook depends on finding ways to support and unlock economic growth and jobs.

"One way to do this is to unlock the productivity gains

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that come from increasing women's workforce participation. It is time to recognise that investing in an accessible childcare and early learning system, with valued and well-supported educators, will return a triple dividend: it will improve outcomes for children, increase workforce participation for women, and have long-term productivity gains by contributing to a more skilled workforce.

"The Premier can achieve this by championing the issue of early learning reform at the National Cabinet. We've seen through the desperate challenges of the pandemic, Federal-State workings have improved well beyond the old COAG model.

"That is what is needed to reform early childhood learning policy for the good of Western Australians."

Nigel Satterley, Satterley Property Group managing director

"Right now, we have a great chance to reset and diversify our economy across a number of industries, with a focus on long-term growth. Population growth is a vital component of

Perth's economic development and key in retaining our status as the world's strongest economy.

"Once the COVID vaccine has been further rolled out, the State Government needs to align with Federal Government policy and introduce sensible and targeted immigration to meet the growing skills shortage across a number of important industries. Measures to attract further interstate migration should also be considered, for example, incentivising interstate FIFO workers to permanently relocate to Perth.

"The current rental crisis

has highlighted the need for affordable housing options and greater housing diversity.

"The State Government, together with industry need a clear focus and a strategy in place to produce more affordable housing and this must remain a government priority with policies designed to ensure housing can remain affordable for WA families."

Professor Steve Chapman, Edith Cowan University vice-chancellor

"Here in Perth we have been luckier than many CBDs, but

lockdowns and home working has still had an impact on the vibrancy of the city centre.

"We need to continue to encourage a variety of activities, including performing arts, education, technology, residential and tourist accommodation.

"ECU's new city campus, funded by the university and Commonwealth and State governments, will help with this. When Australia's borders re-open Perth will be competing with the other capitals for a share of tourists and international students and it's vital we have a vibrant city as a drawcard."

Professor Amit Chakma, University of Western Australia vice-chancellor

"Nothing is more important than ensuring a strong, resilient society that allows all Western Australians to realise their full potential.

"Our health system must be strong enough to take future pandemics in our stride, with minimal disruption.

"The Government's coming challenge is reopening WA to the world. Our tourism industry is raring to go, and many Western Australians are



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eager to visit friends and families and explore the wider world once again. WA's universities are looking forward to the safe return of our international students to campus, and to the renewed vibrancy and confidence of a State embracing the world."

Pat Byrne, State School Teachers Union president

"From a public education perspective, the biggest issue is the failure of government to fund public schools at 100 per cent of the nationally agreed schooling resource standard.

"If schools were resourced to this standard, this would enable the employment of at least 500 additional teachers to meet specialist education and mental health support needs in our schools. It would also enable chronic issues around IT and IT support in schools to be addressed. In TAFE, colleges need additional lecturers, counselling support personnel, as well as IT and library resources to meet what will be an increased demand for services.

"To provide the high-quality levels of support necessary to ensure future success, in both schools and TAFEs, we need an end to wage capping to retain and attract the best people to teach WA students."

Andrew Miller, Australian Medical Association (WA) president

"WA has a failing public health system. The vulnerable are waiting for hours, bleeding and suffering in ambulances, stuck outside hospitals every single day. Mental health patients are sedated for days in emergency wards.

"The Premier should declare this an emergency and add staff to open 150 mothballed beds immediately, with another 290 as soon as possible in existing wards. Doctor numbers should be increased and they must now be offered fair permanent employment, in line with Labor principles, and to compete with other States. Listening to doctors about borders kept us safe from COVID-19 and is the way to fix emergency care."

Chris Rodwell, Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA chief executive

"The priority must be economic diversification. Mining now comprises 43 per cent of WA's economy. For context, the next-highest share in Australia is the NSW finance sector at just 12 per cent. Investment outside mining has declined in WA for seven of the past eight years.

"To diversify we need capital — financial and human. The best way to attract financial capital is further easing WA's tax on jobs, which particularly constrains medium-sized businesses from reaching their potential. We also need to make it easier for women to re-enter the workforce after having kids."

Evan Hall, Tourism Council WA chief executive

"The State needs to rebuild economic diversity and decrease our reliance on iron

ore by recovering interstate and international education, events and tourism. These visitors spend more than \$10 billion in WA each year, creating tens of thousands of jobs. Many tourism businesses are still severely impacted because of ongoing border uncertainty and low consumer confidence in travel. It is critical the State Government supports these businesses which are needed to attract visitors when travel restrictions ease as vaccines are rolled out."

Bradley Woods, Australian Hotels Association (WA) chief executive

"Providing more certainty to businesses and staff in the hotel and hospitality sector through; an examination and subsequent adoption of alternative options to blanket shutdowns, to enable business to plan, budget and retain staff; once vaccinations have been substantially rolled out, develop new border models and phases to help the industry to plan for and accommodate interstate visitation; targeted financial assistance for businesses that have been most damaged by the pandemic, such as Perth's accommodation hotels; work with the AHA to develop solutions to escalating skills and labour shortages."

Damian Collins, REIWA president

"The Premier must address the housing shortage, both



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for sale and for rent. We need an increase in the supply of available properties to help house the growing number of people searching for somewhere to live.

“Given the State’s enviable budget surplus, now is the time to look at reforming inefficient and unfair taxes that inhibit the supply of homes and rental properties.

“Stamp duty is the most inefficient tax currently levied by the State and is long overdue for reform. West Australians overwhelming want this tax changed and we have the means to do it, so there is no reason this shouldn’t be part of the Premier’s legacy.”

Owen Whittle, UnionsWA acting secretary

“The pandemic highlights the health and economic risks of an over-reliance on poorly paid insecure jobs. Many people still can’t get a job that keeps up with the cost of living. WA’s failure to protect domestic and horticultural workers under our employment laws is an

historical anomaly from a shameful past that has worsened these problems.

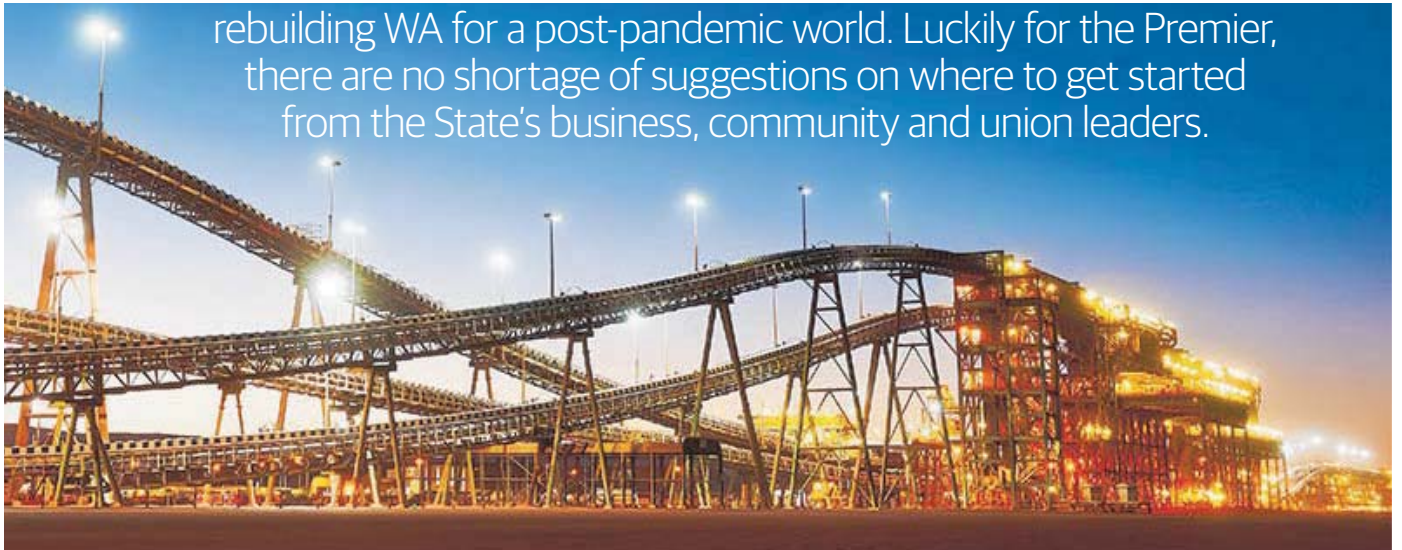
“A more diverse economy, including a sophisticated manufacturing capacity, could grow our skills base and decent wages. Public sector wages increasing below the cost of living are unfair, a threat to maintaining public service skills and capacity and needs to be redressed.”

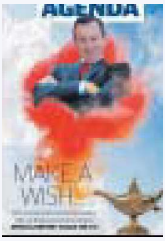


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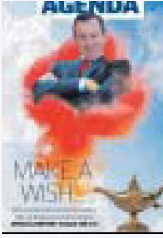
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Dr Andrew Miller

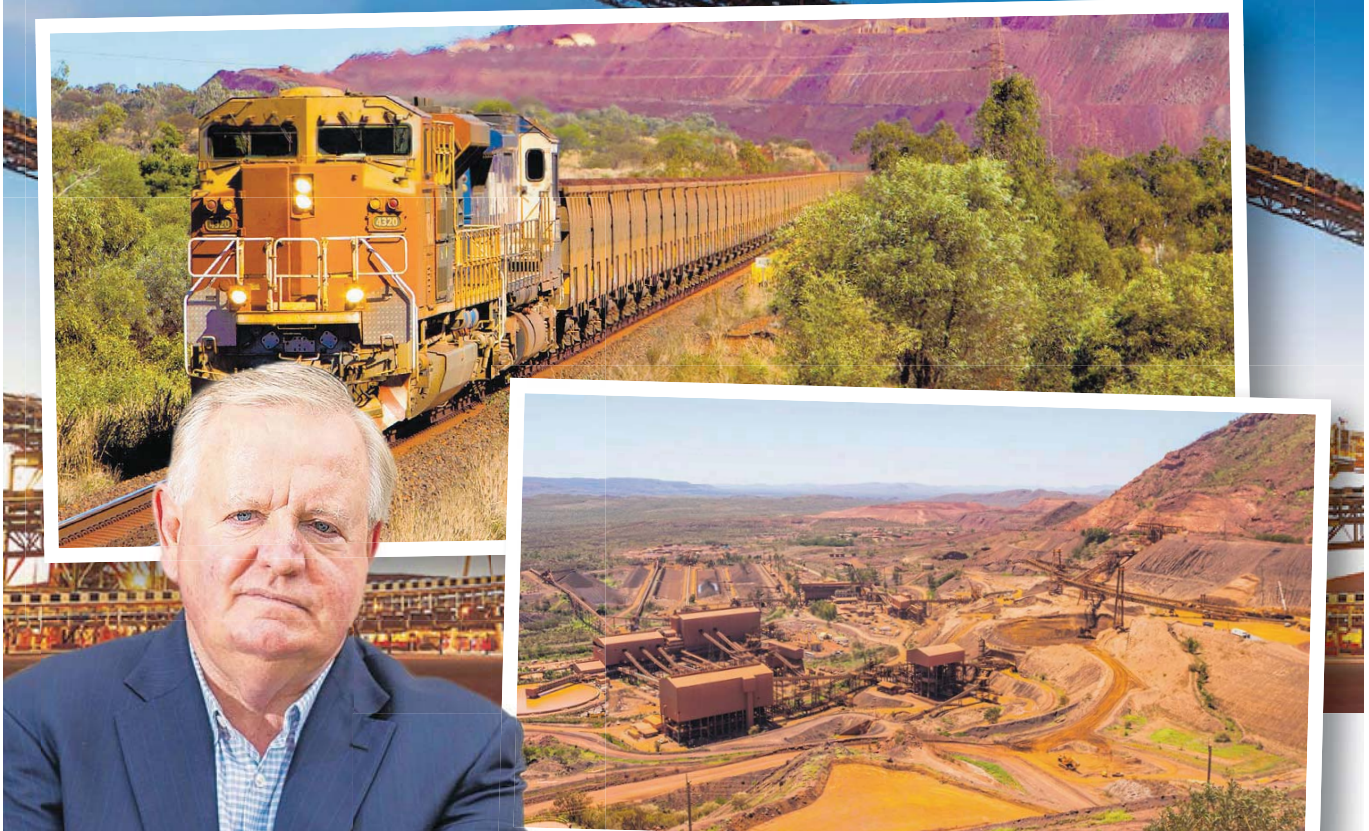


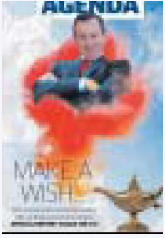


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