

RALLY AUSTRALIA SUPPORTERS AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE

**47. Mr R.F. JOHNSON to the Minister for Tourism:**

I refer the minister to last night's rally on the steps of Parliament House protesting about his ill-advised decision to give away the iconic Rally Australia event. Why did the minister refuse to address the hundreds of assembled Rally Australia supporters on the steps of Parliament House to explain his decision?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the shadow minister for tourism for asking me a question about this matter, but it has taken him a while. I made the decision about this matter a bit over two weeks ago and it has taken him two and a half weeks to ask me a question about it. All of the new members of the Liberal Party need to know something about the shadow minister for tourism, the member for Hillarys: he never misses an opportunity to miss an opportunity. It has taken him a long time to get to the point about this matter. I want to set out for the house a bit of the history so that the member for Hillarys -

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Just answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** So the member for Hillarys understands what has taken place in relation to this matter -

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** By the minister's own admission, he has just said he is going to talk about the member for Hillarys; he is not going to answer the question. That has to be a matter of relevance, surely.

**The SPEAKER:** That is not what I heard the minister say.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I just want to set out for the member for Hillarys the reason this decision was made.

**Mr R.F. Johnson** interjected

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Hillarys!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It costs \$6 million a year to hold Rally Australia. Crowds are declining and tourist spin-off expenditure is declining. The Court Liberal government attempted to put this event out for public tender and not one proponent tendered. All the other events on the EventsCorp calendar secure, by a factor of approximately eight, more tourism spending per dollar spent than Rally Australia secures. When all these facts were brought to my attention, I resolved to make a decision and not delay! I believe that we should spend taxpayers' money as though it is our own and in that light we will be careful with it. The tax-and-spend Liberals opposite do not seem to understand that point. They seem to think that we should throw good money after bad and that taxpayers' money is there to be thrown around the place at liberty. It is not. We must evaluate events on their merits and spend money on them on the basis of the benefits they provide for tourism in Western Australia. Cabinet's decision on this matter -

Several members interjected

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I thought members on my left had been behaving reasonably well until this question was asked. I warn members that, if necessary, I will call them to order rapidly.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The government's decision on this matter was supported publicly by the Tourism Council Western Australia. It announced by press release that it is best to invest money in EventsCorp to ensure that we get the best return for the investment. The Tourism Council and the Tourism Western Australia board backed cabinet's decision. In fact, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile also said it was quite a good decision. All these organisations said the best way to benefit tourism is to spend money wisely.

The tax-and-spend Liberals do not seem to understand that. The Leader of the Opposition said to that crowd last night that we should hold these events regardless of how much they cost or how much they benefit tourism in this state. It shows that the Leader of the Opposition has not learnt from the election campaign, when the Liberal Party made \$9 billion worth of unfunded commitments. The Leader of the Opposition wants to spend more. Cabinet made the right decision in the interests of tourism.

Last night's demonstration at the front of Parliament House attracted about 200 people. I am happy with the fact that I spoke to the organiser.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** When?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Last night. I did not think it was particularly productive to front a group of 200 very angry people.

Several members interjected

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am happy to have a conversation with people in reasonable circumstances. That is the way to conduct ourselves in this place.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call to order the members for Darling Range and Carine and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.