

ATTORNEY GENERAL — GIFTS AND TRAVEL

Matter of Public Interest

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S.J. Price) informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Liberal Party seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [3.24 pm]: I move —

That this house calls upon the Premier to enforce a higher standard of accountability for his ministers and explain why a minister in his cabinet, the Attorney General, failed to be open and transparent with his declaration of gifts and travel.

This is one of the more serious matters—I think the most serious matter—we have debated in this new Parliament. I moved this motion —

Ms S.F. McGurk: There's a pandemic.

Dr D.J. HONEY: In this Parliament.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It speaks volumes that a minister on the other side is laughing about this matter, because this is a serious matter before the house. I moved this motion today because it is critical that we, as members of Parliament, especially government ministers, must maintain the highest levels of integrity, transparency and accountability. That is important to the people of Western Australia. It is important so that the people of Western Australia have full confidence in the Parliament, the government of Western Australia and the ministers who sit in this house and have such an important role in our Parliament.

At the outset, I will say that this debate is about the transparency and integrity of ministers—and this minister, the Attorney General—and the behaviour of the government. The actions of other people are not in question in this debate. I heard the Premier trying to bring this in today in question time. This is not a debate about anyone else. It is not a debate about any people outside this place. This is a debate about the behaviour of the Attorney General. Individuals, organisations and businesses are lawfully allowed to approach ministers, including to offer them gifts. From a probity perspective, the onus is on the minister and members of Parliament to make determinations on whether there is a perceived or actual conflict of interest in taking a gift and whether there is a requirement under the Ministerial Code of Conduct, the Members of Parliament (Financial Interests) Act 1992 or the Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislative Assembly, to declare a gift as a perceived or actual conflict of interest and, in any case, to declare gifts in this place. This motion is about obligations on government ministers in particular and how they need to conduct themselves to maintain the integrity of Parliament and government.

Why is it so important? Members here have made light of this and indicated that it is a trivial matter. It is no trivial matter at all. The accountability safeguards are critically important to prevent corruption in Western Australia. That goes to corruption at all levels of government, including at the ministerial level. There cannot be a distinction between a perceived and actual conflict of interest. We cannot pick a fine line between those two things. Ministers here in this place—all ministers—have a responsibility to be above and beyond reproach. Some of the newer members in this place, in particular the younger members, may not realise that a previous Western Australian Labor government was engulfed by corruption and scandals in a period called WA Inc. The scathing royal commission that ensued highlighted the dangers of not having appropriate safeguards to prevent ministerial corruption. That is the exact reason the Ministerial Code of Conduct would have originated. Can I say that the Premier would know this because the Premier was in Parliament at that time, 24 years ago.

Mr M. McGowan: No, I wasn't. You've got no idea. You can't do maths.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am happy to be corrected on that detail but I know that the Premier is aware of that. I will say one thing about the Premier. When I came into this place some former members of Parliament said to me, "Spend your time in the chamber and observe people." One thing I have observed in this chamber is that the Premier is a stickler for protocol; he is fastidious. I have noted on a number of occasions that when we do not follow proper process in this place, the Premier makes sure we get back on track. I am sure that the Premier, quietly, is pretty cranky that the Attorney General has put him in this position. I think the Premier believes in proper process. Let me read from the Ministerial Code of Conduct because it is quite clear that the Attorney General has not. The background to this states —

Being a Minister of the Crown demands the highest standards of probity, accountability honesty, integrity and diligence in the exercise of their public duties and functions. They must ensure that their conduct does not bring discredit upon the Government or the State.

This code of conduct has been developed in response to widespread public concern about the conduct and accountability of public officials. The need for the development of such a code was highlighted in the 1992 Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government which stated that:

Criminal Law provides no more than the base level below which officials must not fall. It does not address the standards to which they should aspire, even if these, to some degree, always remain an ideal or counsel of perfection.

He quoted that from the *Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and other matters* report.

The code continues —

In the spirit of the findings of the Royal Commission, the primary intention of this code is to provide some direction to Ministers about the conduct the public expects of them and to which they should aspire.

In part 4, under “Official Conduct”, it states —

Ministers have a high standing in the community and they should provide leadership by striving to perform their duties to the highest ethical standards.

That is what I find frustrating in this debate. We have heard this “fine line” argument that if we divide the cost of the helicopter by four, it falls below the required level. Or we have heard, “Hang on, in this case, we say it was a private gift.” The spirit and in fact the intent of the code of conduct is not about picking a fine line or getting away with something because we can. It is about being above and beyond reproach. I will say that it is very explicit when it refers to conflict of interest. It states —

Any conflict between a Minister’s private interest and their public duty which arises must be resolved promptly in favour of the public interest.

Here is the critical part —

The same is as true for a perceived conflict of interest as an actual conflict.

In part 11, under “Gifts”, it states —

Under section 9 of the Members of Parliament (Financial Interests) Act 1992, Ministers, as Members of Parliament, are required to disclose in an annual return the details of any gift received by the Minister. However, the potential for conflict of interest issues to arise in the process of gift-giving necessitates further guidance than simple adherence to the reporting requirements of that Act.

Ministers, their spouses, de facto partners and dependent families shall avoid circumstances in which the acceptance of an offer by way of a gift or any other consideration could result in a conflict of interest with public duty or in circumstances in which an offer is made ...

It refers to the nature of the gifts as follows —

When there is any doubt about conflict arising, Ministers should refer the matter to the Premier ...

We heard today—it is very clear—that the minister did not ever discuss this matter with the Premier, certainly not before he chose to take that flight. It is clear from the Premier’s answer to the question today that that is the case, but that is what he should have done. The Premier may have said, “I’ve considered this, Attorney General; I’ve looked at it and I think it is okay. I think it is fair that you should do that. Maybe you should declare it.” The Premier may also have said to the Attorney General, “Look Attorney General, given there is a royal commission going on in the eastern states and we may well have a royal commission in this state in relation to Crown casino, perhaps you shouldn’t do that.” That should have been raised with the Premier; that should have been discussed with the Premier. The fact that the flight was not discussed with the Premier seems clear that it has put the Premier in an invidious position. The ministerial code goes on to be even clearer, and states —

In no circumstances will Ministers be able to accept money or gifts in kind by way of free accommodation or free air travel. Where accommodation or travel is offered on a ‘guest of government’ basis, or by private organisations, prior endorsement by the Premier will be required.

The Premier asked today what is the difference if someone is going to an event in a car, a bus or a helicopter. There is a difference. This code of conduct makes it very clear that there is a difference and that is that free air travel is specifically singled out along with free accommodation. This code of conduct is very clear; that is, there is something special and different about air travel. Why is that? First, it is unusual to go to an event in a helicopter or any other aircraft in a simple private capacity. Second, it is an expensive way of travelling.

If we go a bit further, I believe that I have been reliably informed that the cost of that flight was \$1 700. It is my understanding that the Attorney General took that flight with his partner and half the value of that flight, because he was there with his partner, would be \$850, which would exceed the \$500 threshold limit. We have heard from the Premier and others that this was done in a private capacity. However, when private capacity intersects with people

whom ministers may well have to have dealings with in their official duties, that crosses that line. The Premier cannot hide this and say it is simply a private gift. If he does that it muddies the waters. We are not talking about whether there was actual corruption in relation to this. We are talking about whether the public has the ability to believe that there could be impropriety in this matter. In that case, every minister has a responsibility to declare those matters and in the case of travel, discuss them with the Premier beforehand. The Attorney General chose not to do that. He has not maintained the standards expected of a minister in this place.

Labor has struggled with accountability and probity in the past, starting with Brian Burke and the WA Inc era. I think that makes it all the more cogent given this Attorney General knows quite a bit about that era. As Brian Burke said in his own book—this Attorney General is the Attorney General who defended Mr Burke during that period—and I quote verbatim from Mr Burke's autobiography —

When I went on trial accused of stealing travelling allowances, John Quigley, whom I would later help get elected to parliament, was my solicitor ...

We know that the Attorney General must be acutely aware of the reasons this code of conduct was developed. We know that this Attorney General must be aware that maintaining the highest possible standards is critically important, especially when the Attorney General's party, the Premier's party, was the party that carried odium for decades, for that matter, and act in the most transparent possible way on this matter and not try to simply get away with something because he thinks he can interpret a particular rule. The opposition is extremely concerned that we are starting to see history repeat itself.

The opposition asked simple questions in Parliament today of the Premier and the Attorney General seeking details of this matter. That this is a matter of considerable public interest should be obvious to everyone in this chamber. This is a matter of considerable public interest. It seems clear that in fact the value of this gift exceeded \$500 because the Attorney General and his partner took the flight. We do not know whether the Attorney General accepted any other gifts because he would not tell us today. Did he accept any other gifts as part of that weekend and did he accept free accommodation? How did the Attorney General return from that function? Has the Attorney General received any other gifts from this individual such as a direct gift or gifts in kind such as general travel or air travel? It is the cumulative total of the gifts, not the amount of any one particular gift, that is important. We have not seen the details. The Attorney General and the Premier have refused —

Mr P. Papalia: I went to a barbecue on the weekend. Do I have to declare that?

Dr D.J. HONEY: It disturbs me that the Minister for Police would think that it is appropriate for the most senior lawmaker in this chamber, the Attorney General, to try to game this and play it on some definition. It is very clear that this should have been declared. It is very clear that the Attorney General should have declared this. It is very clear that the Attorney General has put the Premier in the invidious position of having to defend his behaviour in this place. I will say that it was bizarre when the Premier tried to make this distinction between the so-called private and public lives of a minister. I can tell members that I am conscious that when I go to the local shopping centre to do my shopping, I know that everything I do will be viewed in the light that I am a member of Parliament. I accepted that when I became a member of Parliament and I hope the minister accepts that as the Minister for Police. That was a bizarre explanation and the Premier had to retreat on that.

The government may have a thumping majority but it cannot do what it likes. It was improper for the Attorney General not to declare this gift and the fact that he has continued to double-down on that and not do that is improper as well.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.41 pm]: I, too, would like to speak to the matter of public interest that the Leader of the Liberal Party has raised here today. In doing so, I add that when very important and very weighty matters of public interest are raised here, it is very distressing to hear a senior member of the government, the Minister for Police, interject as though there is no issue here. It seems that he does not understand that it is important to act with integrity in this place. He seems to think that it is more important to act with oafish behaviour and to try to come in behind unacceptable behaviour by the Attorney General and close ranks around that, rather than allow a full examination of the real issue here—that is, the lack of understanding, I think, on the part of the most senior legal officer in this Parliament about the importance of maintaining a separation between his private and his professional lives.

In this place, as we have heard from the Leader of the Liberal Party, there is a Ministerial Code of Conduct and a Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislative Assembly. I have here a copy of that code, which says —

Members of the Legislative Assembly accordingly acknowledge their responsibility to maintain the public trust placed in them by performing their duties with honesty and integrity, respecting the law and the institution of Parliament, and using their influence to advance the common good ...

It continues —

... the Code of Conduct is to assist members of the Legislative Assembly in the discharge of their obligations to the Legislative Assembly, their constituents and the public at large.

Further on, the document states —

- (c) Members are individually responsible for preventing conflicts of interest and must carry out their official functions and duties and arrange their private affairs to the best of their endeavours to prevent such conflicts of interest arising.

I put it to members that to accept a helicopter ride that the Leader of the Liberal Party has estimated was in excess of \$800 value is entirely inconsistent with that clause of the code of conduct. It is inconsistent with the code to accept such a gift from an individual who is involved in a business that even at that point had been the subject of inquiries in New South Wales and was quite likely to be the subject of investigations here in Western Australia. That would have been apparent to the Attorney General at that stage, yet he did not seem to appreciate the importance of maintaining distance and a level of integrity around his actions so that he could act in a way that not only was not an actual conflict of interest but also did not have the perception of a conflict of interest. In a position of that elevation, it is very, very important that he be seen to be completely free from such conflicts, and he has failed to do that by accepting this ride on a helicopter.

We saw the Premier today throw out a smokescreen. I remember when in the estimates hearings, the member for Roe asked a question about the helicopter ride and he was attacked for taking himself to, I think, the Brownlow Medal presentation, which was entirely appropriate in his performance as a shadow minister. It was not entirely appropriate for the Attorney General to accept that helicopter ride. We had another smokescreen today when we heard the Premier attack a former member of Parliament who is not here to defend himself and made an accusation that he had accepted an undeclared gift. That is wrong.

Mr M. McGowan: Really?

Mr R.S. LOVE: As he said that, I ask that he provides the evidence of that. It is not appropriate for the Premier to try to trash a former MP's reputation when he is trying to defend the unacceptable behaviour of a senior member of his cabinet, the Attorney General. This whole matter is about the Attorney General not seeming to understand the perception of his actions that arises from the accusation that he accepted a gift in contravention of him being at arm's length from that particular person. As the royal commission has gone on, we have learnt that there has been a sad history of people not understanding how to separate their personal lives from their professional duties. The Attorney General has fallen into the same trap. Instead of coming clean and declaring his interests, as he could have done in his register of financial interests, which has been tabled today I believe, we understand that he has not done that. He has not taken the opportunity to declare it in either a ministerial register or the register that comes to Parliament and was tabled here today.

That leads us to believe that there still exists within the Attorney General a stubbornness and a view that he has not done anything wrong here, but certainly he has done something wrong. He has accepted a gift without making a full disclosure about accepting that gift. He has accepted a gift from a person who would be at some point coming into the witness box before the royal commission, which must have been in his mind at that stage. Given the revelations in New South Wales, he must have had an awareness that there was a growing matter of concern around Crown. This occurred in December, just a few months before the Perth Casino Royal Commission was called. We know about all these matters, not because the Attorney General made any declaration to Parliament about them, but because of the story breaking in the newspaper. Instead of doing the right thing and going back and making a clear and transparent account to people of everything that has taken place, all we have seen in response to the questions in estimates, previous questions in Parliament and question time today is an unwillingness for the Attorney General to come clean about exactly his interests in this matter and to accept that his behaviour has been completely contrary to the code of conduct that binds all members of this house, as well as contrary to the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [3.49 pm]: I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Liberal Party. I start by saying that it does not matter how much muckraking the Premier does by getting the taxpayer-paid staff in his office to go through history and by making misleading statements during question time, the Attorney General got it wrong and the Premier's position on this matter is wrong.

During question time, the Premier asked what the issue was—he pretended not to know. I cannot believe that he did not know, because the media machine working in his office goes beyond anything that anyone has ever seen. He must have seen the reams of columns written about the Attorney General's trip on a helicopter and he would have understood exactly what the questions referred to. The Attorney General's ill-informed decision to jump on a helicopter to attend a birthday party was a serious error in judgement. The way the Premier responded in question time today was appalling. Instead of dealing with the matter at hand, he refused to answer the first question, which I asked, deflected the revised question and resorted to direct attacks on the member for Roe on the third question before wandering off on a narrative about who and who did not attend the AFL grand final.

This is an important issue. The Leader of the Liberal Party is right to bring this matter to Parliament. The Premier thinks that this was nothing more than a trip to a party. The Minister for Police said that it was nothing more than a trip to a birthday party. He asked whether we had ever accepted a lift to a party. The opening line of the editorial in *The West Australian* of 22 September 2021 articulates this very well. It reads —

A bloke gives another bloke a ride to a Christmas party.

That sounds innocuous, does it not? But it is not when the person offering the lift has links to Crown, when serious concerns had already emerged about matters within that business and when the Attorney General is the highest lawman in the state. When it is put in this context, it is absolutely fair for us to ask the questions that we have asked in Parliament and during estimates, which were also avoided. The Attorney General is the state's chief law officer; he must always be, and be seen to be, scrupulously beyond question, and that is what *The West Australian* said in that September editorial. The Premier's bizarre line that "We're not members of Parliament or ministers every minute of the day" only adds to the strange way that the government has chosen to respond to this issue. In my view, ministers have to make some of those tough decisions. Perhaps you do not get to accept a chopper ride from one of your mates when you are the Attorney General; and, if you do, you absolutely declare it. People in these positions must be, and must be seen to be, above reproach. We are dealing with real and perceived conflicts here. The Premier can go on about who he saw at the footy, but the member for Roe and I are not ministers and all those things that we have accepted will be declared appropriately. We are not sitting on the Treasury bench making decisions on behalf of people and impacting their lives on a daily basis as members of the state's cabinet. The Premier could have answered all the questions today; instead, he chose not to and to deflect, and that is telling.

The last line in the editorial I referred to in *The West* is the kicker. It reads —

WA Labor's unsavoury historical links with business was once exposed by a royal commission into what became known as WA Inc. The lessons must not be forgotten. The issue is not going away.

Premier, ministers are entitled to a private life—we all are—but accepting a free helicopter ride from a prominent former director of a business with links to a royal commission is inappropriate. The Attorney General and Premier should come clean because this issue is not going away. The longer they avoid it and the longer they deflect without acknowledging the mistake, the longer they will compound the view that they have something to hide and questions will continue to be asked. The Attorney General needs to acknowledge that he did the wrong thing. The Premier is not holding him to account; he is not holding him to that gold standard of transparency that he said his government would bring when it came to office.

Questions about this matter must be answered. It is appalling that instead of being up-front and providing the details that have been asked for by the media and the opposition both today and in estimates, the Attorney General continues to deflect and pretend that there is nothing to see here.

Mr Y. Mubarakai: There isn't.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The comments from backbenchers who think there is nothing to see here shows the inexperience of those members of Parliament. There is absolutely something to be answered here. If there is a Ministerial Code of Conduct, it should be adhered to.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [3.54 pm]: I want to be really clear with people and I will be repeating some of the things that I said in question time. The Attorney General has, as have all ministers, complied with the Ministerial Code of Conduct. The Ministerial Code of Conduct has been there for years and the Attorney General has complied with it. If the minister complied with the Ministerial Code of Conduct in his personal dealings, the issue, as the opposition has presented it, has no substance.

As I said during question time, the Ministerial Code of Conduct states that the gifts and hospitality that do not need to be recorded include —

Gifts and hospitality given to Ministers or their immediate families by family members or personal friends in a genuinely personal capacity ...

As I understand it, the individual in question is a personal friend of the Attorney General. If a politician accepts a lift to a party from a personal friend—not a lift to a business meeting or a fundraiser—and it is not publicly financed, it is a lift to a party with a personal friend. I read some commentary that is trying to equate this matter with what Bronwyn Bishop did in Melbourne. She went to a political fundraiser in a helicopter using taxpayers' money. What the Attorney General has done—what he has allegedly done at least—is attend a birthday party of a friend with another friend in a mode of transport. I heard the Leader of the Liberal Party say that it would have been okay if they had used a car but it is not okay because they used a helicopter. Honestly, would it be okay if they had used a boat or a jet ski? If a person goes to a party with someone who is their friend, that is what they are doing. I have been to parties with friends and they have driven me to these events. They used a mode of transport and that mode of transport cost money and produced greenhouse gases. There was no doubt a cost involved because fuel was consumed and there was capital depreciation on their mode of transport. For some reason, the opposition is saying that it would have been okay if they had used a car, but it is not okay because they used a helicopter. That is the opposition's argument—a mode of transport to go to a party. The Leader of the Liberal Party indicated that somehow staying at someone's house is not okay. If a member of Parliament stayed at a friend's house because they went to a party, that is now not okay. That is what the Leader of the Liberal Party said.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is what you said, and I did not interject on you.

Honestly, is it not a bit ridiculous that that is the opposition's argument? If I went through the lives of the six members of the opposition, I guarantee that every one of them would have been to someone's birthday party in a form of transport that was paid for by a friend. I guarantee that every one of them would have stayed at a friend's house—every single one of them—but we do not come in here and say that they have done something wrong. I bet that some of those people ran businesses or were involved in a business at some point. That is the opposition's argument. The code of conduct is clear; it states —

Gifts and hospitality given to Ministers or their immediate families by family members or personal friends in a genuinely personal capacity ...

There it is—a personal friend. I have personal friends who run businesses. Perhaps they have given me a lift to a birthday party—I do not know; I cannot recall. The other night I went to a friend's house for a housewarming. That friend provided dinner, which would have had a cost attached to it. That friend actually runs a business. I went to someone's house for a function and they spent money on the dinner, which, as I recall, was chicken cacciatore, and it cost them money. Is that the argument—that a personal friend paid for something? If that is the opposition's argument, it is pathetic.

The Leader of the Opposition said that somehow I threw a red herring out there because in question time I raised the fact that when the Liberal and National Parties were in government, Brendon Grylls and Colin Holt flew around in a helicopter with Mr Clive Palmer, paid for by Mr Clive Palmer, in which Mr Clive Palmer was promoting one of his business deals, and Mr Clive Palmer provided \$260 000 to the National Party. The Leader of the Opposition said that was a red herring. In a fair world, we would compare the two: someone going to a personal friend's birthday party compared with the Leader of the National Party, in a decision-making role, flying around in a helicopter with the billionaire Clive Palmer, who was promoting one of his business deals at the same time as he was providing a \$260 000 donation to the National Party. We should compare those two and think about it objectively. That is what occurred.

I heard one opposition member ask, "What's your evidence?" My evidence is questions asked in the house. Mr Grylls did not put that helicopter flight on his personal register. Questions asked in the house dragged the information out of him. Indeed, Legislative Council questions dragged it out in 2010. It remained secret for a year and came out via Legislative Council questions. That is the reality. Mr Palmer provided \$260 000 in donations to the National Party over 2008–09 and 2009–10. Then he was lobbying for a \$45 million environmental bond to be dropped from the Balmoral South project. By the way, he is now pursuing us for \$30 billion in the High Court, and the judgement on that comes down tomorrow. That is what Mr Grylls did. It was confirmed in answers to questions on notice in Parliament. Members opposite are trying to say that someone getting a lift to a birthday party is a problem. They are actually trying to say that that is a problem compared with what Mr Grylls did. Their arguments have absolutely no foundation.

I heard someone opposite say that there was a royal commission. There was no royal commission in Western Australia. There was an inquiry in New South Wales. It commenced on 14 August 2019. If your argument is that while an inquiry was being conducted, someone took a lift to someone's birthday party via a mode of transport and that was wrong, why did you take \$50 000 from the party being inquired into after that inquiry was launched? A total of \$50 000 was given to the Liberal and National Parties in 2019 and 2020, after the inquiry was launched. If you feel so strongly about this and your argument is that it was totally wrong because an inquiry was on foot in New South Wales, it is incumbent on you to pay that money back. Otherwise, why did you take the donation? Why did you take \$50 000 if that is the case?

Then members opposite harked back to history. I have some more recent history. I refer to the Corruption and Crime Commission inquiry of a couple of years ago into the behaviour of members of the Liberal Party, many of whom are still here—in fact, some of those members now control the Liberal Party—and some of their activities and misuse of allowances. The Liberal Party and the National Party then used their numbers to block the reappointment of the inquirer. That is corruption. We saw recently the reasons why they did it with their man Mr Chown. We saw why they did it, with Mr Chown's recently uncovered tendencies. That is the more recent history of the opposition's behaviour. I tell you what: the Leader of the Liberal Party does not deal with it.

My other evidence is *Road to reform: Review of the WA Liberal Party 2021* that was recently released. The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission is conducting an inquiry into activities in Victoria. It makes for remarkably similar reading to the Liberal Party's own inquiry into the party. I want to read out parts of it. The review refers to the control of people who are still here—Mr Collier and Mr Goiran. Mr Goiran self-describes himself as a branch stacker. It says that the odious behaviour shamed the Liberal Party and trashed its reputation and that it is contrary to Liberal Party principles and values. It states —

The evidence before the Review Committee, if true, suggests there has been unethical and underhand conduct by Party members, including some MPs.

...

... corruption of the essential mechanisms that guide and are intended to preserve the integrity of the Party.

... what has been revealed is shocking and disturbing.

It further states —

Interference includes manipulating the Party rules to interfere with pre-selections and bypassing the democratic role of Branches and Divisions to choose who might represent them.

I suppose the following is something we have all noticed, and I quote from the review —

The most damaging consequence of rule by powerbrokers has been the selection of inferior quality candidates for parliament over a long period of time, because as one submission observed “selection was based on fealty, rather than ability”.

It is an anti-democratic practice that has not been sufficiently condemned by the Party hierarchy.

Who might that be? Who was the hierarchy? The hierarchy is the Leader of the Liberal Party, who describes Mr Collier and Mr Goiran as “good Liberals”. As long as they signed the membership form, they are a good Liberal, according to the Leader of the Liberal Party. The review further stated—again, we can all confirm this—that members of the Liberal Party, during their first term in opposition, did their jobs with “staggering laziness”. The review further states —

We were told that many senior parliamentary members did little, if anything, to develop policies in anticipation of the election.

... the media saw no policies worth reporting, no Shadow Ministers who had done their jobs or who looked competent.

We all saw that. At least there is some honesty in this review of the behaviour of members of the Liberal Party. There is a real issue. We have senior members of the Liberal Party—in fact, Mr Collier—describing women as sandwich makers. He said that women in the Liberal Party are sandwich makers. As we saw on the weekend, these senior members remain in charge. The Leader of the Liberal Party describes them as “good Liberals”. There is the issue. The Liberal Party, in government for at least half the time in the history of this state, is in that condition. When we look at what is happening in the inquiry in Victoria, we see that it is so similar to what is happening in the Liberal Party here.

Mr Goiran, the one who refuses to endorse vaccination and do the right thing by the people of the state and set the right example, stacks branches and boasts about it, bringing in external bodies and fundamentalist churches. Many of the people he signs up probably do not even know what politics they are. He signs them up to the Liberal Party en masse and takes over and puts his people into positions of authority. It amounts to a mass takeover of the Liberal Party by fundamentalist churches. And the Leader of the Opposition stands up in this place and talks about someone going to a birthday party as though that is the big issue! The big issue is the corruption of the Liberal Party and the corruption that happened in relation to the CCC inquiry and the prevention of the appointment of Mr McKechnie as the head of the CCC. That is real corruption. The Leader of the Liberal Party failed to condemn it. He failed to do anything about it. I read his speech to the Liberal Party conference. He bemoaned no actions on the pandemic, saying how wrong it was and how we divided people and the like. I tried to prevent what happened in New South Wales and Victoria from happening here and all I do is cop criticism from him and then he ignores what is going on inside the ranks of his own party—the takeover of the party by fundamentalists, extremists, with mass branch-stacking operations. They refuse to endorse vaccination; that is what is actually happening. That is a problem for this state and for the Liberal Party, not someone going to a birthday party. Anyway, the government will not be supporting this rather pathetic motion, which is not worth the paper it is written on.

Amendment to Motion

Mr M. McGOWAN: I move —

To delete all the words after “house” and insert —

notes that ministers have adhered to the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [4.10 pm]: The Liberal Party and Nationals WA have again demonstrated that they are a lazy, incompetent opposition. I have been in this Parliament and in politics for a number of years, and I have lost count of the number of times the opposition has resorted to WA Inc when it had absolutely nothing else to bring to this place—something that happened in 1992. That is akin to the desperate nature of today’s motion.

The Leader of the Liberal Party has basically said that ministers of the Crown cannot have a private life. He has basically said that ministers cannot go to a birthday party or stay at a friend's house. That is completely illogical and wrong. As ministers, we understand that we are ministers 24/7. We understand that, and we accept it. But we also understand that we have private lives and private friends. To give members an example, on the weekend, while the Liberal Party was holding its state conference at the Pan Pacific—at which the hospitality staff outnumbered Liberal members of Parliament two to one—I was down in Bunbury, watching my kids playing soccer. I stayed there for a couple of days, and we went out on Saturday night. We went to AJ's Fish and Chips, member for Bunbury, and I bought some fish and chips for the team. We then went to the ice cream parlour and someone said, "I'll pay for the ice creams".

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I hoped my children would choose the \$5 ice creams; I said, "Don't go for the waffles or the hot brownies", but of course, my two girls went for the most expensive ice creams in the place—\$10 each!—the ice cream fudge brownie, and the waffle. My boy got the cookie sandwich, which was a bit too hard for him, but that is what happens. Is the opposition seriously telling me that I cannot do that, or that I will need to declare that? That is what it is saying. The opposition is saying that if I go to a birthday party and I sleep over, I will have to declare it. That is what it is saying. It said the Ministerial Code of Conduct refers to two things: travel and accommodation. The person who bought me those ice creams might potentially be part of an inquiry in a few years' time! What do we do? It is a ridiculous argument. Ministers have private lives.

I understand that when I go to the shopping centre or catch public transport, my children and I are under scrutiny. Sometimes, I wish my children were behaving better, especially when they bring their friends! It is a bit embarrassing. I understand that we, as ministers, are under scrutiny, but we also have private lives. The opposition is saying that if I go to a birthday party and I stay over, I need to declare it. That has never been accepted by any Parliament of any nation, particularly not in Australia.

As the Premier outlined, the Liberal Party's state conference on the weekend was the time for the Leader of the Liberal Party to stand up to the powerbrokers. If he wants to talk about standards, he had his opportunity. I also read the Leader of the Liberal Party's speech, and it was like a puppet performing for his puppeteers who were in the audience. He was trying to say, "I'm one of you. I'm part of the plan, too." That is what he was doing. He was an apologist for sexist and corrupt behaviour in the Liberal Party. He stood in front of that crowd as though he were selling himself to his masters, talking them up and saying how they were good Liberals. Apparently, people who refer to women as "sandwich makers" and who boast about branch stacking and consider it something to be proud of are good Liberals. Hon Nick Goiran was quoted as saying —

Tomorrow I'm going to find a branch to stack, this is driving me crazy.

These people are good Liberals, according to the Leader of the Liberal Party. It was like he was performing for his masters, when he had a chance to stand up to them. The Leader of the Liberal Party referred to the review of the Liberal Party and said that there had been a lot of speculation about what caused the landslide election result. There was no speculation; there was a review, and the review said that the party was completely broken—not a little bit, completely. It is dominated by factionalism and sexist members who make disgusting comments about women, yet the Leader of the Liberal Party comes in here talking about a helicopter flight.

The Premier has already outlined many of the comments from the review. I refer again to the comments in Hon Nick Goiran's WhatsApp message —

Tomorrow I'm going to find a branch to stack, this is driving me crazy.

Apparently, when members of the Liberal Party get bored, they go and stack branches. The review committee report states —

The corrosive impact of factionalism still plagues the WA Liberal Party. It suggests that Senior MPs, abetted by Party office bearers, continue to play an active role in the internal affairs of the Organisational wing of the Party.

...

It is an anti-democratic practice that has not been sufficiently condemned by the Party hierarchy.

As I said, on the weekend, the Leader of the Liberal Party had a chance to stand up to the powerbrokers. If he had stood up to them and then walked into this place to lecture us, we might even have listened. He had his opportunity at the conference to look those people in the eye and say, "This is not good enough", but instead he comes in here and lectures us about 1992 and the fact that someone went to a birthday party. He had his chance on the weekend to stand up to factionalism, branch stacking and the corruption of the Liberal Party. He is the Leader of the Liberal Party, and he had that chance.

The review also revealed that control by powerbrokers such as Hon Nick Goiran and Hon Peter Collier has meant —

Branches and Divisions no longer represent the community in which they are based. They have become little more than entities to promote the interests of the factions or the individuals that control them.

Let us again go through some of those sexist and misogynist comments. Hon Peter Collier referred to members of the Liberal Women's Council as "sandwich makers" and to a woman as a "toxic cow" and a "prize"—I cannot say the word. In one WhatsApp exchange, Ann Patrick asks —

Do you know what division or person is bringing Andrew Bolt to Fraser Suites on sat afternoon??

Hon Peter Collier replies —

The sandwich makers.

In another message, Hon Peter Collier states —

Lorraine Allchurch is a toxic cow.

In a further message, he states —

Robyn Nolan is a prize —

I will not say the word —

... and everyone hates her.

Again, I refer to the comments made by Hon Nick Goiran about members of the Labor Party in the upper house, including the now President of the Legislative Council and Hon Alannah MacTiernan—gross, sexist, demeaning comments made by the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Withdrawal of Remark

Dr D.J. HONEY: I ask the minister to withdraw that statement. None of those statements were attributed to the Leader of the Liberal Party, and I find that fundamentally defamatory and offensive.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Leader of the Liberal Party in the upper house is what I meant to say.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I find that the Leader of the Liberal Party has a bit of a glass jaw. Talking about taxpayer-funded media teams, this member's media team—probably full of Young Liberals employed by "The Clan"—constantly puts out very nasty personal attack memes about government members. They are quite personal. I would probably go into another area, but maybe I will do that another day.

Ms S.E. Winton: Do they get paid by the taxpayer?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think they are paid. The grubby little memes constantly attack government members; they are not about policy. Again, this member has a glass jaw. He comes into the chamber and accuses us of anything and everything, but never looks in the mirror to try to understand the Liberal Party that he leads today. In his speech he said that the Premier and ministers are caught in the top end of town being feted at lavish public events. As the Premier alluded to in question time, there were more members of the Liberal and National Parties at the AFL function than members of the Labor Party. As the Premier said, it was his work and that of the Minister for Health to help protect Western Australia that allowed the AFL function to go ahead. Again, the Leader of the Liberal Party is very, very happy to continually —

Mr M. McGowan: If they had their way, it wouldn't have happened.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Exactly. The opposition had people who wanted us to bring down the borders since April last year.

Mr V.A. Catania: That's not true.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Honestly! It is true. The member's party was very close to Clive Palmer. During the election period, we saw them attacking Clive Palmer and running as far as possible away from him, even though they were happy to accept his free flights, his money and his policy advice and direction when in government.

Mr W.J. Johnston: There was the National Party forum in Albany that Clive spoke at.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Exactly. Clive Palmer was a guest speaker at the National Party forum.

As has been highlighted today, the Liberal Party has learnt nothing from the review. It has put the review on the shelf and it has learnt nothing. The lazy opposition from the last term has continued to be lazy in its analysis of government and public policy. It goes back to 1992. The Liberal Party does not understand the roles and functions of being a minister. This Leader of the Liberal Party somehow got legislation drafted to benefit the council that he was representing when it wanted to develop land in Mandogalup. He was happy to impact on individual landowners, but

Dr David Honey; Mr Shane Love; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Rita Saffioti; Acting Speaker

he is coming in here and talking about conflicts of interest. This member always disregarded the little landowners in that area and through his influence nearly sterilised land for individual small landowners, and they remember it.

Again, there has been no breach of the Ministerial Code of Conduct. As I said, we know that we are ministers 24/7 but we also have private lives. If a minister goes to a birthday party or wants to stay at a friend's house, they are not going to declare it, because that is not the acceptable or the right thing to do. Honestly, members opposite have no idea. They come in here desperate —

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I did not interject on the member even though his performance was worse than normal.

This pathetic bunch called the opposition comes in here and goes back to 1992 to try to prove a point. The opposition has no point today and continues to bring in grubby personal politics because it is a lazy, useless opposition that has no understanding of public policy in this state.

Division

Amendment (deletion of words) put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Ms R.S. Stephens) casting her vote with the ayes, with the following result —

Ayes (43)

Mr S.N. Aubrey	Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr S.A. Millman	Ms J.J. Shaw
Mr G. Baker	Mr H.T. Jones	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Ms R.S. Stephens
Ms H.M. Beazley	Mr D.J. Kelly	Ms L.A. Munday	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Dr A.D. Buti	Ms E.J. Kelsbie	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Dr K. Stratton
Ms C.M. Collins	Ms A.E. Kent	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr R.H. Cook	Dr J. Krishnan	Mr S.J. Price	Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mr P. Lilburne	Mr D.T. Punch	Ms C.M. Tonkin
Ms K.E. Giddens	Mr M. McGowan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Ms S.F. McGurk	Ms R. Saffioti	Ms S.E. Winton
Ms M.J. Hammat	Mr D.R. Michael	Ms A. Sanderson	Ms C.M. Rowe (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr M. Hughes	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Mr D.A.E. Scaife	

Noes (6)

Mr V.A. Catania	Dr D.J. Honey	Ms L. Mettam
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr R.S. Love	Mr P.J. Rundle (<i>Teller</i>)

Amendment thus passed.

Amendment (insertion of words) put and passed.

Motion, as Amended

The ACTING SPEAKER: The question is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Ms R.S. Stephens) casting her vote with the ayes, with the following result —

Ayes (43)

Mr S.N. Aubrey	Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr S.A. Millman	Ms J.J. Shaw
Mr G. Baker	Mr H.T. Jones	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Ms R.S. Stephens
Ms H.M. Beazley	Mr D.J. Kelly	Ms L.A. Munday	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Dr A.D. Buti	Ms E.J. Kelsbie	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Dr K. Stratton
Ms C.M. Collins	Ms A.E. Kent	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr R.H. Cook	Dr J. Krishnan	Mr S.J. Price	Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mr P. Lilburne	Mr D.T. Punch	Ms C.M. Tonkin
Ms K.E. Giddens	Mr M. McGowan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Ms S.F. McGurk	Ms R. Saffioti	Ms S.E. Winton
Ms M.J. Hammat	Mr D.R. Michael	Ms A. Sanderson	Ms C.M. Rowe (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr M. Hughes	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Mr D.A.E. Scaife	

Noes (6)

Mr V.A. Catania	Dr D.J. Honey	Ms L. Mettam
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr R.S. Love	Mr P.J. Rundle (<i>Teller</i>)

Question thus passed.