

ATTORNEY GENERAL — PERFORMANCE

441. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Attorney General:

I refer to comments by Federal Court judge Justice Lee that the Attorney General was a “confused and confusing” witness in the defamation case between the Premier and Mr Clive Palmer, that he misstated evidence, and that he was not reliable and was “all over the shop”. Will the Attorney General advise the house why he should remain the state’s chief law officer in light of these damning comments on his performance, which has cost Western Australian taxpayers time and money?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:

I stand on my record as Attorney General.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, a question has been asked. I, for one, would like to hear the answer. Your attention to the Attorney General, please.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I have been very humbled by both the speech that the Premier made in this chamber, going through my record of achievements in the law reform area, and his subsequent public comments on the legislation and reform agenda that I have prosecuted. Of course, His Honour said that he accepted that I had made an honest mistake about a matter, a date, and also commented that anyone who had ever called a witness in a trial would be used to an honest mistake. He said that.

Of course, when one makes an honest mistake, what should one do? They should move immediately to correct it as soon as they realise that they have made an error, which is what I did. When we make errors, we feel embarrassed. I felt embarrassed that I had made an error, and I apologised. We all make errors, and when we make them, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, we feel a bit silly. I can recall that when we were debating a very important bill in this chamber, the Leader of the Opposition stood up to speak on a completely different bill. When the Acting Speaker raised —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members!

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The Acting Speaker drew the Leader of the Opposition’s attention to it —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Just to clarify, Leader of the Opposition, we are on the Criminal Appeals Amendment Bill 2021.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I am prepared to give you a supplementary question, but not if you continue to interject. Attorney General, bring your answer to a close.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The Acting Speaker drew that to the Leader of the Opposition’s attention —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Just to clarify, Leader of the Opposition, we are on the Criminal Appeals Amendment Bill 2021.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is not what I am on. That is why I asked! My apologies. Sorry; I was under the impression we were doing the Administration Amendment Bill, which is on our green sheet.

Mr D.R. Michael: We did do it, just very quickly.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I missed that. Right, I am clearly fast asleep. I am having a good day today! I will stand and talk to this bill while our speaker makes his way to the chamber. Again, I am going to demonstrate my in-depth knowledge of this legislation. My apologies; I was not paying attention and that is entirely down to me. The Attorney General will be pleased to know that I was very supportive of the passage of the previous legislation! There are many moments in this job, members, for people to look pretty silly. That was one of them.

That was what the Leader of the Opposition said to the chamber. Unfortunately, I made an honest error, which I corrected. I was not taken to it by the presiding officer, the judge, like the Leader of the Opposition had to be. I did not cavil with the presiding officer and say, “No, you’re wrong”, and require the presiding officer to say, “No, you’re wrong.” That is what happened in the Leader of the Opposition’s case, and in the end she said she felt silly! I can say that I felt silly for making an error under pressure. It was an honest error, and as soon as I realised I had made it, I sought to correct it.

I am not perfect. I have introduced 70 bills into this chamber. I am not perfect, and I have been told on many occasions that the bills that I introduced would not stand the test of the courts—for example, the Iron Ore Processing

(Mineralogy Pty. Ltd.) Agreement Amendment Act. We were told by the shadow Attorney General that it would fail. Of course, it did not, and Premier McGowan's government saved Western Australia. The silly little error that the Leader of the Opposition referred to was not an issue in fact in the trial. I have apologised to the court and I have apologised to this chamber for making a silly error that was an honest error, and I felt as the Leader of the Opposition felt on that day: she felt silly, and I felt silly for making an error. I am sorry.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! I am hearing the Leader of the Opposition calling for a supplementary question, and I would like to be able to hear it, please.