

BRIAN BURKE — CONTACT BY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Statement

HON PETER KATSAMBANIS (North Metropolitan) [9.53 pm]: I rise tonight to raise an important matter of integrity and trust, particularly as it relates to members of the opposition, both in this place and the other place. My concern arises from an amazing—extraordinary, I would describe it—article at page 9 of today's *The West Australian* titled "The unlikely heroes of reform" and written by Ben Harvey. He is a very good reporter and someone who I would say managed to score quite a coup in interviewing former Western Australian Premier Brian Burke, and his very good friend and associate, and I believe a former minister, Julian Grill. It is a very interesting and wide-ranging article in which they express their views on all sorts of things. But one particular aspect of that article drew my attention in relation to integrity and trust in members of Parliament. That was where Mr Brian Burke referred to the fact that serving members of Parliament continue to contact him. He is quoted in the article as saying —

"Sometimes a couple of calls a week when business people and other politicians will ask me what I think, and I will tell them."

Hon Sally Talbot: It is you who rings them! It is not any of us!

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Mr Brian Burke is a former Labor Premier of this state. We know that he has a history of contacting Labor members of Parliament. We will remember that former Premier Alan Carpenter once said, when talking about Brian Burke that he is trouble with a capital "T" and people should stay away from him.

Hon Sue Ellery: And ain't that the truth!

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: We know that Mr Brian Burke has intriguing ways of contacting members of Parliament. We know that members of Parliament do not need to use their own telephone to contact Mr Brian Burke. That is because there is at least one former member of Parliament who was issued with a phone specifically to ring Mr Burke and speak to him. That was Norm Marlborough, a former Labor member and Labor minister; and there have been others.

When I read this in the paper this morning, I nearly choked on my Weet-Bix. But I can imagine the reaction of the member for Rockingham and Leader of the Opposition in the other place when he heard that potentially a number of his own members of Parliament are continuing to liaise with Mr Brian Burke. I say that because it is a matter of public record that at one point in Mr Burke's illustrious career he took on a paid commission to get rid of the member for Rockingham. I wonder whether Mr Burke, either paid or unpaid, continues to work to achieve his aim, as he set out all these years ago, to remove the member for Rockingham. I wonder what sort of shenanigans he is cooking up with his friendly members of Parliament who call him, sometimes a couple of times a week, and he gives them more advice.

I raise this issue tonight because until those members of Parliament in the Labor Party who do contact or are contacted by Brian Burke 'fess up to it and let us all know who they are, the suspicion will fall on each and every member of the Labor Party—barring I would say the member for Rockingham, because I have not heard about any kiss and make up between the member for Rockingham and Brian Burke. But every other member of the Labor Party in both this place and the other place is under suspicion. Who are these people who are seeking guidance and advice from Brian Burke?

Hon Sue Ellery: No-one!

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Who are these people who are being instructed by Brian Burke? Are they using their own telephone?

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is one member on his feet, and he has the call.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Thank you, Mr President.

Are these Labor members of Parliament using their own telephone, or have they, too, been issued with a shoe phone from Brian Burke so that he can lecture them 24 hours a day?

Hon Sue Ellery: There are standing orders about making imputations about members of Parliament, so if you are making them, you need to look at the standing orders. Look at the standing orders.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: If these people are contacting Brian Burke, let us be informed about that. Let the public of Western Australia know who these people are, because, Leader of the Opposition—through you, Mr President—until those people 'fess up —

Point of Order

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is one thing for the honourable member to refer to an article, which we all read with great delight this morning, but it is another thing for him to make the same imputations, which is exactly what he is doing, by referring to members of the Labor Party in this place and the other place using their phones and saying that the suspicion falls on all of us. It does not. He can refer to the article, but when he makes the imputation himself, I think he is in breach of the standing orders.

The PRESIDENT: It is not a specific allegation against any particular member in this place.

Hon Sue Ellery: It is against all of us, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: A general comment about members in relation to a newspaper article is not out of order.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Further to that point of order, with the utmost of respect, I take no issue with him making reference to the article at all because that was in the article. What I take issue with is him taking it a step further and saying that therefore it is his view that all of us—he did not name any of us—are tarred with the brush and all of us are suspected of using phones, or shoe phones, to call Mr Brian Burke. I have never called Brian Burke and I never will.

A government member: Have you got a shoe phone?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I wish I had a shoe phone. I used to love Maxwell Smart.

This is a serious point of order, Mr President. He is not just referring to the article. I take no issue with him referring to the article. He is making the imputation himself and he has directed it at all of us—that is the language he used—in the Labor Party and I object to that.

The PRESIDENT: It is quite obvious to me that you do object to it, but that does not mean to say that it is unparliamentary. It might be insulting to you, but it is not unparliamentary to make a generalised comment about, and give an interpretation of, a newspaper article.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I will continue. I note that the strong objections of the Leader of the Opposition to being linked in any possible way to Brian Burke simply verify my point. Who would want to be linked to Brian Burke? The Leader of the Opposition made it very clear that she has no contact with that person. That is a very good start. We can tick her off the list. We can say that there is one honourable member of the Labor Party who clearly does not have contact.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Point of Order

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Mr President, you have just made your ruling very clear, and I absolutely accept that, of course. But it seems to me that Hon Sue Ellery has been exempted from the accusations that the honourable member is making only because she expressed her deep disgust with what the member was imputing. I rise to take a point of order to tell the honourable member that I, too, refute absolutely and completely the allegations that my phone is somehow connected to Brian Burke. I have never spoken to the man in my life.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! That is a point of clarification by the honourable member, not a point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I thank the member for that point of clarification. The list grows, which is great. That is exactly what I am seeking. I am happy to hear lots of points of clarification.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Point of Order

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: By imputation, it has been all members on this side of the house, not all members in this chamber.

Several members interjected.

Hon Sue Ellery: That's exactly what he said.

Hon Peter Katsambanis: That is not what I said.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Sue Ellery: It is.

Hon Peter Katsambanis: Read *Hansard*.

The PRESIDENT: Order! What is your point of order?

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: My point of order—I concur with the Leader of the Opposition—is that I believe that this is potentially insulting to members on one side of the house when there is no questioning whether members on the other side of the house also may have had contact with the former member we are referring to. I think it is a bit rich that when an article states that members of Parliament are contacting Brian Burke, members on the other side automatically assume that it is members on this side of the house. They need only go back to the Corruption and Crime Commission to find out that members on that side of the house contacted him as well.

The PRESIDENT: That is a point of view as well. I have not read the article, but I listened to the quotes that the honourable member took from that article and, quite frankly, I did not hear any mention of a party. I heard mention that Brian Burke said that members still contact him. I did not read into that any imputation about any individual member either from the article or in what the member said.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I will try to wind it up. Suffice to say, I put on record that I have never met this person. I probably would not recognise him if I stumbled across him in the street. I certainly have not had any telephone call from him in any way, shape or form.

As I was saying, this article has left it open for the public of Western Australia to question whether members of the Labor Party are contacting the former Leader of the Labor Party, who was once described as trouble with a capital “T”. Unfortunately—it may well have been this man’s intention—he seems to have besmirched a whole lot of people. It is time that these people let the public of Western Australia know whether they are or are not in contact with him. Tonight has been a good start, and I call on the rest of the members of the Labor Party to clarify their position.