

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

530. Mr M.W. TRENORDEN to the Premier:

I refer the Premier to his election policy on accountability, which states -

Public money should be spent for the public benefit, not for advertising . . . that promotes political and partisan purposes.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I think you put a comma in there that wasn't there.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Really? Would the Deputy Premier like to read it?

Mr E.S. Ripper: Yes; hand it over and I will correct it.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I ask -

- (1) What is the public benefit in tuart forest advertisements that are full of half-truths; school leaving age ads on a policy that is not even funded; budget ads that do not explain Labor's tax increases; ads that criticise police, teachers and school bus operators; ads calling for the federal Government to reverse policies that do not exist; cannabis ads that do not outline the harmful effects of the drug; hospital ads claiming more beds when there are fewer; and southern rail link ads that do not mention the \$2.8 billion cost to taxpayers?
- (2) Will the Premier now admit that his Government's decision to spend millions of taxpayer dollars on advertising has nothing to do with public benefit and everything to do with public relations?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

- (1)-(2) We said two things: first, that we would reduce the amount of government advertising and redirect those resources into health, education and police. That is exactly what we have done. Secondly, we said that we would introduce a proper framework for political advertising in Western Australia. In June 2003 we issued guidelines for advertising Government of Western Australia communications, which guidelines were referred to in our communications policy. Of course, the Government engages in some advertising.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Some?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: We are a modern Government and we need to -

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Let us look at the contrast between what we do and what the Leader of the Opposition and members on his side do. Let us remember the major campaigns that have been run, such as the infill sewerage advertisements with the then Premier in a helicopter. Do members also remember the Mabo ads? There is only one thing to say about the Mabo ads: the High Court's statement on those was "seven-nil". There were also ads on the workers' compensation changes, and the infamous third wave campaign that was blocked by the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations because of its politicised content.

Should we call the Leader of the National Party the deputy leader of the coalition?

Mr M.W. Trenorden interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I do not quite know what to call him. His pamphlets say he is the deputy leader of the coalition.

Point of Order

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: Mr Speaker, you have previously identified the positions on the front bench on this side of the House, and perhaps the Premier needs to be reminded of them.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The disturbing thing is that in the material they put out to the public, members of the front bench opposite are not using those descriptions that you, Mr Speaker, have identified. In that material, the Leader the National Party is described as the deputy leader of the coalition. If that is what he calls himself, is it appropriate to use that term inside this House?

The SPEAKER: The titles are as they appear on the sheets. They are unchanged and will remain unchanged until advice on any changes is officially received. As I said before, the member for Avon is the Leader of the National Party and the member for Mitchell is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Dr G.I. GALLOP: This is great; we have one language for Parliament and another language for outside. That is fantastic! It is a real move forward in parliamentary democracy! The Opposition has its own language. Let us get to the truth of this. This Government has spent less on advertising than the coalition Government spent on

advertising in its last year in office. In its last full financial year before the election, taking into account subsequent media rate increases that -

Several members interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: We have to make a real comparison, do we not? The current Government has spent almost 11 per cent, or \$1.7 million, less than the previous Government spent in the last full financial year before the election.

I understand the meaning of the word “accountability”. We have introduced proper guidelines for this Government, and we have reduced the amount of political advertising that occurred under the previous Government. We have put in place proper government advertising informing and involving the public of Western Australia.