

SUPREME COURT SECURITY MATTERS, TABLING OF CABINET DOCUMENTS

422. Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO to the Premier:

Will the Premier indicate whether the Leader of the Opposition agreed to a request to table cabinet documents related to security matters at the Supreme Court?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

Members will recall that during debate on the issue of the escapes from the Supreme Court cells a couple of weeks ago, the Government agreed that two very important matters needed to be canvassed. The first matter was the specific circumstances of that escape and how they related to the security arrangements at the Supreme Court. Mr Hooker has been given the task of undertaking that inquiry. Secondly, we agreed that the public interest surrounding this matter was such that we should reveal to the people of Western Australia what had gone on within the context of the Government and the Cabinet. We agreed to table all the documents that related to the cabinet submissions and discussions on this matter so that everyone in Western Australia could make a judgment on the performance of the current Government. We have done that. All the cabinet considerations on this matter since 2001 have been tabled in the Parliament, and people will be able to read those documents and make a judgement about the way in which the Government has acted.

There is also the matter of what happened from 1993 to 2001. We said that if the people are to make a judgment on these questions, the documents from the Liberal years also should be tabled in the Parliament. I instructed the Director General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to find out whether there were any such documents and to make a request of the Leader of the Opposition to table them. The Government of Western Australia has released for public scrutiny its own cabinet documents. What is the position of the Opposition? The response of the Leader of the Opposition states -

I have recently written to the independent head of the 'Inquiry into the Supreme Court Escape of 10 June 2004', Mr Richard Hooker, offering the Opposition's full cooperation with his investigations.

As such, I am pleased to authorise the release to Mr Hooker of the six unedited Cabinet Submissions identified by your Department as relevant to this matter and would ask that you make the appropriate arrangements.

As Cabinet Submissions are subject to strict rules of confidentiality, and given the potential security implications, I would also request that you ensure Mr Hooker first seeks my permission should he wish to make public any of the information contained in these documents.

In other words, the Leader of the Opposition will not release the documents to allow the people of Western Australia to make a judgment. I have looked at the terms of reference for Mr Hooker's inquiry, and he will not investigate the question of what happened from 1993 to 2001. That is why the Leader of the Opposition has agreed to release those documents to Mr Hooker.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The Opposition has failed the test of accountability. The Government of Western Australia has put the information on the Table of this Parliament to be examined.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Let me ask the next question. Why will the Opposition not allow those documents to be tabled in the Parliament? According to this letter, there are six cabinet submissions from the previous coalition Government. I wonder what was in those cabinet submissions and I wonder what happened to them. Could that be the reason that the Leader of the Opposition will not let the public of Western Australia see those submissions? It is now clear for all to see. The Opposition has failed the accountability test and the Government of Western Australia has been willing to make its own performance subject to public scrutiny.