

SCREENWEST CEO — SEPH MCKENNA — DEPARTURE

955. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Culture and the Arts:

Before I ask my question, I point out to the house that today is National Agriculture Day—a day of celebrating the industry that is very important to members on this side of the house.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to the minister's media statement from last year heralding Screenwest's new top-rated CEO, and that the announcement of Seph McKenna would further strengthen the WA screen sector's position.

- (1) Has the minister sought an explanation from his department or Screenwest as to why Mr McKenna's five-year contract was ended in September, just nine months into the term?
- (2) If yes to (1), what was the reason for the departure?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. The member may be aware that Screenwest is now an independent authority—an independent entity —

Mr R.S. Love: It is your press release, so it is something to do with you.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Screenwest is a very important entity in the culture and arts infrastructure of Western Australia, and in fact it is doing a tremendous job, so of course it is appropriate that I highlight Screenwest, as an independent authority doing great things for the screen industry in Western Australia. It is leading the country! The Treasurer highlighted that the WA arts and creative industries are now leading the country, particularly in the screen area, highlighting the record number of films, documentaries and television programs being made. It is a pity the member is having a go.

However, I will answer the member's question. As an independent entity, it is up to the board—the independent board of that organisation—to make decisions. Indeed, I have found Mr Seph McKenna a very skilled and very good person. However, I am not the hirer and firer of that person. The independent board makes the decisions, and it has obviously made a decision on that position. There is currently a recruitment —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister! The member for Moore has asked a question, and each member of the Nationals WA has answered it. But it is not the Nationals' answer; it is the minister's, and that is the one I will listen to.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: There is currently a recruitment process that involves —

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Warren–Blackwood to order. I know he thinks he runs the chamber, but he does not; I do.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The board is currently undertaking an independent process to replace Mr McKenna. I am sure that board will assess applicants for that position and make a choice, as is its responsibility as it is an independent board. I am sure the replacement will continue the outstanding work of Screenwest, which is leading the country in the creative industries and the volume of productions across Western Australia, including, of course, in regional Western Australia, where a record number of films are currently either under production or under film. *Dirt Music* is being filmed in Esperance, and *H is for Happiness* is being filmed in your electorate, Mr Speaker, in Albany. That builds on the work of *Breath* that was filmed in Denmark in the great southern area, and builds on the strength of *The Heights*—a fantastic 32-episode television series that will be broadcast in the UK.

The SPEAKER: Minister, do not forget about me—through the Chair!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Western Australia is leading because the McGowan government recognises very strongly the value of the creative industries!

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, otherwise you will be sitting in the chair.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The McGowan government recognises the importance of the creative industries to the broadening economy of Western Australia, and will continue—can we change the seats?—to invest in that, it will continue to support Screenwest and it will continue to support creative people in our community. That is why we have a wonderful strength there.