

PERTH MINT — SENATE COMMITTEE INQUIRY

546. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

I have a supplementary question. Given the ongoing revelations about the goings-on at the Perth Mint, does the minister still stand by his refusal of an independent inquiry into the Mint?

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Deputy Premier!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

I tell members what: I have asked to give evidence to the Mint inquiry. I wanted to give evidence immediately the inquiry started, but it refused to let me come and give evidence. It has asked an executive and two members of the board to give evidence at the inquiry, and we welcome that. It has not yet set a date, but if the inquiry does not call me to that hearing, it will show the dishonesty that is on display here. This is political rubbish. It is a political stunt by a senator whom nobody has heard of; nobody knows who he is, and the Liberal Party does not even think he deserves to be on the front bench. He is irrelevant to Australian politics, and he is attacking 700 hardworking Western Australians. It is a disgrace. They are his electors. Revelations? What revelations? The evidence of AUSTRAC to the inquiry is exactly what was in its media release. I noticed there was a news article that reported that AUSTRAC had drawn attention to the dates for which the inquiry was seeking information. That was in its media release when it asked for the independent audit. No new information has been provided by AUSTRAC, and everything that AUSTRAC said to the inquiry had already been put on the public record previously. The idea that a regulator would go into a Senate inquiry and talk about secret information is ridiculous. Everything AUSTRAC said in the Senate inquiry it had previously said in public, and it is the only regulator that has given evidence.

I am amused by the Leader of the Opposition's own submission to the Senate inquiry, which called for it to seek the answers he has not been able to get. I have provided an answer to every question he has asked. He can go and look at dozens of questions on notice; all of them have been answered. On every single issue regarding the Mint there has been total transparency. It took him two years to ask a question about money laundering—two sets of estimates hearings before he asked his first question about money laundering. I was already on the record on the question of AUSTRAC and money laundering before he had even asked the first question. I engaged with the Auditor General within months of taking on the portfolio, to make sure I had a full understanding—as the Leader of the Opposition knows, because I have tabled documents here previously. A year and a half before he asked his first question, I had already sought a briefing from AUSTRAC, which it refused to give me. The idea that there is anything being hidden here is stupid. This is all based on a set of false allegations made on *Four Corners* in which things were implied that were not true and no acknowledgement was given that there was no illegal conduct, but it still reported it anyway. This is a beat-up; it was a beat-up at the start, and it is a beat-up today.