

PERTH MINT — SENATE COMMITTEE INQUIRY

829. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Treasurer:

I refer to Treasury's independent analysis of options to reduce the state's risk in relation to Gold Corporation, promised to be delivered this year, and also to the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre inquiry into the operations of Perth Mint and evidence from AUSTRAC's acting deputy CEO, Bradley Brown, about potential penalty options available to AUSTRAC and that all possible options and a range of actions that we have are still on the table.

- (1) Noting the delay in AUSTRAC's inquiry due to matters that arose in the conduct of the audit at the Perth Mint, does the Treasurer still expect the independent analysis to be completed this year?
- (2) How will the Treasurer inform the Western Australian public of the results of the review?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

- (1)–(2) The Leader of the Opposition is right in that an analysis of the operations of the Perth Mint is being undertaken, and he is correct when he says that the AUSTRAC inquiry has been delayed. I will make this point and I want to back up the comments made by the Minister for Mines and Petroleum last week. I do not understand why the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA want to jeopardise 700 jobs at the Perth Mint. I do not understand why members opposite would do that. The Perth Mint has been operating for many, many years. It undertakes a number of key functions, including supporting the gold industry. The gold industry has said that it supports the Perth Mint and its operations, in particular, the services it provides to the gold industry. The gold industry is 100 per cent backing the operations of the Perth Mint and Gold Corporation. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to say to the gold industry that he is going to rip away those services, he should say it, and see what the gold industry says.

The second point relates to the 700 workers at the Mint. It is a major tourism icon that many, many people use and visit. The workers there are doing their best to make sure —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! Leader of the Opposition, if you would like to have the opportunity of asking a supplementary question, at this stage you are still getting one. Minister.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Perth Mint is a very, very strong exporter and it supports other countries in producing coins. It produces coins for WA, in particular for investors and the tourism industry. The Mint plays a very key role in that industry. I know what the member has tried to do here. I think it is disgusting that he would attack a Western Australian institution for no other reason but pure political gain.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: He has come into this place with hearsay.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: He makes claims and then he winds up—I mean, look at the performance of federal senators on this such as Dean Smith. These are senators who are meant to represent Western Australia.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Senators such as Linda Reynolds, who are elected —

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Point of order!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts): I would like to hear the point of order in silence.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Madam Speaker, I believe it is customary even for other members of Parliament to be referred to by their proper titles.

The SPEAKER: Sorry, who specifically are you saying has not been referred to properly?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Senator Reynolds.

The SPEAKER: There is no particular ruling. It is about how you refer to members of this place and members of the other place. I have no particular issue there with the minister.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr P.C. Tinley: Go for gold!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Okay. Of all the things that an Australian Senate could be focusing on, led by Western Australians, it chose to try to undermine the credibility of a WA institution that not only services one of our biggest and most important industries in this state, the gold industry, but also its 700 workers for pure political gain. I know this was some sort of coalition between the desperate and the willing, the WA opposition being the desperate and some federal senators being the willing. That is what it is. It is an unholy alliance that is trying to undermine an institution, which plays a role in the gold industry, and its 700 workers. The Leader of the Opposition should go to the Mint and look those workers in the eye and tell them, “You don’t deserve a job”. The member should do that. What was the member for Cottesloe’s announcement today? Today we heard that the Liberal Party is actually a bunch of Independents. I mean, honestly! The Leader of the Liberal Party has three members now and has already lost one, again! They cannot have a consistent message on anything, including planning reform.

I want to quote the Auditor General’s evidence to the senate committee inquiry. Like I said, those Western Australia senators could be doing anything. For example, they could be supporting the diversification of the economy. They could be supporting getting more jobs in the defence industries. They could be doing all this work but what are they doing? They are trying to attack a Western Australian institution for pure political gain. That is all this is because that is all they are ever concerned about.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Point of order, Speaker!

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The SPEAKER: The point of order will be heard in silence.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: There is constant interjection from the Leader of the Opposition and it continues. Speaker, I believe he should be called to order.

The SPEAKER: I understand and appreciate your point of order, Leader of the House, and the Leader of the Opposition has been warned. One of the reasons we brought supplementary questions into being in this house was to avoid incessant interjections and to give a person asking the question the opportunity to ask another question. If that practice continues to be abused, you run the risk of not being given the supplementary question. I have given a little more leeway than I might have been inclined to, given that the minister has ranged rather widely. I will ask the minister to come back to directly answering the question, keeping in mind she will probably get further opportunity to respond via a supplementary question.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I want quote the Auditor General’s evidence to the committee. She stated —

... the Perth Mint today is in much better shape than it was five years ago, with a greater understanding of its risk environment and regulatory obligations ...

...

... as auditor I have not seen any evidence of money laundering at the Perth Mint.

That is despite the Leader of the Opposition going out and saying it. She later said —

... if I’d had a view that a \$1 billion penalty was likely, I would have made sure that the disclosures in the annual report were appropriately reflective of that. But I cannot speak for AUSTRAC.

The Leader of the Opposition went out and made some claims. Like I said, I understand what it is like to be in opposition—we were there for eight and a half years—but members cannot go out and jeopardise people’s jobs, people’s livelihoods and the gold industry by making false, fabricated claims in what is a very sensitive area. The Liberal and National Parties are so desperate that they line up federal senators to spend taxpayers’ money to come over here. Let us get this again: they are Western Australian senators whose job they now believe it is to destroy a Western Australian institution.

Mr R.H. Cook: And Western Australian jobs.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: And Western Australian jobs. That is what is happening. As the Treasurer, along with the Premier, I take all these issues seriously, but what we will never do is jeopardise jobs and, in particular, justify the opposition’s terrible performance in this matter.