

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, DISCLOSURE STANDARDS

**124. Mr R.F. JOHNSON to the Premier:**

I refer to the Premier's curiously timed announcement last weekend regarding the Government's tough new disclosure standards for members of Parliament. In relation to the disclosure of family financial arrangements, will the Premier please define his use of the terms "family" and "family holdings" and, in particular, advise the House whether those terms will apply to -

- (1) children; and, if so, will it apply equally to children aged under and over 18 years of age;
- (2) parents;
- (3) de facto spouses; and, if so, what is the limited length of time of the relationship;
- (4) gay and lesbian partners;
- (5) any other relatives?

**Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:**

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: What did the Leader of the Opposition just say? He interjected, but he will not be held to account for what he said. He made quite a prejudiced and biased comment about members on this side of the House, but he will not be held to account, which is typical of the interjections of the Leader of the Opposition in this Parliament.

I will begin by commenting on what the member for Hillarys referred to as the curious timing of the announcement. We considered the matter in Cabinet last Monday and announced the measure on the following Saturday. I do not know what is curious about the timing of the measure or, indeed, what is curious about the announcement. I refer to the Commission on Government report No 4, which was released in 1996. That report outlines the accountability framework that should be adopted in Western Australia. Chapter 9 of the report deals with the pecuniary and other interests of public officials. Chapter 9.2 deals with members of Parliament. During the election, we said that we would review the Members of Parliament (Financial Interests) Act and make sure that the principles outlined in this report were incorporated in legislation.

One of the reasons we have had to deal with the issue of families is that there was a very serious loophole in the legislation. At one time during the previous Government's term, a minister was negotiating a privatisation deal with a major company in Western Australia. Inconveniently for that minister, he had shares with a company associated with that privatisation, so he shifted them to his spouse. Most commentators and people who have discussed these matters realise that that is clearly a loophole in the intention of the disclosure provisions. As is done in the commonwealth legislation, when it is appropriate we will require members of a family - I will come to that point in a minute - to outline their interests and to have that tabled as part of the financial interests disclosure provisions. However, unlike information on individual members' interests, that information will not be made public. That system works very well for the Commonwealth.

The very detailed question about the definition of "family" asked by the member for Hillarys is very interesting. When the legislation has been drafted and brought into the Parliament, the member for Hillarys will be able to debate all of those points. Basically, we are talking about the interests held by family members that are related to the interests of a member. The Cabinet has accepted that underlying definition and the Government will draft the precise details of that definition in legislation. This issue must be addressed. It is interesting that the member for Hillarys is getting up to date on Western Australia. I will ask the Attorney General whether proclamation of the legislation occurred today.

Mr J.A. McGinty: It is not yet proclaimed.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: It is not yet proclaimed. However, in the next day or two Western Australia will proclaim legislation that will mean that Western Australian human beings will be treated equally under the law no matter what their sexual orientation is. It is very important legislation. We cannot have discriminatory legislation if we are to live in a society in which every member of the community is to be treated according to their talents and abilities. There was no mention of sexual orientation in the equal opportunity legislation in this State; that legislation discriminated against gay and lesbian people. I am very pleased to be the Premier of a Government that has passed historic legislation to establish equality for all Western Australian citizens.