

MEMBER FOR WARREN-BLACKWOOD — CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION REPORT

Reference to Brian Burke by Member for South Perth — Personal Explanation

MR P.D. OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood) [4.00 pm]: Yesterday, a report from the Corruption and Crime Commission was tabled in this Parliament. That report was on an inquiry conducted on behalf of the Procedure and Privileges Committee of the Legislative Assembly into alleged misconduct by three members of this house. I received this report just prior to question time. However, given the importance of energy to Western Australia and the need to debate the matter of public interest motion on that issue, this is the first opportunity I have had to make this personal explanation.

The report of the CCC refers at page 66 to evidence given by the member for South Perth. The report states in paragraph 206 —

Mr McGrath said that he told the then Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Paul Omodei MLA, as he was walking into the Chamber that he would “like a bit more time on this motion because Brian Burke is trying to get me some support on the Government side”. . . . Mr McGrath did not mention that Mr Burke had provided the draft motion because, he said, it was not a detailed discussion. When asked whether he had ever told anyone in his Party of the role played by Mr Burke in respect of the motion Mr McGrath said:

Well, you’ve got to understand that in the Liberal Party, Brian Burke is sort of seen as public enemy Number 1. I had a different relationship with Brian Burke because of our days as journalists and, you know, I guess I had a different relationship with him to a lot of other people. . . .

I advise the house that I cannot recall Mr McGrath saying to me that he had been talking to Mr Brian Burke. Members in this house would know about my disdain for disgraced former members of Parliament, whether they be Liberal or Labor. On reflection, I think that immediately the name Brian Burke came up, it would have rung warning bells with me and I would have counselled the member for South Perth in the most strenuous terms that he should not consult with Brian Burke—or Julian Grill or Noel Crichton-Browne—on any matter. I want to make that very clear to the house.

I remind members that in February 2007 I actually dismissed Hon Anthony Fels from his shadow portfolios after he had received information from Mr Noel Crichton-Browne. The report states in paragraph 205 that Mr McGrath told the inquiry —

. . . I agreed with the general thrust of the — of the motion. I went through it with my researcher who had been working with me on road safety for six months and, you know, basically they were the things that — that we had been working on and we agreed with.

The inquirer then asked —

So effectively, apart from crossing out a couple of words in two spots, I think, you read this motion from what you had been provided by Mr Grill. Yes?

The answer from Mr McGrath was —

Yeah.

As the Leader of the Opposition at the time, I would have, on any matter to do with Brian Burke, Julian Grill or Noel Crichton-Browne, counselled my members strongly that they should not consort with those people. I am on the public record as saying that if any of my members wanted to talk to Brian Burke, they could. However, the adjunct to that was they would do so at their own peril, and to their own disgrace. We have seen too many members of this place consult and consort with these people and then be subjected to public opprobrium on those issues. I want to make it very clear that if Mr McGrath had been referring to information that he had been seeking from the opposition, I would have just let the matter pass. However, if he had mentioned the words “Brian Burke”, I put it to every single member here that I would have objected in the most strenuous terms to his consulting with Brian Burke. It just would not make sense that any member on this side of the Parliament would consult with or take advice from any of those disgraced members.