

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT ON MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS, CORPORATE CREDIT CARD  
CONTROLS

**1. Mr C.J. BARNETT to the Acting Premier:**

I refer the Acting Premier to Labor's accountability policy that a Gallop Labor Government will aim for the highest standards of openness and accountability and that the public has a right to know how its money is being spent.

- (1) Is the Acting Premier aware that the Auditor General's report on ministerial portfolios, which was tabled today, found that corporate credit card controls need to be improved to ensure that all transactions are supported and appropriately authorised as valid agency expenditure?
- (2) Is the Acting Premier aware that the Auditor General also found that there was insufficient explanation of hospitality expenditure on government credit cards?
- (3) Will the Acting Premier now admit that these findings, coupled with the Labor Government's refusal to answer any parliamentary questions on credit card expenditure, show nothing but disregard and contempt for the public's right to know how its money is being spent?

**Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:**

- (1)-(3) The Auditor General has a valuable role in our system of government. The Government takes the Auditor General's reports seriously. Very often the Auditor General investigates matters about which ministers have not received advice from the public sector; in effect, they are matters that are below the ministerial radar. We value the reports of the Auditor General and regard them as an important contribution to improved public sector management. We are always looking for ways in which we can improve the quality of our management and accountability.

In the executive summary of his report, the Auditor General says that the audits of 22 agencies were commenced early because quality financial statements and performance indicators were available significantly ahead of the statutory deadline. This represents better practice discharge of annual accountability obligations. He refers to the number of agencies that submitted on the last day. Regrettably, 10 per cent of agencies submitted their financial statements late. Judging by the Auditor General's executive summary, there has been some improvement in the provision of information. Nevertheless, the Auditor General's report shows that there are areas where further improvement is required, and the Government will certainly give attention to those areas.

I point out that there is one very obvious measure of financial management in this State: the retention of the State's AAA credit rating.

Mr C.J. Barnett: The question is about misuse of credit cards under a Labor Government. It is not about the State's AAA credit rating.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Year after year and budget after budget under this Government the State's AAA credit rating is confirmed and retained. That is the star rating system for proper financial management, and this Government receives that award year after year. Year after year we deliver operating surpluses and balanced budgets.

Mr C.J. Barnett: This is about propriety and accountability.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: When that is compared with the Leader of the Opposition, who was on the budget committee of the previous Government, and whose Government delivered -

*Point of Order*

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Mr Speaker, I draw your and the Acting Premier's attention to the standing orders. The Acting Premier's answer must be relevant to the question. The answer that the Acting Premier is giving now has no relevance to the misuse of credit cards in government departments and ministerial offices.

The SPEAKER: The standing order to which the member accurately refers is quite correct. It is a matter of opinion whether the Acting Premier is answering the question. I think that he is.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is noteworthy that the point of order was taken just as I was about to remind the House that the previous Government delivered five budget deficits out of eight budgets when the Leader of the Opposition was a member of the committee.

Mr P.D. Omodei: What was the level of state debt?

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 3 December 2003]

p14069c-14070a

Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker

---

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Let me come back to the specific issue raised by the Leader of the Opposition. The Auditor General's report has drawn attention to some deficiencies. That is the value of the role of the Auditor General. Every minister will examine the recommendations of the Auditor General and work - as we always do - to secure improvements in financial management, in management generally and in accountability.