

CARPENTER GOVERNMENT - ELECTION POLICIES

113. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:

I congratulate the Premier sincerely on his decision to sign the National Water Initiative. It is a pragmatic decision that will benefit all Western Australians. At the last election, Labor took to the polls a clear policy decision against joining the National Water Initiative. The Premier has since made the comment in *The West Australian* on 9 February -

And I think it would be foolish for us now, given the way things have changed over the last couple of years, not to pursue that opportunity and I'm going to.

Given that the Premier's defence of his opposition to uranium mining in Western Australia is that the Labor Party took that policy to the election, and the people of Western Australia elected the Labor Party to government on that policy -

- (1) How does the Premier justify his willingness to cast aside his opposition to the National Water Initiative, and the comment in *The West Australian* to which I have just referred, with his refusal to reverse his unfounded opposition to uranium mining in Western Australia?
- (2) Is it the position of this government that it was not elected on a policy of opposition to the National Water Initiative?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

(1)-(2) I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. It was a bit convoluted, I think. Perhaps I was not following it closely enough, but it seemed to me to be a bit convoluted. The Leader of the Opposition will find that the position on the National Water Initiative was that we would not join it under the conditions that applied at the time. However, there has been significant change since that time. I know the point the Leader of the Opposition is trying to make about the parallel with uranium. However, I do not think such a parallel applies, frankly, because nothing has changed in the uranium debate, apart from the economic attractiveness of the material itself. That is the only thing that has changed. It was interesting to listen to some of the points of view that were put in the debate yesterday on that matter.

Mr P.D. Omodei: You should have been here taking part in the debate.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I had the monitor going. I also had other things to do, as the Leader of the Opposition would appreciate. It is part of the job. One of the things I had to do was prepare and make sure everything was in place for the meeting with the Prime Minister today to sign the National Water Initiative. It was interesting - I found it interesting, anyway - that yesterday the Prime Minister was in the member for Cottesloe's electorate to make an announcement and the member for Cottesloe was not there.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I did not know about it. That is why.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member for Cottesloe did not know about it? I wonder why! Did the Prime Minister's office not let the member for Cottesloe know about it?

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, it did not.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That says something!

Several members interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That is basically the position on that matter. I had a good meeting with the Prime Minister this morning. In fact, all the meetings I have had with him in my 10 weeks and one day in the job have been good.

Mr P.D. Omodei: I had a good meeting with him last night.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes; the Leader of the Opposition has told me.

We had a constructive conversation about the National Water Initiative, and other matters, including uranium, industrial relations, court positions, powers of the states, and so on. It was a very interesting and good meeting. I think it is obvious that we now see opportunities in the National Water Initiative that were not obvious to us when Dr Gallop - I think quite rightly at the time - decided not to sign that agreement.

Meanwhile, back at the harbour, today the *Duyfken* has headed off on its trip to all parts of the compass. I wish it well. The Dutch Prime Minister was there to see it off; and he will be visiting the Parliament later this afternoon. This has been a very good day for Western Australia.