

FREMANTLE-CLASS PATROL BOATS, CONTRACT

**94. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Premier:**

I refer to the \$400 million contract to replace the Royal Australian Navy's Fremantle-class patrol boats and ask: how is Western Australia faring in the bidding process?

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

I have some good news about Western Australia, which might cheer up the Leader of the Opposition. Western Australia is in a strong competitive position to win the contract to build up to 15 new patrol boats. Three companies are on the short list in the final round, and two are based in Western Australia at the Henderson shipyards - Tenix Defence Systems and Austal Ships Pty Ltd, partnering with Defence Maritime Services Pty Ltd. The interstate competitor is Australian Defence Industries based in Newcastle. I visited the Henderson shipyards last Friday and saw the evidence of our track record. Coastguard search and rescue boats for the Philippines Government are being built in Western Australia, and repairs are being carried out in this State to the Navy's Anzac and Adelaide-class frigates.

This is an important and very big decision for the Australian Navy. We want to ensure that the Commonwealth Government makes this decision properly. Members will recall that when I came to government last year I indicated that I strongly supported Western Australia being used as the base for major refits of the Collins-class submarines. The lack of process in that decision was most disturbing. We expect the Commonwealth Government to follow a proper process in this issue. We are not being alarmist in raising the prospect that political factors could be taken into account; we know there will soon be an election in New South Wales. The decision last year on the Collins-class submarines was made in the middle of a federal election. An article in *The Advertiser* in Adelaide on 16 October 2001 stated -

Premier John Olsen visited Defence Minister Peter Reith in Canberra shortly before the election was called, seeking an assurance the refitting would be carried out in SA.

Mr M.W. Trenorden interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The article continued -

The announcement will cap off Mr Howard's two-day visit to SA where the Coalition has three marginal seats it considers crucial if it is to retain government.

Mr Olsen, also soon to face an election, will help make the announcement.

I point out to the Leader of the National Party that we were concerned about the way the Commonwealth - both Labor and Liberal - approached this issue, because I am Premier of Western Australia and I will support the interests of Western Australia any day. We are concerned about the way the Commonwealth treats these issues, and we will make sure that the process is accountable to the people of Western Australia.

I wish to add something to my answer. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition raised a question - and I notice he did not raise it again today - about the Minister for Racing and Gaming and the Fabian Society web site. I am advised that last year contact details for a former staff member of the Minister for Racing and Gaming were placed on the national web site of the Fabian Society by the national secretary of that society. This web site is administered in Victoria. The contact details were sourced from the membership application form of the staff member.

*Point of Order*

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Standing orders state that answers to questions should be relevant. This has no relevance to the dorothy dixer asked by one of the Premier's colleagues.

The SPEAKER: During the previous question time the Premier committed to providing this information. The number of questions will not be affected by the length of this answer. It allows the commitment by the Premier to be honoured as quickly as possible.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Neither the minister nor the staff member authorised these details being placed on the web site or were aware of it. As soon as the staff member became aware that these contact details were on the web site, she requested that they be removed. The national secretary has failed to do that. The Western Australian Fabian Society has its own web site, administered locally, and completely different contact details unrelated to the minister's office appear on that web site. That clears up that matter. Can the Leader of the Opposition

guarantee this House that no member of his staff is ringing talkback radio and campaigning on behalf of the Liberal Party?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yesterday the Premier made allegations in this Parliament - I think the Premier or someone else used the word vendetta - that my staff was orchestrating a campaign against Hon Tom Stephens. Hon Tom Stephens clearly misused his ministerial position, his letterhead and his fax machine -

Dr G.I. GALLOP: So they were orchestrating a campaign using the offices of -

Mr C.J. Barnett: The Premier should listen; he made the allegation. The member for Bunbury used the name of a young person on my staff in Parliament House. Fortunately, Hansard did not pick that up. I approached that person on my staff and inquired exactly what had happened. For the benefit of this Parliament, she did call talkback radio. She called talkback radio on her private mobile phone from her private residence, as any citizen of this State is entitled to do.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Absolutely.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I call on the Premier -

Dr G.I. GALLOP: No -

Mr C.J. Barnett: The Premier can listen for once.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I call on the Leader of the Opposition to -

Mr C.J. Barnett: The Premier should be man enough to give an apology to that young staff member and to instruct the member for Bunbury to do the same. The Premier should show some standards.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I will tell the Leader of the Opposition what I will do: I will repeat what I said yesterday.

Several opposition members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I will repeat my question to the Leader of the Opposition: were any members of his parliamentary colleagues' staff campaigning against Hon Tom Stephens through their parliamentary offices? I have repeated the question and the Leader of the Opposition has not answered it.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You should apologise to that young person instead of bringing Labor Party sleaze into Parliament.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will not stand again. The next time this question time cannot continue, it will finish.