

DEPARTMENT OF WATER - APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR GENERAL

**117. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:**

I refer to the Premier's recent interest in maiden speeches and direct his attention to the maiden speech of one of his most senior ministers, the member for Balcatta, who said in his maiden speech -

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** There isn't one.

Several members interjected.

**Mr P.D. OMODEI:** I mean the member for Balcatta.

Several members interjected.

**Mr P.D. OMODEI:** It sounds as though members opposite are all confused. I am referring to the member for Balcatta. He says in his maiden speech -

Personally, I am indebted to Brian Burke for showing to me that our political system can work, . . .

He refers further on to the men of the calibre of Brian Burke who formed the Labor Party. He makes four or five significant comments. I refer the Premier also to the transcripts of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the detailed relationship between Brian Burke and Paul Frewer, including comments from Brian Burke as follows -

Frewer will fight this to the, to death for us.

- (1) Why, after consulting the member for Balcatta, did the Premier decide to reject the three candidates put forward by the Commissioner for Public Sector Standards for the position of the head of the Department of Water and, instead, continue to favour Mr Frewer, who was interviewed by Ms Murray, but did not even make the short list?
- (2) Given the close connection between Brian Burke and Paul Frewer and the member for Balcatta's glowing endorsements of Brian Burke in his maiden speech, why has the Premier not removed Mr Frewer?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Before I respond, I welcome into the gallery young adults representing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who are visiting Parliament and the Constitutional Centre today. Welcome.

(1)-(2) I do not quite know where to begin. I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition; he has done a bit of research. That was good work.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** The only difference is that you misquoted my maiden speech. I can guarantee that those words are in the member for Balcatta's maiden speech. There are five glowing references to Brian Burke.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** What is on the historical record is on the historical record. There is no walking away from it. The Leader of the Opposition's support for the timber industry was articulated very powerfully in his maiden speech to the Parliament. The member for Balcatta, which he is now - I think it was Nollamara when he was first elected in 1989, in, I think, the same election as the Leader of the Opposition - had previously been a staff member for Mr Burke.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** In 1989 he no doubt felt that it was appropriate to recognise the support he felt he had been given by Mr Burke at that time. In relation to that matter, it would be fair to say that a lot of water has passed under the bridge since 1989. A lot of people have had cause to reassess their view of Brian Burke since 1989. I understand that the member's relationship with Mr Burke is not quite as it once was, we might say. We will leave that matter at that.

If issues surrounding Paul Frewer require investigation and the Leader of the Opposition has cause to believe that they do require investigation, I urge him to take his concerns -

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** He did not even make the short list. You are the Minister for Public Sector Management; you are the minister responsible.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** I was provided with advice by the minister that it was not an appropriate time to replace him because there was a lot of transformation and other work going on that he wanted Mr Frewer to see through.

**Mr T. Buswell:** What sort of work was he seeing through, and on whose behalf?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** On behalf of the government and the minister. If there are issues relating to Paul Frewer that the Leader of the Opposition feels are not being addressed adequately in the CCC inquiry, please take them to the CCC.

It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition referred to the transcript and what Mr Burke had to say about Paul Frewer. I cast my mind back to when Brian Burke was in the witness box during the Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and Other Matters. My memory is pretty good at recalling these things. I spent a lot of time listening and observing.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** You didn't do much.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** I have come a long way since those times. Mr Burke also has traversed a great distance one way or another. I remember when matters were being put to Brian Burke that were given in evidence by Laurie Connell about his relationship with Brian Burke, and I paraphrase them, because I cannot exactly recall Brian Burke's own words about this sort of assessment of evidence. He said something like this, "Just because Laurie Connell says something is true, it doesn't mean it is true." I say to people, when they are listening to what comes out of the CCC, to hark back to those words. I also say that just because Brian Burke says something is true, it does not mean that it is true.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** You are questioning the CCC.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** The member for Hillarys is not really this thick, is he?

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** I'm not as thick as you would like to think I am.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Maybe I am being overly generous. He is not really that thick.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Read *Hansard* to see what you just said.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** I am not questioning the CCC. I am urging a bit of caution by people reading evidence from particular witnesses and accepting it as fact, untested. The CCC is there to make those sorts of judgements about what Mr Brian Burke said. It will make that judgement in relation to Paul Frewer.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** You do not think you should make a judgement?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** The evidence about Paul Frewer is nothing at all like the evidence about some of the other people who have been before the commissioner.

Does the Leader of the Opposition want to ask me a supplementary question while I am on my feet?