

KATANNING SALEYARDS — PRIVATISATION

352. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I ask a supplementary question. Was the Public Sector Commissioner aware of this meeting when he advised that there was no conflict of interest in this matter, and when will the minister stop misleading the house?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

When the point was raised through some rural media, which is where it first came up, that there was some suggestion that having Scott Mitchell in my office, who had worked for the Deputy Prime Minister, may have been a conflict of interest, we sought the advice of the Public Sector Commissioner—we presented him with all the information that we had at the time—about maintaining Mr Mitchell in my office doing the activities under my direction with the notion that is always there, which is that he needs to accompany me to meetings, provide me with advice and take minutes and notes. They are all the normal activities of a chief of staff.

Mr M.P. Murray: You misled the house.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie—Preston!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I think we have been more than above board in the actions that we have taken in response to my chief of staff and his former links to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr M.P. Murray: It is becoming very commonplace, misleading the house.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie—Preston!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I would also add that no decision has been made by this government —

Mr M.P. Murray: Tell the truth when you're in here.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie—Preston, you had the opportunity to ask a supplementary question. There is no cause for further interjecting. I have given you a few subtle hints. I formally call you for the first time today.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I want to highlight to the house that the implication behind this question is that there is a conflict of interest with my chief of staff having a former relationship with the Deputy Prime Minister, who now represents a company that is showing some interest in private investment in saleyards. No decision has been taken by this government to have any sort of tender process or anything at all that relates to requesting a private company —

Point of Order

Mr M.P. MURRAY: This is far removed from the question that was asked.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Minister, please conclude your remarks.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr D.T. REDMAN: No decision has been put before cabinet or me that has any implication of a conflict of interest from my chief of staff. There is no conflict of interest.