

MR ROGER PAYNE, TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

440. Mr C.J. BARNETT to the Premier:

I refer the Premier to a report in *The West Australian* on 7 February 2003 that refers to discrepancies in the accounts given by the Premier and the Minister for the Environment and Heritage about the termination of the employment of Mr Roger Payne, the former acting head of the Department of Environmental Protection. I ask -

- (1) When did the Premier first become involved in discussions to terminate Mr Payne's employment?
- (2) Can the Premier confirm whether, at any stage, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, or anyone acting in that capacity, rejected an offer of resignation from Mr Roger Payne?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

- (1)-(2) Yesterday's debate on this important matter of ministerial responsibility and the role of the Minister for the Environment and Heritage was very interesting, and the presentation of what happened did not accord with reality. The Minister for the Environment and Heritage not only adequately defended her position, but also indicated very clearly to the Parliament that she is the person for her job. This matter is indicative of the fact that we do not necessarily want to believe what we read in the newspapers. The simple fact of the matter is this: an agreement existed between the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and Mr Payne, the former head of the Department of Environmental Protection, that he leave his position, and negotiations about the terms and conditions of that departure were taking place. That was going on when I returned. Those negotiations were completed after I returned from my vacation and announced on the Tuesday morning after Australia Day. It is as simple as that. All other speculation about this matter is totally irrelevant to the case at hand. The Government not only announced Mr Payne's departure but also, unlike the Liberals, indicated to the people of Western Australia the terms and conditions of his departure. In other words, we were open and accountable about the issue. There was some publicity about the terminology that we used, because some people thought that it was an attempt to obscure reality. Is it not interesting that the terminology I used is exactly the same terminology that was used by the Liberal Party spokesperson on public sector management in questions she placed on notice in this Parliament in 2001 and 2002? Is it not interesting that the terminology that I used is exactly the same as that used by the former Premier when he spoke about similar matters? Of course, he never revealed the details like we have done. The terminology I used was consistent with the terminology that has previously been used. However, it must be said that that terminology does not fully cover the circumstances under which these arrangements are entered into. Therefore I have corrected it. We now quite properly talk about management-initiated retirements. I have corrected the terminology, but I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition will correct the statement in his weekly newsletter, *Points of Order*, which is published on his web site. This is the Opposition at work. The Leader of the Opposition stated in his newsletter -

Water Corporation figures show that the average family of four would use 620 kl in year - well over the Premier's new limit.

I tell the House the science that the Opposition used to reach that figure. It took all the water usage in Western Australia -

Points of Order

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Point of order -

Dr G.I. Gallop: He does not want the facts.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This is an absolute abuse of question time. The Premier is on his feet, but he never answers questions -

Dr G.I. Gallop: I did answer it.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What he is saying has no relevance whatsoever to the question, and I ask that you, Mr Speaker, bring him into line.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: There is no point of order. Perhaps you, Mr Speaker, should consider members who call points of order when there are none.

The SPEAKER: It is quite true that answers need to be relevant to the questions. I think the Premier is in the process of answering that particular question.

Debate Resumed

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 26 February 2003]

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Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker

Dr G.I. GALLOP: This is the Opposition at work. We saw the same principle applied last week. The Opposition took the total water consumption - that is, householder, commercial and industrial use - divided it by the total population and said that the resulting figure was the per capita household water consumption. When will the Leader of the Opposition correct that statement? It is like all the other statements he and his friend the Deputy Leader of the Opposition make in this Parliament. They make things up and bring them into this Parliament and expect us and the public of Western Australia to take them seriously.

I have answered the question about the departure of the former head of the Department of Environmental Protection. I have indicated that the terminology "management-initiated redundancy" has been corrected and is now "management-initiated retirement". I call on the Leader of the Opposition to correct the misinformation that he publishes to make a point. That is where the Opposition of Western Australia is today.