

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — ABC REPORTING

**670. Mr D.T. REDMAN to the Minister for Emergency Services:**

I refer to ABC reporting of Department of Fire and Emergency Services activities, including the McGowan government support for gagging DFES volunteers from talking to members of Parliament. Has the minister's office lodged any official complaints to the ABC for its reporting of such activities; and, if so, how many complaints have been lodged and what has been the basis for lodging such complaints?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN replied:**

Here we go again with the member for Warren–Blackwood. It goes in one ear and out the other. Let us just go back to basics because the member for Warren–Blackwood and some of his cohorts in the Nationals WA did everything they possibly could not to take any notice of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 when they were in government. Let me take them to clause 9 of the Public Sector Management Act. It refers to the principles of conduct by public sector bodies, stating —

The principles of conduct that are to be observed by all public sector bodies and employees are that they —

...

- (b) are to act with integrity in the performance of official duties and are to be scrupulous in the use of official information, equipment and facilities;

That is translated by each director general in the Western Australian government into a code of conduct for their various departments. The code of conduct for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, which I am sure the member has read —

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Mr Speaker, the question related to whether or not the minister's office has made any formal complaints to the ABC. I ask you to bring the minister back to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I am sure the minister will.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I am getting there, but first of all I want to make sure that the member for Warren–Blackwood is clear about what he is complaining about. I am referring to the Public Sector Management Act, which is then interpreted by every director general in the government. I will go to those dot points in the DFES code of conduct that refer to what the member is complaining about. It says that employees must —

- *adhere to policies regarding communication and protocols with ministers, ministerial staff and lobbyists*
- *not contact or communicate with any Federal or State Members of Parliament regarding Departmental business; or invite or allow them onto any DFES premises unless authorised*
- *not respond to any media enquiries unless authorised*

The member for Warren–Blackwood has been out there in the media complaining endlessly about that code of conduct, which has been set down by the Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Services, as he is required to do under the Public Sector Management Act. When the opposition was in government, the Nationals WA in particular did not take any notice of that at all.

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Mr Speaker, my question simply asked whether the minister's office has made any official complaints to the ABC on these matters. I ask you to bring the minister to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, could you answer that, please.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I will. That is exactly where I am going to.

**The SPEAKER:** Do it now, please.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I will go to that very point. With that reference to me, the member for Warren–Blackwood has been in the media complaining about —

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, I want an answer to the question, please.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I am actually getting to it.

**The SPEAKER:** We are not going to be here all day.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Mr Speaker, I am talking about the media itself, which is at the heart of this question. In that case, with the ABC down in Albany, the member is using one of the councillors to make a complaint about the code of conduct. His name is Mr Ian Osborne. I think the member for Rockingham and maybe the member for Midland would remember Mr Osborne.

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** We certainly do.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** They certainly do. He was sitting in this house. He is also a councillor down in Denmark and a former colleague at the school that the member for Warren–Blackwood taught at.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Has everyone had their fun? He lives in Denmark, not Albany, so do not taint Albany, please. He is a councillor in Denmark, not Albany.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** He trotted Mr Osborne out to the media, I am sure as a friend of the member for Warren–Blackwood, to complain about the code of conduct. The ABC did not pick up on the background and history of Mr Osborne, nor did it pick up on the fact that Mr Osborne was a member of the bush fire brigade—nothing to do with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, but the bush fire brigade. We brought that to the attention of the ABC.

One final thing: if the member for Warren–Blackwood and Mr Osborne were to look at the code of conduct for Denmark shire council, of which he is a member—he is a bush fire brigade member as well—he would notice that it is not too different from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' one.