

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 21 February 2019]

p742b-748a

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Bill Johnston; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Rita Saffioti

PREMIER — INTERSTATE TRAVEL — NOVEMBER 2018

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.00 am] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be moved forthwith —

That this house —

- (1) condemns the Premier for —
 - (a) using taxpayers' money to travel to NSW for the primary purpose of attending a fundraising dinner for the NSW Labor Party; and
 - (b) his attempts to cover up the trip by refusing to answer specific questions about his trip; and
- (2) calls on the Premier to pay Western Australian taxpayers back.

The reason for this suspension today comes out of the very good work of Hon Tjorn Sibma, the opposition spokesperson for accountability in the other place, and the information he has uncovered. The reason for the suspension today is that it has come to the notice of the opposition that the Premier has made a sustained attempt at trying to obfuscate and hide the true facts about this trip to New South Wales. He has refused to release diary notes. He has refused to reveal to the opposition what his purpose was in New South Wales—the entire purpose—for what was a \$12 000 taxpayer-funded junket. We believe that that is utterly inappropriate, particularly in the current climate in which we find ourselves in Western Australia, with cost of living biting, unemployment at record highs and so on. I believe the government has agreed to this suspension, with a 10-minute time limit for debate on each side, so I will not labour the point.

Standing Orders Suspension — Amendment to Motion

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland — Minister for Police) [10.01 am]: The government will accept the suspension, subject to the following amendment. I move —

To insert after “forthwith” the following —

, subject to the debate being limited to 10 minutes for government members and 10 minutes for non-government members

Amendment put and passed.

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion, as Amended

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy): Members, as this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need the support of an absolute majority for it to proceed. If I hear a dissentient voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.02 am]: I move the motion.

This is a very serious matter. In the last few weeks of Parliament last year, the Premier was paired out on 22 November. When that sort of thing happens, a responsible opposition tries to find out exactly what the Premier was paired for. It has taken a while for Hon Tjorn Sibma to get this information from the Premier, but we found out that for the night of 22 November 2018, an invitation went out that stated —

Join us for an intimate dinner with WA Premier, the Hon Mark McGowan

... Thursday 22nd November 2018

...

Location: Sydney CBD ...

Tickets: \$3000^{+ GST} per person —

That is \$3 000, members —

\$2000^{+ GST} Labor Business Dialogue Discount

It seems that people get a discount if they are regular attendees. This invitation was sent out on behalf of the New South Wales Labor general secretary Kaila Murnain. It states —

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Bill Johnston; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Rita Saffioti

... I would like to offer the opportunity to attend an Intimate Dinner with Western Australia
Premier Hon Mark McGowan.

This is your chance to hear more about the implementation of Labor's plan in Western Australia.

Naturally, the next question we asked was if the Premier had gone over to New South Wales, maybe he was attending this fundraising dinner in his own time and perhaps he had a full itinerary the next day, packed with appointments with various people on the east coast—maybe the banks, ministers over there, the Treasurer or whoever it might be. We were expecting to get an itinerary that proved that this expenditure of \$12 000 by the Premier and his chief of staff was in the interests of Western Australian taxpayers. We found from the responses that the Premier provided that the primary purpose of the visit was to meet with Hon Andrew Constance, the New South Wales Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and departmental officials to discuss their major infrastructure projects, and to meet with Hon Bob Hawke, Hon Geoff Gallop, Hon Bob Carr and Michael Daly, the New South Wales Leader of the Opposition. We thought that surely this could not possibly be just one meeting, so we got in touch with Hon Andrew Constance and asked him how long the meeting went for. Guess how long it went for. It went for 30 minutes. The Premier used \$12 000 worth of taxpayers' money and took his chief of staff on a junket to Sydney for a 30-minute conversation with the New South Wales Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. He did that for a 30-minute appointment. But we know the real purpose of the trip. The real purpose of the trip was to fundraise for the New South Wales Labor Party—\$12 000 worth of taxpayer money to fundraise for the New South Wales Labor Party.

The reason that we have suspended standing orders today is that we know that the Premier sets the tone for the rest of the cabinet and we know that this cabinet has form. There was that \$30 000 junket for Minister Saffioti and Hon Sue Ellery from the other place to go over east to find out how to build inner-city high schools. How many schools did she visit, members? None—she did not visit a school. That is 30 grand gone. We have Hon Alannah MacTiernan using the government jet as her own little private jet—65 regional trips. How many of them have terminated at her holiday home in Albany?

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I know government members do not like it. We are outraged. A year ago almost to the day, the Premier said that travel allowances for WA MPs were set for review. Everyone else needs to have their travel allowances looked at, but not the Premier. He has the government jet or he can pay \$12 000 to go over to Sydney to do a fundraiser for the Labor Party. It is an absolute disgrace. That is \$12 000, members. Do members know what that is? That is the measly pay rises for 12 police officers wasted in one trip so the Premier can go over there and fundraise, not even for WA Labor, but for New South Wales Labor. That is our taxpayers paying that money, and the Premier needs to pay it back. He needs to pay it back because his trip was very light on detail. The New South Wales minister said that the meeting was 30 minutes of basically nothing. The Premier could have picked up the phone and had that meeting. He did not need to fly over there. We all know that the Premier flew over there only for the purpose of this fundraiser. We know what happened. We know that New South Wales Labor said, "We want a fundraiser. Will you come over and do this for us, because we've got nobody over here who's going to be a drawcard?" The Premier said, "Gee, I'll be the drawcard. People will pay \$3 000 to come and listen to me." Then the Premier said to his staff that they had better book an appointment so that he could write the trip off and charge it to the taxpayers, so they booked him a 30-minute appointment. It was not even a full day's itinerary. The Premier has wasted this money; he needs to pay it back. That is \$12 000 stolen from WA taxpayers and given to New South Wales Labor. It is not good enough.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member has made a specific allegation in contravention of the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: Sorry, I did not hear what happened. Can you start again?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member accused the Premier of doing something illegal and it needs to be withdrawn.

The SPEAKER: Who suggested that?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member on her feet; the member for Scarborough.

The SPEAKER: Could you withdraw that—did you say that, member? I was not here so I cannot comment.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will seek your clarification.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What did you say?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Do you need to sit down so I can speak?

The SPEAKER: Did you say it, member, or didn't you?

Ms R. Saffioti: How's your investment property going, member for Scarborough?

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Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Not very well. Mr Speaker, what I said —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister! It is a point of order.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: What I said, Mr Speaker —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: No; I want to know whether you said the Premier did something illegal; that is all I want to know.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It would depend on the —

The SPEAKER: No; just yes or no?

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: I've not said he's done something illegal.

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: What?

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: I have a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: Through you, Mr Speaker, maybe if we could get the specific word they are concerned about so that the member knows what she needs to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Member, what was the specific word you said?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am surprised that the member does not know what she said. Normally people in this place, when they make an allegation, know the allegation they made.

The SPEAKER: No, can you just tell me the actual word?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: She made the allegation that the Premier had stolen something.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Mr Speaker, in the interests of the house moving along, I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Withdrawn; thank you.

Debate Resumed

MRS A.K. HAYDEN (Darling Range) [10.10 am]: I join the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in condemning —
Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members on my right!

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Transport, we will hear this in silence.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: Thank you, Mr Speaker; I will start again. I join the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in condemning the Premier and all those on the other side for having double standards. They stand in this place and say they represent the community. They stand here and say they are about saving money and doing the right thing, yet they have no problem spending \$12 000 on a two-night trip to Sydney to fundraise money for the very man they made a bogus meeting —

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member!

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: — to justify —

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, I call you for the first and second time; I am on my feet.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: For two nights' accommodation and travel, \$12 000 was spent —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister!

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: Twelve thousand dollars of —

The SPEAKER: Members, I want you to treat this seriously, otherwise I will call you all to order.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: This is a very serious matter and members on the other side do not understand that the misuse of \$12 000 of taxpayers' money is serious. Families are struggling in Western Australia to keep their power on, to

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Bill Johnston; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Rita Saffioti

keep their mortgage paid, to keep a roof over their head and to be able to pay the increase in power bills, water bills and car registration that every member opposite has imposed on them, but they think \$12 000 is a joke. They should all hang their heads in shame and be embarrassed because it is a joke to spend \$12 000 to go over and fundraise for the Labor Party in Sydney, and have a bogus meeting with the very man they are raising money to fight. It is a joke. The Premier met with the Liberal Minister for Transport and Infrastructure while, at the same time, they were having a fundraiser to fight him at the next election. It is an absolute joke and a waste of taxpayers' money.

People in over 17 500 homes in Western Australia have had their power turned off and disconnected by Synergy because they cannot pay the government's bills. They cannot afford the government and while those people sit in the dark because they cannot pay their power bills, the Premier is jetsetting off to Sydney to catch up with his mates Bob Hawke and Bob Carr and have a drink. What was he really doing over those two days? He had a 30-minute chat with the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure; what came out of that \$12 000, 30-minute meeting? I will tell members what came out of it—a lot of backslapping and, "Good on you, buddy old mate from over in WA. You've done extremely well!" It was backslapping by mates of the Labor Party to raise money to fight for the Labor cause in Sydney. All the Premier did was increase tourism and jobs for Sydney. He did not do anything back here because all his money was spent in Sydney. Just like that, \$12 000 of Western Australian taxpayers' money was gone to Sydney. The Premier has shown no respect —

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, you are on two calls.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: The Premier has shown no respect for the people of Western Australia. He has shown no respect to his promise of accountability and transparency. He has broken his promise on that. When asked a question in the other place, "What did you do on this trip?" he hid the answers. He did not answer them all correctly. He did not answer them in full. That is not the ironclad guarantee.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [10.15 am]: The other day, the government introduced the Infrastructure Western Australia legislation. It is an important reform that has been called for, particularly by industry and business in Western Australia, for more than a decade. We are very pleased to have introduced it. As part of the consultation during the drafting stage, I went to New South Wales, particularly to meet with Andrew Constance, the New South Wales Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. I thought it was important because I was of the view and am of the view that the New South Wales infrastructure body is the best model. A meeting was coordinated for me and a senior staff member with Minister Constance and a range of his staff, plus the CEO of Infrastructure New South Wales. We went to his office in the middle of Sydney. From my recollection—I think this is accurate, but we will check with his office—the meeting went for around an hour and a quarter. The range of discussions we had were in relation to Infrastructure New South Wales. I found Minister Constance to be very informed. He gave me a lot of good advice on these issues. In particular, Mr Jim Betts —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, you wanted an explanation.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The CEO of Infrastructure New South Wales, Mr Jim Betts, was very good. He was very forthcoming with his advice and offered to provide ongoing advice to the Western Australian government on this body.

The conversation with Mr Betts continued once the meeting with Minister Constance finished. Minister Constance was quite ill and I was grateful that he took the time to have the meeting. The meeting itself —

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr Speaker, I listened in silence.

The subject matters that were discussed in the meeting included the railcar manufacturing that Western Australia is engaging in. New South Wales has gone overseas. We have a difference of opinion. There was quite a discussion about that. We also discussed the project management role of Infrastructure New South Wales and its particular role in helping smaller agencies in New South Wales with their infrastructure programs, because smaller agencies do not have the staff and the like that the bigger agencies have. Infrastructure New South Wales has a specific role there. The minister was very keen on the long-term strategic plan. He said it had set New South Wales up well because its body was established back in the era of 2010. He said that the long-term plan means that the infrastructure program is rapidly becoming a bipartisan document. He said the infrastructure body works well with the cabinet infrastructure subcommittee, which I thought was important. He said the CEO reports to the Premier, which is the model that we have adopted. He thought that worked well and he said that he worked well with the Premier as minister for infrastructure on these matters. The minister was of the view that the deep diving into

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individual projects, if there is a problem, was also a role that Infrastructure New South Wales had adopted well and it had resolved a range of issues in infrastructure projects in New South Wales.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: He indicated that the arrangement between Infrastructure New South Wales and Infrastructure Australia has worked well and it has meant that Infrastructure New South Wales and the government of New South Wales have secured more money from the commonwealth government as a consequence of the very cooperative working relationship between the bodies. The minister indicated it has taken the politics out of New South Wales' infrastructure to a large degree. I think he referred to it originally when they established it, with Nick Greiner chairing it, as a mistake, but as time went on, obviously getting some independent business people on to the board and having a CEO of the quality of Jim Betts worked well. Infrastructure New South Wales has a five-step gateway process for infrastructure assessment, which has been worked out over the seven or eight years it has been established. It has resulted in significant cultural change within agencies by having far greater analysis before major infrastructure projects are entered into.

He also indicated that directors general are risk management assistants, and providing directors general who do not have necessary experience in infrastructure has been a good outcome of the system. Infrastructure New South Wales has provided a well-evaluated process to directors general who do not have experience in infrastructure. Minister Constance was very keen on the appointments to the body. He indicated that appointments to the body have been largely bipartisan and of people who are respected across the community. He was very insistent that that was an important component of Infrastructure New South Wales. Mr Constance is Minister for Transport and Infrastructure for New South Wales. He indicated that working with the Independent Planning Commission in a collaborative way was very important. It was a long meeting that involved a lot of discussion. I found him to be knowledgeable about these issues, as I found Jim Betts to be, and I appreciated the opportunity to meet with the New South Wales minister; it was productive. New South Wales spends around \$6 billion to \$7 billion a year on infrastructure, so getting Infrastructure Western Australia right is very important for this state. Obviously, I have carriage of the legislation; it is, in effect, my project. I want to make sure that I cross every t and dot every i in regulation to establish this body.

Whilst I was in New South Wales, I took the opportunity to meet with Bob Hawke, a meeting that went for over an hour, and I sought his advice on a range of issues, which I will not go into.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will not go into my conversation with Mr Hawke, but I appreciated him providing that opportunity. I also took the opportunity to meet with Bob Carr. We had a long and involved conversation about his experience as Premier and he gave me, as Premier, advice.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I did the same with Geoff Gallop, the former Western Australian Premier. I also did a range of other things; for instance, I looked at the New South Wales bridge climb, because we are putting something similar in place here. I wanted to see how it worked and how something of that nature —

Mrs L.M. Harvey: Why don't you release that?

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr Speaker, honestly!

I had a look at the bridge climb so that I knew exactly how it worked. I did not do a tour or anything of that nature; I just had a look so that I could see exactly how it works, because I want it to work effectively here.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I know another member wants to speak, but I draw members' attention to Mr Morrison, who came to Western Australia recently and held a fundraiser that I assume was at taxpayers' expense. The Leader of the Opposition spent \$14 495 on travel to the United States, and he said in his own report that it was partly for a family holiday.

Several members interjected.

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Bill Johnston; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Rita Saffioti

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I also note that the former Western Australian Premier, Colin Barnett —

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr M. McGOWAN: — and other Premiers, in particular the Liberal ones, joke about how he used to take the government jet when he went to Tasmania, Victoria or New South Wales, probably with the member for Dawesville in tow.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, I want to hear this in silence.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [10.22 am]: I know that it is quite foreign for the Liberal Party, but we have to pay for our trips. We do not ring up the CEO of the travel agency and get it for free. That is what has stunned members opposite the most.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! I will hear this in silence.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The CEO of Helloworld —

Dr M.D. Nahan: Taxpayers are paying for his personal trip to New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I have warned you three times. I call you to order for the first time.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Leader of the Opposition took a four-week holiday to his homeland and billed taxpayers—four weeks for a personal family vacation during which he worked half a day.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Member for Scarborough!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Was that it? He stands up and makes accusations in this place.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, do you want to go home early?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Leader of the Opposition went to the United States for three or four weeks; I cannot remember. I know that it was four weeks—remember, Treasurer?—and he had one day of meetings.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Dr M.D. Nahan: False!

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition! It does not matter; she is on her feet.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Scarborough wants to come in this place and constantly throw mud. She has never really explained those properties in Scarborough and that conflict of interest, has she, members?

Government members: No!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: She has never really explained it.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: I didn't participate in the cabinet meeting.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: She did not participate —

The SPEAKER: Minister, through the Chair. You had your go on this side; the minister is replying.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Two properties were part of a redevelopment area to which the previous government committed tens of millions of dollars. The member for Scarborough says that she did not participate in the decision. A couple of days ago she said —

One thing that triggered the redevelopment of Scarborough was the footage I took, ...

She took it from her home in Scarborough. That is what she said—public money because of the footage she took from Scarborough. Do not come in here and throw mud, when the opposition had a leader who spent three to four weeks in the US, as described, for a family vacation and half a day's work.

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Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Do not throw mud like that in this place.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you are still in the chamber.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (17)

Mr I.C. Blayney
Ms M.J. Davies
Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mrs A.K. Hayden
Dr D.J. Honey

Mr P. Katsambanis
Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup
Mr A. Krsticevic
Mr S.K. L'Estrange
Mr R.S. Love

Mr W.R. Marmion
Mr J.E. McGrath
Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr K. O'Donnell

Mr P.J. Rundle
Ms L. Mettam (*Teller*)

Noes (31)

Ms L.L. Baker
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr J.N. Carey
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms J.M. Freeman
Ms E. Hamilton
Mr T.J. Healy

Mr M. Hughes
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr F.M. Logan
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr S.A. Millman
Mr Y. Mubarakai
Mr M.P. Murray

Mrs L.M. O'Malley
Mr P. Papalia
Mr S.J. Price
Mr D.T. Punch
Mrs M.H. Roberts
Ms R. Saffioti
Ms A. Sanderson
Ms J.J. Shaw

Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms S.E. Winton
Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr D.R. Michael (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr D.T. Redman
Mr V.A. Catania

Ms M.M. Quirk
Mr J.R. Quigley

Question thus negatived.