

**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS — QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE 329 —
HON JIM CHOWN'S COMMENTS**

Statement

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [9.46 pm]: I rise to speak in response to a statement concerning me made by Hon Jim Chown in this place on Thursday, 14 June 2018. I also want to address a further statement made about me by the member in a media statement issued in his name and with the contact details of Mr Andrew Gaspar, which was issued the following day. I seek leave to table that media statement.

Leave granted. [See paper 1488.]

Hon SUE ELLERY: During the member's speech on the estimates of revenue and expenditure motion, he made an accusation against me that I had misled the house. He made the same allegation three times during the course of his speech. The member's allegation concerned an answer that I had given to question without notice 329, which was asked and answered on Wednesday, 9 May 2018. For members' benefit, the question was from Hon Jim Chown to the Minister for Education and Training and states —

I refer to the answer to my question without notice 284 asked on 12 April 2018 regarding comments made by Hon Darren West to two Moora shire councillors and his commitment to them that he would find \$500 000 if an independent assessment undertaken during the April 2018 school holidays indicated that that expenditure would enable the college to remain operational.

- (1) Has the minister asked Hon Darren West whether he provided such a commitment?
- (2) If yes, what was the honourable member's reply?

My reply was —

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) That he did not say what they claimed he said.

To make it clear, I was asked whether I had asked Hon Darren West what Hon Darren West had said to the two Moora shire councillors. I said yes because I had asked him. That answer is 100 per cent correct. Hon Jim Chown then wanted to know what Hon Darren West had told me. In the second part of my answer I replied that Hon Darren West had told me that he did not say what they—that is, the councillors—claimed he had said. That is 100 per cent accurate; that is what Hon Darren West told me. Hon Jim Chown asked me what Hon Darren West had told me and I relayed that accurately. The essential fact that I am addressing here is that I was asked what Hon Darren West had told me and I relayed accurately what he had told me. I did not mislead the house and I would expect an apology from Hon Jim Chown for saying three times that I misled the house.

The second allegation made by Hon Jim Chown is very serious and potentially libellous because it was made outside the protection of parliamentary privilege. It is in relation to the member's media statement released in his name on Friday, 15 June 2018. There is an inaccuracy in that media statement. The media statement that I have just tabled states —

Minister for Education Sue Ellery recently told Parliament Mr West had not committed the Government to fund \$500,000 in repairs to the Moora College ...

That is incorrect. I did not tell Parliament that. I told Parliament that Hon Darren West had told me that he did not say what he was alleged to have said. That is an important point, because I was answering the question asked of me, not the question that I think Hon Jim Chown claims I answered.

There is another false statement in Hon Jim Chown's media statement that was not directed at me but, for the sake of accuracy, I will clarify it. The member's media statement reads —

... Mr Chown yesterday tabled statutory declarations from two Moora shire councillors ...

Hon Jim Chown did not, in fact, table those documents.

There is another statement directed at me that is particularly insulting as it speculates, without foundation, that I could have been involved in some kind of collusion. I quote from the media statement again, and this time these comments in the media statement are in quotation marks, so they are words attributable directly to Hon Jim Chown. It states —

“He —

That is Hon Darren West —

has either told the Minister to tell Parliament he didn't make the commitment or colluded with the Minister to mislead Parliament ...

To allege, even as an alternative scenario, that there was collusion on my part to mislead Parliament is untrue and disgraceful. But, in any event, if that is what the member genuinely believes, he should have referred that to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges as a matter of privilege. To make matters worse, this inaccurate claim about me colluding was then repeated in *The Weekend West* the next day on Saturday, 16 June. This is a serious allegation to make, made even more serious given it is based on a flawed description of the question asked and the answer given, and was made in a media statement that I assume was distributed far and wide, not simply some sort of private conversation, and was repeated in a statewide newspaper.

Madam President, I did not mislead Parliament. There has been absolutely no collusion of any description to mislead Parliament. I invite Hon Jim Chown to issue me with an apology tonight and to withdraw the comments he made in this place suggesting that I had said something I had not and suggesting that I had been involved in collusion. Because of the media statement, I request that Hon Jim Chown issue a public apology outside of this place for his media release that he issued outside of this place that repeated his allegation made inside this house that I had misled the house and colluded to mislead the house.