

NAVAL SHIPBUILDING PLAN — FEDERAL GOVERNMENT — BRIEFING

24. Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE to the Minister for Defence Issues:

Yesterday the commonwealth Minister for Defence Industry, Christopher Pyne, announced the release of the naval shipbuilding plan for Australia. Was the state Minister for Defence Issues or his office yesterday offered a briefing by the office of the commonwealth Minister for Defence Industry on the naval shipbuilding plan?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for the question. Obviously, Mr Pyne did not talk to him in the car about this particular issue. I understand where this question has come from. I understand that a senator for Western Australia, Linda Reynolds, has gone on radio this morning and claimed that I refused a briefing from the minister's office. I can say that I was not offered a briefing by the minister's office. None of my staff spoke with the minister's office. She is incorrect. She is wrong. However, I am meeting with the minister in about two weeks.

Clearly, a 114-page document, dropped on the state government with no notice yesterday, would require us to read the document, consume it, go through it, and determine whether contributions were to be made by Western Australia. When I meet with the minister in a couple of weeks, that is the time when I would receive the briefing and be able to comment on the document. Unlike the former government, we intend to make informed contributions to the national defence debate. One week before the last federal election, the federal Liberal Party announced \$90 billion worth of future ship and submarine construction contracts, with \$86 billion of it going to South Australia. The Liberal-National government was in office then. That government failed to advocate on behalf of Western Australian industry. Actually, it failed to advocate on behalf of the nation because it is in the national strategic interests that Western Australia, with our far greater capability and capacity in defence industry, is employed in a robust and sustainable fashion to develop the future capabilities of the nation's Navy.

The former government failed; it made no comment. It spent more money on an online advertising campaign before the last state election telling people how many jobs there were going to be than it spent on trying to advocate for those jobs to be allocated to Western Australia. It has failed dismally. An email to my office at 8.30 the morning of the announcement by the minister does not represent an offer of a briefing. Western Australia is an absolute afterthought. Western Australia is an afterthought in the minds of the federal Liberals.

Mr S.K. L'Estrange interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member, he is trying to answer your question.

Dr M.D. Nahan: He didn't.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, when I am on my feet, you do not comment and you do not query my decision.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Western Australia was an afterthought. Senator Linda Reynolds and Senator Michaelia Cash should be ashamed of themselves. On the day of dropping a 114-page plan for the future of naval shipbuilding, both of them had clearly prearranged with only one defence industry player in Western Australia, so it was the only industry player that got any notification. They failed to talk to the state government. They then had a prearranged press conference at Austal ships. On the very morning of the release of the document, what happened in South Australia? Some second-rate senator did not make the announcement. It was not made by some second-rate players in the outer periphery of the Liberal Party in Canberra; it was announced by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry. The Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry went to Adelaide. Do members know what the Prime Minister said on radio in Adelaide? He said that South Australia is getting all the work. How could the member possibly claim that South Australia is being ignored because the Prime Minister was actually saying that he is ignoring Western Australia?

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I cannot believe the Leader of the Opposition came into this place the day after that disgraceful announcement. Whose side are you on?

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am on the side of Western Australia!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, I have been very lenient today. The next person who talks when I stand up, I will call them to order. Wrap it up please, minister.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will ask the same question of the federal senators who had the gall to go out yesterday morning in a prearranged press conference and make the claim that that was a good deal for Western Australia. Whose side

is the Liberal Party on in Western Australia? This government is on the side of Western Australians. We are unashamedly on the side of Western Australians and members opposite are a disgrace!