

PORT AUTHORITIES — SECRET REVIEW CLAIMS

**1000. Hon JIM CHOWN to the Minister for Transport:**

- (1) Is the minister aware of media statements released today by Hon Ken Travers titled “Secret review to reduce and restrict Bunbury Port Authority”, “Secret review to reduce and restrict Esperance Port Authority”, “Secret review to reduce and restrict Geraldton Port Authority” and “Secret review to reduce and restrict Albany Port Authority”?
- (2) Is the author of these releases in touch with the reality of the situation?
- (3) If no to (2), have any of his Labor Party colleagues been so ill-advised as to let Hon Ken Travers place words in their mouths in these releases—words that now make them look totally out of touch with reality?

*Point of Order*

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** The question clearly breaches standing order 140 or 141. It contains imputations.

A government member: Get the right one!

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will take longer and take out my copy of the standing orders if that is what members opposite want.

**The PRESIDENT:** I am aware of what standing order 140 says. Yes, there were certain imputations and inferences in parts of that question. Every member has the opportunity to ask a question. Courtesy is usually applied across the house to allow members to ask their questions. The member has asked his question and the minister can now respond.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:**

Mr President —

**Hon Jon Ford:** Place it on notice!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** No, I am determined to be accountable when I am asked these questions!

- (1)–(3) In answer to the honourable member’s question, yes, I am aware of those media statements and, serendipitously, I happen to have a copy of them with me. I do not think the purpose of the member’s question was to make an imputation; he just asked whether the content of these releases is accurate. Gee, members opposite do not want to be lectured about this, do they? They do not want to be found out in the public domain when they are found out telling porkies.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! It is reasonable for the minister to get an opportunity to answer the question without interruption, as long as he addresses the question.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Thank you, Mr President.

I am aware of the media statements. Let me just tell the house that my response to them basically is that this is a very feeble attempt by an irrelevant opposition to try to scaremonger. The fact is that, yes, there is a review into Western Australian ports. It is on now; it is not a secret; it has been going on for more than two months. All other ports and all other stakeholders have been involved. Various government agencies as well as all the port authorities have been involved from the outset. There is no secret. That is the first thing that this opposition spokesman has got 100 per cent wrong in the material that he puts in writing and puts out to the public.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! In the normal scheme of things, Hon Ken Travers is next in line to ask a question, but if he wants to ask questions by interjection, then I will move to the next member.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Let me just state it because it is an important issue and members of the public should not be misled by statements from irresponsible oppositions that have no justification to be made. Let us get a couple of things straight. There is no privatisation agenda. There is no proposal for all the ports to be run out of the metropolitan area.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Can you guarantee that it will not happen?

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** What is it? Don't you speak English; don't you understand what I am saying, dopey!

**Hon Ken Travers:** Guarantee it then.

**Hon Adele Farina:** What is the point of an independent inquiry?

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** The member wants to just go out there and make up the news. I am telling the member what I am telling him and that is the fact.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Guarantee it will not happen.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Guarantee. I started this review —

**Hon Adele Farina:** Oh!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I will come to Hon Adele Farina in a minute. The reason we are having this review is that the state is entering an environment of rapid growth. There will be increasing demand for port services. A lot of that, incidentally, is driven by the resources sector. That is why we need to get ahead of the game to make sure that our state can deal with those types of economic circumstances. It is about planning and getting ahead of the game, which is something that the former government did not understand. Opposition members would be the first to criticise if we did not review our governance arrangements of our ports at a time like this, and particularly when we have new ports coming on stream in the future, such as Oakajee, Anketell, Ashburton North —

**Hon Ken Travers** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** He does not want to ask a question.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! That is about seven interjections during this answer—seven far too many.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** The final question that I have been asked about on these statements is: is there anybody else involved in this feeble exercise? I looked at the media statement about Albany, which is written in a certain way and attributes comments to Hon Ken Travers *inter alia* —

“A review of the Port Authorities Act was only tabled last year by Transport Minister Simon O'Brien and this latest review is unnecessary,” he said.

That is exactly what he said. The one in respect of Bunbury Port Authority refers to quotes from Hon Adele Farina, who is saying almost identical things about Bunbury, including —

“A review of the Port Authorities Act was only tabled last year by Transport Minister Simon O'Brien and this latest review is unnecessary,” she said.

That is the difference. When we get to Geraldton we have Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm saying —

“A review of the Port Authorities Act was only tabled last year by Transport Minister Simon O'Brien and this latest review is unnecessary,” he said.

Of course, when we get to Esperance we have Hon Ken Travers making the identical comment. That raises two questions: have the members who have been quoted got any thoughts of their own? The one I really want to know about is —

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The minister has been running now for about eight minutes by my reasoning.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Most of it interjections.

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes, some of it has been interjections but, by the same token, I think it is time that you started your concluding remarks.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I have concluded. I think I have made the point: they need to get real.