

LIBERAL ELECTION PROMISES — TAX CUTS

46. Hon KEN TRAVERS to the Minister for Finance:

Some notice of the question has been given to make it a bit easier for the Minister for Finance.

Hon Simon O'Brien: I don't have any trouble with you!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The minister has been having trouble all week! He could not answer two of the questions I had for him.

The PRESIDENT: Order! It is question time—not comment or statement time.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I refer to the 2008 Liberal state election promises.

- (1) Is the Liberal Party still committed to delivering a minimum of \$250 million in additional tax cuts for Western Australian families and small businesses in its first term of government?
- (2) Is the Liberal Party still committed to quarantining all savings identified by the economic audit for return to the Western Australian taxpayer through taxation reform and reduced taxes?
- (3) Is the Liberal party still committed to directing all windfall state budget surplus revenues to tax cuts unless needed to meet unexpected contingencies such as natural disasters?
- (4) If no to (1), (2) or (3), why not?
- (5) Does the minister accept this will mean the government will need to find at least \$2 billion in tax reform and reduction measures over the next two years; and, if not, why not?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

(1)–(5) Faced with the dramatic impact of the global financial crisis on the state budget, this government took financially responsible steps in delaying our tax cut commitment and some capital works projects, in addition to delivering operating cost savings across the public sector. The economic recovery, combined with good management by the government, is improving our financial position, thereby enabling us to fund an increasing number of infrastructure projects and growing demand for services.

I do not know how many times the member wants to keep asking these questions in different ways day after day, but that is fine.

Tax cuts in the future will depend on our overall financial position and will be considered in the overall context of the state's need for more infrastructure investment and growth in government services.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Ken Travers had his opportunity to ask the question; he should let the minister answer it. He wants to continually interject, and that might be done in other places in the parliamentary system but it is not done here.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: The honourable member has found a statement about economic management that came out in the last week of August 2008; that is, in the heat of the final week in the lead-up to the extraordinarily early election called—to the distress of many on that side of the chamber—by then Premier Carpenter. Among the range of other matters contained in that statement was—I acknowledge this every day of the week—a commitment to identify some tax cuts. The world moved on. This was addressed in the 2009–10 budget when the global financial crisis was impacting on our economy. I do not know if the member thinks only one document that matters has been put out and that matters like the GFC and subsequent budgets never happened, but this matter has been dealt with before. I have indicated every day of the week where the government is looking to for the future. Perhaps one day we might debate Hon Ken Travers' record—if he wants to toss around fanciful guesstimate figures such as those —

Hon Ken Travers: They are not guesstimates; they are based on your budget, you —

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: If you want to pull billion-dollar figures out of the air, I do not know where you get them from. You make it up!

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Come back again next week after you have looked up your contribution to the last debate we had in this place and we will talk again about your forensic skill, Einstein!

Several members interjected.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: That is what the Leader of the Opposition calls it when referring to how good the member is at predicting budget trends. We will see if the member likes having a bit of scrutiny applied.

As for me, keep asking me the dopey questions, and we will get on with running the government.