

GOVERNMENT TRADING ENTERPRISES — CAPITAL EXPENDITURE NEEDS

**Hon KEN TRAVERS to the Minister for Finance:**

I refer to the critical role the minister plays in analysing the performance and capital expenditure budgets of government trading enterprises and the revelation in today's budget that the state net debt for the non-financial public sector will be around \$24 billion by 2014–15.

- (1) Is the minister aware of the growing backlog of essential capital works for government trading enterprises responsible for power, water and ports?
- (2) How does the Barnett government expect to meet the capital expenditure needs of these GTEs over the next four years, in light of this extraordinary level of state debt?
- (3) What action will the minister take to ensure our power, water and port GTEs are able to meet the growing demand for their services?

**The PRESIDENT:** There are elements of that question that are specific to other specific portfolios. The Minister for Finance will be required to answer whatever parts of the question encompass his portfolio.

*Point of Order*

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Mr President, when the portfolio of finance was created, the Premier indicated that the Minister for Finance would play a critical role in analysing the performance and capital expenditure budgets of government trading enterprises. That is what I have asked about today.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! That is the part of the question that is relevant to the minister's portfolio.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:**

(1)–(3) I thank the member for attempting to ask me a question. The fact is it is not relevant to my portfolio.

**Hon Ken Travers:** So the Premier was lying in his release, then?

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** If the member wants to have an answer—in fact, I am going to persist with an answer, because he is misrepresenting the facts. Firstly, as the President has correctly pointed out, each of the government trading enterprises that the member has mentioned comes within the responsibility of ministers other than me. The member ought to know that, because he thinks he knows everything. So that question cannot be addressed to me. If the member wants to address a question to me in my capacity as being involved in budget preparation, my only capacity there is as a member of the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee, which is a subcommittee of cabinet. As the member would also be aware, I do not answer questions about what happens at cabinet; I am not allowed to. In any case, it is not my portfolio responsibility to respond to those questions that the member has raised.

If the member insists on saying that there is a role to be played by the Department of Finance in examining the performance of GTEs —

**Hon Ken Travers:** And the capital expenditure.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** — and the capital expenditure of GTEs, then that is a matter that we can canvass on another day.

**Hon Ken Travers:** The Premier said you were going to do that.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** No, he did not say I was going to do that.

**Hon Ken Travers:** He did! He said you would play a critical role in it!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Mr President, the honourable member might like to hold his horses, because the fact of the matter is that the Department of Finance will not be created until 1 July 2011, at which time the new director general of the Department of Finance will commence in that newly created role, and at which time the process that the Premier was alluding to will commence; but it has not yet.