

GOLD CORPORATION — AUSTRAC AUDIT

557. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

I refer to questions I asked of the minister in budget estimates in May and revelations in *The West Australian* of 8 September, which allege that Gold Corporation may be liable for an unlimited sum with respect to possible breaches of the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006.

- (1) For how long did Gold Corporation conduct transfers without appropriate remittance service provider registration?
- (2) As minister responsible, was this issue brought to his attention or was anyone in his office made aware of this potentially criminal failure in process prior to the publication of this article; and, if not, why not?
- (3) Did the minister arrogantly mislead the house during estimates when he said that the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre was meant to be coming last year when board papers show clearly that AUSTRAC did visit in 2021 and Gold Corporation was aware and involved, and was the minister notified by the board?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

- (1)–(3) I will go to the question of misleading the house. I have reviewed the *Hansard*. No, I am not required to make any correction because the information I provided in estimates was entirely accurate.

The next thing I will go to is the question about seeking approval for registration that the member described in the first part of his question. That was done by Gold Corporation in March 2021 during the caretaker period of government. That means that the entire time that I have been the responsible minister, Gold Corporation was in compliance with the law.

In respect of the period prior to that, it is true that Gold Corporation did not tell the government that it was not registered in the appropriate way. That meant that the former minister, the Premier, was never informed of the failure of Gold Corp to deal with this matter. I am also advised that the matter that the audit is currently going on is not related to that particular aspect.

I just want to let the member know a few things. I have reviewed the audit report of Gold Corporation and at no time did the audit report ever draw attention to the matters that have now subsequently come to light. This is the point that the member should understand in respect of the article in *The West Australian*: it misunderstood what had occurred in March 2021. The article referred to the anti-money laundering and counterterrorism audit being done currently by AUSTRAC, which is a very serious matter. If any failings are demonstrated by that audit, action must be taken by Gold Corporation because we must make sure that it complies with the law.

I met with the Auditor General—I am trying to find the time line—not long after I took on the portfolio. She and I discussed the matters related to AUSTRAC. Subsequently, she again spoke to me and told me that she did not expect that—I think that these were the words she used—any matter would blow up. That is what I said to the member on the day. If the member remembers, at the time when I answered his questions in the estimates hearings, I said that if he had any questions about the information that I had provided to him, he should reach out to the Auditor General, who is independent of government. He does not need to make an appointment through my office; he can reach out to her directly. I am interested to know whether the member took up that opportunity to speak to the Auditor General —

Mr R.S. Love: You are asking me questions, minister. I'm not going to reveal conversations I have held with other people.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: — because if the member has any questions in relation to the audit performance by the Auditor General, let me make it clear: the Auditor General's job is to provide independent assurance around the operations of government trading enterprises to this Parliament. I do not interfere in her independence. I have read the commentary from the current Auditor General and previous Auditors General in respect of the tabled reports in this chamber, and at no time were these matters raised in those reports.