

PERTH MINT — SENATE COMMITTEE INQUIRY

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

I refer to the Senate inquiry into the Perth Mint, which has received evidence from the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre, the Australian Taxation Office and the Reserve Bank of Australia, amongst others, and the description of the June 2022 meeting between AUSTRAC and the Perth Mint by Mr Bradley Brown, the acting deputy chief executive officer of AUSTRAC, as being pretty sombre. Would the minister like to take this opportunity to update the public record and his comments on matters surrounding the Perth Mint?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

I cannot believe I get a Dorothy Dixier as the first question in this week of Parliament! I thank the Leader of the Opposition very much!

Let us put some stuff on the record here. As we all sit here today, there has never been an allegation of money laundering involving the Perth Mint by anybody, ever; not by the Leader of the Opposition, not by any member of the Senate—nobody. The *Four Corners* episode demonstrated that Perth Mint complies with the law. The AUSTRAC evidence to the Senate inquiry shows that Perth Mint is complying with its obligations. There has never been any allegation, ever, of illegal money laundering by the Mint. I want the Leader of the Opposition to acknowledge that he has never made an allegation that there has been illegal conduct. He keeps going on in public, implying that there has been illegal conduct, but he has never actually admitted that he has never had any evidence and has never alleged that anybody has used the Mint for money laundering.

I am sick and tired of the dishonesty of Senator Dean Smith. Senator Dean Smith lied on radio about the inquiry. He went on and said that the Reserve Bank of Australia had provided evidence of illegal conduct. What a disgrace! What a disgrace! He should apologise for that lie and correct the record. Let us acknowledge something here: the Senate is inquiring into four specific laws. The Reserve Bank of Australia does not perform a regulatory function in respect of any of those laws or of any aspect of the operations of the Perth Mint. I do not know what evidence the Reserve Bank gave, because apparently it was a confidential briefing, so Senator Smith's reference to the Reserve Bank in his media remarks was a breach of the standing orders of the Senate.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members! Attorney General—and others!

Mr R.S. LOVE: Point of order.

The SPEAKER: Before I give the Leader of the Opposition the call for the point of order, I remind members that points of order are heard in silence.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: The minister is misleading the house. In fact, the program of interview of the committee on the public record clearly mentions the Reserve Bank.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, please sit down. This is not an opportunity for debate. If you want to bring something on for debate, you are very welcome to do that, but question time is not for that.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: This is the reason that this member is so embarrassed by this question. He asked me to put on the record these facts, but when I go on the record and make these points about the facts of the matter, he objects; he objects to the facts, because he does not want the facts about the Perth Mint made public. He does not want the facts of this matter.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member interjects about whether the fact that the RBA gave evidence was on the record. Yes, it was, but not at the time that Senator Smith made his remarks, and the remarks made by the RBA are still secret. Senator Smith went on radio and said, "Oh, if only I could tell you what I know." Well, I want him to tell us what he knows, because the reason he knows what he knows is that there are no allegations of illegal conduct by the Perth Mint. He is investigating four specific laws of the commonwealth, one of which, the Privacy Act, does not apply to the Perth Mint. With the other three, there is no evidence of any illegal conduct. One of the things the committee is investigating is weights and measures. The agency that deals with weights and measures never even made a submission to the Senate inquiry.

I mean, this is typical of the current Leader of the Opposition; we look forward to the next Leader of the Opposition, but the current one uses Parliament to make false allegations and imputations against 700 hardworking Western Australians at the Perth Mint, and he should apologise to them.

