



STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

REPORT ON PERSON REFERRED TO
IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

TORRANCE MENDEZ

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly
10 September 1998

REPORT

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly referred to the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee a letter from Mr Torrance Mendez seeking to use Standing Order 165A to respond to a statement made by the Deputy Premier on 19 August 1998.

The Committee has agreed to the attached response proposed by Mr Mendez.

It should be noted that Standing Order 165A specifically precludes the Committee from considering or judging the truth of any statements made in the Assembly or in the submission.

Recommendation

Your Committee recommends -

That a response by Mr Mendez in the terms specified in the Appendix to this report, be incorporated in *Hansard*.

CHAIRMAN

Response by Mr Torrance Mendez
Agreed to by Mr Mendez and the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee
pursuant to Standing Order 165A

I, Torrance Mendez, wish to respond to adverse statements made against me by the Member for Merredin and Deputy Premier, Hendy Cowan, relating to the sale of Westrail Freight.

His comments were aired in debate in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday 19 August 1998 and can be found on pages 566-569 inclusive of Hansard.

The adverse comments by Mr Cowan were made without supporting evidence and were damaging to the point that they sought to lower my standing in the eyes of the public and my peers.

His words amounted to:

- (a) That Torrance Mendez, journalist, was the unofficial press secretary of the Member for Armadale.
- (b) That the Member for Armadale would use him to write another report containing the ALP line of argument.
- (c) That he wrote rubbish in that capacity.
- (d) That it was well known that he could be twisted around the little finger of the Member for Armadale.

Other remarks inferred that:

- (e) Torrance Mendez might write reports for or on behalf of other people.
- (f) That he was one of a number of people who meticulously and faithfully followed statements made by the Member for Armadale because they were controversial.

The facts are:

I wrote a report which appeared in *The West Australian* on Friday July 31 under the headline 'Full steam ahead for rail sell off'.

The report was compiled after I received a written press statement by the Minister for Transport, Murray Criddle, and a copy of a written message to staff by the Acting Commissioner for Westrail, Wayne James.

The published newspaper report was a fair and accurate reflection of the position spelt out by the Transport Minister and the Acting Commissioner in their respective statements.

My complaint is:

Mr Cowan's statements were grossly unjust in that they disparaged my professional capability in circumstances that were unwarranted.

It is unlikely that such comments would have been made in public outside protection of parliamentary privilege.

Mr Cowan's comments, while untrue and false, carry great weight through his capacity as Deputy Premier.

The harsh and abusive nature of his comments, and the high title held by Mr Cowan, might lead others to accept the words as fact.

If uncorrected, these comments lie on the public record and retain their capacity to harm my professional standing.

Finally, I don't know what more could have been done to give a fair representation of the Government case in the report of July 31.