

House: Legislative Assembly- QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Date: Thursday, 4 May 2006

Member: **Castrilli, Mr John; McGowan, Mr Mark**

Subject: MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT - CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Page: 2238c - 2239a / 1

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT - CONFLICT OF INTEREST

209. Mr G.M. CASTRILLI to the Minister for the Environment:

I refer to the *South Telegraph* article on 19 April concerning the minister's decision to step aside on the Rockingham marina issue in which he is reported as having said -

It would be inappropriate for me to be involved in the decision-making process and to have an influence either way, considering my positions.

And -

How can I make a decision either way when the environment centre is opposed to the marina development, while the development office is promoting the concept?

Given these comments -

(1) How are those circumstances different from his current conflict of interest in relation to decisions on a second desalination plant in the Rockingham area or the tapping of the south west **Yarragadee** aquifer?

(2) Given the clear opposition from within his electorate to a second desalination plant, how can he avoid a conflict of interest in assessing the Environmental Protection Authority's recommendations?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

(1)-(2) The circumstances are completely different.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member asked me the question. The central premise of the member for Bunbury's question is that as environment minister I have an environmental issue within my electorate and, therefore, I should step aside because of that. Is that correct?

Several members interjected.

Ms K. Hodson-Thomas: You are struggling, minister, and it is obvious.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Let the bloke who asked the question try to explain what his question means.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am being whipped by the member for Carine.

Is that the central premise of the member for Bunbury's question?

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The argument goes that because there are a series of environmental issues within my electorate, I should not decide upon them simply because I am the local member of Parliament. If we were to apply that logic, as the member for Bunbury seems to be indicating, it would mean that Senator Campbell, the federal environment minister and Western Australian senator, should not decide any environmental issues within Western Australia. That is the premise upon which the member for Bunbury's question is based.

Several members interjected.

Ms K. Hodson-Thomas interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr Speaker, she got me again.

The difference is that I am very familiar with the marina proposal at Point Peron, within my electorate. I am so familiar with it because the member for Peel and I are a joint member of the Premier's Rockingham Development Office task force, which has a responsibility for carrying forward that proposal. I am also a founding member of the Rockingham Regional Environment Centre, also located at Point Peron, which is the principal objector to the proposal. The member for Maylands, when she was environment minister, stepped aside from a decision about the Ningaloo marina proposal in December 2000 because at some point in the preceding years she had written a letter on the issue. I did more than write a letter; I am a member of the organisation that is a proponent for it and I am a member of an organisation that is opposed to it. If members cannot see the difference there and that I am in a tricky position in relation to the marina, I cannot help it.