

ROBBIE & WENDY SHOW DOMINATE NSW PARLIAMENT - POWERHOUSE AND HARWIN INTERVIEW

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE – FEBRUARY 25, 2020 – NSW PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

WILLOW GROVE HERITAGE BUILDING

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE – Leader of the Opposition (16:02:03): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government in his capacity as arts Minister. Given the Minister's 10 April 2019 comments on ABC Radio where he told broadcasters Robbie Buck and Wendy Harmer when asked if heritage property Willow Grove would be demolished to make way for the new Powerhouse Museum that "No, we have not said that at all", will he now admit that he misled the local community, the media and the people of this State?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Special Minister of State, Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs, and the Arts, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (16:02:30): No, I have not misled the local community at all.

The Hon. Walt Secord – Shadow Treasurer and Shadow Minister for the Arts: Fibber!

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): Order! The Hon. Walt Secord's comment is entirely inappropriate.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: The Government conducted a thorough investigation into the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to achieve the best outcomes for the community. The selected site on the banks of the Parramatta River is the ideal location for the new museum. The project's business case is underpinned by extensive architectural, heritage, museological, geotechnical engineering and flood-risk studies. The Government understands its importance to the community and the international design competition for the new Powerhouse Parramatta focused on developing concept designs to get the best outcome for the people of New South Wales. All finalist design teams in the Powerhouse Parramatta international design competition were asked to consider aspects of heritage and cultural significance within their submissions, including the local heritage buildings.

The Hon. Shayne Mallard: Point of order: I am interested in hearing the Minister's answer. The Hon. Penny Sharpe and the Hon. Walt Secord are both sledging the Minister across the Chamber. I ask you to call them to order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): I am not going to call the members to order. However, as it was a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, I invite those members of the Opposition to allow the Minister to answer the question without interrupting him. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am not at all fazed by the two honourable members. Other considerations included the activation of transport and pedestrian access consistent with the City of Parramatta Council's vision for a civic link. While the retention of heritage was considered carefully during the judging process, the jury was unanimous in its decision on the final chosen concept. The winning design will reflect and engage with the multiple histories of the site, including its Indigenous histories. These histories will be considered and interpreted through the next stage of the design process. The New South Wales Government is working closely with the City of Parramatta Council to ensure the new museum will be the anchor of a new and vibrant Parramatta arts and cultural precinct. The

Government is proud of its decision to build an iconic, fit-for-purpose museum in western Sydney that will be recognised around the world for the excellent institution it will be.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): Before the next question is asked, I note that I debated whether to call the Hon. Walt Secord to order. He repeated the interjection that I had previously indicated was inappropriate. I will not call him to order. However, I encourage a modicum of self-restraint

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The Hon. PENNY SHARPE – Deputy Opposition Leader - (16:09:22): My question is directed to the Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs, and the Arts, and Leader of the Government. How does the Minister explain the disparity between his 18 April 2019 statement that Willow Grove will not be demolished and his 19 February 2020 statement that it was "an accurate answer at that particular point in time"?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Special Minister of State, Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs, and the Arts, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (16:09:46): Very simply, because if the honourable member had listened to the answer I just gave she would know that all of the entrants in the design competition were encouraged to look at the heritage—

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): I call the Hon. Walt Secord to order for the first time. That is the third time he has interjected. He must show a modicum of restraint. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: As I was saying, all of the entrants in the design competition were encouraged to look at the heritage considerations of the site. They were also encouraged to consider other priorities that the City of Parramatta Council had, such as the Civic Link and the importance of creating a river square.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: You told people that Willow Grove was going to stay. That is what you went to the election on.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I did not. I never said that and don't interrupt—

The Hon. Walt Secord – Shadow Treasurer and Shadow Minister for the Arts: You liar. You're lying again.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I have never said that.

The Hon. Walt Secord: He's lying again.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Never.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Well, you threw the Premier under the bus because she did.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): I call the Hon. Walt Secord to order for the second time. I call the Hon. Penny Sharpe to order for the first time. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: The reason I have always said that heritage considerations will be taken into account is that there are several things that the City of Parramatta Council asked to consider, not just the heritage of Willow Grove. I refer to a letter from the City of Parramatta Council to Create NSW on 1 July 2019 where it makes it very clear that it has decided not to prioritise its objectives—not. It made it clear to us that the realisation of a 24-hour publicly accessible Civic Link, the delivery of a connected river square and the retention and adaptive reuse of Willow Grove and St George's

Terrace all have strategic importance to the city. When we received advice like that from the City of Parramatta Council, it was clear that the responsible thing to do was to put in all of those considerations as criteria in the design competition and invite architects to do what they could to optimise the outcome of all four strategic priorities. As I also made clear on Wendy Harmer and Robbie Buck's program more recently, at least two of the designers in the competition—

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): The Minister's time has expired.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Under the standing orders, I seek an extension of time to complete my answer.

Leave granted.

One designer chose to enter a design that involved Willow Grove staying and another chose to enter a design that involved St George's Terrace staying. The unanimous view of the jury in the design competition was that neither was the preferred outcome. They chose an excellent outcome, which is now the design that the Government is pursuing. That puts the lie to people who have been saying that the Government was telling them to demolish Willow Grove. We were not, as any fair reading of the design competition brief will show. There it is. I have always said that all of the matters that the City of Parramatta Council wrote to us about in July 2019 were important.

The Hon. Walt Secord: I ask a supplementary question.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): The Hon. Walt Secord is not able to ask a supplementary question.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Your lies will stay hidden, Don.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan) Order! I do not know whether it is a deliberate strategy by the Hon. Walt Secord to get himself thrown out but he has been told repeatedly where he is transgressing yet he continues to interject. He probably does so because I am the Acting President and he is seeing how far he can go. I encourage him, particularly on a day when the House will be dealing with an important condolence motion, not to descend into a position where he is thrown out of this place. Let us all ramp it back and allow question time to proceed in a civil manner. I do not want to throw the member out but if he continues to interject he gives me no choice.

WILLOW GROVE HERITAGE BUILDING

The Hon. WALT SECORD – Shadow Treasurer and Shadow Minister for the Arts (16:21:55): My question without notice is to the Minister for Public Service and Employee Relations, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and the Minister for the Arts, and Leader of the Government. Did the Minister at any point ask that Willow Grove be retained as part of the design of the Powerhouse museum at Parramatta?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Special Minister of State, Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs, and the Arts, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (16:22:15): I think the previous two questions that I have answered have given me an opportunity to make it entirely clear that the retention of Willow Grove was something that needed to be considered by the designers involved in the design competition. That has been my position all along. I quote from the City of Parramatta Council's letter, which is directly on point. The council said to me that—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Why are you putting it home to them? This is your decision. It's not the commitment you made.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am sorry but I did consider it to be a very relevant consideration, what the elected council decided on behalf of its council, which was, after all, the vendor for the site. The council made it additionally clear to me that "prioritising the objectives would unduly constrain the opportunity to deliver both a world-class museum and council's objectives through a creative competition process." Council supported the creative competition process and made it very clear that it did not want to constrain it by being prescriptive in terms of which was the most important consideration. Willow Grove, for example—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: So it's council's fault that you did not tell the truth.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: No, I did not ever say that it was council's fault. I said that we took council's advice into consideration when we prepared the brief for the design competition.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Listen to the community.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): Order! This is not a conversation. The Minister is entitled to answer without a dialogue going on. The Minister may proceed.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: That well and truly answers the question. It is quite clear that the retention of Willow Grove, or non-retention for that matter—it is a semantic argument, which way it is phrased; it is two sides of the same coin, when all is said and done—was very clearly something that all of the designers were asked to consider.

The Hon. WALT SECORD (16:24:40): I ask a supplementary question. Would the Minister elucidate his answer in regard to the Willow Grove retention that he discussed in his answer? Is it Parramatta council, the Premier or the Minister who lied?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): It would take a considerable amount of time for me to read out the precedents from a whole range of Presidents of every colour in this Chamber. The Hon. Walt Secord clearly knows what the problem has been up to this point but he has now sought to inject the term into a question. I invite the member to rephrase his question. Again, I make the observation that the member is on two calls to order.

The Hon. WALT SECORD (16:26:15): Would the Minister elucidate his answer in regard to the Willow Grove retention? Is it the Parramatta council, the Premier or the Minister who fibbed to the community?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): I invite the member to rephrase his question. This is the final time for the member to put his question and take out the offensive term.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: He is wasting valuable time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): I do not need assistance from the Government benches.

The Hon. WALT SECORD (16:26:45): Would the Minister elucidate his answer in regard to Willow Grove's retention? Was it Parramatta council, the Premier or the Minister who misled the community?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Special Minister of State, Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs, and the Arts, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (16:26:55): None, and I have nothing to add to my three previous answers on this point.

Honourable Walt Secord

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