

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Tuesday, 12 February 2019

1822. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for the Environment representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to question without notice No. 1161 asked in the Legislative Council on 20 November 2018 by Hon Martin Aldridge to the Minister representing the Minister for Electoral Affairs in relation to the Electoral Commissioner's referral on 17 April 2018 of suspected electoral fraud in the Pilbara to the Western Australia Police Force, and page 33 of the Town of Port Hedland minutes of 24 October 2018, and ask:

- (a) was the Mayor of Port Hedland advised that there is insufficient evidence into his claims of mail fraud evidence that he obtained in the last Local Government election;
- (b) if yes to (a), on what date was the Mayor informed;
- (c) has the Mayor submitted a FOI application(s) for all documents in relation to this investigation;
- (d) if yes to (c), were documents supplied and on what date;
- (e) if yes to (d), will the Minister table the FOI documents;
- (f) did the police send Mayor Blanco a letter stating that the investigation had been reopened;
- (g) if yes to (f), on what date;
- (h) is it correct that "The investigation has been closed and the Mayor's understanding is that the police have evidence of mail tampering and fraud in relation to the Town of Port Hedland election, but they do not have enough evidence to charge a specific person.";
- (i) is it correct that "The Department of Public Prosecutions is not accepting expert witness evidence on handwriting.";
- (j) if yes to (i), why not; and
- (k) the Mayor has stated that in his opinion, "that there was fraud, corruption and mail tampering in the last Local Government elections.";
- (i) is there any evidence to support this statement;
- (ii) if yes to (k)(i), will the Minister provide that evidence; and
- (iii) if no to (k)(i), is the Mayor at liberty to continue by inference to suggest there was corruption?

Answer

The Western Australian Police Force advise:

(a) Yes.

(b) September 2018.

(c), (d) and (e) The names of FOI applicants (and the content of their applications) is personal information and, in accordance with the position of the Information Commissioner, that information is not publicly disclosed.

(f) There are no records or running sheet entries that the Mayor of Port Hedland was ever advised by South Hedland Detectives either by letter or other means that the investigation had been reopened.

(g) Not applicable

(h) There is no evidence to show the mail was ever tampered with. There is insufficient evidence to proceed with Electoral Fraud.

(i) – (j) As these questions relate to the procedures of the Department of Public Prosecutions, the Western Australia Police Force are not in a position to provide an answer. It is recommended that the Honourable Member refer the question to the Minister representing the Attorney General.

(k) As per answer (h), the offence identified by the WA Police Force was that of electoral fraud. Evidence to show offences of corruption and mail tampering were never confirmed.

(i) Not applicable.

(ii) Not applicable.

(iii) Not applicable.