

UNCORRECTED PROOF

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 4

**INQUIRY INTO BADGERYS CREEK LAND DEALINGS AND
PLANNING DECISIONS**

UNCORRECTED PROOF

At Sydney on Monday 14 December 2009

The Committee met at 9.30 p.m.

PRESENT

The Hon. J. A. Gardiner (Chair)

The Hon. G. J. Donnelly

The Hon. K. F. Griffin

Ms S. P. Hale

The Hon. T. J. Khan

The Hon. G. S. Pearce

The Hon. R. A. Smith

The Hon. M. S. Veitch

CHAIR: Welcome to the third public hearing of the inquiry into Badgerys Creek land dealings and planning decisions by General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4. Before we commence I will make some comments about procedural matters. I refer, first, to the invitation to Mr Richardson to appear again before the Committee. Mr Richardson previously appeared before the Committee on 19 October 2009. At that hearing some Committee members had insufficient time to ask all the questions that they wished to put to Mr Richardson. These additional questions were submitted to Mr Richardson in writing. However, Mr Richardson has chosen, voluntarily, to appear at a subsequent hearing to respond to these questions and to other questions put to him by the Committee rather than to submit written answers. The Committee has presented its main report on the inquiry's terms of reference, but following this hearing it will table a second supplementary report to include any matters raised by Mr Richardson that might be pertinent to the recommendations of the first report.

I refer, next, to the sub judice convention and to my comments at the first hearing relating to the sub judice convention. The convention is applied strictly only to prevent discussion of the precise nature of a matter before the courts. The convention does not prevent discussion of related matters, in particular, when issues are being widely canvassed in the media. The convention does not apply to matters being investigated by the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. In relation to the immunity of proceedings from questioning in the courts I refer also to my previous comments relating to the immunity of proceedings from questioning in the courts. I remind the witness that anything said outside this hearing will not be covered by parliamentary privilege. I refer, next, to adverse mention. I note further that the freedom of speech afforded to witnesses is not intended to provide a protected forum for a witness to make false statements or adverse reflections about others.

I refer, next, to police investigation. In relation to the current police investigation into the murder of Mr Michael McGurk, I emphasise that this Committee inquiry is not an inquiry into the circumstances of that crime. This inquiry concerns land dealings and planning decisions at Badgerys Creek. However, it is possible that questioning may touch on matters in which Mr McGurk was involved. I will not rule out of order questions relating to the activities of Mr McGurk, but I will ask members to be cautious in ensuring that they do not in any way prejudice any murder investigation. If a member asks a question directly about the conduct of the current police investigation I will rule it out of order. In accordance with the Legislative Council's guidelines for the broadcasting of proceedings, only Committee members and witnesses may be filmed or recorded.

In recording the proceedings of this Committee, members of the media must take responsibility for what they publish or for what interpretation they place on anything that is said before the Committee. The broadcasting guidelines are available from Committee staff. I note that at an earlier hearing I ruled a question out of order. I remind the media that the broadcasting guidelines require hearings to be reported in context. If I rule a question out of order that should be reflected in media coverage of the question. Any messages from audience members should be delivered through parliamentary staff. I remind everyone to turn off their mobile phones.

GRAHAM FREDERICK RICHARDSON, Lobbyist, on former oath:

CHAIR: I welcome today's witness, Mr Graham Richardson. Mr Richardson, as you were sworn at your previous appearance before the Committee, today you will give evidence under your former oath. I invite you, if you would like to do so, to make a brief opening statement.

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

CHAIR: Mr Richardson, the last Committee hearings triggered the then Premier, Mr Rees, to announce at his first and last day at the Australian Labor Party conference as Premier and leader that protocols applying to meetings between planning department officers with development proponents and their representatives be strengthened. As you would be aware, the Committee has tabled a number of recommendations in that regard. Have you had an opportunity to take a look at those recommendations?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

CHAIR: So you do not know what they were?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

CHAIR: The new Premier, Mrs Keneally, said that she, as planning Minister, started to implement some of those recommendations at the direction of the then Premier. Have you as a registered lobbyist noticed any changes after the implementation of those recommendations?

Mr RICHARDSON: I have had no meetings with anybody in the period since I came before the Committee so there has been nothing to notice. I had a phone call to ask someone in the Premier's department whether or not I was on any government boards or committees. That, I think, is the only contact that I have had in regard to any of the matters that could have come before you or the recommendations that you might have made.

CHAIR: Since the last hearing you have not had any contact with anyone that might be relevant to the planning decisions of the Government of New South Wales?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

CHAIR: Mr Richardson, for completeness, the Committee asked you a question on notice about you having told it that you do not keep a diary, but that your diary had been tendered in the Gordon Wood murder trial. You replied in writing:

At the present time my car is my office and I have virtually no day-to-day support. The luxury of keeping an accurate diary these days is one I do not have.

Do you confirm that you did not have a diary at the time? Do you have a diary these days?

Mr RICHARDSON: I have a diary. I am not sure where it is at the moment; it is somewhere in the car. It has not been used for some months but a small pocket one is in existence.

CHAIR: How long has that been in existence?

Mr RICHARDSON: It is in existence. I do not think I have seen it for four or five months but it is in existence and it is this year's diary, so one would imagine since January.

CHAIR: So you did have a diary?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, but I did not keep it.

CHAIR: You did not keep it?

Mr RICHARDSON: It has had a couple of entries in it; otherwise I do not bother keeping it. I do not even look at it.

CHAIR: Is it mainly blank?

Mr RICHARDSON: So far as I am concerned I do not have one.

CHAIR: You have a diary and it is mainly blank?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, that is correct. People always give me a diary.

CHAIR: For Christmas?

Mr RICHARDSON: Usually, yes.

CHAIR: Maybe they will give you one that you will keep?

Mr RICHARDSON: I doubt that very much.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: In the past month did you make any contact, or did you attempt to make any contact, with any Labor members of Parliament or senior officials in relation to the premiership or the ministry?

Mr RICHARDSON: What would that have to do with the terms of reference of this inquiry?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I ask the questions, Mr Richardson.

Mr RICHARDSON: I am asking the Chair whether that has anything to do with the terms of reference of this inquiry.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Of course it does. It relates to influence and to your role as a lobbyist, or any other contact that you might have had with relevant Ministers.

Mr RICHARDSON: Who is a relevant Minister? Let me ask that question.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: My question was any Labor MPs or senior officials.

Mr RICHARDSON: Have I spoken to a Labor MP?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: In relation to the premiership or the ministry?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: To whom did you speak?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not intend to give you a list of those people.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You spoke to several people?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Were you a player in relation to the premiership?

Mr RICHARDSON: No. People rang me, gave me their thoughts and a few times asked me what I thought.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: And what did you think?

Mr RICHARDSON: Again that has absolutely no relevance. I will keep my opinion to myself.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is relevant if you were making suggestions, for example, as to who should be appointed as planning Minister. Did you make that sort of suggestion?

Mr RICHARDSON: I never did that.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It would be relevant if you made suggestions as to who should be appointed as Premier.

Mr RICHARDSON: I did not do that either.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You did not do that either. What did you do?

Mr RICHARDSON: I listened to people and I gave them my opinions, as I just said.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Would you say that your opinions influenced people in the Labor Party?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You no longer have any influence in the Labor Party?

Mr RICHARDSON: Very little.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Mrs Keneally has been called a puppet and she has been described as one of Joe Tripodi's girls. Are you impressed with the continuing influence of Mr Obeid and Mr Tripodi?

Mr RICHARDSON: Am I impressed with it?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Yes.

Mr RICHARDSON: That is a strange question. Could you elaborate?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I ask the questions.

Mr RICHARDSON: I am asking you to explain the question. I think I am entitled to do that, am I not?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Yes, you certainly are. What is your view about Mr Obeid's and Mr Tripodi's continuing influence?

Mr RICHARDSON: They have some influence; that is a fact. That is just something that is in existence.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: And you have no influence?

Mr RICHARDSON: Very little.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You were asked about the evidence that you gave before the Gordon Wood trial. Do you remember giving that evidence?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, I do.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: At that stage did you give evidence with regard to consulting your diaries?

Mr RICHARDSON: That is correct. When I got hold of the diary I think the questions from the police were in about 1999.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I am asking you just about the trial.

Mr RICHARDSON: I gave evidence in the Gordon Wood case much more recently. I did not get out any diaries at the time of the trial; they were uncovered for the police in 1999, I think it was.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: In your diaries were appointments that you had kept, including luncheon appointments?

Mr RICHARDSON: That is correct.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: It included an appointment with Mr Peter Moore?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: In light of the context of those diary entries of luncheon engagements you were able, in a sense, to refute some other alternative scenarios. Is that right?

Mr RICHARDSON: That is correct.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I think you rightly said that that went back to events in 1999?

Mr RICHARDSON: No, it went back to events in 1995, but 1999 was when the police asked me about them.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: So you kept your 1995 diaries up until 1999, is that right?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: It was a matter of prudence that you retained records of what you had done from time to time, including luncheon engagements?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not think it is a matter of prudence; I just kept them. The only time I was ever asked for them was on that occasion. That is the only time that they were ever looked at.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Did you meet Ron and Roy Medich back in 1995?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes. I think I said in the transcript last time that I met them something like a quarter of a century ago. So, yes, I would have known them. Would I have been seeing much of them? No.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: At that stage were either of them seeing or dealing with Rene Rivkin?

Mr RICHARDSON: Not that I have ever heard of.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: What about Gordon Wood? Had either of them been in contact with Gordon Wood?

Mr RICHARDSON: That is a bizarre question, but I would imagine no. Why would they be in contact with Gordon Wood, Rene Rivkin's driver? If they did not know Rene Rivkin why would they know him, whatever he was?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Let us move forward a bit in time.

Mr RICHARDSON: I hope that we can.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: On or about 7 December you spoke to the *Sydney Morning Herald*—I assume to Mr Andrew Clennell—with regard to the events of the week before and said that you had "spoken to everybody last week". Is that an accurate quote?

Mr RICHARDSON: I did not speak to Andrew Clennell; I will not speak to him. I spoke to a journalist whom I believe to be Louise Hall.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: In a sense Louise Hall is an offsider to Mr Clennell?

Mr RICHARDSON: I believe that is what she is, yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: But you are quoted as saying—

Mr RICHARDSON: "I spoke to everybody last week", yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I take it when you say that you spoke to everybody that includes various members of the Labor Party?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes. It is a figure of speech. I cannot say that I spoke to everyone in the world, nor can I say that I spoke to everyone in the Labor Party, but I spoke to many.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Can we refine that by saying that you were speaking to members of the right wing of the Labor Party?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not think we could assume that, no.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You are not a favourite son the left wing of the Labor Party, are you?

Mr RICHARDSON: Many of them seem to talk to me. I do not seem to have too many problems with them. Perhaps you are more expert on this than I am.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: In your valedictory speech to the Senate you went out of your way, for instance, to drop a bucket on Mr Faulkner. Is that not right?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: No?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Is that right?

Mr RICHARDSON: I would not have called that a bucket.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You were not referring to him in terms of endearment, were you?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not think that Senator Faulkner and I have ever been close friends.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: No, and nor have you been a close friend of the Left of the Labor Party.

Mr RICHARDSON: No, I never said that I was.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: The people to whom you were speaking in the week in which Mr Rees was dumped essentially were members of the Right of the Labor Party?

Mr RICHARDSON: Mostly, certainly, but not entirely.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Do I take it that that includes Eddie Obeid?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, I would have spoken to Mr Obeid.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: And to Joe Tripodi?

Mr RICHARDSON: I would have spoken to him, yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: In a sense were they not the shakers and movers of the defenestration of Mr Rees?

Mr RICHARDSON: They were among them.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Yes. Did you speak to John Della Bosca?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes. He has been a friend of mine for decades.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: And also one of the plotters for the removal of Mr Rees, is that not right?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not know; you tell me. You are making the commentary, not me.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You are the one who at least was having a conversation on the telephone. Is that right?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: What about Tony Kelly? Were you speaking with him as well?

Mr RICHARDSON: No, I do not think I did.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Do I take it that amongst the plotters we have got you speaking to Della Bosca, Obeid and Tripodi?

Mr RICHARDSON: A tremendous revelation. Yes, you have. Great work getting that out of me. It was very good.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Do I take it that you were speaking to those gentlemen not only prior to the defenestration of Mr Rees but also after?

Mr RICHARDSON: After? Yes, I have spoken to them since, yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: So your discussions were occurring in the run-up to getting rid of Mr Rees and then in the days following, is that right?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: And your discussions with Obeid, Tripodi and Della Bosca in the days following were with regard to the composition of the ministry, would that not be right?

Mr RICHARDSON: No, that would not be right. That would be totally wrong, so I would not therefore admit to it, would I?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I do not know what you would ever admit to, Mr Richardson.

Mr RICHARDSON: I will not admit to untruths, which is what you are pedalling. So I will not admit to those, no.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: So you were just having little quiet chats with them about the fur and feathers that had been flying in the days prior?

Mr RICHARDSON: I certainly had some words to say to them about the direction I thought the Government ought to take from here on in, things I wanted to feed in about policy announcements and things. But as to the rest, I was not terribly interested.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Were you at any stage, when you were registered as a lobbyist, asked to identify yourself as a person who was fit and proper?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not recall.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Think about it. Were you asked, for instance, to identify any prior associates that you had had?

Mr RICHARDSON: By whom?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: By anyone in government?

Mr RICHARDSON: Anyone in government?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Yes.

Mr RICHARDSON: No, I do not believe so.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: In regard to the people that you were having discussions with either before or after the defenestration of Mr Rees, did they include any ministerial staff?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not think so.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Matt Secord? Did you perhaps have a chat with him?

Mr RICHARDSON: I think you mean Walt Secord.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Sorry, Walt.

Mr RICHARDSON: No, I did not have any discussions with Walt Secord.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: So you can be firm that you did not speak to him; you are uncertain as to other ministerial staff that you could have spoken to, is that the case?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not believe I spoke to any. I cannot think of any off the top of my head. There were a lot of phone calls but I do not recall speaking to a ministerial staffer.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: It would stick in your mind if a ministerial staffer were to ring you during this period of time?

Mr RICHARDSON: I suppose it depends what they were going to ask me about. If they were just saying, "Do you want to see the boss?" or "The boss wants to see you", whatever, then I would probably remember it. But I do not recall any such conversation. I do not believe I spoke to a ministerial staffer in the period.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Did you actually attend this building on or about 4 December?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Have you visited this building since you gave evidence on the last occasion?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Did you make any other phone calls to Messrs Obeid, Tripodi or Della Bosca?

Mr RICHARDSON: Did I make any of the phone calls?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Did you initiate any of the telephone calls?

Mr RICHARDSON: We were ringing each other; they were going back and forth at the time.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: The answer is yes?

Mr RICHARDSON: I suppose I would have to have initiated some of them.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Did you call them on their mobile or mobiles or in their Parliamentary office or some other telephone number?

Mr RICHARDSON: Mobiles mainly. I may have spoken to Mr Obeid in his parliamentary office, I am not certain. But mobiles mainly, yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Do I take it, from all the evidence you have given on various occasions, that you do not have a photographic memory?

Mr RICHARDSON: No. I do not claim to have.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: So did you refer to a diary or the like to obtain the telephone numbers of Messrs Obeid, Tripodi and Della Bosca?

Mr RICHARDSON: In fact, Della Bosca changed his number some time in the last three or four weeks and he had sent me a text of the new number, so that is how I got his. I already knew Obeid's mobile number and I think I asked Obeid at some point, but I think it was probably prior to the last two or three weeks, to give me Tripodi's mobile number. But I am not sure this is entirely relevant or fascinating to anybody bar you.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: We will wonder about that later, won't we? One of the plotters that I have not referred to so far is a gentleman by the name of Ian Macdonald. Did you have discussions with him in the lead-up to or post the defenestration of Mr Rees?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: It is only three of the five plotters that you had discussions with, is that what you are saying?

Mr RICHARDSON: Who is the fifth plotter?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I think we had Mr Kelly in there as well.

Mr RICHARDSON: Oh, did you? And they are the only plotters, are they? You would know this, would you? Excellent. I did not, so thank you very much for enlightening me, I appreciate that.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: If we could just move on to the telephone calls.

Mr RICHARDSON: We haven't moved off them.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Did you make a note of the various telephone numbers that you received or did you keep them in your phone in your speed dial?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not use a speed dial, so I did not keep them in the phone in the speed dial, but once they are there they are in the past numbers so you can always get back to them.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: So we have got a situation where one gentleman sends you his telephone number by text and the others you just have on your phone, is that the case?

Mr RICHARDSON: I am staggered at this line of questioning. Is this what we are going to go through all morning? I have got to ask the Chair, has this got anything whatsoever to do with the terms of reference of this inquiry?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Why do you not answer the question as to why Tripodi, Obeid—

Mr RICHARDSON: I am asking the Chair a question.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Why did Tripodi, Obeid and Della Bosca choose to talk to you about these issues?

Mr RICHARDSON: They choose to talk to me about many things. I have been talking to Mr Obeid for 30 years; I have been talking to Mr Della Bosca for a similar period. But I did ask the Chair a question and I am going to wait to hear her answer.

CHAIR: I would hope, Mr Richardson, that Mr Khan will come to a point where he is within the terms of reference.

Mr RICHARDSON: So he is not now. I am glad we agree on that.

CHAIR: I ask him to swiftly do that.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Well, I will repeat the question. Why did Mr Obeid, Mr Tripodi and Mr Della Bosca choose to talk to you about the premiership and the ministry?

Mr RICHARDSON: Do you think that is the point that they have come to that is within the terms of reference?

CHAIR: Could you repeat the question?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Why did Mr Obeid, Mr Tripodi and Mr Della Bosca choose to talk to you about the ministry and the premiership?

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order:

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is within the terms of reference because it relates to lobbying and discussions.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: I think we just had a ruling from you, Madam Chair, in a pretty clear way that the roaming, broad nature of the questioning of Mr Khan does not come within a bull's roar of this term of reference. So the tag team now has moved from Mr Khan to Mr Pearce, who is pursuing the same line of questioning, which I think, by definition, means that the question is out of order. I think it is a duty you have to inform Mr Pearce that his question is out of order and his questioning should be within the terms of reference of this hearing.

CHAIR: I agree. The questions need to be within the terms of reference. So the questions need to be brought to a point where they fall within those terms of reference.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: In an earlier answer you indicated that you were seeking to give advice as to the direction that certain government policies should take? Is that your earlier evidence?

Mr RICHARDSON: I gave my opinion on a few things that I wanted to be passed on to whoever became relevant to that opinion, and I did so. But none of that had anything to do with planning, if that is the next question

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Did that include anything with regard to Premier Rees' announcements relating to political donations by property developers?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You see, that was an area that could particularly have impacted upon some of your clients.

Mr RICHARDSON: I just said no.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Such as Messrs Medich.

Mr RICHARDSON: I repeat: My answer was no.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Did it have anything to do with strengthening the lobbyists' code, which could have directly impacted on you?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: There were areas of the announcements made by Premier Rees at conference that were, in a sense, a direct result of evidence that had been given to this inquiry, were they not?

Mr RICHARDSON: I think the stuff on developer donations had been going on for about 12 months. So no, it was not in relation to this inquiry at all, I would not have thought. Maybe you missed some of that but ever since the Wollongong hearings there have been statements—Morris Iemma was making statements about political donations from developers. It has been going on for a long time.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: And he got it in the neck as well.

Mr RICHARDSON: I would not agree with that. You think he got it in the neck because of that? Not even you would come up with that one. Not even you would want to look that silly.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Don't underestimate Mr Khan. He loves playing the clown at these hearings.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That interjection comes from the Right of the ALP, does it, Mr Donnelly.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: You're the clown.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You're the stooge, old son.

CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Just back to Mr Kelly, again for clarification. Have you known Mr Kelly for some time?

Mr RICHARDSON: Oh yes. I think I met him when he was living in Wellington, and that probably would be 20, 30 years ago—probably closer to 30 than 20.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Have you ever had any discussion with him about any planning matter?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Any discussion about the Medichs?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Have you spoken to him since he became planning Minister?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Have you had any contact with his office since he became planning Minister?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Why not?

Mr RICHARDSON: I had no reason to, is probably why not.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I would like to put this whole matter in context, if I may. This inquiry is the result of an alleged attempt by Michael McGurk to extort \$8 million from the Medich family on the basis that he had a tape of a conversation between himself and Mr Ron Medich that supposedly named or implicated senior bureaucrats and members of Parliament in bribery and corruption in order to obtain favourable planning

decisions. Were it not for the existence of the tape and the allegations contained on it this inquiry would not be meeting today.

Mr RICHARDSON: There is an assumption that there are allegations on it. I heard none and I am the only one who has heard the tape. So do you know more about it than I?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I would like to return to the issue of the tape.

Mr RICHARDSON: May I ask, Ms Hale, are these in reference to the questions on notice that you asked?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: These are in reference to the general terms of reference for this inquiry, so I would like to ask you some questions, if I may, Mr Richardson.

Mr RICHARDSON: I would like to ask the Chair a question prior to you doing that, if I could. I note that some weeks ago the first four questions, I think, that were given to me on notice were printed in full in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Did the Committee approve the release of those questions?

CHAIR: No.

Mr RICHARDSON: Is it proper to release those questions?

CHAIR: If you have got a query I am quite happy to answer it, but obviously our time needs to be taken on asking you questions. But the answer to your question is that the Committee did not publish those questions.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: They were probably leaked by the Greens. They were probably leaked by Sylvia Hale.

CHAIR: Order!

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson, I would like to ascertain a few dates from you, because clearly you must have a fairly strong recollection of these matters. When did Mr Richie Vereker approach you on behalf of Michael McGurk?

Mr RICHARDSON: That was in the last couple of weeks of February.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You are saying late February or mid to late February?

Mr RICHARDSON: Mid to late February.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: When did you talk to Mr Medich about what Mr Vereker had said or what Mr McGurk was alleging?

Mr RICHARDSON: I spoke to Roy Medich about it after I had had the initial phone call from Mr Vereker.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: When was that? Again, mid to late February?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: When did you meet Mr McGurk at the bowling club in York Street in Sydney?

Mr RICHARDSON: There is only one date that I could find in my diary at the time, of March this year. I told you I had one. We went through that, if you remember. I also told you—I did not use these words—but it is inadequate, to say the least. But I did find one of the meetings referred to and I think it is about 3 March.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You would say 3 March?

Mr RICHARDSON: Whether that was the meeting I had with Vereker where I did not speak to McGurk or whether it was the meeting with McGurk, I was not quite sure. So in my police statement I think I said that it could have been a meeting with Vereker minus McGurk that may have been the week before, or if that was the meeting with Vereker minus McGurk then it would be a week later that I met with Vereker and McGurk.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You are saying it could either be 3 March or 10 March?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, or the first meeting with Vereker could have been late February, but I am not certain.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So in mid-February you were approached by Richie Vereker and then on either 3 March or 10 March you had a meeting with Mr McGurk. You are reported by AAP as a result, I think, of your Channel 9 interview, as follows: "Mr Richardson said that he reported the incident to police three months ago, three months after meeting Mr McGurk". When did you give your statement to the police?

Mr RICHARDSON: I cannot recall the date but it was early May.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You are saying "early May"?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yep.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: That does not really seem to be three months after meeting McGurk—

Mr RICHARDSON: It seems to be two months.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You think it is two months—six weeks or two months?

Mr RICHARDSON: That says two months if it was—

Ms SYLVIA HALE: These are critical things, are they not, this timing, because here we have a significant client of yours and there is a man who has a reputation, which is to say the least unsavoury, who has already been charged with two counts of arson with intent to injure and three counts of assault, and they supposedly included a crowbar and a cricket bat. This man is going around saying, "Your client had better pay me \$8 million or I'm going to go to the police."

Mr RICHARDSON: No, he did not say he was going to go to the police.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Or that he was going to reveal what was on the tape.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, that is correct.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What did you do in that intervening six weeks—12 weeks; it seems to be unclear—

Mr RICHARDSON: No, it is not unclear. Let us get back to it. It is not unclear. I gave the police statement early in May and if I saw him in early March it is two months, so I think we can be relatively clear about that now, now that I have looked up—

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Okay, two months. That is a long time—

CHAIR: He looked up the diary.

Mr RICHARDSON: Actually I looked up the police statement. That is how I found out the May date. It is not in the diary.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What was the actual date of the police statement? You said you looked it up.

Mr RICHARDSON: I am reluctant to be too—I think it was the sixth.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You think? D-day the 6th of May.

Mr RICHARDSON: I could check that. I do have that at home.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: If you would not mind clarifying that.

Mr RICHARDSON: If that is a wrong date I will ring through the correct one.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: But we are looking at about six or eight weeks.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, we are.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The man has been charged by the police with extraordinarily serious offences, and his reputation leaves a lot to be desired. You go back and talk to your clients and you have been instructed by your clients to meet this man—

Mr RICHARDSON: I was not instructed, I was asked.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You were asked, and you were asked by Mr Roy Medich, even though it was Mr Ron Medich's voice that appears on the tape?

Mr RICHARDSON: That is correct.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Ron Medich was not concerned?

Mr RICHARDSON: I have explained before that I have really worked with Roy Medich rather than Ron most of the time, so Roy was the natural place to which I would go. He was concerned that if there was going to be anything that would happen that would damage the family name, so he asked me if I would not mind going along and hearing it.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So in that two months between meeting Mr McGurk and making a statement to the police did you discuss these issues with anyone else or was it only with the Medich family?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not think I would have had reason to discuss it with anyone else.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You did not discuss it with any members of the Labor Party, any people you thought might have been, could possibly be, implicated in the tape?

Mr RICHARDSON: No, there was no suggestion ever that there were any members of the Labor Party implicated in the tape, so why would I discuss it with members of the Labor Party?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How long was the tape, Mr Richardson?

Mr RICHARDSON: I have no idea, Ms Hale.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Why not?

Mr RICHARDSON: I was told by McGurk that it was an hour, an hour and a half, but whether it was an hour or an hour and a half or not I would not know.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Why was that, Mr Richardson?

Mr RICHARDSON: Because I did not listen to it all.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Why did you not listen to it all, Mr Richardson?

Mr RICHARDSON: Because that would be a complete waste of my time.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You are saying that when you have been asked by your client to go and meet this man to hear the basis of his allegations—

Mr RICHARDSON: That is correct.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: —when he is threatening, he has an appalling reputation and he is clearly wanting to extort \$8 million, you are saying that you did not bother to listen to the entire tape?

Mr RICHARDSON: Absolutely. I asked him to play me the bit that mattered. Why would I want to listen to an hour and a half of talk between people about which I had no interest whatsoever?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: But surely the whole point of this tape is that Mr McGurk was alleging there were major politicians and bureaucrats named—

Mr RICHARDSON: No, he never said—you are following the *Herald* story. I would rather you follow the truth. He never suggested to me that there were any politicians involved; never at any stage did he even suggest it.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: But you did not even listen to the tape to ascertain that.

Mr RICHARDSON: I asked him to play me the bit that mattered. Which part of that do you not understand?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: When he did play you the tape, how much did you listen to?

Mr RICHARDSON: I would have thought a minute.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: A minute. I think you are quoted as saying 30 to 50 seconds of the hour-long tape, right?

Mr RICHARDSON: Pardon me for my dreadful inaccuracy!

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You say that it was inaudible, the critical part was inaudible.

Mr RICHARDSON: Mm-hm.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Did you ask Mr McGurk to explain what was being said, to translate to you what was being said?

Mr RICHARDSON: No, he had already said what was being said. I did not need him to repeat that. I tried to see if I could hear that on the tape and I could not, so I suggested to him that this was a load of nonsense and what he ought to do was get it cleared up by some sort of audio expert and replay it to me, which of course never occurred.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson, here you have a man who wants to extort \$8 million. There is general knowledge, according to reports, that this tape is in existence. There is a genuine belief, accurate or otherwise, that it names significant people and talks about influence being wielded—

Mr RICHARDSON: There is a "general belief". I do not understand that. Who generally believes it?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: There have been reports.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, but you cannot say there is a general belief.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I think Mr Jim Byrnes, for example, refers to it. He talks about—

Mr RICHARDSON: Oh, he is one of your sources, is he? That is reliable! I am glad we are relying on him.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Madam Chair, could I ask Mr Richardson just to answer the questions?

CHAIR: Sure.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson, there are reports floating around from various people that there is a lengthy tape in existence, a tape somewhere between an hour and an hour and a half long, that names significant figures with very good connections to the upper echelons of the Labor Party, the Government and the bureaucracy. Your Mr Medich is sufficiently concerned that he asks you to go and listen to it. You, who I assume have a long-term interest in the Labor Party and what goes on, and in fact a very intimate knowledge of what goes on inside the Labor Party, turn up at the bowling club. You stay for a maximum of 10 minutes, you say, you listen to only 30 to 50 or possibly 60 seconds of the tape. That just does not seem credible, Mr Richardson, that anyone in your position should be so indifferent as to what was on that tape, and you expect people to believe that.

Mr RICHARDSON: I find that question offensive. I would go further and say stupid. I am dealing with a lowlife. I go in and the lowlife says—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: He's dealt with a lot of them in his time.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yeah, well I am here with you. He says, "As far as I'm concerned I've got a tape here in which some planning officials are nominated as having accepted bribes." I say to him, "Okay, you've got an hour and a half tape which is about all their business dealings. I don't care about those. Play me the bit where this occurs." I think that is what anyone would do rather than sit there for an hour and a half listening to a lot of stuff that is totally irrelevant to my life entirely and even to the Mediches. So, what do I do? I say, "Play the bit that matters." He plays it, it is completely and utterly inaudible and so I walk out on this lowlife because I am not prepared to spend an hour and a half listening to a tape with him. I did not want to spend a second or nanosecond more with him than I had to. I find it extraordinary that you would expect that I would sit there for an hour and a half with this bloke and listen to a whole lot of stuff that was totally irrelevant.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson, that explanation may satisfy you but I am sure it will not wash with a lot of people who will find it absolutely inconceivable that you were not prepared to sit and listen at least to more than 30 or 60 seconds of the tape, which potentially contains quite explosive information about—

Mr RICHARDSON: I listened to the part that was supposed to contain explosive information and it would not have let off a bunger. I simply disregarded it because it was nonsense. It was a fake.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson, as you may have been aware, in fact in January, that is three or four months beforehand, Mr McGurk had been charged with arson and assault.

Mr RICHARDSON: I read that.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Here is this fellow whose reputation leaves a lot to be desired and he says to you it is his intention, or at least you understand his intention is to extort \$8 million. Did he tell you that—that that was what he wanted Mr Medich to pay you?

Mr RICHARDSON: Pay him, not pay me.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Pay him.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, he claimed that was the money owed to him and that he was suing Mr Medich for it.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So you have got the gentleman there who is extorting \$8 million. How long did it take you to go to the police?

Mr RICHARDSON: He did not extort \$8 million.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: He was attempting to extort \$8 million.

Mr RICHARDSON: Do you want me to answer the question? I will answer it. If you want to interrupt I will listen to the interruption.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I want you to tell me how long it took you to go to the police after Mr McGurk made these requests for this \$8 million?

Mr RICHARDSON: I thought we had already agreed it was two months. Is there any part of that earlier conversation you do not recall?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Okay, so you say it took two months.

Mr RICHARDSON: Good, you recall.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Why did it take two months?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not understand why you would be asking that question. As far as I am concerned, all that has happened here is—and I think everyone has to imagine the situation—I have been played a tape by one person, so it is he and I sitting in a private club totally isolated from everybody else. I hear this and no-one else does. If I go to the police it is simply a matter of him saying, "I didn't", and I say, "He did", and where does it go? One on one it goes nowhere. You wonder whether it is worthwhile. However, I reported it to the Mediches, naturally. The Mediches considered their position and Ron Medich went to the police and put the police in contact with me, with my agreement of course, and I think I played phone tag with police and mucked around for a few weeks until we finally agreed on an appointment on a Sunday.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I find that extraordinary, Mr Richardson.

Mr RICHARDSON: You find a lot of things extraordinary.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: We have an example just this last week where an extortion attempt for only \$5.5 million was made. It was reported to the police—

Mr RICHARDSON: You mean the one in Griffith?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: In Griffith.

Mr RICHARDSON: That is the one that has been going for 15 months.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Within four days of it being reported to the police, the police had arrested someone. Why did you anticipate that if you had gone to the police, the police would not have acted equally swiftly?

Mr RICHARDSON: They would not have been arresting anyone on that in four days. The essential difference is the people in Griffith had paid over extraordinary sums of money and that was noted and recorded. In this case nothing had been paid. I think that is a substantial difference. Even you might agree with it.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson—

Mr RICHARDSON: You are the one who raised Griffith, not me.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson, it is in the context of the Medich thing. We have an extortion attempt by someone who has already been charged for arson and assault. You do not think that prior background gives a basis for the police treating what you have to say with considerable—taking it very seriously?

Mr RICHARDSON: I am sure they did take it seriously, but in the end they dropped those other charges anyway, didn't they?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The police did not drop them, it was the Director of Public Prosecutions who dropped them.

Mr RICHARDSON: The Director of Public prosecutions dropped them. I spoke to the police and I told the police everything that I have told you.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Okay. Did you make a very detailed statement to the police?

CHAIR: Sylvia, can I just warn you not to go crossing over the police inquiry?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Okay. Madam Chair, my questions predate Mr McGurk's inquiry so I think it is relevant that this inquiry—

Mr RICHARDSON: So you do not think this would be included in a police investigation? I find that extraordinary.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I think it is relevant to ask Mr Richardson what he actually told the police about what Mr McGurk had said. That is the substance of this inquiry.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Point of order: Madam Chair, I invite Ms Hale to look at page 2 of your opening statement, under the heading "police investigation", and specifically the last sentence—

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The police investigation is into Mr McGurk's murder. I am talking about Mr Richardson's statement.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: —where, Ms Hale, it says, "If a member asks a question directly about the conduct of the current police investigation, I will rule it out of order."

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I am not asking a question about the conduct of the current police investigation. I am asking questions about the statements Mr Richardson made back on 6 May to the police prior to Mr McGurk's murder.

Mr RICHARDSON: And you do not think that that would have been included in the police investigation of the murder?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I do not know; I am sure that Mr McGurk's arson charges are probably included in the police investigation.

Mr RICHARDSON: So we are dealing with something that is included.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Madam Chair, it relates to a police investigation. Clearly, it is out of order.

CHAIR: I guess the problem is that we do not know what the police investigation is actually investigating.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: That being the case, I think it is prudent that it be ruled out of order.

CHAIR: I agree. Ms Hale, I ask you to not touch upon what might be part of the police investigation.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson—

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You have said that you made a statement to the police.

Mr RICHARDSON: Correct.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: And you have said that that statement detailed your dealings with Mr McGurk in the bowling club.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: That statement included the fact that Mr McGurk had attempted to extort \$8 million from the Medich family.

Mr RICHARDSON: He would claim, as I have said, that he was owed the money and was suing for it. I think, however, that it is a reasonable conclusion to come to that he was trying to extort it, but that is not what he would say, were he able to say anything—which I take it, he is not.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Was your statement any more detailed than that?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not think there are any more details than I have given here.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Okay. Given that it was made prior to Mr McGurk's murder, given that it is presumably a full account of your meeting with Mr McGurk, will you be prepared to make that statement public?

Mr RICHARDSON: When the police investigation is concluded, absolutely.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Thank you. Mr McGurk—I am sorry, Mr Richardson. After you had met Mr McGurk at the bowling club, in that period between meeting Mr McGurk at the bowling club and then making the statement to the police, did Mr McGurk contact you at all? Did he follow it up with telephone calls wanting to know?

Mr RICHARDSON: No. I think I said in the transcript last time that I had only ever had that 10 minutes with him; that I had no other contact with him of any kind—ever.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Did Mr Vereker contact you about it further?

Mr RICHARDSON: No, he did not.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: No-one spoke to you after that time?

Mr RICHARDSON: No. That was it.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What is your understanding of what Mr McGurk did between implying that he wanted to extort this \$8 million and the time of his death? Did he suggest to anyone that you are aware of, or did he make any further claims?

Mr RICHARDSON: I have no idea.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So you did not hear any rumours?

Mr RICHARDSON: Nothing.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So far as you are concerned, after that meeting in the bowling club, the whole matter subsided and went away.

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not know. I cannot obviously testify as to what McGurk did with that tape afterwards, but I think, having fairly dismally failed with a low-brow attempt at extortion, he may well have given up. But what happened with the court case, I actually do not know whether they came to a settlement or whether they fought it through. I really do not know.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: In relation to your conversation and your listening to the tape, you said you spent 10 minutes with Mr McGurk and about 50 or 60 seconds of that time were spent actually listening to the tape. Can I ask you what you did in the other nine minutes? Did you listen to any other parts of the tape at all?

Mr RICHARDSON: I sat down and was introduced to him.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Who introduced you?

Mr RICHARDSON: I think you know the name. I have used it many times today.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: No, I do not, I am sorry.

Mr RICHARDSON: Richard Vereker introduced me to him.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So Mr Vereker was there at the bowling club?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes. I actually did not know that McGurk was going to be there at all. I thought I was merely meeting Mr Vereker who had the tape.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So if you had gone to the police and said that there had been this extortion attempt made, you could have told the police Mr—or did you tell the police Mr Vereker was there?

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So it would have been possible for Mr Vereker, if he had been questioned by the police, to either support or deny your assertion?

Mr RICHARDSON: No, because—maybe you did not hear what I said earlier on and I have to repeat it. I went to a part of the club where there was nobody else and had the tape played, so Vereker did not hear the tape.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So he waited to one side and the two of you—

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, and the two of us were alone.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Would it be a reasonable construction to say that you only listened to 60 seconds of the tape because you heard enough of it to know that if you listened to any more, if you were asked questions about whether people were named on it, you would be either forced to admit you had heard people's names, or you would be forced to lie?

Mr RICHARDSON: Why would I be forced to admit or lie?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Obviously, if you are being cross-examined in a court of law as to what was on the tape and you have listened to more of the tape than may have been prudent, that may have made you liable to answering certain questions.

Mr RICHARDSON: I went there to ascertain whether or not the allegation that had been made to me over the telephone by Mr Vereker—i.e. that there had been a statement made on the tape that some planning officials had been bribed—I went to ascertain if that were true. What I ascertained was that no-one could ascertain whether or not it was true because the tape was—and probably deliberately—blurred, garbled, whatever, so that I could not understand it. Once I knew I could not understand it, I saw no point in staying around.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You did not attempt to listen to any more of the tape to see whether it became clear?

Mr RICHARDSON: It was up to him to play me the part of the tape that I was called to the meeting to hear. He could not do it because it did not exist.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Did you tell him to stop playing the tape, or did the tape stopped playing?

Mr RICHARDSON: I think he gave up.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You mean that after one minute at this meeting, which has taken a couple of months to arrange, suddenly after one minute it had all—

Mr RICHARDSON: Because I was not playing the game. I would not do it. I just said, "This is rubbish", which is why it seems to me to be extraordinary, to use your word, that here we are at a committee, at all this great public expense, about a tape that I could not understand. I do not know what part of "I do not understand" you do not understand.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: But you listened only to 60 seconds of a tape that might have been 60 or 90 minutes long.

Mr RICHARDSON: That is right.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I just find that extraordinary—your lack of interest in what the tape contained.

Mr RICHARDSON: My lack of interest in the rest of the hour is profound, I want you to understand—profound. I was interested in one bit. He could not produce the one bit.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Can I suggest to you, Mr Richardson, public interest in the other 59 or 89 minutes is equally profound?

Mr RICHARDSON: Is it not interesting that no-one has ever asked me a question about it, bar you?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Because it might reveal who it was, because if you had listened to the full length of the tape in fact you might have heard the names of significant members of Parliament and bureaucrats being named, and of allegations and suggestions that money had been paid.

Mr RICHARDSON: Look, I put to you—even you—if McGurk had not suggested there were members of Parliament mentioned on the tape, there probably were not. What do you reckon? It would be in his interest to suggest it, would it not?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I believe we have only tapped—

Mr RICHARDSON: Would it not?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson, we have only your word that he did not mention members of Parliament—only your word.

Mr RICHARDSON: And whose word do you have that he did?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: That there could have been—

Mr RICHARDSON: Whose word do you have that he did? McGurk's!

Ms SYLVIA HALE: There seemed to have been—

Mr RICHARDSON: Only McGurk's.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: There seems to have been plenty of stories circulating that in fact key figures were named on the tape.

Mr RICHARDSON: Only McGurk.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: And you, Mr Richardson—

Mr RICHARDSON: Only McGurk, and you know it.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson—

Mr RICHARDSON: Well then, name one other person who has circulated the story. Name one other person who heard the tape. Go on, you do it. If you want to make the allegations, back them up.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr Richardson, you have sufficient connections with the Labor Party—

Mr RICHARDSON: In your case, silence is not golden, Ms Hale.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You have sufficient connections with the Labor Party to know how embarrassing it would be if a tape were to become public that named those people and suggested that in fact money had

changed hands in return for favourable planning decisions. Can I suggest to you, Mr Richardson, that you decided not to listen to the remainder of the tape because you were apprehensive about what you might hear, and that you did not want to be put in a position where you would have to either confirm or deny that significant members of Parliament and public servants were mentioned on the tape?

Mr RICHARDSON: I would say the suggestion is nonsense. If I did not want to be placed in that position, I would not have gone to the meeting in the first place. By going to the meeting, I was prepared to be placed in that position. However—I mean, I suspected it was always going to be a lame attempt at blackmail, which is what it turned out to be. You are desperate to find something more in it than that, and I appreciate your desperation. But I just cannot help you with it.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Tell me, Mr Richardson, after you had made your statement to the police, did they ever attempt to follow up with you—

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: —about it?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You heard nothing more from the police after that?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Did you find that surprising?

Mr RICHARDSON: No.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Surely, as with the Griffith incidents, we have shown that the police can act with remarkable speed when someone complains about a blackmail attempt, and yet you did not even get a follow-up call from the police?

Mr RICHARDSON: I do not understand what follow-up you could get. I gave a statement; that is it. It is up to them to investigate. At the end of the day, it would have been his word against mine, as I said, so I doubt very much that it could have been taken very far. So I did not expect to hear anything more, and I did not.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: As far as you know, the police made no attempt to obtain the tape from Mr McGurk?

Mr RICHARDSON: Oh, no, I am sure they did. I do not know that, but I am sure they did.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Whose voice was it on the tape? Did you recognise it as Mr Ron Medich?

Mr RICHARDSON: The part of the tape that I heard the 60 seconds of, you could not understand any—I could not make out any person.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So why were your clients so enraged and sufficiently concerned, when you reported back to them, to go to the police, or for them to ask you to go to the police?

Mr RICHARDSON: I would have thought that if we go back over the last couple of minutes and look at your own questions, you were suggesting that there should have been enough outrage at the attempt to go straight to the police. Now you are suggesting why were they outraged to go to the police? For the same reason that you were suggesting a few minutes ago, I would imagine.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You are saying then—

CHAIR: Order! Do Government members have any questions?

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Not at this point.

CHAIR: You have no questions at all?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We spoke about this in the deliberative meeting, so not at this point.

CHAIR: Okay. Mr Richardson, that brings us to the conclusion of the hearing. I would like to thank you for your attendance today.

Mr RICHARDSON: It was a great pleasure, thank you.

(The witness withdrew)

Committee adjourned at 10.26 a.m.
