

SOFTSTAR
UCUW MEDIA
MINISTER TUCKEY

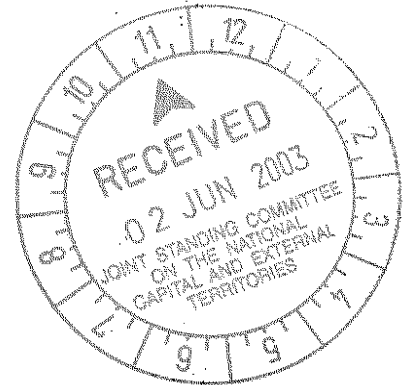
ATT: SARA EDSON

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FROM M. ASIM'S
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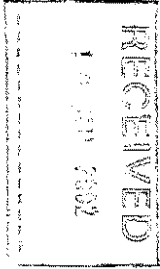
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36 THE WEST AUSTRALIAN WEDNESDAY JULY 9 2003

No casino revival: Tuckey

CANBERRA
By Karen Middleton

THE Christmas Island casino would not reopen because the locals might fall victim to the gambling scourge, Federal Territories Minister Wilson Tuckey said last night.

Mr Tuckey said he had not received any requests for a renewal of the licence to operate the defunct casino, despite reports that Asia Pacific Space Centre managing director David Kwon wanted to reopen the venture.

He did not intend to revisit the casino licence issue.

"It's not going to be renewed," Mr Tuckey said. "I have received no rep-

resentations whatsoever as Minister in that regard and I don't see what would change it. I can see no reason why the community needs a casino."

Mr Tuckey said there were enough new projects on the island to provide employment opportunities for locals, including the proposed new detention centre for asylum seekers and the proposed spaceport development.

"I don't see any reason to give the people on the island a chance to gamble away their hard-earned gains," he said.

He was negotiating with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs so appropriate training could be available on the island to enable locals to gain the skills to work at the detention centre, rather than importing workers from the mainland.

Speculation on the casino's possible reopening followed ABC TV's Four Corners program on Monday night which carried allegations the casino had previously been involved in money laundering with most of the gambling proceeds coming from Indonesian high-rollers.

Yesterday, the Federal Labor Opposition and the Australian Democrats urged caution in any consideration of a future casino licence.

Labor's territories spokesman Gavan O'Connor said some islanders were keen for the casino to reopen.

"It is important that the economic base of the island be enlarged to generate employment and ensure long-term prosperity for the island community," Mr O'Connor said.

"If a new licence is granted, it must not go to anyone associated in any way with crime, corruption or money laundering in Australia or elsewhere. Very thorough checks are needed."

Democrat leader Senator Natasha Stott Despoja said Christmas Island had had about enough of outlandish development ideas from the mainland.

"We have the proposed spaceport, the detention centre, un-rehabilitated phosphate mining sites and the prospect of more mining in the national park and now the reopened casino."

Senator Stott Despoja said.

"How much more can Christmas Island take?"
"It appears the Government's approach to Christmas Island is out of sight, out of mind."

W TUCKEY MP 02 6277 2067

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Att Counselor

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Minutes of Council meeting with Minister Wilson Tuckey
3.00pm 2 September 2002
Shire Chambers

Attendance:

Commonwealth: Minister Wilson Tuckey, Dick Sherwood (Senior Political Advisor), Jarl Andersson (Official Secretary), Ray Stone (Senior Program Officer), Maureen Ellis (TOC), Vivan Mawhinney (TOC).

SOCI Councillors: Deputy President Foo Kee Heng, Cr Gordon Thomson, Cr Kelvin Lee, Cr Philip Teo, Cr Morgan Soh.

SOCI Officers: Gary Dunt, Eddie Love, Margaret Robinson, Chew Boon Beng, Gan so Hon.

The Minister was welcomed by the Deputy President.

Minister stated that the works being managed by DoTaRS for the infrastructure to support the IRPC was going well and local contractors, he believes, are involved. The Minister also stated that the Shire should look beyond the immediate future with regard to governance models. The Minister asked Mr Dunt whether this had been raised with Council?

Mr Dunt stated that Councillors had been briefed on a possible governance system but no lengthy discussions had taken place as research is continuing. Mr Dunt also stated that he had briefly discussed this with the President of Cocos (Keeling) Shire on the return flight from Local Government Week. President Grant indicated that he would like a teleconference with the SOCI Council to discuss this.

The **Minister** stated that the type of issues he would like to resolve are such things as the currently proposed Culture and Arts SDA. Could not this be handled by someone or some organisation on island? The Minister would like to see funding and future governance issues resolved during his 3 year term.

The **Minister** stated that the proposal by DIMIA to have education and medical facilities at the new IRPC Centre was not supported. The use of current island infrastructure would be a better option.

The **Minister** noted that APSC seem to be making progress at South Point however more frequent discussions are required with APSC.

The **Deputy President** asked what was the current status of the \$8M for the new sports and recreation facility?

The **Minister** stated that currently this was being handled by the Administration until a better working relationship with the Shire was established.

The **Deputy President** asked what the current situation with the recommendations on the CIR enquiry and the ex-employees entitlements?

The **Minister** stated that this had not been resolved at this time. The Liquidator has money available but he is currently being sued by the Indonesian owners. The Commonwealth could have guaranteed payments however the advice received by the Department was not to underwrite the entitlements. The retrenched workers are high on the priority list.

Cr Thomson asked why the laundry workers could not be paid out of the sale of the asset as this generated \$110,000 and the workers entitlements are \$20,000.00?

The **Minister** asked Cr Thomson whether he had received the Ministers written response dated 22 August 2002? Cr Thomson stated that he had not yet received it but that was not unusual with the mail system on CI. The Minister then read his response.

Mr Dunt explained to the Minister that on occasion mail has taken 3 months from Perth to CI.

Deputy President asked the Minister about the press release stating that the Commonwealth were not inclined to issue a Casino licence on CI.

The **Minister** responded that the history of small communities is that they pay a high price for the jobs that are generated. Poker machines have had a negative effect on families. A Casino would be detrimental to the community. The Minister has had discussions with the current owners who want the Resort in freehold. The Minister would only be interested in freehold transfer if the resort was operating as a viable resort i.e. restaurants open, swimming pool etc. A set of conditions on freehold transfer would have to be agreed. The Administration should liaise with the SOCI for input on what you would reasonably expect before freehold would be agreed.

Cr Lee asked the Minister about the freshwater spring and Waterfall Bay within the resort lease.

The **Minister** stated that he agreed about the water issue. The water does not belong to the casino. The Commonwealth expect to develop this water source (\$1M) as part of the airport upgrade. CIR would then become only another water user and pay accordingly, however, dependant on costs there may be some concessions.

Cr Lee asked about public access to Waterfall Bay.

Mr Dunt explained that if residents rang the resort they could get access to Waterfall Bay. There is a public liability issue as the track down to Waterfall Bay is a problem.

The **Minister** stated that the public liability and any OH&S issues need to be resolved so that the public access issue is resolved.

Cr Thomson stated that the lease requires 'reasonable public access'. This issue has been going around and around with no resolution. The Minister needs to address this.

The **Minister** said that it will be resolved before any freehold transfer would be considered.

Cr Thomson asked whether the Minister is willing to do something about it today or tomorrow?

The **Minister** stated that he would not but would await the negotiation process.

Cr Lee brought up the fact that rents had increased by anything up to 200% since the IRPC project had got underway.

The **Minister** stated that he had no power to fix prices unlike States. There is a philosophical view that the Commonwealth does not fix prices. There will be an ongoing need for public housing on both islands.

Cr Thomson said that there is a lot of VCL on CI. Selling off superlots has not worked. The Commonwealth have taken steps to try and curb the increases and pay a maximum rent of \$450 per week. What can the average person do?

The **Minister** said that the Commonwealth are spending \$18M on the IRPC accommodation and Construction Camp. The 'boom' will not last too long. Contractors are paying \$30.00 per day for Poon Saan units.

Mr Dunt asked whether, similar to state agencies, an agency on island could develop a subdivision and sell individual blocks to on-island buyers at reasonable prices? For example could the SOCI develop a subdivision along similar lines to the LIA proposal?

The **Minister** stated that he would not be personally opposed to it, however the Dept of Finance are the dominant factor in land issues.

The **Deputy President** asked what was happening with insurance on CI as residents could not insure their houses or contents. Compulsory third party for vehicles was also lacking.

The **Minister** said that he thought the house insurance had been resolved as long as they met the necessary cyclone/wind loading factors. As far as the compulsory third party went this was close to resolution through the Northern Territory Government. They will start a pool with a \$5M underwriting guarantee from the Commonwealth, this is now with the Dept of Finance. The

Minister said that he would get his staff to send information on what insurance is currently available.

The **Deputy President** stated that he had met with the WA Municipal Scheme and they were also interested.

Ms Maureen Ellis agreed to follow up on what insurances are available.

Cr Thomson stated that he had been speaking to a resident at the current swimming pool who indicated that \$8M would not pay for a decent size swimming pool. If all the proposed projects go ahead then the funds available for a sports and recreation centre will not be sufficient to meet the demand. Also the current infrastructure for youth is inadequate and any increase in young people would require further infrastructure. Now is the opportunity to have another look at the funding required so that a reasonable level of youth and sporting facilities could be delivered. In other words extra \$ plus a bit to take into account the remote area.

The **Minister** stated that when he was on the Council of Caernarvon Shire and they needed a swimming pool they borrowed money for it. The original offer of \$8M was for a joint facility. Everything has now changed although the offer of \$8M is still on the table. Any extras above \$8M will have to be borrowed. The construction methods considered need to be thought of 'beyond the square'.

Cr Thomson said that he would feel very uncomfortable borrowing money against future rates as some projects may not go ahead. He asked that it be considered.

The **Minister** said that is a decision for Council. The Minister also stated that he had asked GHD to take more care and consideration when dealing with funding of projects.

Mr Dunt asked about the progress of the new off loading facility at Mar Chor Nui Nui.

The **Minister** stated that the contract has been let to Detmil. Consideration is being given to a 200 tonne mobile crane rather than a fixed crane.

Mr Dunt asked about the progress of the airport extension.

The **Minister** said that he hoped that an alliance could be formed for the management of this project as he did not want to see every tenderer bringing a crushing plant to the island. The Public Works Committee Report is available (handed to Mr Dunt). Firefighting at the airport still needs to be addressed utilising a volunteer brigade.

Cr Lee asked whether the IRPC tender for management was finalised?

The **Minister** said that this was a question for DIMIA however he believed that the successful contractor would use local people. Training needs to be available. The Minister went on to say that the Education and Health Services should be improved so that the community benefited rather than the IRPC.