
TRANSCRIPT OF AFTERNOON PROCEEDINGS

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INDEPENDENT BROAD-BASED ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

MELBOURNE

WEDNESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2019

(7th day of examinations)

BEFORE THE HONOURABLE ROBERT REDLICH QC

Counsel Assisting: Mr Michael Tovey QC

Ms Amber Harris

OPERATION SANDON INVESTIGATION

PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS PURSUANT TO PART 6 OF THE INDEPENDENT BROAD-BASED ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION ACT 2011

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of transcripts. Any inaccuracies will be corrected as soon as possible.

1 UPON RESUMING AT 2.10 PM:

2 <LORRAINE JOAN WREFORD, recalled:

3 COMMISSIONER: Yes, Mr Tovey.

4 MR TOVEY: Thank you, Mr Commissioner. Could we please go to
5 images 30 and 31. These are surveillance photos which
6 were taken of you at a meeting with Mr Aziz at the Little
7 Billy cafe in William Street on 1 February of 2019. Do
8 you recall having that meeting?---Yes, yes.

9 And that's a meeting on which you discussed business involving
10 Mr Woodman?---I believe so.

11 And you also handed over - sorry, you prepared to hand over
12 cash to him then?---Yes.

13 I will now seek to have played to you - - -

14 COMMISSIONER: They will be exhibit 63, those images.

15 1 February 2019.

16 #EXHIBIT 63 - Images 30 and 31, 1 February 2019.

17 MR TOVEY: Surveillance device clips Nos 1 through to 5. These
18 were all recordings of conversations which took place in
19 and around that meeting.

20 (Audio recording played to the Commission.)

21 COMMISSIONER: Just a moment, Mr Tovey, if you want the witness
22 to follow the transcript, you'll need to have the full
23 transcript up, not a fragment of it. So do you need the
24 image there?

25 MR TOVEY: I'm sorry, I hadn't realised - yes, we need the - -
26 -

27 COMMISSIONER: Do you need the image there at the same time?

28 MR TOVEY: No, we don't.

29 COMMISSIONER: No.

1 MR TOVEY: Can you follow that transcript okay?---Yes.

2 Could we start again, please.

3 (Audio recording played to the Commission.)

4 COMMISSIONER: Is this a continuation of the same call, Mr -
5 conversation?

6 MR TOVEY: It's not a continuation but another excerpt from the
7 same call.

8 COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you.

9 MR TOVEY: Sorry, from the same - - -

10 COMMISSIONER: Conversation.

11 MR TOVEY: Conversation, yes, or series of conversations under
12 surveillance.

13 (Audio recordings played to the Commission.)

14 COMMISSIONER: Mr Tovey, before we proceed to the
15 next - there's one more excerpt, is there?

16 MR TOVEY: Yes, I think there is one more.

17 COMMISSIONER: Mr Tovey, there's reference there to an
18 individual at the council named. Should that not be the
19 subject of a suppression order?

20 MR TOVEY: Yes, it should, Mr Commissioner.

21 COMMISSIONER: I take it you want to examine Ms Wreford about
22 what that all meant in relation to the other council and
23 what the implications of that might be in relation to
24 Casey Council.

25 MR TOVEY: Quite so.

26 COMMISSIONER: But you are not proposing to lead any evidence
27 that concerns that individual, are you?

28 MR TOVEY: No, or indeed about Yarra Valley Council.

29

1 correct?

2 MR TOVEY: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER: So I make a suppression order that his name
4 should not be the subject of publication in any way. Yes,
5 Mr Tovey.

6 MR TOVEY: Yes, if we could go on to the next extract, please.

7

[REDACTED]

8

[REDACTED]

9

[REDACTED]

10

[REDACTED]

11

[REDACTED]

12

[REDACTED]

13 (Audio recordings played to the Commission.)

14 MR TOVEY: Thank you. So what happened after that, I'd
15 suggest, and you were observed leaving the restaurant,
16 getting into your car for a short time - sorry, getting
17 into a car for a short time and then leaving the car; is
18 that the situation? Whose car was it you went to?---It
19 wasn't my car.

20 I think it was Mr Aziz's car?---Yes.

21 So after that you went to Mr Aziz's car, handed over the cash
22 and then got out of it?---Correct.

23 And those in circumstances where he's remarked to you in the
24 restaurant to the effect, "I can't hand the money over
25 here because it just looks like a drug deal"?---Mm-hm.

26 Is that right?---That's what he said.

27 I'll take you back to other parts of this conversation, but
28 it's patently clear, is it not, that by this stage you
29 knew that whatever arrangement there was between Mr Aziz

1 and Mr Woodman had to be corrupt?---I guess looking back
2 on it that's correct. It's probably not quite how
3 I looked at it at the time, but it certainly looks like
4 that.

5 I'm now not saying you said to yourself the "corrupt" word, but
6 you knew that this was an arrangement which was covert and
7 involved the aim of hiding the transfer of
8 funds?---Correct. But I - - -

9 And the reason for that had to be that there wasn't a
10 legitimate purpose for the handing over of the funds or
11 all the funds?---I guess so.

12 If I could just take you back to the first part of that.

13 There's talk there about, "So as soon as this settles
14 I take over the property, which will be the 8th of
15 February"?---Yes.

16 Can you give us some idea of what all that was about? What
17 property was he expecting to take over on 8 February?---He
18 was hoping to take over the property that - my
19 understanding was part of his divorce settlement in
20 Berwick.

21 And he's going to pass on to you some bank account details.

22 You tell me, was there some - you started off with the buy
23 Barak Road arrangement, that fell through; was that
24 right?---Yes, that's to do with the same property.

25 So this was some other arrangement to get money to him in the
26 vicinity of six, \$700,000?---Yes, by this time
27 I would - I don't know how to explain it, but I was
28 incredibly - I don't know, frustrated, disappointed, a
29 whole lot of things about Mr Aziz, who seemed to expect

1 Mr Woodman would pay for this property, would pay for it
2 somehow, and I noticed a reference in there about a
3 meeting and an agreement Mr Aziz had with Mr Woodman.
4 However, I wasn't in place or I wasn't there when that
5 agreement happened, whatever it is. It sounds like
6 there's a verbal agreement, and that's what it sounded
7 like to me at the time. I didn't understand it and
8 I still don't understand it to this day.

9 This is when he was talking about the thing that meant more to
10 him than anything else in his life; is that the agreement?
11 Anyway, we'll just go - - -?---Yes, I believe so.
12 I believe so.

13 We'll just go through this bit by bit. So - - -?---He seemed
14 very desperate for money.

15 And he felt that he was entitled to that money because he had
16 been voting as instructed?---He felt that way, clearly.

17 And did he seem to see - from your perspective, did he seem to
18 see Mr Woodman as a bottomless ATM?---Clearly.
19 Absolutely. And by the time this meeting happened -
20 I mean, I would have preferred not to meet with Mr Aziz,
21 but that \$2,000, I mean, he - you've got my phone records
22 anyway. Mr Aziz would ring me incessantly until I turned
23 up with the money. So I felt - sorry, I felt obliged to
24 meet him, even though I would have rather not.

25 You didn't want to be involved because you knew at that stage
26 that the whole thing was covert and, to use a
27 colloquialism, on the nose?---I felt uncomfortable about
28 it, 100 per cent, and clearly - I don't know if you've got
29 any recordings of me but a number of times I had asked

1 Councillor Aziz to declare a conflict of interest because
2 I just felt it was of utmost importance that he did. But
3 clearly he didn't.

4 COMMISSIONER: Ms Wreford, it's not just about a conflict of
5 interest. Doesn't this conversation make clear that
6 Mr Aziz was being bribed?---Yes, I guess it does. Yes.
7 I didn't look at it like that at the time, but yes.

8 MR TOVEY: And you discussed with him in that first segment of
9 the conversation - - -?---Yes.

10 The fact that any arrangement with him had to be covert, that
11 there couldn't be a money trail, and it couldn't be seen
12 to have anything to do with Mr Woodman?---Yes.

13 And you wouldn't be saying that unless you thought it was
14 corrupt, would you?---Yes, I guess so. I guess I felt an
15 obligation. I don't know what it was, and it might be
16 because I was on a payroll. I think I felt an obligation
17 to Mr Woodman. I disliked every single meeting I had with
18 Councillor Aziz by this time, and what I did is often went
19 along and let him talk and went along with what he said,
20 not because I agreed with it but because it's the quickest
21 way for me to get out of there.

22 By the time you got to the second clip of that conversation,
23 there was - at that stage Mr Woodman was suing the City of
24 Casey, was he not, because - and tell me if I'm wrong,
25 I don't know too much about this, but because some council
26 officers had alleged that he had been bullying
27 them?---Correct.

28 And was he suing them and the council for defamation?---He
29 was - I believe he was suing the City of Casey.

1 Yes, so he was suing - okay, so he was suing the City of Casey,
2 and at this stage Mr Aziz is a councillor for the City of
3 Casey?---Yes. I believe he knew about it.
4 Well, not only did he know about it. You are there talking
5 about Mr Woodman suing the City of Casey and Mr Aziz is
6 offering there, is he not, to help Mr Woodman, the person
7 who is suing the City of Casey - - -?---Actually, yes, it
8 does look like that.
9 Yes. So he's going to - at that stage he indicates he will do
10 whatever he can to help Mr Woodman successfully sue the
11 City of Casey?---That's what it says.
12 That's pretty shocking, is it not, in terms of - - -?---Yes.
13 In terms of a viewpoint as to appropriate allegiance?---Yes.
14 I think Mr Aziz wanted his payments from Mr Woodman. So
15 I think he was prepared to do anything.
16 Yes. And he went on to - Mr Woodman hadn't been able to,
17 through subpoena or any legal means, get hold of certain
18 documents he wanted, and Mr Aziz was volunteering to get
19 those documents for him?---That looks like it, yes.
20 Then if you go to the third clip Mr Aziz says, "Amanda said to
21 me that she's meeting with him." So that's him there
22 referring to Amanda Stapledon meeting with Mr Woodman, in
23 context, would you agree?---Yes, I would agree.
24 And you said, "Yeah, he told me that," and Mr Aziz says, "And
25 I said to her, 'That's good, that's it.' She's actually
26 asking him a different question on my behalf relating to a
27 completely different council. Basically Yarra Ranges. We
28 want to take it over the same way we've taken over Casey,
29 and there is another businessman we are working with to

1 make that happen." Now, is that something which you knew
2 anything about before he mentioned it to you?---No,
3 I didn't know anything about it and - sorry - - -
4 But, again, it's a bit hair raising, isn't it, when he there
5 seems to be talking about, "We've already taken over
6 Casey" - that's him and Amanda Stapledon and perhaps
7 Mr Woodman - "and we're going to take over Yarra
8 Ranges"?---I think - I took it that Councillor Aziz was
9 big-noting himself, and I don't believe that - he might
10 have thought he had taken over the City of Casey, but
11 I don't think other people thought that was the case.
12 That's why he was promoting himself - - -?---Correct.
13 And pitching himself to you and Mr Woodman? And was Mr Ablett
14 doing the same thing?---Not to me he wasn't, but maybe to
15 Mr Woodman.
16 Did you discuss with Mr Woodman what arrangements, if any, he
17 had with Mr Ablett?---Mr Woodman mentioned to me I think
18 it's some time this year that he had some sort of
19 arrangement with Mr Ablett; correct.
20 And what did he say that arrangement was?---No, he didn't say.
21 He did tell me that - he told me about a property
22 Mr Woodman - sorry, Mr Ablett owned and that he had
23 been - he had done some work for him on a consulting basis
24 to do - I don't know if it was subdividing it - I think it
25 was to do with subdividing a piece of land that Mr Ablett
26 had, and that they had horses together.
27 Did he tell you he was buying Mr Ablett's property?---No.
28 All right.
29 COMMISSIONER: But was it your understanding from this portion

1 of the conversation involving Yarra Ranges that what
2 Mr Aziz was saying was that some sort of corrupt
3 arrangement could be pursued with that council?---I took
4 it at the time to mean that Sam Aziz was beating his chest
5 and saying, "You know, look, I'm a good person, I've got
6 this other contact in Yarra Ranges and we're going to take
7 over the council," whatever that means. Whatever that
8 means. And I'm not sure exactly what he was thinking at
9 the time and, like I said, I was convinced he was just
10 big-noting himself.

11 Yes. Did you subsequently discuss that with
12 Mr Woodman?---I don't recall ever discussing Yarra Ranges
13 with him.

14 Very well.

15 MR TOVEY: The next conversation at tab 4 starts off with
16 Mr Aziz pleading to you not to share what you're about to
17 tell him with the "blood donor"; all right? Who came up
18 with "blood donor", do you know?---Councillor Aziz did.
19 And did you ever ask him whether that meant that - referred to
20 the person who the vampires hung off?---No. No, I didn't
21 ask him.

22 Is that the way you saw it?---How did I see that? I just saw
23 it as a nickname he had given Mr Woodman, and I did tell
24 Mr Woodman that's what they called him.

25 And it wasn't just Mr Aziz. Mr Ablett and Ms Stapledon also
26 referred to him by that appellation, did they
27 not?---I believe so. Once Councillor Aziz started it, it
28 seemed to - everyone seemed to use it.

29 Then he went on to tell you, "Basically my entire life centres

1 around the arrangement"?---Correct.

2 "I made with him about a year ago" - so this is early 2018, one
3 would conclude from that - "which is now influencing my
4 health. Do you reckon there's any chance he can actually
5 renege on it?" And you say, "Has he given you any
6 indication?" And you say, "No, no indication at all. But
7 I've seen other bits of information not for you, with
8 other people (indistinguishable)." So what was that
9 arrangement?---Well, that's the one I don't know because
10 I wasn't involved or - it was some arrangement that he's
11 talking about that I know nothing - I know nothing about,
12 unfortunately, or fortunately. I don't know which.

13 But you say, "I've seen other bits of information not for you,
14 with other people." What had you seen in respect of
15 arrangements with other people?---Sorry, where's this?

16 MR CASEMENT: We are just going a bit too far forward with
17 the writing, your Honour.

18 COMMISSIONER: Yes?---Which line are we talking about? What
19 number?

20 MR TOVEY: He asks you - sorry, we are at line 15 on
21 page 2?---Okay.

22 Thank you?---That comment by me is I'm just trying to pacify
23 him. I don't know what other information I had, in all
24 honesty, and I'm just - I think I found Councillor Aziz at
25 this point to be - I don't know how to describe it but
26 I think mentally unstable might be the way I saw it. In
27 this particular conversation I know we're talking here,
28 but in other conversations I've had with him he had
29 threatened suicide. He had - and, look, I'm not

1 sure - he's done that to me at least twice or three times,
2 actually. I'm not sure whether he's doing it for a
3 reaction or he really meant it or he's trying to be
4 manipulative. So I'm kind of pacifying him because
5 I don't quite know what his mental state is through this
6 conversation.

7 COMMISSIONER: But can I just ask you when you agree you said
8 to him, line 25, "If I was you I'd be putting away as much
9 as you can so that if anything happens," that reflects a
10 recognition by you that Mr Aziz had no legally binding - -
11 -?---Correct - well - - -

12 Entitlement to anything; what was happening just depended on
13 the goodwill of Mr Woodman?---Well, I'm agreeing to that
14 but I'm also just trying to be friendly to him because
15 he's getting - I don't know, he just - to me he seemed
16 unstable. I mean, really, there's been times where I've
17 been really worried about him, his mental health, and then
18 he'll turn around and suddenly be back to his normal
19 intelligent self. So I was getting - from Mr Aziz, he was
20 up and down like a yo-yo and saying all sorts of almost
21 hysterical things to me at times.

22 MR TOVEY: But you recognised, did you not, that he had as a
23 result of some meeting he'd had with Mr Woodman an ongoing
24 expectation, starting about a year before this, that he
25 was going to be getting a large sum of
26 money?---I recognise it, but neither Mr Woodman nor
27 Mr Aziz, or Councillor Aziz, had ever told me about it.
28 So I think he's telling me thinking I know about it. In
29 actual fact I didn't.

1 If you go over to the - before we do that, perhaps we will just
2 do it in a logical fashion.

3 COMMISSIONER: Can I just probe that for a moment,
4 Ms Wreford?---Yes.

5 You said a few moments ago in explaining something you said or
6 did here that maybe this occurred because you had a sense
7 of allegiance to Mr Woodman, and you had been associated
8 with him for a long time. Insofar as you say, "I didn't
9 know what the details of the financial arrangements were,"
10 was that in part because you didn't want to
11 enquire?---Could be. At one stage Councillor Aziz said to
12 me, "Mr Woodman owes me \$600,000." Now, I think I said
13 that this morning. But I still in my own mind was
14 confused about what that was. I didn't know if that was
15 the money that he had originally given him or it was
16 another arrangement. So I suspect in hindsight it was
17 another arrangement which I was not privy to.

18 I'm just trying to understand why, given the centrality of your
19 role between them, it is you didn't try to ascertain more
20 about what the arrangement was?---In all honesty, I don't
21 think I wanted to know.

22 Yes?---And that's it - you know, maybe I'm in denial and
23 I didn't want to know.

24 MR TOVEY: So at the bottom of that page at line 40 you see
25 Mr Aziz saying, "Traditionally he's been very honest with
26 me. Everything we've agreed to," and then he says, "So
27 I've given him all the support I can in council." So
28 that's Mr Aziz telling you barefaced - - -?---Correct.

29 That because of what he has been given by Mr Woodman he's given

1 him support in council; is that right?---That's - yes.
2 And that's the way you must have understood it at the
3 time?---Yes, correct.
4 "And that's based on an understanding that we had in his
5 office. I just want to make sure that you know" - - -
6 COMMISSIONER: You understood that to be Mr Aziz telling you
7 that he had been bribed to give Mr Woodman his support on
8 these recommendations?---Yes.
9 MR TOVEY: Then you went on over the next page at line 10, and
10 you've said there initially that your advice was it was
11 nothing that Mr Aziz could do, "Don't stress. He knows
12 about it." Mr Aziz says, "His son must know all about
13 it." You say, "And his accountant"?---Well, only because
14 I figured that someone's paying the money, so someone knew
15 about it in the office.
16 And then you went on to observe that with that sort of money,
17 anticipating that it was money - a large sum involving
18 hundreds of thousands of dollars; is that right?---Yes.
19 And you are saying, "With that sort of money he's got to get it
20 from somewhere." But then you went on to point out at
21 line 35 that "there's a difference between being wealthy
22 and having the cash"?---Correct.
23 You went on to say at page 4, line 10, "He said to me a number
24 of times he worries about you voting on him. It would
25 have to be more with people like Geoff Ablett." What were
26 you meaning by that?---What I think I meant at the time
27 is - I'm pretty sure I meant is that Mr Woodman and I had
28 discussed or I had discussed it with him about conflict of
29 interest and I think he was - Mr Woodman was worried about

1 him voting on things if there was a conflict of interest
2 and he should have declared one.

3 And what about Geoff Ablett? How did he come to get a mention
4 in this context?---I'm not sure. I can't recall what
5 I meant by that.

6 I want you to think about this carefully. You were one of, as
7 you understood it, his primary operators on the ground
8 making political contacts with councillors?---Well,
9 I think there was two of us, one on the Liberal side and
10 one on the Labor side.

11 Yes. And was it your understanding that in performing that
12 role that Geoff Ablett, Mr Aziz and Amanda Stapledon
13 formed a core of councillors who could be relied on to
14 support Mr Woodman?---I don't believe Councillor Stapledon
15 or Councillor Ablett were allowed to vote on - I think
16 they declared a conflict of interest at some earlier
17 stage.

18 I'm sorry, I'm not asking about votes. I didn't make myself
19 clear. There is material, a lot of material, indicating
20 that Councillor Ablett in the background being briefed and
21 initiating contacts with other councillors?---Yes.

22 Soliciting their votes in favour of Mr Woodman?---Yes.

23 Now, as the primary Liberal involved in making - maintaining
24 contact with councillors - - -?---Yes.

25 That's something that you were aware of, that Mr Ablett was
26 being used to approach other councillors to arrange votes,
27 even though he couldn't vote himself?---Actually
28 I probably was aware. I probably didn't think about it
29 because I didn't have direct contact with Mr Ablett. Very

1 few occasions in the last few years have I had any direct
2 contact with him.

3 What about Amanda Stapledon?---Yes, I've known Amanda for many
4 years.

5 And was she somebody - - -?---Sorry?

6 Who you understood from Mr Woodman could be relied on to vote
7 in his favour?---I don't think to vote in his favour
8 because she had declared a conflict of interest.

9 Sorry, to promote his interests in council other than by
10 voting?---Potentially, yes.

11 COMMISSIONER: Who was the other person you - you were dealing
12 with members that had a Liberal Party connection. Who was
13 the person you were suggesting dealt with Labor
14 members?---That was Phil Staindl.

15 MR TOVEY: Did Phil Staindl deal with people at council level
16 or only at State level?---I can't answer that
17 because - - -

18 It's okay?---Yes, I can't answer that one.

19 COMMISSIONER: Are you moving on, Mr Tovey?

20 MR TOVEY: I am.

21 COMMISSIONER: That will be exhibit 64, excerpts of recording
22 of conversation between Ms Wreford and Mr Aziz of
23 1 February 2019.

24 #EXHIBIT 64 - Excerpts of recording of conversation between
25 Ms Wreford and Mr Aziz of 1 February 2019.

26 MR TOVEY: You were working for Mr Woodman at the time of the
27 council elections in late 2016?---Yes.

28 Did you perform a role in trying to promote his interests in
29 respect of the election of councillors at that

1 time?---Okay, I'll tell you what happened - - -
2 Yes, please?---At that time because it's a little bit of a
3 story, is that Councillor Aziz approached me, probably
4 approximately six months before the election, and said he
5 would like to have a meeting with Mr Woodman. I said,
6 "I'll ask," and Mr Woodman agreed to having a meeting but
7 he insisted that I be part of that meeting. Subsequently
8 we had a lunchtime meeting which Councillor Aziz organised
9 at a Chinese restaurant in Dandenong, and at that meeting
10 Councillor Aziz put forward a proposition to Mr Woodman
11 that he support a group of councillors to run the council.
12 He was proposing that he would get together maybe 10 or so
13 candidates to run in different wards. He was hoping that
14 Mr Woodman would financially support his proposal. He
15 said and his pitch to Mr Woodman was that he wanted to
16 work with like-minded individuals.

17 Yes?---Mr Woodman - the figure that was run around at the
18 lunchtime was I think somewhere between 50 and 70,000, and
19 I was a little bit shocked because I have not ever heard
20 of a concept of a group of councillors or people running
21 as a group, apart from in a political party, running as a
22 group in a council election like that where they are all
23 funded basically together. So, yes.

24 All right. So in those circumstances you understood it to be
25 implicit in what was being said that if he offered that
26 support he could expect their support?---Yes, I think that
27 that would be an expectation, and in that conversation
28 Councillor Aziz made very clear - because we are talking
29 about 2016 now - that he didn't want any funding to run

1 his campaign and he said very clearly that he had - he had
2 organised fundraisers and he didn't need money. But he
3 said there's other people who were running who don't have
4 the means to run for council, and if you look at the City
5 of Casey and the size of the City of Casey, if you have a
6 ward in the City of Casey, it's almost as big as a state
7 electorate. So to actually financially fund a campaign to
8 even put one brochure out is quite expensive. So he put
9 this pitch to Mr Woodman and he said, "Look, I would like
10 to run a group of councillors" or "a group of people," and
11 Mr Woodman agreed to fund that. But he was very explicit
12 in saying that he didn't want to directly fund it because
13 he didn't want to be linked to other councillors, firstly,
14 and, secondly, he didn't - he didn't even want them to
15 know where the funds were coming from.

16 So did you prepare a budget in respect of that?---No, I did
17 not.

18 Could you have a look at - - -?---No, I didn't prepare it.

19 Someone else prepared the budget.

20 All right. I'm just going to show you a document?---Yes, yes,
21 I know the document.

22 I think this document came from - do you know what I'm about to
23 show you? Did that come from the execution of a warrant
24 at your premises?---It did - - -

25 Yes, it's okay, I'll just show you the - - -?---But the
26 document was not in my - - -

27 Don't worry, I'll show you the document?---Okay. I know the
28 document.

29 And then we can work out what you want to say about it. Could

1 the witness please be shown 3925. While that's coming up,
2 was it the case that, by the time the actual cost of what
3 you were doing to support that project was finally worked
4 out, the final cost was \$98,202? If you can't remember,
5 don't worry, I'll take you to the document?---Yes, I can't
6 remember seeing - I remember the 77,000. I can't
7 quite - - -

8 It doesn't matter. We'll go there?---That's about three years
9 ago now, so - - -

10 Thank you. This is a budget. Where did that budget come
11 from?---It came from - so what Councillor Aziz did, he
12 worked out that it was going to be a gigantic exercise to
13 run a campaign and he got someone else to actually manage
14 the campaign.

15 And who was that?---That was Janet Hasell.

16 How do you spell that?---H-A-S-E-L-L. Hasell; is that right?

17 Yes, I think we know who that is?---Janet Hasell.

18 Janet Hasell?---Yes.

19 All right?---And there were plenty of emails I think
20 between - Janet sent me information a lot, and that's
21 where I got that from.

22 And who is Janet?---She was a former councillor of the City of
23 Casey. Former.

24 At that stage there was, was there not, a - tell me if I'm
25 wrong, was there a \$500 donation limit in respect of
26 council elections?---Possibly. I'm not sure what the
27 council donations were. I think when I was in council it
28 might have been about a thousand. It probably was, yes.

29 In any event - - -?---It probably was, yes.

1 So could you look then at that budget. That's the budget that
2 was provided to you, was it?---It was one of them because
3 it kept changing, from memory. My job was purely - in
4 this, it was basically a clerical job. So I didn't have
5 any dealings with any of the candidates. I didn't talk to
6 them about this.

7 Yes?---I was purely making sure that invoices got paid, nothing
8 else.

9 Yes?---And in regard to the limit on donations, clearly once
10 again the onus has to fall on the councillor or someone
11 who's elected, and my understanding is in the Local
12 Government Act that even if you don't get elected and you
13 get a donation you should declare it on a register.
14 I would have assumed that the people who received a
15 donation would have enquired where it came from, but
16 I don't know that. And, secondly, if they couldn't find
17 out where the money came from I would have assumed that
18 they would have declared on the register that they had a
19 donation of printing or whatever it is, even though they
20 didn't know where it came from.

21 COMMISSIONER: So this amount was expended, was it?---Yes.
22 To your understanding?---Yes. On different candidates. It
23 wasn't on one candidate.

24 If we look midway down the page there are some people's
25 initials?---Yes.

26 Firstly, who actually proposed - these are all Mr Aziz's
27 proposal - - -?---Sorry?

28 Who nominated those persons as the persons for whom this
29 money - - -?---Yes, nothing to do with me. When I say

1 that, I honestly don't know. I think it's a group he got
2 together.

3 Who? Mr Aziz?---Correct.

4 But are any of these people names that have already been
5 mentioned in your evidence?---Yes.

6 Who are they?---Well, I think Amanda Stapledon was "AS".
7 Yes?---"GA" is Geoff Ablett.

8 Yes?---"SA" would be Sam Aziz, even - and I think - I actually
9 don't think his was paid for in the end. We can call that
10 a technicality, if you like. It was on there, but he
11 had - he repaid that money, for what it's worth.

12 So those persons were serving councillors who were standing for
13 re-election; is that so?---Yes, yes. Yes, correct.

14 And Mr Aziz - to your understanding, Mr Aziz presented them as
15 being a group?---I think it was more than that. I think
16 it was a bigger group. From memory, I think there was
17 about 10 or 11 candidates. But it's memory and it's
18 not - I mean, it's good to see this because it reminds me.

19 MR TOVEY: If you go through this list, at one stage there's
20 reference to - for various tasks ranging from two or three
21 candidates right through to 14 candidates?---Yes, that
22 could be the case.

23 Is that consistent with your recollection?---That could be the
24 case, absolutely. I thought - I think there was a core
25 group of 10 or 11, and I think there may have been a
26 subgroup a bit later.

27 And the sorts of things that were being paid for were things
28 relating to the printing of brochures and promotional
29 material?---Sure.

1 And the delivery of that material?---Correct.

2 And the nomination costs for four candidates, if you see down
3 towards the bottom of the page?---Whatever is on there
4 happened, I'm sure.

5 Mail-out costs and advertising?---Yes.

6 All right. So in the end that was estimated to be 75,000.

7 Then I would just like to have a look at 3927.

8 COMMISSIONER: Just before you move on, Mr Tovey - - -

9 MR TOVEY: I tender that.

10 COMMISSIONER: Was this a common process for council elections
11 at that time, that you'd get donations for a campaign for
12 multiple - - -?---I had never heard of it before. So if
13 it had happened before it would have happened without my
14 knowledge. I have never known it. So I was a little
15 surprised at the proposal, first of all. I was surprised
16 at the proposal and I was actually surprised that
17 Mr Woodman agreed to it.

18 I know there's been publicity from time to time about the
19 appropriateness of councillors standing in a bloc for
20 council elections. Was that something you had encountered
21 before?---What, standing in a bloc?

22 Yes?---Yes, definitely.

23 And was the expectation that if that happened there would have
24 to be transparency that needed to be disclosed to the
25 electorate?---No, and I think part of - it's complex, but
26 back in 2016 I think they were proposing - the State
27 government were proposing that you couldn't put
28 how-to-vote cards in your material unless you put - unless
29 you paid for it yourself. So the one that the VEC put out

1 was a - you know, you put a blurb in there, sorry, your
2 own personal write-up, and then you might put an order of
3 preference of candidates. Well, I think the proposal was,
4 and I think it went through, that you weren't allowed to
5 put that in the VEC handout. So, if councillors are in
6 multi-councillor wards and they hope to work with another
7 councillor, how do you show that on your voting
8 preferences if you can't do that through the VEC. So
9 I think what happens is councillors who really want to get
10 elected need to put that material out, rightly or wrongly.
11 I also think that having multi-councillor wards is not a
12 good thing because what happens - this is my own opinion.
13 What happens is the area is so much bigger and it's so
14 much more expensive for councillors to actually run, they
15 have to find the funds somewhere. So if you are trying to
16 stop that flow of funds it's got to be affordable for
17 people to run for council.

18 Yes. Do you agree that, if the electorate was to have the
19 proper knowledge about this campaign, both the fact that a
20 number of councillors were doing this together and,
21 second, that they were all being supported by the one
22 person needed to be disclosed?---Yes, potentially. And
23 I think - yes, I think just with donations and things like
24 that clearly if a business or a developer or anyone
25 donates to State or Federal government they have to put it
26 on a register. Clearly at this point in time there's no
27 such register for local councils. So it seems that it's a
28 bit of a free-for-all.

29 And of those that were elected at this election how many of

1 them disclosed this arrangement?---I wouldn't know. I've
2 never looked at the - I've never looked at the - - -

3 MR TOVEY: The answer, Mr Commissioner, is nobody.

4 COMMISSIONER: Does that come as a surprise, Ms - - -?---I'm
5 disappointed.

6 I believe from the council we are going to get a detailed list
7 of declarations over the period that we are looking at.

8 MR TOVEY: Yes. (To witness.) Now could you look at 3927,
9 please.

10 COMMISSIONER: I'll make that exhibit 65, the budget for the
11 2016 election campaign.

12 #EXHIBIT 65 - Budget for the 2016 election campaign.

13 MR TOVEY: This is a document which again I think was part of
14 the documentation found at your home?---Yes.

15 Which appears to indicate the final cost. If you look at the
16 totals there, they correspond with the totals - -
17 -?---Yes.

18 On the previous document, and then you get the new actual cost
19 of \$98,202; is that right?---That's what that says, and
20 I'll just say that that probably included Councillor
21 Aziz's printing. However, it was never paid for this way.
22 He did actually pay for his own. So it may be - and
23 I can't remember because I haven't got the documentation,
24 but it may be slightly less than that, if you take his
25 out.

26 In any event, you know, you are looking at a
27 contribution - assuming that this core of, say, 10, you
28 are looking at contributions something in the vicinity of
29 \$8,000 per candidate. Is that a large contribution in the

1 context of council elections as a single - - -?---I think
2 when I last ran for council - so that - just to get it in
3 perspective, I think it cost me about \$5,000, five or
4 \$6,000. So in 2016 that would probably be the sort of
5 cost it would be for a candidate to run for council.
6 So that would basically be the full cost of a fairly
7 well-provisioned run for council?---It could be. It could
8 have cost them more. I don't know.
9 And at that stage, of course, from what you say, you had one
10 person paying for this?---Correct.
11 COMMISSIONER: Not only paying for it but presumably arranging
12 for the discharge of each of these functions, delivery of
13 the documents - - -?---No, they weren't doing - no, no,
14 nothing like that. The campaign manager organised
15 everything like that.
16 So once the material was printed - - -?---Yes.
17 So why would the delivery of the pamphlets be part of the
18 campaign budget?---Well - - -
19 Mr Woodman's paying for that, though?---Yes, correct. Sorry,
20 I misunderstood what you said.
21 Yes. But the individual person standing for council would have
22 their own people do the actual delivery?---In some cases.
23 I think some of it may have been - I'm not sure if any of
24 it was posted out. I think in - Geoff Ablett I think had
25 some posted out. But it's three years ago and I actually
26 haven't looked at any of this documentation in three
27 years.
28 So there is a Perfect Pamphlets. Is that a company, is
29 it?---My understanding, and I don't know them and - yes,

1 but my understanding is they are hand deliverers. So
2 rather than put something through Australia Post, which
3 can be unreliable at times, you pay people to - - -
4 I see. Thank you.

5 MR TOVEY: Now, I just want to come back again to something
6 that we have already touched upon and that is - - -

7 COMMISSIONER: That will be exhibit 66, Mr Tovey.

8 MR TOVEY: Thank you, Mr Commissioner.

9 #EXHIBIT 66 - Document relating to final costs of the 2016
10 election campaign.

11 MR TOVEY: And that is arrangements relating to Barak

12 Avenue?---Yes, okay. Yes.

13 Could you please look at page 4071, and if you look at the
14 bottom of that page you'll see that's a text from Sam Aziz
15 to you?---Yes, correct.

16 And Sam says, "Hi Lorraine. My understanding is this. He
17 would buy 5 Barak Avenue at its current market value of
18 \$750,000, pay the mortgage out at \$490,000 and give the
19 difference to me. I would move in when the tenant moves
20 out on 7 January 2019 and he would allow me to live rent
21 free. We would have an agreement for him to transfer the
22 property back to me by August 2020 at a nominal fee"; is
23 that correct?---I saw that text and I think my jaw
24 dropped. This is - he kept coming - sorry, Councillor
25 Aziz kept coming up with these different schemes that he
26 came up with, yes.

27 Mr Woodman went along with this, did he not, to the point to
28 which you reported back that the purchasing entity would
29 be Cordwood Pty Ltd, one of his companies?---So in

1 discussions I had with Mr Woodman at first he said no way
2 would he buy a property, he doesn't need a property in
3 Berwick. Somewhere down the track he thought,
4 "I'll" - and he said to me, "I'll buy it in my name, but
5 Councillor Aziz has to declare a conflict of interest."
6 But that's - clearly, he pulled out of it in the end. He
7 really didn't want - - -

8 In the end what happened was that there was publicity given - -
9 -?---Correct.

10 To alleged improper association between - - -?---Correct.

11 Aziz and Woodman?---Correct.

12 And Mr Woodman said, "Look, this is just too hot to handle and
13 we can't settle." Is that the way it panned
14 out?---I believe so.

15 In the meantime contracts of sale had been prepared, a
16 section 32 had been prepared; is that right? I can take
17 you to the text?---Oh, okay, yes.

18 Is that consistent with your recollection?---I think he was
19 trying to get a section 32 together, yes. I'm not sure
20 how far down the track it got before it was decided that
21 that wouldn't be a way to go.

22 COMMISSIONER: So was it clear to you from your discussion then
23 with Mr Woodman that while he was proceeding to implement
24 this proposal it was not in exchange for any service or
25 commercial return from Mr Aziz; was that clear to
26 you?---Yes.

27 What reason did Mr Woodman give you for why he was prepared to
28 do this?---He said, "I'm helping out a friend." That was
29 it.

1 And you accepted that?---Did I accept it? It didn't feel right
2 to me. It didn't feel comfortable with me, and I kept
3 thinking if Councillor Aziz declares of conflict of
4 interest I'd have a huge sense of relief because I didn't
5 like being in the middle of this toing and froing.

6 MR TOVEY: The thing is that he couldn't be expected to declare
7 a conflict of interest because it would have alerted
8 anybody who looked at it to the fact that he had received
9 \$750,000 for nothing?---Well, that was - that was
10 Councillor Aziz's proposal. Like I said, my jaw dropped
11 when I saw the text. I was - I couldn't believe that he
12 had even thought of it.

13 COMMISSIONER: But as I've followed your evidence Mr Woodman
14 was going to implement this proposal were it not for The
15 Age article of late '18?---Yes. I don't know about the
16 amounts, though; but, yes, that's correct. I don't think
17 it was ever going to be 750,000, but that's - - -

18 MR TOVEY: But this sort of arrangement could only ever be
19 contemplated if there was between Mr Aziz and Mr Woodman a
20 corrupt relationship; true?---That would appear so, yes.

21 COMMISSIONER: Did you normally use a WhatsApp method of
22 communication with people?---Yes, I did. WhatsApp, I've
23 probably got about 30 different people on groups that I'm
24 connected - you know, friends and whatever.
25 I actually - especially when you are travelling it's a
26 great way to communicate.

27 MR TOVEY: Would you use WhatsApp as a call medium as well as a
28 way of messaging?---Occasionally - - -

29 When I'm talking about a call medium, voice calls?---Only if

1 I was overseas because - no, I wouldn't normally use it to
2 call. But that's not - no, probably not. I actually
3 found sometimes it's unreliable.

4 Did you actually see the contract of sale or section 32 in
5 respect of Barak Road?---I don't believe I saw - no,
6 I don't believe I saw the contract of sale or the
7 section 32.

8 Later on 10 August at page 4072 - - -

9 COMMISSIONER: The WhatsApps of 10 August will be exhibit 67.

10 #EXHIBIT 67 - WhatsApp messages dated 10 August.

11 MR TOVEY: If you look at 4072, and if we just bring up to the
12 top the one that starts, "He can just buy one of the Santa
13 Monicas"?---Mm-hm.

14 And there on the same day it would seem he's sent you a message
15 by WhatsApp saying, "He can just buy one of the Santa
16 Monicas at the advertised price and through the agent" -
17 I've got a hole in that - "through the agent number 1.
18 Santa Monica has a tenant and covers the mortgage. The
19 price is 695,000, and we can then have a nominal agreement
20 to hand it back. I would still need to refinance 5 Barak
21 through the higher income contract that Bernard drafted,
22 then sell it and use the difference to rent something in
23 Casey and pay 12 months in advance until I get a job, then
24 secure my" - sorry, "that then secures my position."

25 What's the Santa Monicas?---The Santa Monicas is a
26 development that Sam Aziz did. I think he built five
27 townhouses or six - I'm not sure how many townhouses in
28 Berwick when he decided he was going to be a property
29 developer. He went through a property developer stage,

1 and that's what he wanted to do. And he somehow - I don't
2 know how he got the money to do it, but that's - he built
3 them, and then through the divorce proceedings they had to
4 be sold.

5 All right?---So once again it was another one of his wild ideas
6 that he came up with that I was - - -

7 This is another idea to get around \$750,000 in his
8 pocket?---Unbelievable, yes.

9 When he refers to the "higher income contract that Bernard
10 drafted" what was that?---At that point in time I think he
11 was - this is when he was doing some work with Spicer
12 Thoroughbreds. This is Councillor Aziz was earning
13 I think \$2,500 plus GST a month, and there was talk of him
14 earning more money at \$5,000 a month, and they drafted a
15 contract but it never went ahead. So some of
16 those - I think we talked about it this morning, that Sam
17 Aziz or Councillor Aziz had sold it to the guys at Spicer
18 Thoroughbreds that he was going to pull together this
19 great Chinese syndicate.

20 That wasn't a syndicate, though, in which Spicer Thoroughbreds
21 had an interest. I thought that was an independent - tell
22 me if I'm wrong, but wasn't that supposed to be - I'm not
23 suggesting it was a real thing, but wasn't that supposed
24 to be an arrangement between Mr Aziz and your partner to
25 set up a company marketing thoroughbreds to Asian
26 people?---It wasn't just through my partner at all and, as
27 I've said to you this morning, there were three of them
28 involved in that. In the meetings that they had about
29 this Mick Sharkie, Brad Spicer and Bernard Lee all met on

1 a number of occasions with Councillor Aziz.
2 Okay. But one of the matters that you - in respect of Spicer
3 Thoroughbreds - - -?---Mm-hm.
4 Do you recall I told you you were surveilled talking to
5 Mr Woodman - - -?---Mm-hm.
6 About what you would say in respect of various
7 matters?---Mm-hm.
8 Do you remember - - -?---Yes, yes.
9 I suggested to you that happened on 8 October this
10 year?---Mm-hm.
11 Now, one of the matters you there discussed, you came along
12 with Spicer Thoroughbreds documentation, didn't
13 you?---Yes, I did.
14 And you pulled that all out because you knew Spicer
15 Thoroughbreds was a problem or a potential problem?---I'm
16 trying to get - - -
17 I want to give you a chance - - -?---I'm trying to get to the
18 facts.
19 Okay. I want to give you every chance?---Sure.
20 Wasn't it the case that in the course of that conversation with
21 Mr Woodman you were discussing the fact that Spicer
22 Thoroughbreds was used as a vehicle to funnel money from
23 Mr Woodman to Mr Aziz?---Yes.
24 And, look, I know that you might want to not get involved in
25 saying things here that are going to have adverse
26 implications for your partner, but the bottom line is that
27 that's what it was during that period - - -?---And it
28 wasn't - that's my whole point. It wasn't just my
29 partner. So that's my point, and I think - - -

1 COMMISSIONER: But accepting that that's so - - -?---Yes.
2 From the Commission's perspective - - -?---Correct.
3 What the Commission is interested in is your acknowledgment
4 that it was a vehicle being used to explain away funds
5 going to Mr Aziz?---Correct. It was. I still believed
6 that they were hopeful that he could bring in the buyers.
7 I've seen the document. I don't know if you got it or
8 you've seen the document that was drafted about that
9 agreement. There was a document.

10 MR TOVEY: As the Commissioner said, we are concerned about the
11 fact of the matter rather than - - -?---But that is also a
12 fact, but yes.
13 Rather than what specific role people other than those involved
14 with the council had?---Sure.
15 All right?---Sure.

16 COMMISSIONER: Who was the contact for the purpose of being
17 able to use Spicer for that purpose?---Well - - -
18 How did Mr Woodman find the link to Spicers?---He already had
19 horses or at least one horse, if not more, with them.
20 Yes?---So prior to - I don't know from what year he had it, but
21 it was before all this.
22 Yes?---So there was already a relationship there and, yes,
23 he - - -
24 But that was a bona fide relationship?---That was a bona fide
25 relationship.
26 But did he ever discuss with you why he chose to use Spicers to
27 provide an explanation for funds going to Mr Aziz?---No,
28 but I think it was Mr Aziz's idea. I'm pretty sure it was
29 Mr Aziz's idea because he's smart enough to join the dots.

1 MR TOVEY: And from time to time would Mr Aziz contact you to
2 follow through on payments due to him from Spicers?---He
3 always was following through with me because I seemed to
4 be in the middle of the whole mess.

5 And did you contact your partner who was in fact arranging the
6 payments?---Probably, yes.

7 Thank you?---Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER: Was it your partner that was responsible for the
9 creation of the invoices?---Yes, but not just for that.

10 For - I mean, he was running the business.

11 I understand that?---Yes, yes.

12 Did you ever discuss with your partner the fact that this was a
13 most uncomfortable arrangement to be involved in?---We
14 probably - I probably did discuss it because I said to him
15 all along I'm not happy with Councillor Aziz. He, my
16 partner, is a very positive, upbeat person and who was
17 hoping that at least Councillor Aziz could bring together
18 some of the Chinese clients. And that came from the fact
19 that Councillor Aziz had gone to China quite a number of
20 times and he had boasted quite heavily that he knew all
21 these Chinese people. He had also taken this great
22 interest in horse racing, this is Councillor Aziz. So it
23 was sort of just the way it happened. It wasn't a
24 deliberate - I don't know, it just happened that way. It
25 might have been deliberate on Councillor Aziz's part,
26 I would suggest. He was very good at coming up with
27 ideas.

28 Ms Wreford, if initially the arrangement with Spicers was a
29 device, a vehicle - - -?---Correct.

1 To simply get funds into Mr Aziz's hands, even if at some point
2 of time some expectation arose that maybe Mr Aziz might do
3 something - - -?---Yes.

4 It was an arrangement that was made without an expectation that
5 Mr Aziz was going to produce something in return for these
6 payments?---I guess you're right. I think from Spicer
7 Thoroughbreds' point of view there were two things that
8 they - they considered, and one is from a pure business
9 point of view they wanted to help out Mr Woodman because
10 they wanted him to buy more horses.

11 Yes?---So that's I think why they agreed to it.

12 Your point here is that it wasn't just your partner who
13 knowingly entered this arrangement?---Correct.

14 But the people at Spicers?---And they wanted more - you know,
15 that's all they cared about, is selling shares in horses
16 and so if they help out one of their clients their
17 unspoken expectation is that they would get more business.

18 MR TOVEY: Could we have played to the witness, please, tab
19 135?

20 COMMISSIONER: How are you feeling, Ms Wreford? Are you able
21 to manage for the next half hour or so?---I wouldn't mind
22 a quick toilet break, if that's all right.

23 Yes, we'll do that. We'll have a break for five
24 minutes?---Sorry, I've just got - - -

25 That's okay.

26 (Short adjournment.)

27 COMMISSIONER: Yes, Mr Tovey.

28 MR TOVEY: Thank you, Commissioner. (To witness.) I just want
29 to take you to the document page 4101. This is on

1 13 November of 2019?---'18?

2 Sorry, 2018. If you look at the - - -?---Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER: This is between who, Mr Tovey?

4 MR TOVEY: Sorry, your Honour?

5 COMMISSIONER: Between who?

6 MR TOVEY: This is a series of messages between Ms Wreford and
7 Mr Aziz on WhatsApp.

8 COMMISSIONER: Yes.

9 MR TOVEY: So if we start at the - so that's on 12 November of
10 2018. Could we just go up slightly, please. Thank you.
11 If we go up to 4100. If we see the middle of page 4100
12 that's - so that's back to the 18th - sorry, that's
13 29 October '18. If we could just keep on going, please.
14 Keep on going. Yes, thank you. So if you look at the
15 first communication from you to Mr Aziz at 4.59 pm on
16 12 November '18 you say to him, "It's not that he doesn't
17 care. It's taking time to organise this from his end,
18 I believe," and that was, was it, Mr Aziz complaining that
19 funds weren't coming through?---It was, but he was doing
20 it in such a way that he was irrational. It was all over
21 the shop. I think I've tried to explain - around this
22 time he said things that didn't make a lot of sense. So
23 I'm just trying to push back and calm him down.

24 So he was quite emotional at this stage, was he, in his
25 demands?---He was very demanding and I was getting very,
26 very tired of the whole thing.

27 But on the other hand that must have caused some consternation
28 as to whether he was going to be reliable to vote in the
29 way in which he was expected to vote?---I'm not sure that

1 I cared at that point in time. I was - seriously, my
2 state of mind then was I was over him. But I had a job
3 and I felt like I had to pacify him.
4 And then you see him saying, "Okay, I'm just very sad"?---I'd
5 actually wondered at that time whether he had been
6 drinking, some of the things that he was texting me and
7 saying to me. But anyway that's - - -
8 Was he a drinker?---Yes.
9 All right. Did he know anything about racehorses?---Not a lot.
10 He pretended to know a lot about racehorses or he tried to
11 know a lot about racehorses and he showed a lot of
12 interest in learning about racehorses, but nothing ever
13 eventuated nor did he buy into a racehorse which he had
14 indicated he was going to do.
15 To whom?---Well, to me and then later to Spicer. But
16 anyway - or to - - -
17 In any event, moving on at the bottom of that page, "Spoke to
18 JW and he wants to do the settlement in January"?---Yes.
19 "Due to article in the paper and the relentless way the
20 reporter is chasing him"?---Yes.
21 And that was you indicating to Mr Aziz that in view of the
22 press focus on the relationship between him and Mr Woodman
23 now is not a good time for it to become public that he had
24 purchased Mr Aziz's house?---Mm-hm.
25 Is that right?---Yes. I was telling Councillor Aziz - I was
26 passing on a message from Mr Woodman.
27 If we could keep on going down. That's on 13 November?---You
28 could see I didn't want to answer his calls.
29 He wants to talk urgently with you?---He always wants to talk

1 urgently.

2 Yes. And you understood this was because he wanted to chase up
3 how he was going to get the money that was going to come
4 with the sale of his house to Cordwood?---Correct.

5 Okay. Keep on going down, please. Then you get to the point
6 where on 14 November of 2018 he says to you, "Lorraine,
7 I have reflected on everything and putting aside the
8 massive disappointment you don't need to do anything
9 further about this matter. I will need to correct a few
10 things now as you clearly either don't understand the
11 severity of the situation or you don't care. You have
12 placed me in a corner where I have nothing to lose and
13 I'll be seeing a lawyer at 3 pm today. I have had
14 significant pressure to reverse the decision on Hall Road
15 and that is what I will do through a notice of
16 motion" - - -

17 COMMISSIONER: "Now do".

18 MR TOVEY: Sorry, "And that is what I will now do through a
19 notice of motion on Tuesday, 20 November"; is that right?
20 That's what he said to you?---That's what I said and I was
21 quite convinced he had been drinking, but anyway.

22 I'm not concerned about your reaction; I just want to
23 understand how you understood this?---It was a threat from
24 him.

25 Yes. So at that stage he has responded to the postponement of
26 the payment to him of \$700,000-odd by threatening to
27 reverse his vote on Hall Road; is that right?---Correct.

28 And indeed to reverse the decision on Hall Road; is that
29 right?---It sounds like exactly what - yes - - -

1 So you understood him to be saying that not only will he
2 reverse his vote but he will use his voting bloc to
3 reverse the decision; that's the way you understood
4 it?---I did. And I was pretty angry and annoyed, or
5 really angry actually when I saw that text.

6 Yes?---Not because of - - -

7 Having seen that it is impossible to come to any conclusion
8 other than he linked the payment of money to his vote on
9 Hall Road?---Correct.

10 And that's the way you understood the relationship between him
11 and Mr Woodman to have been for some time?---Yes.

12 But - yes.

13 Then he says to you, "Are you accusing me of something" - -

14 -?---I said to him.

15 Sorry, you say to him, "Are you accusing me of

16 something"?---Yes.

17 "I'm the mere messenger who's going in to bat for you," and
18 could we just go down further?---In all honesty I wasn't
19 going in to bat for him, but I just said that to him to
20 try and calm him down and I felt pressured because I'm in
21 the middle of these two people.

22 And then, this is still on 14 November?---Yes.

23 "You can at least do me the courtesy of returning my calls.

24 I am so sick and tired of doing everyone's dirty work and
25 getting treated like shit. I have deadlines to manage and
26 I have not let anyone down in managing their priorities.
27 But when it comes to me I can't even get a call returned.
28 Sorry I won't play that way anymore." And did you see
29 that as the more subtle repetition of the threat?---I saw

1 it as a threat, but I didn't understand it. I completely
2 thought he had been drinking, and I'll say that again,
3 because, you know, I don't know anyone who's insisted that
4 he votes on anything. He's been asked to do things.
5 Whether he votes on things or not is up to him. So that
6 language, that tone, I was just over it. It's just - yes.
7 Then if you go down to the next one, "I need to now obtain
8 finance ASAP and this is why I needed to talk to you
9 urgently yesterday"?---Mm-hm.

10 "I have now approached another broker and if that doesn't work
11 I'm seeing a lawyer today to prepare to go back to court
12 and obtain an order to sell the property. I guess the
13 rest is now academic." Had he enlisted you to find
14 finance for him in respect of some movement of
15 property?---This is the same property. He did at one
16 stage ask me to work as a broker and do finance for him.
17 I looked at it.

18 Had you previously at some stage worked as a finance
19 broker?---Yes, I currently am.

20 Okay?---So, just to get everything in perspective, all this or
21 all the - everything we're talking about here today, this
22 was in my life part-time or minor in what I was doing in
23 my life, and he was just - he was relentless, this is
24 Councillor Aziz, in trying to get his own outcomes and he
25 will manipulate people to however he wants. He did ask me
26 if I could get him a loan, because he didn't think he was
27 going to get money any other way. I did look at it and
28 looked at his finances, but he didn't qualify for a loan
29 so it never proceeded.

1 Thank you. Could I just go down to the look at the
2 next - okay, so then when you talk about "my instructions
3 are settlement is going to happen at the end of January",
4 I take it this is an argument you're having with him
5 because, although he's making demands, it had taken him
6 months to get papers signed - - -?---Correct.
7 To achieve what he had originally proposed?---Yes.
8 COMMISSIONER: So you're - - -?---Anything he said to me
9 I would pass on to Mr Woodman.
10 MR TOVEY: Thank you.
11 COMMISSIONER: Am I right your app of 14 November at 1.28 pm
12 rather suggests - - -?---1.28?
13 You had some fairly detailed knowledge of the fact that he was
14 going through a matrimonial turmoil?---Correct.
15 And for how long had you known that he had matrimonial issues
16 that he was struggling to manage?---I'm not sure if it was
17 from 2016 or 2017. Definitely through 2017.
18 But by the time he came with the suitcase full of cash - -
19 -?---By the way he turned up with a girlfriend that day
20 too, apparently.
21 On that day?---On that day.
22 Yes. But when he came with his suitcase of cash, Ms Wreford,
23 you understood that had some connection to his current
24 domestic turmoil?---I suspected.
25 Yes?---But that's - he didn't tell me that. But I suspected it
26 may have something to do with it. But he told me he took
27 the money out of the bank - I'm just telling you what he
28 told me - so I would imagine that his wife or ex-wife
29 would have known about a sum of money that large or a

1 large sum of money. So at some stage he did tell me his
2 lawyers knew about it. So I wasn't sure what he was up
3 to, really.

4 Can I just go back. Prior to that moment in time when he
5 arrived with the cash - - -?---Yes.

6 For how long prior to then were you aware that there was some
7 sort of relationship outside council between him and
8 Mr Woodman?---I came back on the scene, if you like, in
9 2015. So I'm not sure how far back it goes.

10 What about from the time you were there in 2015? Were you
11 aware then - - -?---Or 2008 when Councillor Aziz got
12 elected - - -

13 I'm just dealing now with the time you came back on deck and
14 started working with Mr Woodman. Was there then an
15 existing relationship with - - -?---To my knowledge there
16 was not an existing financial relationship that I knew of.

17 What about any sort of relationship other than - - -?---I think
18 there was a relationship in terms of, yes, a developer in
19 the City of Casey; I'm sure there was a relationship.

20 But based on what? Did you observe them meeting or did you
21 from conversations know that they were talking - -
22 -?---Yes, more from conversations, I think; yes. Sorry,
23 when you are a councillor and you've got developers or
24 business people doing things in your electorate it's hard
25 not to get to know them to some degree. So he would have
26 known him. The depth of that relationship,
27 I don't - I couldn't attest to before 2015.

28 Yes, thank you.

29 MR TOVEY: Lastly, I just want to play you, if I might,

1 Mr Commissioner - - -

2 COMMISSIONER: I will mark the WhatsApp from 12 November to
3 14 November '18 exhibit 68.

4 #EXHIBIT 68 - WhatsApp messages from 12 November 2018 to
5 14 November 2018.

6 MR TOVEY: I'm told, Mr Commissioner, that no exhibit number
7 has been attached to page 4072, which was also the subject
8 of reference.

9 COMMISSIONER: We can perhaps consider that afterwards,
10 Mr Tovey. Is that 10 August?

11 MR TOVEY: 4072 is one of the WhatsApp conversations.

12 COMMISSIONER: We will just check the numbering system after we
13 adjourn, Mr Tovey.

14 MR TOVEY: (To witness.) Now, I want to just now take you to
15 tab 211, which is a conversation between yourself and
16 Mr Aziz on 29 October 2018. Before I take you there - no,
17 I won't. We can just start this. Could we just play
18 that. Thank you.

19 (Audio recording played to the Commission.)

20 MR TOVEY: This was obviously late October 2018. It appears,
21 does it not, that that relates to the mayoral
22 election?---It does.

23 And was it the case at that stage that Amanda Stapledon got
24 elected mayor?---She did.

25 All right. So is that what the conversation was about?---It
26 was, yes.

27 And when Sam Aziz said, "Is the BD happy" you indicated,
28 "Very"; is that right?---I did indicate that. I'm not
29 sure if I knew that, but I indicated it.

1 In fact wasn't it the case that you had quite detailed
2 conversations from time to time about the manoeuvrings in
3 respect of - - -?---Who? Me, sorry?
4 Yes, sorry, you with Mr Aziz about the manoeuvrings in respect
5 of the election of a mayor?---I did, and I was hoping that
6 Amanda Stapledon would get the mayor; nothing to do with
7 anything that this hearing is looking at. It's just that
8 I know that she would work really hard in the community.
9 You wouldn't have been happy if you were working for Mr Woodman
10 if Ms Stapledon was disposed to vote against his
11 proposals, would you?---But she couldn't vote on his
12 proposals anyway.
13 Or to - sorry, when I say "vote" I mean to advocate against his
14 proposals?---That's completely up to her. So are you
15 saying I wouldn't be happy? I would challenge that
16 comment.
17 If you work for Mr Woodman and you wanted councillors to vote
18 or to achieve results for him, you surely only wanted
19 councillors who were disposed to vote in his favour or -
20 vote in his favour or, if not voting, at least advocate in
21 his favour?---What I didn't want was Councillor Ablett to
22 get the mayoralty again, and he wanted it again. So
23 I think it's got nothing to do with what Mr Woodman
24 wanted, but from my perspective is what I thought was
25 better for the community and I thought it was a better
26 outcome because I know how hard she works for the
27 community.
28 And when you spoke about "wankers like Gary" was that
29 Mr Rowe?---That would be - I didn't say that, but yes.

1 COMMISSIONER: Mr Aziz said that.

2 MR TOVEY: Sorry, when Mr Aziz - - -?---Yes, correct.

3 Spoke about "wankers like Gary" was that Mr Rowe?---Correct.

4 And Mr Rowe was somebody who had, other than in respect of a

5 fairly short period of time, been something of a thorn in

6 your side; is that the case?---A thorn in whose side,

7 sorry?

8 In the side of Mr Woodman?---I think so. I think so. He

9 seemed to swap sides regularly.

10 And there again you had Mr Aziz indicating, "We've still got

11 control of the council"?---Yes.

12 Did you understand that to relate to you, that is - - -?---No,

13 not at all.

14 That is the Woodman interest still having control of the

15 council?---No.

16 Or his bloc still having control?---Once again I took it as

17 Councillor Aziz bragging. One of the things that - - -

18 If I can just ask you this, though. You say - sorry, he says,

19 "We've still got control of the council", and you say,

20 "I love it"?---What I loved was the fact that Amanda

21 Stapledon got elected as mayor because I think she's a

22 good - and I've always thought that. I think she works

23 hard for her community and she certainly turns up to all

24 the events and dedicates herself to a whole lot of things

25 that other councillors don't do. But can I also say, and

26 I think - - -

27 I think you have answered the question. We have to draw a

28 line?---Oh.

29 COMMISSIONER: What else did you want to say,

1 Ms Wreford?---I think it's really important just to
2 mention, because I think it's important for you, that it
3 doesn't matter who manoeuvres outside of council, who says
4 what to whom, in the end who gets to be mayor is only the
5 people who are in that room at the time voting. So people
6 can say all sorts of things, "I like this person" or "that
7 person" or "we are a group". One of the things I've
8 learnt in politics is that alliances change. So, even if
9 you've got an alliance with a group at one point in time,
10 it will invariably change. So you might say, "We're still
11 in the minority." I take it with a grain of salt,
12 personally, and so should everybody because alliances
13 always change.

14 What do you say about the notion, though, that if someone's in
15 a conflict of interest situation and the mayor has to
16 absent themselves because they have a conflict - -
17 -?---Yes.

18 That anyone else that has a conflict on that issue should not
19 be able to participate in voting for an acting
20 chair?---Okay.

21 Because that's not the case at present, is it?---Correct, that
22 isn't the case at the - - -

23 But we have already seen more than enough evidence - -
24 -?---Yes.

25 Of strings being pulled - - -?---Correct.

26 "To make sure we get someone in as chair" - - -?---Yes.

27 "Who's going to have a casting vote" - - -?---Yes.

28 "If the numbers are deadlocked"?---Can I just say on that point
29 that's exactly how political parties talk. So within

1 council, when I first got elected to council in 2003 I was
2 just a single parent who knew nothing about politics, and
3 what I found myself - I found myself in a group of
4 I called them vipers or whatever. It was so politically
5 divided councillors were always voting in blocs; always.
6 So this common practice in local government. And what
7 I didn't realise and I learnt within a few months it was
8 all political blocs. So in those days the Labor Party had
9 very strong control of the City of Casey, and what I found
10 out down the track was that not only were they voting in
11 blocs, they were talking to their Federal Labor member who
12 was telling them how to vote on things. So even though
13 there's not a financial direct payment that happens at
14 that point in time there could have been political favours
15 happening, and that still happens today.

16 Yes. But it's evident from something you said to me before
17 about there being no constraints on a councillor who has a
18 conflict outside the meeting room - - -?---Correct,
19 correct.

20 Doing whatever he or she could to influence other councillors -
21 - -?---Correct.

22 That rather suggests we need some laws - - -?---I couldn't
23 agree with you more.

24 In that area?---I couldn't agree more.

25 Yes. Yes, Mr Tovey.

26 MR TOVEY: Would this be an appropriate time, Mr Commissioner?

27 COMMISSIONER: Yes. How much longer do you think you will be
28 with Ms Wreford.

29 MR TOVEY: Only an hour or two.

1 COMMISSIONER: Yes, very good.

2 MR TOVEY: It's probably best rather than - - -

3 COMMISSIONER: Very good. So, Ms Wreford, we'll excuse you
4 until tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock and, as you have
5 heard, hopefully we will complete your evidence in the
6 morning?---Okay. Thank you.

7 <(THE WITNESS WITHDREW)

8 ADJOURNED UNTIL THURSDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 10.00 AM

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