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40 MR ROBERTSON: So you're referring to when Ms Berejiklian gave evidence in the seat that you're now sitting to the effect that she was in a close personal relationship with Mr Maguire from at least about the time of the 2015 election or slightly after or thereabouts?---Correct. That was – I'm meant to know those things in my job and I had no idea.

So far as you're aware was that something that was known or at least rumoured within government or any part of government?---As I say, I, I had a conversation with my current boss that day. Neither of us had any idea.

THE COMMISSIONER: You mean when that evidence was given?
---When that evidence was given. That was – for someone in my role that I've worked for the former Premier and other MPs, that's kind of what I'm meant to know. I had no idea.

How are you supposed to find out, Mr Blunden?---You talk to people.

10 MR ROBERTSON: Without being rude, it's fair to say that Parliament House can be a place where lots of gossip is shared.---There is a lot of gossip and, and I'm being very careful about what I say.

And to be clear I'm not saying that as a criticism of anyone at all.-- [REDACTED]

20 If you'd known about the existence of what Ms Berejiklian calls a close personal relationship at the time that you were dealing with emails along the lines of what I've shown you so far, would have that had any impact on any steps that you would have taken in relation to the matter?---Absolutely.

How would you have acted differently, as best you can put yourself into that parallel universe?---I think, I think that our office would have viewed any approach from the Member for Wagga in a vastly different way.

And what do you mean by that?---In that we would have perhaps suspected ulterior motives in some of the things he was putting forward.

30 There'd also be a concern, wouldn't there, as to the potential political risk or cost of it emerging at some point in time of the existence of that relationship if it wasn't otherwise in public and whether that might put any questions on the decision-making function. Is that right?---Absolutely.

THE COMMISSIONER: Would you have expected the Treasurer to act differently bearing in mind she was going to chair the ERC Committee at which this was going to be brought forward?---Commissioner, I, I, I understand the question. I, I think it – had you asked me that 18 months ago, without my knowledge of the relationship - - -

40 No, I'm asking you now?---No, no. I know. I know. I know. I, I appreciate that. I, I think that – I'm happy to say this. My – when I started my role with the Premier, my wife resigned her role because she worked in a business that could have been perceived to have had a conflict with the job I did. That's the way we ran our office. It is, in my belief, totally beholden on the person to declare conflicts of interest. I state for the record that I don't believe there was a conflict of, of interest. That might be a judgement made by others. But I find it fairly apparent that there's a perception that there could be a conflict and perhaps that the – there could have been

decisions made by the Treasurer or her office to make decisions at arm's length when that member was making representations.

Well, you say, as I understand it, that you didn't perceive there to be an actual conflict but perhaps a perception of a conflict of interest with Ms Berejikian and Mr Maguire were in that relationship, bearing in mind the evidence Mr Robertson's drawn your mind to. She said she was in that relationship at the time of the ERC Committee meeting. Can you just explain for me why you see it as only a perception of a conflict of interest as opposed to an actual conflict of interest?---I haven't read transcripts and followed the hearings of the evidence given before, with the hearings of the Premier and Mr Maguire but I don't know whether the actual issue was raised directly between the two of them - - -

So you don't know whether she was particularly aware?---Whether she was particularly aware of this as an issue - - -

But this is a project he was urging upon people?---He was certainly urging it upon staff members in other offices. Did he ever raise it in a conversation with the then Treasurer now Premier? I don't know.

Yes. Well, we'll just go back to whether it was an actual as opposed to a perceived conflict of interest?---It's a no-brainer that it's a perceived conflict.

Well, I'm trying to test why it's not also an actual conflict of interest? ---Because I'm not sure that he raised it directly with her. And I understand that he's clearly raised it with his - her office but it - I, I - yeah.

So you would - in your view, there would have had to have been a personal communication between Mr Maguire and her in which he advanced the application for funding which ACTA was putting up for there to be an actual conflict of interest?---I find it odd that a Treasurer who's knowingly in a relationship with a member of parliament who's considering a proposal being put by him through relevant departments would not make some kind of decision to perhaps declare that there's a conflict in that situation, just - - -

And have you ever - sorry.---Does that, does that answer the question or is that clear enough, or - - -

Yes. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]