

# Palmer court victory costs WA taxpayers almost \$57,000

**| Phoebe Wearne**

Clive Palmer's recent legal victory over Premier Colin Barnett cost WA taxpayers almost \$57,000 in arbitration costs and expenses.

The confidential commercial arbitration decision of the dispute between Palmer-controlled companies Mineralogy and International Resources and the State of Western Australia became public after it was tabled in Queensland Parliament by a

Palmer United Party MP. Former High Court judge Michael McHugh found in May that Mr Barnett, in his role as Minister for State Development, failed to rule on a proposal by Mr Palmer within two months as required by the businessman's State Agreement Act covering the Balmoral South iron ore project near Karratha.

Mr McHugh ordered the State

Government pay the arbitration costs and found "the failure of the minister to give a decision within that time means he is liable for any damage that the applicant may have suffered as a result".

In answer to questioning from Opposition Leader Mark McGowan dated June 18, Mr Barnett revealed the State had paid \$56,631.98 in arbitrator's costs and expenses and Mineralogy was yet to make a claim for damages.

The Department of State Development yesterday confirmed that Mr Palmer's proposal had since been assessed. "The State

Government has responded to Mineralogy and sought additional information and/or clarification of a number of aspects of the project," a statement said.

Speaking in Parliament after the decision became public in June, Mr Barnett said the dev-

elopment proposal to dredge a shipping channel and build berths at Cape Preston was "manifestly inadequate" but he accepted it should have been formally assessed before being rejected.

He said yesterday that Mr Palmer was "highly litigious". "He takes most matters to court," Mr Barnett said. "He wins some and loses some."

Mr Barnett has accused Mr Palmer of using his political party to further his commercial interests after the confidential legal victory was aired in Queensland and after Mr Palmer's tirade about Chinese "mongrels" on the ABC's Q&A program last week.

Mineralogy could not be contacted for comment yesterday.

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