

WA infighting hits entertaining high

Wow — isn't this fun to watch. And I reckon there's more to come. I've done this job for a very long time and I'm not sure I've ever seen anything quite like this.

Over the past few weeks Federal polities and their WA colleagues appear to have done away with a long-standing protocol that you don't speak out against the family — in public, at least.

But political discipline — not airing dirty washing in public — now appears to be a thing of the past in WA politics.

That's great for journos, but I'm not sure it's great for political parties.

The events of the past few weeks continue to reverberate within WA political circles.

Weeks after Anthony Albanese's No.1 man in Perth, Federal MP Patrick Gorman, came out publicly to oppose Roger Cook and Rita Saffioti's \$217 million racetrack at Burswood, it is fair to say that all has not been forgiven by Gorman's WA Labor colleagues.

He went public with this on September 7 in *The Sunday*

JOE SPAGNOLO



Times: "My longstanding and firm view is that the Burswood racetrack should not proceed," Gorman said.

Understandably, this was manna from heaven for opponents of the project, including the State Opposition.

Publicly, Cook reckons there is nothing more to see here, playing down Gorman's public anti-racetrack declaration.

Asked by *The Sunday Times* this week whether he felt betrayed by Gorman — given the racetrack was the Premier's idea — Cook replied: "No, not at all. These things always divide opinion. I understand that."

But multiple Labor sources paint another picture, saying Cook is seething and bitterly disappointed over Gorman's comments.

Cook apparently saw Gorman as not just a political colleague, but a friend. He even attended Gorman's 40th birthday party in

December. Will he attend Gorman's 41st?

Not sure about that.

As for Deputy Premier Rita Saffioti, I'm also reliably told she is beyond angry at Gorman's public opposition to the racetrack proposal — a project she's tasked to deliver for the Government.

As an avid fan of the *Godfather* trilogy, I would not be surprised if Saffioti was reciting several of the franchise's quotes in reference to what she would see as a betrayal by Gorman.

A horse's head in Gorman's bed? Probably not.

But sources are suggesting the relationship between Saffioti and Gorman is now well and truly dead.

On the other side of politics, the politician once known simply as Basil — who, with his own website is now known as *Zempilas.com.au* — is also clashing with his Federal colleagues, Michaelia Cash and Andrew Hastie, over all sorts of issues, including setting a net zero emissions' target by 2050 and standing in front of the Aboriginal flag at official government events.

So what's going on?

Lovers' tiffs or something a

little bit more serious? Zempilas has obviously decided that the way to the promised land is for him to be his own man, and not be dictated to by his Federal colleagues.

He obviously doesn't think much of Cash and Hastie's views.

I just wonder how much support *Zempilas.com.au* will get from Cash and Hastie — two very influential Federal Liberals. Should *Zempilas.com.au* ever face troubled waters, will his Federal colleagues come to his aid?

As for Gorman, was his decision to oppose a project supported and pushed by his WA Labor colleagues a one-off? A bit of self-preservation?

Or was it a sign of frustration that Cook and co. had on several occasions blamed the Feds for their woes (like pointing the finger at the Albanese Government for problems in health and demanding more aged-care beds).

And as Albanese's right-hand man in Perth, was the PM's office made aware that Gorman was going to fire a racetrack bullet before he did?

Grab the popcorn and take a seat. This could be fun to watch.

