



HD **WA:Nalder's judgment error 'serious': Barnett**

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NALDER PERTH, Dec 3 AAP - It was a serious error of judgment for a West Australian minister to suggest his business associate be invited to a meeting with the **Chinese** consul-general, the premier says.

In parliament on Tuesday, it was confirmed the office of Finance and Transport Minister Dean Nalder had been asked for names of potential guests to attend the August meeting, which included high-level state bureaucrats.

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On that list was Darryll Ashworth, the chief executive of **property company** Metier Asia, in which Mr Nalder has invested \$400,000.

Mr Nalder has conceded the meeting wasn't private as he initially claimed, saying that portrayal was inappropriate.

And at a press conference on Wednesday, Liberal leader Colin Barnett described the conduct as "a serious error of judgment".

"It was a mistake," he said.

"It mixed up his ministerial role with his private business interests."

Mr Barnett said he had no problem with the issues that were discussed at the meeting, claimed to be Australia-**China** trade relations.

"The error was to invite people who had a **commercial** relationship with the minister," Mr Barnett said.

The premier said Mr Nalder had apologised and he had accepted.

Mr Barnett also said the divestment of his once rising star's stake in Fleet Network, which leases cars to public servants through salary packaging arrangements, should have happened earlier.

Mr Nalder has not **sold** the stake in the 60-day time period stipulated under the ministerial code of conduct, but says he informed the director general of the Department of Premier and Cabinet he was having difficulty doing so.

Mr Barnett refused to say if he would fire Mr Nalder, in whom he said he still had confidence.

The premier said he expected to receive the results of a review of Mr Nalder's disclosure of financial assets either late on Wednesday or on Thursday morning.

Mr Barnett was also asked about a claim Mr Nalder has invested in a Cottesloe **property** with Paul Dion Thompson, a financial trader charged in April by a US federal grand jury with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and bank fraud.

The premier said he only became aware of the claim on Wednesday morning.

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