

AT-RISK YOUTH — SAFE HOUSE — CARNARVON

926. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to my repeated calls over many months for a 24/7 safe space or safe house for at-risk youths in regional areas, reinforced by the Carnarvon —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms M. BEARD: — community in an article on the front page of *The West Australian* as a key priority —

Mr R.R. Whitby interjected.

The SPEAKER: Sorry. Members, particularly ministers, this question is addressed to one minister and I would like to be able to hear the question.

Ms M. BEARD: This is a key priority to keep children safe and off the streets and ensuring that they get to school the next day.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the provision of a safe place in Carnarvon is a priority for her government, has received appropriate funding and is underway?
- (2) Will this facility be prioritised and also provide support for family and domestic violence services for those women with boys over 12 years of age and unable to stay at the refuge?

Ms S.E. WINTON replied:

- (1)–(2) Before I start, I ask the member: has she actually written to me? She said she was concerned for a few months, so just to clarify —

The SPEAKER: Sorry. Minister, you can ask yourself rhetorical questions, but you cannot expect to ask questions. If you would like to ask questions, you need to go into opposition.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you. I like the view from here much better, thank you, Speaker.

I ask that question because the member in asking the question suggested that she has been advocating for this for months. I am trying to understand whether I have missed something in my office in terms of her advocacy for this issue. I stand to be corrected, but I do not think I have heard from her. Certainly, she has not tried to engage or advocate with me directly, like many members in this place do, particularly during parliamentary sitting weeks. As minister's know, we are constantly corralled and hit-up by local members, as we should be, as they advocate for important issues in their electorate. I would like to think I make myself available to all members of Parliament, including the six opposite.

I am an absolutely big supporter of local solutions for local communities because we know it works. I have gone right around the state and of the various programs that I have seen, the ones that are most successful are the ones that are run locally with local people in charge. I know that works. I have spent a fair bit of time living in regional and remote communities. Regional people do things better than anyone else to solve the problems in their communities. When local suggestions come up as solutions to local problems, I am always keen to listen to them, but we also have to remember, particularly when we are talking about children, that they need to be lawful, they need to be appropriate and they need to have national safe principles attached to them so that we adhere to the recommendations of the royal commission. These are really fundamental and important issues. That can be a bit detailed, but they are really important things to consider when we hear from local communities that want to run local projects.

Unlike the member for North West Central who has changed her colours, there is a local champion up there in Eddie Smith. In fact, I think I spoke to him on the phone about this issue less than two weeks ago when he raised it with me. He actually picks up the phone and talks directly because he is solution-driven rather than seeking a headline. When I spoke to him, there was a fair bit of confusion because he mentioned that he had forwarded me a letter and then he realised he actually did not forward me a letter, but it has recently arrived. There has clearly been some miscommunication and the Department of Communities is reaching out to the Carnarvon Family Support Service—which is particularly keen on running a safe space as the member described—to really clarify what has actually happened. The letter that Eddie wrote suggested that the service had funding and a property. I am not absolutely clear whether that is the case. My advice today is that it does not actually have any funding, but never mind the truth getting in the way of the details. Given that there has been a fair bit of miscommunication, I have reached out to the Department of Communities to clarify the situation and see what the proposal is up to and we will go from there.

I also want to stress that the Minister for Racing and Gaming gave a really good account earlier of the significant impact that has been achieved in the town of Carnarvon with the alcohol sale restrictions. What has been really

critical to that change is the sense of space and opportunity that it has provided to all the service providers and people who work on the frontline to actually support young people. Like the minister clearly outlined, I am not sure what the member's intent is with her community. She has not been supportive of initiatives like the one that the minister outlined, even though it is clearly making a difference to the very things that she is trying to advocate for right now.