

SWAN VALLEY NYUNGAH COMMUNITY

1313. Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs:

I draw the attention of the minister to the statement on ABC radio this morning by Hon Derrick Tomlinson, the opposition indigenous affairs spokesman, referring to the Swan Valley Nyungah Community, that he would prefer the camp to be left as it was and real services put in to assist the women and children who were, without a doubt, living in horrible circumstances. However, the Government chose to close the camp. How practical is the suggestion of Hon Derrick Tomlinson?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

I really had to do a double take when I heard Hon Derrick Tomlinson say those things on the radio this morning. As the Liberal spokesperson, he is suggesting that the Government should have left things as they were and just put in some more resources, even though, as he says, the people were living in horrible circumstances. Members opposite should take time to read the coroner's report, to understand the child abuse that has gone on at the camp, and the death of young people.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Stop distorting the facts.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Is the member for Warren-Blackwood saying that the coroner distorted the facts? Has he read the coroner's report?

Mr P.D. Omodei: Stop being a smart Alec.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Liberal Party may be a rabble, but on a matter as serious as this, members opposite should not yell out in those raucous voices. We are dealing with a community in which young people have been killed, and from which have come successful prosecutions for child sexual abuse. It is sickening that the Opposition does not take that seriously. We know the previous Government did not take it seriously; it was happy to sweep the matter under the carpet. Now that the Gallop Government is taking the matter seriously, has made the tough call and is now carrying through to deliver to these people, members opposite, to try to hide their shame, treat the whole matter as a joke. This is absolutely disgusting. The Liberal Party stood by when the child sexual abuse and deaths were happening. Now it is suggesting that the Government should have left people living in those circumstances and put in more resources, when the whole heart of the problem was that government agencies - police and community development - could not deliver their services to that community. That is why the Government had to take unprecedented action with regard to this community. Unfortunately, it is not the only community in which child sexual abuse is a problem and in which there are suicides. However, this community was different, in that police and other government officers could not effectively do their job. That is why the Government had to close down this camp and why it will not allow that problem to be re-established in that location.

Ms S.E. Walker: What about Onslow? You weren't very fast on Onslow, were you?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The member for Nedlands, by her interjection, is trying to do a whitewash of the Swan Valley Nyungah camp. She is trying to drag up something else because she does not think this is important, or, alternatively, she knows that it is very important and is ashamed that the Liberal Party allowed it to happen. What is it?

Ms S.E. Walker: I'm proud of the Liberal Party, and I am concerned about the children whom you -

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The member for Nedlands is not ashamed of what the Liberal Government did. She cannot have it both ways. Either she is ashamed of what the Liberal Party failed to do or, alternatively, she does not think this is a serious issue, because all she wants to do is squawk, squawk, squawk and not listen while I try to speak on what I think is perhaps the most important matter in my indigenous affairs portfolio. The Government is trying to give respect and protection to the men, women and children - particularly the women and children - who found themselves, even in the words of Hon Derrick Tomlinson, to be living in horrible circumstances. This Government is doing something about it. Therefore, the announcement that the Government has made is that it will turn that area into an environmental park, which will recognise the heritage and culture of the Nyoongah people. In that way this place of hopelessness and despair can offer to the Nyoongah community, and to the wider community, an example of the richness of their heritage and culture, and can help to perpetuate it for their young people and share it with the wider community. That will be a positive turnaround from the despair and hopelessness that existed before the Gallop Government decided that this matter could not go on and that unprecedented action had to be taken to make sure that we looked after the women and children in that area.

