

COMMUNITIES — POLICE RAID

121. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Child Protection:

I have a supplementary question. When can we expect to receive that information?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I am happy to provide that information by tomorrow. I do not think there is anything particularly controversial. As I said, I have given most of those dates. I do not know exactly what the opposition is getting at—as if there is some mystery here about when we were told about possible breaches, the unauthorised access of information and the removal of a large number of documents from the Department of Communities, and that some of those documents contained sensitive information. I really wish the opposition was more concerned about the fact that a large number of documents, including documents containing details of children in care, might have been compromised. I wish you would show some concern about that, but that seems to be something that is only of passing interest, because what you are really interested in, in this regard, is some sort of political advantage over this incident. What was made clear yesterday by me and, I think, rather clearly by the Minister for Police, was that as well-meaning as an individual employee might be in taking it upon themselves to take information from a government department, they are not authorised to do that.

There are in fact other mechanisms available to people who have concerns about the way that government departments are conducting their business, so-called whistleblower provisions, in the Public Interest Disclosure Act. There are specific laws and powers to enable individual employees to take information forward with anonymity and with some regard for their protection. It is not the case that this was the only opportunity an employee had to disclose issues that they were concerned about. That person may have been concerned about what was going on in the department; I do not know. I do not know what their motivation was. But it was not right for them to remove large amounts of information, including details of children in care and the foster carer organisations that look after them. It is just not right.

Everything I have been advised, from the beginning of this process, is that the Department of Communities—particularly the director general, but also the integrity unit—acted correctly in what it did when it found out that that was the case. It advised the Public Sector Commission and the Corruption and Crime Commission and, because it thought there may have been criminal offences, it advised the police. The police then took that investigation themselves and conducted the investigation in the way they saw fit. In fact, again, if people had been listening carefully to what the Minister for Police said yesterday, he made it very clear in the briefing that he received from the police that they did believe there was a *prima facie* case for a possible criminal charge in one of those documents that was leaked and the nature of the attachments. However, they decided that it was not in the public interest for that person to be prosecuted. That was a police decision. There is nothing untoward, as I understand it. Nothing I have heard in any of the public discussion, or certainly in this Parliament, leads me to question the way that the Department of Communities or myself or any of my other ministerial colleagues have acted in this incident.