

FORCED ADOPTIONS

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

I refer to the tabling of a petition in the Legislative Council calling for an inquiry into forced adoption practices in Western Australia, the grievance that I presented to the minister in October and the correspondence sent to both the minister and the Premier on this matter.

- (1) Has the minister considered the request from survivors for an inquiry?
- (2) If yes to (1), when will the government take action on this important issue?
- (3) If no to (1), why not?

**Ms S.F. McGURK replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) I note that the Leader of the Opposition did a grievance on this not that long ago and she asked the same questions then. I note that in the eight and a half years that she was in government, she did not do an inquiry. There was an apology that was in place —

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** — but there was not an inquiry and there was no other action that has been requested by those who have been affected by forced adoption.

I will say at the outset that this was a terrible practice thought to have occurred largely between the 1940s and 1980s, in terms of the people who are still with us. Largely young mothers were forced or coerced to give up their babies at birth. It was usually single women. Some of the stories I have either heard directly from these women or read in accounts about what they have suffered have been heartbreaking. Obviously, it is not only the women who are affected; it is their families and the children who are affected by that. The children often did not know for many years what their backgrounds were. We are very conscious of that. I gave an undertaking to some of the advocates for those affected by forced adoption that I would meet with them before the end of the year, and that meeting has been arranged, and I will give them feedback.

I do not know whether people in this chamber have noticed a theme in what the opposition is doing; that is, they want an inquiry on any matter that is going on at the moment. That is a way to spin their wheels and perhaps get some more political mileage out of a question. In fact, there has been a Senate inquiry into this very matter and Victoria took a very thorough look at this matter as well. We are actually aware of a lot of the requests that have been put by largely women, who have come and advocated to me on this issue.

Something that came to me more recently that made an impression on me is that the women are saying they would like a way to tell their stories publicly. That might be identified or de-identified. It is a way to put their stories on the record so they are known. I have heard that request and I am looking at ways that we could meet that request. By and large, the policy or the initiatives requested by those affected are well known; there are no new issues that would be uncovered by an inquiry in Western Australia. I have undertaken to meet with other advocates and those affected before the end of the year. I think a meeting has been set up for early December. I look forward to continuing to work with them to address their concerns.