

WORKSAFE WESTERN AUSTRALIA, COMPLAINTS BY CONSTRUCTION, FORESTRY, MINING AND  
ENERGY UNION

**174. Mrs C.L. EDWARDES to the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection:**

I refer the minister to the industrial action taken today at Perth work sites at the instigation of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union.

- (1) Is the minister aware of complaints allegedly made by the CFMEU to WorkSafe Western Australia about safety issues in recent weeks; and, if so, what was the basis of the complaints and what action was taken to address them?
- (2) Given the pressure that the CFMEU is putting on the Government, is the minister proposing to allow union organisers on-site to become work safety inspectors?

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:**

- (1) The first issue relates to the CFMEU complaints. It is very hard for me to answer that question, because I understand there are quite a number of complaints -

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: From the CFMEU over recent weeks?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Over recent weeks, yes. For instance, in relation to the fatal collapse of a building at Myaree, I have been told that there had been three inspections, all of which were undertaken without any complaints being made. Half of the work of the building inspectorate is proactive; that is, getting out there and checking on the industry. That site had been inspected. Notices had been given prior to the fatal collapse. Following that incident, there has been a heightened interest as a result of the media coverage. I understand that on the weekend, a member of the CFMEU rang a staff member in my office who got on to the duty inspector who then inspected a site in the northern suburbs on which construction was under way that did not conform with the standards. That work then ceased. Similarly, last weekend in the south east corridor, another job was closed down when an inspector inspected the site even though no complaint had been made. There is a whole level of activity.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Has there been only one complaint from the CFMEU?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: No; one complaint has been specifically drawn to my attention, and I have explained briefly the detail of that complaint and why it happened. It would not surprise me if complaints made in a range of other areas had been taken up and responded to in the way thought appropriate.

- (2) The second part of the question related to potential changes in legislation. I suspect that is the point of the question.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Yes - where union organisers become WorkSafe inspectors.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am not currently countenancing that. The Government is waiting for the final report by former Commissioner Robert Laing into the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984. In the preliminary report released for public discussion there was a suggestion of provisional improvement notices and similar ideas, under which people - who may be union officials, but will have to be elected as safety representatives - can take some action. I am sympathetic to that, but I am waiting to see what form it takes in the final report. Outside of that, I am not currently countenancing that any special form of certification be required in the building and construction industry, other than that required by the inspectors employed by WorkSafe.