

MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION — PERFORMANCE

**118. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

I refer to damning reports that point to endemic and widespread racism in the portfolio of child protection, the police raid of an employee's home, reports of unsafe workloads for staff, failures to meet child safety key performance indicators, and a walkout of exhausted and stressed child protection workers right now. When will the Premier show leadership and sack the Minister for Child Protection?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please, members!

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

It is beneath the Leader of the Opposition to launch these sorts of silly, childish and nasty attacks on a minister who is doing a good job in a very difficult portfolio. As anyone who has ever held that portfolio would understand, the minister is dealing with complex issues across a very large state, with people with long-term and sometimes intergenerational issues that are trying to be resolved on a daily basis by committed staff in difficult positions, in difficult locations. What I have noted about the minister is that she is deeply committed to improving the lives of, particularly, people who are disadvantaged and children who are in a position of need. It is a cheap and nasty attack.

In terms of the actual resourcing for the agency, in our time in office, since 2017, we have increased the staffing levels of child protection workers by over 200. That is significantly more than was done during the previous eight years of the last Liberal–National government. It is a massive increase in the number of child protection workers out there across Western Australia. The government made that available because we managed the finances properly in Western Australia, which has allowed us to invest in important initiatives like that.

I also note—the minister has said this and I think it deserves some acknowledgement—that the number of Aboriginal children in care has actually declined. It is the first time, I think, in many years, if not ever, that the number of Aboriginal children in care has declined, because we have worked very, very vigorously with families to ensure that they are able to look after their children, and fewer children are removed into another form of care, which is an important and under-acknowledged achievement for Aboriginal people across the state.

The Leader of the Opposition will no doubt have her matter of public interest motion and I expect it will be full of a bunch of wild and excessive statements and falsehoods, but the minister is doing an outstanding job in a difficult portfolio.