

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

Special

On motion without notice by **Hon Kim Chance (Leader of the House)**, resolved -

That the house at its rising adjourn until 10.00 am on Thursday, 6 December 2007.

Ordinary

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Minister for Agriculture and Food) [10.01 pm]: I move -

That the house do now adjourn.

Mental Health System - Adjournment Debate

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan) [10.01 pm]: I want to talk a bit more about mental health issues. About a month ago, I revealed the extent of the staffing crisis in mental health: the system is about 170 nurses and doctors short, which has caused beds to be closed. Staff are having to cut corners and compromise their professional standards, and discharge planning has been shot to pieces. Recently, I spoke about the alarming rate of deaths among those with mental health issues; the figure is about eight a week. More than 200 mental health sufferers suicide each year. Last week, the Council of Official Visitors presented its report outlining the institutionalised and custodial culture in health services characterised by the rather punitive and degrading management practices. I have previously referred to the problems associated with a lack of beds. People have been sleeping on the floors of storerooms and interview rooms. I have also mentioned a lady who was quite ill and who, after taking a baby from King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women, had to go to prison instead of a mental health facility because there was no bed for her.

Issues have been raised about old, shabby and poorly maintained buildings. The answers I have received to questions on notice indicate that the number of forensic mental health patients receiving services from outpatient clinics has doubled in the past year without a matched doubling of resources. Members must remember the forensic mental health nurse who was stabbed 23 times. It took for that incident before the Minister for Health heeded any warnings about a crisis and provided nurses with additional security.

One of the key planks of the Minister for Health's \$173 million mental health action plan was his support for community housing options. Despite the millions that have been spent, the net result of the past eight months is minus three places. Twenty-five places have opened but 28 places have closed, resulting in a net total of minus three. While all this has been happening, Steve Langford from the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia has raised issues about the increase in the number of mental health patients that the RFDS transfers from country areas to Perth. Basically, the RFDS cannot keep up. If that is not enough, the coroner is travelling the Kimberley to investigate deaths in Aboriginal communities, most of which are suicides. When I travelled to the goldfields recently, I was told that the goldfields is experiencing exactly the same problems. I do not know about you, Mr Deputy President, but if I were faced with these difficulties to resolve, I might just try to muster my key people to come up with some urgent short-term, medium-term and long-term strategies to fix the system. The short-term and urgent crisis management strategy that the Minister for Health has come up with is that on 1 January 2008, the minister will force all mentally ill patients in public institutions to quit smoking. That includes voluntary patients, involuntary patients, patients in residential facilities and patients who live in community supported residential units. Involuntary mental health patients who are locked into WA's secure mental health facilities - mostly against their will - will not be able to smoke anywhere, not even in the garden or park areas to which they have access. Once again the minister is trying to make a name for himself among his interstate colleagues. He wants to become the first health minister to have smoke-free health facilities across the board.

Hon Kate Doust: I think he should do whatever he can to ban it in this place.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am getting to that. This is a case of the minister getting his priorities wrong. He should be sorting out the problems of staffing and access to beds, and the dreadful problems of the punitive and degrading culture in the mental health system that I have spoken about. Instead, he is placing more strain and stress on the health system when the mental health facilities will be most short staffed. Be very clear about this: between Christmas and the new year it is dreadfully hard to find the staff to manage those services, and agency staff do not want to work. The minister's ban coincides with the time when most people with a mental illness require services and when there will be an increased demand for beds. This is the highest demand time of the year for mental health patients.

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The degree of difficulty in implementing this policy for mental health patients should not be underestimated. Why was smoking not banned in all outdoor areas of prisons? More importantly, why has the government not banned smoking in the courtyard of Parliament House? It is because the MPs who smoke would find it too difficult. Those members are here voluntarily - I think. They can go home, out into the street or into the garden to smoke. Would the Leader of the House voluntarily accept a smoking ban in Parliament House to set a good example for the involuntary patients in the mental health facilities? I suggest that the government should not implement a ban on patients smoking in garden areas when the ban on smoking does not apply to members of Parliament in the courtyard of Parliament House.

Hon Kim Chance: I don't see the linkage. Actually, I do with some people!

Hon HELEN MORTON: The Council of Official Visitors raised this issue in a report, which states in part -

This directive has created enormous concern in the sector as tobacco is an acknowledged source of great comfort to most people with a mental illness.

I am not saying that people who smoke a lot have a mental illness; I am saying that people who have a mental illness probably smoke a lot. The report continues -

Official Visitors say that not only patients but also clinical staff continue to approach them to voice their concern as well as their claim that such a ban is unfair and in their view impossible to implement.

...

Despite the attention and preparation of the Council's position about involuntary patients in locked wards has not changed. Added to this proviso is our opposition to a prohibition that will extend to people who are to live in community supported housing built on land owned by the Department of Health: the accommodation is after all to be their home - people in shared housing generally set rules as to how to live together. This may or may not include rules about where and when to smoke. It should never be expected that Government would set those rules.

If ever members needed an example of the things that I have mentioned before regarding the government starting to bring about institutionalised living in those community supported residential units, this is the first example. The minister himself is bringing those types of examples. I have received a number of representations, including one from a carer's representative. She writes -

... I am on the Graylands Hospital Management Team Committee which meets once a fortnight to discuss what is happening ...

She goes on to talk about the dreadful things she has witnessed. She writes -

One last point which I would like to make, for those who are in Graylands for the long haul, IT IS THEIR HOME. They have no choice and I am sure they do not want it to be their home, however it is. The government is forcing these people to stop smoking in their own home. I hate smoking myself, but I believe they are being inhumane to these very sick individuals how -

It should be "who" -

are often not capable of voicing their own opinions. No one wants to be made an involuntary patient and to live in Graylands. It happens, I know, because it happened to our son. He is 24 and has been living there in a permanent basis for seven years. It is a sad situation and forcing him to give up the one thing he enjoys, is just unbelievable.

I received a similar letter from another person, who wrote -

I feel that although people are outraged by the unrealistic idea of the Health Department to enforce their policy, not many people are speaking out, basically as most organizations are funded in some way by the Government.

Any consumers I have spoken to cannot believe that this might happen ...

In the very short time that I have left, I quote from a lady who writes -

I am so grateful to you for taking up this challenge. ... I knew that I wasn't well enough and as a result strong enough to be an effective enough voice for the consumers this affects.

People have come to me with a number of concerns. I hope to table a petition tomorrow morning that is signed by a range of people. People are very concerned about the effect of this ban at a time when we cannot even imagine what it would be like for members of Parliament to give it up.

Leila Soerink - Adjournment Debate

Hon Kim Chance; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Kate Doust; Hon
Barbara Scott

HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM (South West) [10.11 pm]: I rise to make a brief statement on the recent passing of a most loved and respected south west constituent. Leila Soerink, nee Huggett, was one of the earliest members of the humanist movement in Western Australia who believed in the need to leave planet earth in a better state than when she arrived, something that she strove constantly to achieve throughout her life. She was born in South Africa in 1918, migrating to WA with her parents after spending her early childhood in England. During their early years in Western Australia, the Huggetts lived on a farm near Kalannie before moving to Perth, where Leila studied and became a chiropodist. In 1952 Leila married Henk, and both turned to political activism. With her keen interest in humanism underpinning her approach to community life, she was an inspiration to all, particularly in Denmark, where the Soerinks moved and co-founded the cooperative community known as the Wolery some 30 years ago.

Leila's great passion in life was the pursuit of social justice. She frequently spoke out on issues of concern and was a regular contributor to newspapers such as *The West Australian*, the *Albany Advertiser* and the *Denmark Bulletin*. Leila became a long-term member of the Australian Labor Party. She was particularly interested in the peace movement, the role of women in society, the environment and the anti-nuclear issue. Although she passed away shortly before the recent federal election, Leila would have taken great comfort from the result. Leila joins two other highly respected Denmark identities to have passed away in recent times. Her sister, Enid Conochie, and the well-known soil salinity expert Clive Malcolm have likewise made outstanding contributions to the Denmark community. Leila Soerink will be sadly missed by her family and all who came to respect a lady of vision, compassion and commitment to her fellow human beings.

Education, Behaviour Management and Pastoral Care - Adjournment Debate

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan) [10.14 pm]: Last night I made some comments about the lack of adequate behaviour management strategies and pastoral care strategies in our public schools. I identified the fact that the pastoral care strategies in our public schools should be included in the "Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007", as identified in this year's annual report of the Department of Education and Training. As I mentioned last night, the plan is based on three pieces of evidence, all of which were not completed when the plan was written. That puts into question the sincerity of this government in terms of looking after pastoral care or providing pastoral care in the public school system. Perhaps if the government had looked at this evidence that it purportedly used in the "Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007", it may have had a more comprehensive pastoral care strategy. I will look at one of the documents, which is "Caring for our children". I will read some of the findings of the paper -

Factors impeding pastoral care

Principals/administrators and teachers were asked varying questions relating to the factors that "hindered" their school (or schools in general for teachers) in providing pastoral care. The responses have been discussed below.

Accessing resources

All schools discussed the availability of resources as a major issue that can impede the provision of pastoral care. Principals mentioned that considerable resources were required to provide pastoral care services that could cater for the individual needs of all students. They felt that staff resources were already at what they considered to be minimum levels which made it challenging to implement any new pastoral care initiatives. To do so principals often borrowed resources from other areas within the school, or relied upon the goodwill of staff.

Many teachers mentioned that they were already working at full capacity and that it was not possible to implement any pastoral care initiatives if this involved additional demands upon their time.

"Stress levels upon teachers is another issue, I am already giving up my recesses and lunchtimes and choose to work right through, and it is difficult to see how I could dedicate any more energy to provide pastoral care to students."

[Teacher]

...

There was also some concern expressed by principals and teachers about limited access to pastoral care services, including school psychologists, school nurses and police services. This was seen to be particularly problematic in rural and isolated schools.

Principals and teachers mentioned that many students were on psychologist waiting lists, but in the meantime, schools had to persevere in teaching these young people without the problem being resolved. Moreover school psychologists often only had the opportunity to work with students on a one-on-one

basis whereas there was an equally important need for them to implement group or school level programs.

Finally, principals in small schools mentioned that their schools do not achieve the same economies of scale as larger schools, making it often impractical for them to implement pastoral care programs.

Accessing specialised knowledge and expertise

Somewhat related to access to resources is access to specialised expertise and knowledge. Many teachers and some principals felt that they did not have the knowledge or skills to deal effectively with serious pastoral care issues. In particular they believed that they needed additional support to teach students with mental health and extreme behaviour management problems.

Accessing external support agencies

Accessing external services was also considered to be an issue. Community services were either unavailable or had extensive waiting lists. Staff also discussed the work, especially paperwork, required to access these services as often being excessive.

...

Meeting shifting expectations

Many teachers and principals felt that parent and student expectations, in relation to pastoral care, were becoming increasingly unrealistic. Many schools believed they schools were becoming more responsible for many areas that had traditionally been the parents' role.

“Parents expect too much. They expect teachers to play a surrogate role, to look after the emotional side of a student as well”

“Some parents have shifted their responsibilities to the teacher, for example sex education, etiquette, and values.”

[Teachers]

This was seen to lead to shifting perceptions surrounding school responsibilities in relation to pastoral care and result in increased uncertainty and anxiety among school staff.

...

Support required by schools

Schools were asked not only about the factors impeding its provision, but also about the support they needed with regard to pastoral care. The results are presented below.

More resources

A lack of resources was considered a major impediment: not surprisingly, schools saw increasing them as the most important form of support required.

The following resources were emphasised:

- Increased student services (including psychologists, school nurses, other allied health services and police officers) to provide greater casework support to students and professional advice to teachers.
- Smaller class sizes or more non-teaching time to free teachers to focus more effectively on providing care for students.
- Increased program-based resources (for example the ‘Friendly Schools’ program), where some pastoral care programs could be developed at a system level and then implemented by schools.

Standards in pastoral care provision

There was a general belief across most school staff of the need for much greater clarity in relation to the provision of pastoral care. For example:

“At the moment teachers are just winging it, they require...clear processes in place, at the moment they are just using common sense.”

[Principal]

Specifically, the following issues were mentioned by most principals and teachers:

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- There is no formal departmental position concerning what pastoral care is and what good pastoral care actually involves.
- The responsibilities of schools versus students, parents, community agencies and the wider community were undefined and at times confused.
- There were no standardised guidelines and procedures across schools for meeting those responsibilities.

Many principals and teachers thought that these issues could be resolved by the development of an overarching Departmental framework that would provide greater clarity and clear guidelines in relation to pastoral care provision in schools.

I could not have put that better myself. Perhaps if the Department of Education and Training and the government had looked at this document, they might have started to implement some effective pastoral care strategies in our schools. Instead, they maintain that pastoral care strategies in our schools were based on the report, when they were produced 12 months prior to the date of the report. Where is the logic in that? Obviously, there is a real issue with this annual report, which is fatally flawed.

To give members an example of some of the difficulties that are occurring in our schools, I received a copy of a letter from the Busselton Senior High School branch of the State School Teachers' Union of WA to the district director of the Warren-Blackwood District Education Office, dated 22 November 2007, which reads -

Dear Janine

Branch Motion Concerning Violence and Abuse at Busselton SHS

The Busselton SHS branch of the union has held three specially convened branch meetings in recent weeks as a response to our growing concern about issues of violence, threats and abuse of teachers by students. These meetings have resulted in a motion which has been unanimously passed by members. The motion reads as follows:

This branch, in responding to the legitimate concerns of members and in support of the school administration, calls for urgent action to be taken to address the issue of Violence and Abuse in the Workplace. Many staff continue to endure insults and abuse from students in the conduct of their daily duties. This has resulted in serious disruption to the teaching and learning environment, has had a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of staff and led to perceptions of poor behavioural standards at Busselton SHS in the wider community which undermine confidence in government schooling.

This branch calls upon the department to provide adequate resourcing to address the issue in a comprehensive and proactive manner by:

1. Recognising that we are not equipped, resourced or staffed to meet the needs of severely alienated youth; their needs cannot be met in the mainstream context at Busselton as they require additional resourcing, specialist provision and external agency support. Such students continue to cause significant disruption in the school to the detriment of students and staff alike. This branch therefore calls upon the department to make urgent provision to meet the needs of severely alienated students through the provision of additional resourcing at district and school level.

2. Resourcing the school so as to enable its operation in a manner consistent with OHS Act (1984) such that incidents of violence, threats and abuse directed at teachers and other staff are dealt with immediately, consistently and restoratively.

It goes on to give a much more comprehensive outline of those issues that I have just identified. The simple fact of the matter is that this is not an isolated case. It is a call for help from the teachers of Busselton Senior High School. The letter is signed by 30 teachers. Dare I say that this school is typical of a number of schools in the public education system. We must take this seriously. Behaviour management is a significant issue that is causing teachers to leave and turning people away from the profession.

We need to properly resource schools to ensure that they have effective behaviour management strategies. One of the most vital underlying components of effective behaviour management strategies is pastoral care. Effective pastoral care strategies in our schools are absolutely essential. If we are to overcome such behaviour management issues, we must provide comprehensive pastoral care strategies.

Hairdressers Registration Board - Adjournment Debate

Hon Kim Chance; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Kate Doust; Hon
Barbara Scott

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan - Parliamentary Secretary) [10.24 pm]: A number of governance issues in the hairdressing industry have been raised with me over the past couple of months. Over a long period of time, and long before I came into this place, the subject of the Hairdressers Registration Board of Western Australia would be raised regularly for discussion. Hon Peter Foss would raise the issue from time to time because it was very close to his heart. I know he would like to have seen the board removed. Having dealt with a large number of quite serious related matters, I agree with him. The time has come to revisit the Hairdressers Registration Board and perhaps to look at change.

I remind members that Western Australia is the only state that has a hairdressers registration board. The Hairdressers Registration Board of Western Australian is a statutory authority set up as a result of the Hairdressers Registration Act 1946. Although it may have been relevant then, after having dealt with a number of complaints I have taken to the Minister for Consumer Protection over the past couple of months, I seriously question its relevance to the industry today. I am firmly of the view that it has the potential to provide some impediments to people entering and operating in the industry, and also raises some serious concerns about how the industry deals with changes in training and education for people operating in hairdressing.

I will share with members some of the examples of the problems that I have taken up, because it struck me as being quite unusual that people would have to cope with these issues. The first approach I had was from a hairdresser in Victoria Park who owns quite a large outlet that not only provides normal hairdressing services, but also employs a number of trainees and apprentices. That salon also provides a service for cancer sufferers. The salon had been visited by the inspectorate from the Hairdressers Registration Board. The manner in which the whole visit was conducted is another story, but it was not necessarily a successful visit. One of the staff had trained and qualified as a hairdresser many, many years ago and had not worked as a hairdresser in WA for about 13 years, but had worked in other states. She is a receptionist and a manager and provides advice to cancer sufferers who come into that shop to get wigs. She advises on colour and style, but does not do any cutting. Anyone can give that sort of advice; they would not have to be a hairdresser. Wigs can be obtained from a range of other places, not just hairdressing salons, such as Myer or cut-price shops where there are all sorts of hairpieces and wigs -

Hon Barbara Scott: You can have your colours done.

Hon KATE DOUST: One could have colours done.

The Hairdressers Registration Board wanted this woman to register as a hairdresser. She was told that if she did not, she could be prosecuted and fined and could not work there. That was the first of the problems I had to take up. It struck me that the system that people are operating under is outdated. That problem opened the floodgates and I was inundated with a range of problems, not just in the metropolitan area, but also in some parts of country WA, right up to Kalgoorlie, where one salon was not able to register its hairdressers because of the timing of the board's meeting. That salon was thinking it would have to shut its doors because it desperately needed these staff.

Hon Barbara Scott: Like the teachers' registration board - WACOT, I think it's called!

Hon KATE DOUST: No, I will not go there. I want to talk about this issue because it has been debated over time and the Labor Party has supported the retention of the Hairdressers Registration Board. In my former work as a trade unionist, I used to work with the hairdressing industry. At that time we supported the retention of the board because we believed there was an opportunity for it to work in the industry, particularly in the areas of research and changes to education and training. However, after having dealt with quite a broad range of problems, I am questioning its relevance.

Another example is that some of the training providers in the industry are looking at a new form of traineeship for older trainees, which is a great idea because there is a desperate need for hairdressers, and people might be attracted back into the industry. The concern is that at the end of 12 months' training those people would be unable to work in the industry because they could not register as a result of not having undertaken an apprenticeship and acquired a formal qualification. That would be a barrier to employment.

Other people have come to my office who want to provide hairdressing services, but who do not have the formal qualification and do not want to run a formal business. For example, members of the African community, who, for cultural reasons, want to provide some sort of service for hair braiding, because that is culturally very important to them. They cannot operate a hairdressing service because they do not have qualifications from Western Australia. I have taken up these matters with Minister McHale and her staff on a couple of occasions and told her about the concerns that people have in dealing with the board and whether the board is relevant to the needs of the industry today. I have talked to her about specific complaints about the conduct of the board towards certain individuals. I know of people who have stood their ground on the issue of registration and have

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had to pay fines of up to \$10 000, as occurred in a recent case. For a person who is running a business that employs a number of people, having to deal with that issue is a fairly substantial concern. There has been a review of the Hairdressers Registration Act 1946, and I know that the minister has been examining that review. Hopefully, the minister will take on board the issues I have raised with her over the past couple of months, and the correspondence I have provided her from a number of employees in the industry and representatives of employers. I have met with employers and employees from some of the very large hairdressing companies in Western Australia and they all express the same concerns about the relevance of the board to the industry, the potential barrier that the board could create to employment in the industry, and the barriers it creates to meeting the constant changes in the nature of the industry. If one speaks to people in the various hairdressing outlets, they will explain that they are desperately trying to fill vacancies. There are two hairdressing salons near my office, and another located in the shopping centre across the road. In both cases, it took more than 12 months to find a staff member who was prepared to work one day a week. In one case, the staff member registered with the board, only to have an inspector come around and say, "You can't work here. You're not registered." The staff member said, "See that on the wall? That's my receipt; that's my registration form. You've got my cheque - you obviously haven't updated the register."

A range of issues need to be addressed. I hope the minister will take this on board. The industry is saying that it is time for a change. It would like the hairdressing industry in Western Australia to operate on a similar basis to that in New South Wales, where there is no registration board and no requirement to register. Consumer complaints are dealt with by the relevant government department, and health and safety complaints are dealt with by the New South Wales equivalent of WorkSafe. That system operates really well. The industry in New South Wales is able to encourage people to return to hairdressing. The industry is able to regulate itself. My sister was a hairdresser. I asked her, "Why don't you register?" She said, "Why should I? They don't do anything for me anymore. There's nothing I can get in return."

Hon Barry House: It's nothing more than a sinecure for Les Marshall!

Hon KATE DOUST: I will not go down that path.

I was surprised about the types of complaints, the level of interest within the industry and its frustration with dealing with the board. I agree with the industry; I think it is time for a change, and I sincerely hope the minister will take all those concerns on board when she reaches her decision after going through the review of the act. I hope she will provide relief, change and the capacity to move forward for what could be a very exciting industry and employment group for Western Australians.

Kulunga Preschool and Hilton Primary School - Adjournment Debate

HON BARBARA SCOTT (South Metropolitan) [10.33 pm]: I do not intend to take very much of the time of the house tonight, but I wish to raise an urgent matter that has been raised with me in my electorate. This is the last opportunity I will have to do so.

My electorate covers the suburb of Hilton, and I have had a long association with the school and several kindergartens in the area. In fact, yesterday I was at Coolbellup kindergarten, of which I am a patron. Coolbellup is a low socioeconomic area and the kindergarten services a range of children, particularly a large number of Aboriginal children. This year, the school has been able to attract some very good federal funding to enable it to track the competencies for Aboriginal children developed in the early years, and to make sure that they succeed during their early years. Just down the road from the Pineview Community Kindergarten at Coolbellup is the Hilton pre-preschool. Many members may not be familiar with the term "prepre". The pre-preschools were established many years ago especially to enhance the early learning years of Aboriginal children. There are only a few of them left now because most of the children go into the mainstream kindergarten classes and then into the preprimary classes. The Hilton pre-preschool is a separate Aboriginal preschool with which Aboriginal parents feel comfortable.

The other day I received an urgent message from a young woman called Dale Olson, with whom I have had a long association. Many members opposite in the chamber tonight will know Dale. She has been very active in that area for many years. I think she is a past president of the kindergarten. She is involved in the army museum and the Hilton Primary School. She sent an urgent message to me, which reads -

I have a local problem in Hilton and I seek your urgent advice/input.

As you probably know DET is conducting a pilot program in several school districts where they are bussing in problem teens, to be housed during school hours for special programs - basically getting them out of the classrooms where they have been disruptive.

Hon Peter Collier: Is that where they'll be? You'll have to tell the minister; he doesn't know.

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Hon BARBARA SCOTT: It is one of the few, I think, that has been designated. There are probably children in that area who may need the facility. Ms Olson's note continues -

There was recently one such program set up on the oval at Hilton Primary oval in a demountable room - 3-metre high fence, barbed wire and the works! No local consultation, Hilton Principal informed, but not included - you know, the usual sort of DET process.

. . .

Now the local District Director . . . is saying that they -

The teenagers involved -

need bigger premises - i.e. more kids coming - and they want to move the well established Kulunga Pre-pre-primary Aboriginal learning centre from its wonderful off-site kindergarten down the block, into a demountable classroom - a third of the size! - on-site at the school.

Again, no consultation, no discussion, just fait accompli . . . and causing lots of angst at the school and in the wider community.

There are lots of issues:

I want to focus tonight on the fact that the Kulunga pre-preschool has served the Aboriginal community in this area very well and the success of the children who have been going through that school has been measured. For many of them it has been very successful. Dale Olson goes on to say -

1. Kulunga is a well-established, very successful program - the families coming through this early intervention have been doing well for several decades with well-documented successes at Hilton and in higher learning.
2. The off-site kindergarten was purpose built as an early childhood setting in the early 70's - and would need major (expensive) modification for teens. It is leased from the City of Fremantle and adjacent to the Hilton Child Health centre and local aged-care facilities - not a good mix.
3. Kulunga is being down-graded into an unacceptably small space - unsuitable for pre-primary and the early childhood programs undertaken in the centre. Again putting this program at risk.
4. Community concerns about this program are not being addressed - though Ross Albones is supposed to be turning up to a Hilton Precinct meeting tomorrow evening.

That was last night.

This afternoon in the Parliament I asked the Minister for Education and Training whether in fact the Aboriginal parents and their children involved in this program had been consulted. That may seem odd, but little 3, 4 and 5-year-old kids know when they have a good playground. They know when they have space to play and they would be able to say, "We'd rather stay here and not go down there into that classroom near the big kids because we've got swings and trees to climb and we've got other things to do here." I asked the minister whether the parents and children or any of the relevant community members had been consulted about moving this Aboriginal intervention learning program, which is working and which has been successful, to another site, rather than the minister simply saying that he wants to establish a program for disengaged young people. I do not have a problem with that, but why should he move little Aboriginal kids who feel comfortable and whose parents feel comfortable out of their properly designed building and into a prefabricated classroom on the school grounds up the road where there are no proper play facilities? This is an outrageous demonstration by the Minister for Education and Training that he has no understanding and no appreciation of the importance of capturing little Aboriginal kids at a critical age in their learning cycle. This program at the Kulunga pre-preschool is working for these kids, but now they will be pushed out of their comfort zone into a place that is not suitable because the minister wants to try to gain some pixie points in the electorate by saying that he will deal with difficult kids who disrupt other classrooms. Yes, I feel for parents who have children in classrooms in which a few difficult kids disrupt the whole class. However, do we not at least have an obligation to provide a service to little kids in the Aboriginal community in their critical early learning years? We know that right across the board the literacy and numeracy levels of children in the Aboriginal community are almost two years behind those of children in the normal population.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.41 pm

Extract from *Hansard*

[COUNCIL - Wednesday, 5 December 2007]

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Hon Kim Chance; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Kate Doust; Hon
Barbara Scott
