

MULLEWA, ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

**1205. Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS to the Premier:**

I refer the Premier to his response to the Gordon inquiry, which states that for its part the Government will move immediately to increase police and child protection resources, targeting localities where it is jointly agreed this is urgently required, and, further to his claims in this House yesterday, that this Government is committed to the protection of young people.

- (1) Is the Premier aware that Aboriginal children between the ages of three and 17 years are regularly unaccompanied on the streets of Mullewa as late as 2.00 am?
- (2) Is the Premier further aware that as well as being at risk, these children are causing criminal damage to businesses and private residences?
- (3) Will the Premier immediately act to address this alarming situation, including ensuring that the Geraldton office of the Department for Community Development, which is currently four full-time equivalent employees short, is properly resourced?

**Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:**

- (1)-(3) I am aware that problems are being experienced in Mullewa, which is of concern. We are concerned that some young Western Australians have been caught up in a life that will not produce positive results for them and at the same time is causing great harm to the rest of the community. This is a challenge we face in Western Australia. We will do something about it.

In respect of the Gordon inquiry, I believe that I can stand in this Parliament and through this Parliament say to the people of Western Australia that they have now got a Government that has taken seriously the issue of child sex abuse and domestic violence in Aboriginal families throughout Western Australia. Resources are being rolled out and changes are being made in administration.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Nedlands!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: We believe that the long road to turning around some of those communities has commenced. It will take time, but we have made the commitment. I believe a public meeting was held in Mullewa, which was attended by my colleague, the member for Geraldton. May I congratulate the member for Geraldton.

Ms S.E. Walker: What about the child protection workers? Where are they?

The SPEAKER: Member for Nedlands!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The member for Geraldton takes his responsibilities -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I want to say good things about a member of Parliament, and all the Opposition can do is attack.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The member for Geraldton has taken on board wider responsibilities because he recognises that the Government needs to know what is happening in places like Mullewa. Even though it is not in his constituency, I congratulate him, and indeed the member for Greenough who was at that meeting.

I have just been made aware of this issue. It is of concern. As members know, ultimately the Commissioner of Police makes decisions about where resources are allocated. When I was in opposition I remember going to Mullewa and having a discussion with members of that community. At that time things were going positively. It is very depressing to hear that it has turned around again and it is heading in a negative direction. I will certainly look at all the information that is provided to me by the Shire of Mullewa, local members of Parliament and interest groups to see if we can put together a strategy that will deal with this situation.

As I said yesterday, the problem of bad behaviour is not solved by acquiescing to it; it must be confronted. We are a Government that is willing to do it. We have been willing to do it when it comes to child sex abuse. It is very interesting that when we took up the challenge of the Swan Valley Nyungah Community, a good portion of the Liberal Party was undermining all our efforts, to the shame of the Liberal Party. We are a Government that will take on these challenges.

Several members interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Listen to these questions from members of the Opposition. They were in government for eight years.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Aboriginal women and Aboriginal communities were going to them, as was reported in this House by the member for Ningaloo. What did they do? They got out the broom and they swept it under the carpet. At last there is a Labor Government that will confront bad behaviour.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Nedlands and the member for Hillarys to order for the first time.

I draw members' attention to the presence in my gallery of the Vice-President of the Senate of the Parliament of Lesotho, Senator Letapata Makhaola. The senator is here to discuss several aspects of Parliament's procedures and operations. On behalf of all members I welcome him to the Western Australian Parliament.

[Applause.]