

SHADOW CABINET, CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

286. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth:

I have noticed that there is no portfolio responsibility for children and community development in the new coalition shadow Cabinet. Will the minister please advise what this may mean for families and children?

Ms S.M. McHALE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. I was amazed and concerned to see that a portfolio of children and community development was not in the shadow ministry. One of the best indicators of performance is to look at what people have done and not what they say they will do. Let us look at the Opposition -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Ms S.M. McHALE: Let us look at the Opposition's record when it was in government. It had the chance but it refused to establish a children's commission. It also had the chance but it rejected mandatory reporting. In addition -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Nedlands to order for the first time.

Ms S.M. McHALE: When in government, the coalition ignored report after report about workload issues affecting child protection. It put no new money into child protection. What has it done in opposition? It opposed the Government's new children's legislation. It foreshadowed its intention to de-fund and close a child protection service. Children and disability issues are not that important so as to appear in the shadow ministry. Children do not have a voice in the shadow ministry.

Let us look at what the Government has done; its performance can be judged by what it has done. It instigated the Gordon Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities and implemented the recommendations of the State Homelessness Taskforce. It has continued to resource local communities for early intervention. It has employed 115 new workers in the system. For the past three years this Government has been the Government that has systematically tackled child abuse, family and domestic violence and protection for those who need it most. The true colours of the Opposition are now pinned to the mast. The Opposition has put families and children well and truly on the outer.