

CHILD ABUSE — MANDATORY REPORTING

16. Hon SHELLEY ARCHER to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to a media article in *The West Australian* dated Saturday, 20 September 2008 in which the minister was reported as having vowed to introduce blanket mandatory reporting of all forms of child abuse.

- (1) What evidence can the minister provide to support the introduction of “blanket” mandatory reporting of child abuse, and what evidence is there to support the position that this will improve the protection of children?
- (2) Has the minister undertaken any consultation processes with key agencies and the Western Australian community to determine the impact of this decision on child protection agencies, police, families and children?
- (3) If the government introduces mandatory reporting, how will the minister ensure that no child will slip through the net due to the anticipated increase in the number of reports that will require investigation?

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The government is committed to mandatory reporting, which will lead to better protection for children in Western Australia. The new legislation for mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse will come into operation on 1 January 2009. It is important that this new legislation is fully bedded down prior to the expansion of mandatory reporting to include other types of abuse.
- (2) Consultation will be undertaken prior to the drafting of legislation for the expansion of mandatory reporting.
- (3) Following the outcomes of (1) and (2), cabinet will consider what resources are required to respond to the anticipated increase in mandatory reports.

As the member may know, anyone who has any suspicions that a child is being abused in any form can now pick up the phone and report it.