

CHILD NEGLECT

103. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Child Protection:

Yesterday the minister answered a question by Hon Robyn McSweeney and outlined the department's position on child neglect. Has the government got a policy position on child neglect and will the policy be tabled at the next sitting?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the member for the question. The government has made its position clear on child protection. It is a high priority. The government has responded to the Ford report by accepting all but one of the recommendations. The report canvassed all the difficulties that the Department for Community Development had been experiencing and the allegations that have been made against the department. As I have indicated, the government has accepted all but one recommendation. The one it did not accept concerns mandatory reporting. In that respect the government has made an announcement that it will introduce mandatory reporting. Child protection is a high priority for the government. The answer I gave yesterday was that there is an existing policy on child neglect. I tabled it yesterday. I also indicated that the department is reviewing the policy. When the review work has been done, I will be happy to table it.

Point of Order

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I should have taken this point of order at the end of the previous question rather than now. With the indulgence of Mr President, I will raise it now. I seek Mr President's view about whether it is the province of a parliamentary secretary to qualify or change an answer or whether it is merely a parliamentary secretary's role to convey a minister's answer to this house in question time.

The PRESIDENT: I think I have made observations on this issue before. Representatives of ministers give answers but they are responsible for the answers they give. I think that is consistent with what has been said by previous Presidents. The member has raised his point of order some time after the incident occurred; therefore, I do not have the issue right in front of me. The member is referring to an answer whereby another aspect is within the province of somebody else. There is nothing unsatisfactory in what I heard from the parliamentary secretary.