

AUSTRALIAN ISLAMIC COLLEGE

**629. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:**

Will the minister explain the difficulties being encountered by the Australian Islamic College and whether they are a result of advice given by the Leader of the Opposition in his former capacity as Minister for Education?

**Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question. This is another very interesting example of the fabulous flexibility that we spoke about yesterday. The Australian Islamic College is encountering difficulties in developing its school in Kewdale. It is certainly my view that the notorious capacity of the Leader of the Opposition for flexibility with the truth is contributing to its problems. I will just run back over the history. In 1999 the then State Government closed down Kewdale Senior High School and sold the site to the Australian Islamic College. The college advised the Government of the time of its plans for this site and said it would be using between 60 and 65 per cent of the site for schooling purposes and that the remainder - between 35 and 40 per cent - would be redeveloped for non-schooling purposes. We have letters from the Australian Islamic College setting that out clearly to the then Minister for Education, now the Leader of the Opposition. We also have a letter dated 29 September 1999, in which the Minister for Education acknowledges that; he also acknowledges that a maximum of 65 per cent of the total site would be retained for school purposes. However, in 2002, when this matter went to the City of Belmont for planning, it struck a problem. The City of Belmont thought that the 60 to 61 per cent that was being proposed was a bit small. However, it was mindful of the claims that were being made by the Australian Islamic College that the then Minister for Education and the previous Government had sold the site on the understanding that it would only have to keep somewhere between 60 and 65 per cent aside for school purposes. The City of Belmont did the right thing. It wrote to the Leader of the Opposition and asked whether he could clarify what his position was when he sold the site. Guess what? Yet again, the Leader of the Opposition has done a complete about-face. In a letter dated 5 August 2002 - notably after 11 September 2001 - he acknowledges that there was an agreement to sell about 10 per cent of the site, but he goes on to say that the sale of any other land, including the proposed sale of the playing fields, was not contemplated. He further said that any rezoning or sale of the land is entirely independent of, and contrary to, the original agreement made by the coalition Government. This is an absolute disgrace. Once again this is a clear and absolute demonstration that this Leader of the Opposition has absolutely no regard for the truth. He will say whatever it takes to establish some sort of crazy popularity. He has done the Australian Islamic College a grave disservice and we will make sure that his commitments to that group are honoured.