

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

Special

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [10.10 pm] - without notice: I move -

That the house at its rising adjourn until 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 5 December 2007.

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [10.11 pm]: The opposition supports this proposition. Indeed, discussions between me and the Leader of the House indicate that, by changing some of the sitting hours between now and Thursday, the house can adjourn on Thursday evening.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Mr Deputy President -

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: No.

Question put and passed.

Ordinary

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [10.11 pm]: So as not to disappoint Hon Peter Collier, and the rest of us, I move -

That the house do now adjourn.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I tell Hon Peter Collier that on a special adjournment often many members try to stand and walk out because they think that is the end of the day.

Education, Behaviour Management and Pastoral Care - Adjournment Debate

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan) [10.12 pm]: They usually do when I start talking!

Over the past 12 months or so I have made a number of speeches on behaviour management in schools, and I have also asked a number of questions about behaviour management. I have done so, in particular, at budget estimates this year. I have not really been satisfied with the responses I have been getting from the Department of Education and Training; that is, that there are meaningful, comprehensive and effective behaviour management strategies in the public school system and also that there are supportive pastoral care strategies to deal with the behaviour management problems that exist in a number of our schools.

I have looked at the 2006-07 Department of Education and Training annual report - in particular, the section on pastoral care. I have alluded to this section on several occasions over the past month. If anything, it heightens my concerns with regard to the delivery of pastoral care within the public school system. I will read part of the report listed under "Pastoral care". It states, in part -

Through quality pastoral care processes schools build and maintain a supportive culture that is conducive to academic excellence.

This commitment means that schools:

...

- Have clearly articulated and comprehensive pastoral care processes that are proactive and oriented towards prevention and early intervention.

...

The Department articulated its commitment to pastoral care in the core values expressed in the Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007. To ensure that the proposed initiatives were supported by evidence, three pieces of research were commissioned and were completed by February 2006.

I was immediately concerned because I saw that the three pieces of evidence were completed by February 2006 for a report that is from 2004 to 2007. How could the report, which is from 2004 to 2007, be based on evidence that was completed in February 2006? I asked a few questions about what I saw as a contradiction. If anything, it just heightened my concern and put serious question marks over the accuracy of the DET annual report. I have mentioned this question in a couple of other speeches during the adjournment debate. I asked -

Will the minister table the three pieces of research into pastoral care commissioned by DET?

The minister's response was -

"Caring for our Children" has been published on the department's website. "Pastoral Care and Education", prepared by Edith Cowan University, was recently completed and is being used by the

department in pastoral care planning for the system. It will be made available on the department's website. The third document was a consultative process for schools rather than a report and is being incorporated into pastoral care planning.

As I have said, those three reports heightened my concern. When I asked the question on 15 November 2007 I was told that "Caring for our Children" was completed, that "Pastoral Care in Education" was recently completed - that is, in November 2007 - and the third was merely a consultative process for schools, yet the annual report states that the pastoral care processes or strategies in government schools are based upon initiatives and supported by evidence from three pieces of research commissioned and completed by February 2006. That is blatantly inaccurate; it is wrong. That is why I have some concern about whether this government is doing enough to ensure that schools will have comprehensive, effective and meaningful pastoral care strategies that will assist teachers to deal with existing behaviour management issues.

I looked at "Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007" on the department's website and referred to the core values, which were the basis for the determinant of pastoral care strategies in government schools. The relevant section under "Our Purpose" states -

We seek to ensure that all students are able to develop the values articulated in the *Curriculum Framework*. The core-shared values in the Framework are described broadly as:

- a pursuit of knowledge and a commitment to the achievement of potential;
- self acceptance and respect of self;
- respect and concern for others and their rights;
- social and civic responsibility; and
- environmental responsibility.

The so-called core values that determine the basis of pastoral care are nothing more than the core values from the curriculum framework, which were written in 1998. So much for "Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007", which is the basis of pastoral care in government schools. The minister stated in his answer that the three pieces of evidence that were used to develop that plan were one report that has just been finished, one report that was not actually a plan and one from "Caring for our Children". The only problem is that "Caring for our Children" was completed in 2005. Therefore, "Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007" is based on three pieces of evidence that were not even completed when the plan for government schools was completed, which makes a complete mockery of the whole approach of the Department of Education and Training towards pastoral care.

Hon Kate Doust: I genuinely want to know what you define as pastoral care in the state school system.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Pastoral care means meaningful support mechanisms for our students to ensure that those students feel that they have support as an individual. I am not talking about academic support; I am talking about meaningful, personal support, so that they have someone in a school who understands the very special needs of each individual child. It is difficult with a school of a thousand students, but the private sector does it very well. It may have a vertical balance, with a vertical group of students from year 8 through to year 12, or it may have a horizontal group. One teacher will have responsibility for a set group of students, so that teacher will have a direct connection with a particular student. There may be what is called a year coordinator in a number of government schools, but that teacher is responsible for up to 200 to 300 students. Any meaningful interaction with students is therefore limited. Pastoral care ensures that a particular teacher has a small cohort of students and that he is directly responsible for the welfare and development of those students. If a student has parental issues, drug issues or any number of issues that children in our complex society are dealing with on a day-to-day basis, that teacher will be aware of the problem and can nip it in the bud. More often than not that will help to prevent any behavioural issues in the schools.

Behavioural issues as a whole can never be eliminated. I am not that naïve, and no teacher would be. If a teacher is directly responsible for a little group and has direct, day-to-day contact with those students, that goes an enormous way to preventing the acceleration of behavioural issues. Meaningful pastoral care strategies are absolutely essential. In all of the documentation, the government has acknowledged that good pastoral care strategies are needed. This is not a political statement; I am stating this because it is fact, and behaviour management must be dealt with. When I talked for three hours about the teacher shortage, over and over again I gave examples of teachers' concerns about behaviour management, which is one of the prime reasons teachers leave the profession. Teachers are leaving the profession because they are sick to death of going into classrooms and being abused, spat at and sworn at. If Western Australia had a good, comprehensive pastoral care system, supplemented with effective behaviour management strategies, that would go a long way to resolving a lot of those issues. Teachers would then really enjoy going into classrooms, knowing full well that their interaction with their students would be meaningful and helpful for both sides of the equation.

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I would like to continue on the subject of the “Caring for our Children” document to show how significantly pastoral care in the school environment is presented. I have run out of time this evening, but I will continue perhaps tomorrow night. I say, once again, that I am concerned that the annual report of the Department of Education and Training refers to pastoral care being in the “Planning for Government Schools” document, whereas within that, pastoral care refers to core values from the curriculum framework, and it also is based upon three pieces of evidence that have been written since “Planning for Government Schools” was published.

Mental Health System - Adjournment Debate

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan) [10.21 pm]: For the past three years in a row the Council of Official Visitors has tabled a report in this Parliament in about November. I would like to alert members to what was in the last report. Before I do that, I will explain that the Council of Official Visitors was established under the Mental Health Act 1996. The Minister for Health appoints people from the community to visit involuntary patients in the mental health system. These are involuntary patients in hospitals and other institutions, and also people who are involuntarily on community treatment orders. It is also a visiting service for mentally impaired accused persons in authorised hospitals, and for those mental health patients who live in psychiatric hostels.

The idea is that this panel of people make a regular visit about once a month to a hospital, or every two months to a hostel. Also, involuntary patients in these facilities can request a visit by the Council of Official Visitors, and most of those requests are responded to within 48 hours. In 2006, 979 consumers had contact with the official visitors, an increase of 9.9 or 10 per cent. There were 2 257 consumer requests to the Council of Official Visitors this year, an increase of 19.3 per cent on last year.

The council reports to the Minister for Health, and if there is any particular, significant issue that any member of the Council of Visitors wants to raise directly with the minister, they can. The business of the council is actually set on principles that were established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1991, where the principles for the protection of people with a mental illness were adopted under the banner that all persons with a mental illness shall be treated with humanity and respect for the integrity and dignity of the human person.

I refer to some of the things that the Council of Visitors raised in this report. First of all, the Council of Official Visitors raised concerns about community treatment orders. Under these orders, people receive involuntary care in the community. Most of the complaints were about the offhand manner with which clinicians treated the consequences of the decisions that they made about the lives of the people they deal with.

Another issue raised by the council was to do with patients in non-authorised areas, specifically voluntary patients with a mental illness. Issue 2 of the report states -

A woman who had been admitted to the psychiatric ward at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (SCGH) contacted the Council for assistance as she had been informed that she was an involuntary patient. This case mirrored that of another woman whose complaint had been made the previous year: our questions on her behalf were followed through this year.

They are both reported here as staff misunderstandings have the potential to deprive people of their freedoms and liberty.

I read that out because I want to explain to members that once again, the Acts Amendment (Consent to Medical Treatment) Bill 2006 will have a greater effect on people with a mental illness than it will have on others. We have to be very careful to ensure that the bill does not inadvertently have a really bad effect on people with a mental illness.

I now highlight the effect on acute patients of the shortage of beds in the mental health system. In one case the report makes reference to the number of non-forensic patients being admitted to the Frankland Centre, which is a unit at Graylands Hospital for forensic patients who are acutely mentally ill. They have very restricted visiting rights. People who are admitted to the facility who do not have a forensic problem have the same visitation limitations as others in the unit. The report makes reference to patients being assigned floor-based mattresses because the number of patients in the hospital is “over the count”; that is a term that is used to say that there are more people going into the hospital than it can accommodate. Staff have to nurse patients on mattresses in interview rooms and, in some cases, in storerooms. I have mentioned before that I have been to facilities in which patients were nursed in wards in which curtains were strung down the middle of the room.

One of the points made in the report is that in trying to fix one problem, another one is created in its place. The report states -

In order to meet need and to transfer patients from Emergency Departments as soon as is practicable the Council was told that a Department of Health notice was sent to each authorised unit requiring them to

accommodate one or more extra patients. In some circumstances patients were admitted to a ward to be nursed on a mattress on the floor.

As I said, this increases the nurse ratio and creates additional stresses for the staff.

There are a couple of other issues that I think are of great significance. At one of the facilities, the Mills Street Centre, three claims of undue force have been made in which patients had their arms twisted behind their back in order to subdue them. There was also a terrible case of a breach of human dignity. I will mention it again, because it is a sad situation for this to happen in this day and age. Illustration 4 of the report states -

Although no “*rough handling*” was reported this case still illustrates that a woman being taken to the seclusion room appears to have had her dignity breached. A female patient (who had complained about her own transfer) told the Council of an incident that she witnessed and claims that this woman was escorted to seclusion, past the dining room and in full view of other patients, without any underwear. She said that this patient’s request for a towel or sheet to protect her modesty was ignored by staff.

It is another example of some of the ongoing breaches of human dignity that take place in some of these facilities. I add that, in that case, responses to the complaints by the facility concerned have been, and remain, unsatisfactory to the Council of Official Visitors. It took up to six months for the Chief Psychiatrist to get around to looking into that complaint.

Some of the issues around Graylands Hospital include the institutionalised culture that is custodial in nature and not conducive to individualised care of a high standard. The Council of Official Visitors’ report refers, once again, to long-term patients in the Murchison ward having no lockers and wearing communal underwear. It describes the facility as dirty and shabby and a mid-twentieth century institution. There are issues such as no privacy for phone conversations. It refers a lot to the compromise of dignity and respect and refers to a person who was treated like a naughty child and to threats to voluntary patients that they would be made involuntary if they did not concur with the wishes of the staff. It is of real concern when patients are being threatened in that way so that they will comply with what the staff want.

I am really concerned about this. It is just another example of indifference. This is the third year in a row that a report of this nature has been presented to the Parliament. I cannot help but think that there is real official indifference to what is going on inside mental health facilities. If this was happening in any other health service, it would not be tolerated, but because it is a mental health service, people continue to accept people being treated with a lack of dignity and show a lack of concern for the kind of treatment these people are receiving. I have been calling for an inquiry into mental health for a number of weeks. While initially I was concerned about the rate of deaths in mental health, I am equally concerned about the custodial culture and the punitive, downgrading approaches noted in some of these mental health services, which reflect the way they are managed. I do not understand how this can continue to happen without an enormous community uproar. I am awfully concerned that by my raising these issues so often, somehow I am contributing to people’s desensitisation to them. However, I cannot think of any other way than to keep highlighting to people that this is a serious concern and we need to do something about it.

Ord Irrigation Scheme Stage 2 - Adjournment Debate

HON NIGEL HALLETT (South West) [10.31 pm]: I have some observations to make on some water issues that have been highlighted in *The West Australian*. In the 1 November edition there were two very interesting articles. Although they were entirely separate, they covered the same issue. I am referring to the current drought in some areas. The heading of the more prominent article referred to the possibility of food prices rising by some 20 per cent before Christmas because of the drought. The second article listed the additional 37 shires now able to receive drought relief from the state government. I am sure members will all agree that in this current parliamentary sitting, the government has shown that it has been very committed to social issues. However, the questions must be asked: what has it done to cushion us against price increases, and what is it doing about a long-term plan for domestic food supplies as well as a growing export market? There has been a further recent announcement that the state would not be considering adopting the genetically modifying technology that is available, although the eastern states are certainly looking to go down that path now. Should we be considering what ongoing projects would have an impact on this drought problem and on food prices? Is there an answer? Of course there is an answer. I speak of stage 2 of the Ord irrigation scheme. I notice that in today’s *The West Australian* the Economic Regulator, Lyndon Rowe, suggested that we delay any further search for water sources. I find those comments quite irresponsible and an attempt to hold back the state’s progress in this regard. The state’s growth must continue. The population is growing and demand for water will continue to grow. We cannot grow crops and food without water. What has happened to this project since the present state government won power in 2001? Before I talk about that, I will give a brief history of the Ord River project. We can trace the project back as far as 1941, when a small experimental farm was established on the Ord River. Although that

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was abandoned in 1945, a joint commonwealth-state research station was established in the same year. A decision was made in 1958 to proceed with the irrigation scheme, and the Ord River Dam, which formed Lake Argyle, was opened in 1972. Almost all of this took place during the term of the Brand Liberal government.

In stage 1 of the irrigation area, 14 000 hectares of land were transferred from cattle stations to agriculture. Gross production for 2004-05 was valued at some \$53.6 million, which, when we look at the development of stage 2, can be put into the context of what the state could be developing. It is a much more ambitious stage and it covers a much larger area. Successive governments have shied away from getting dinkum about this project. The question is: what has happened? The answer is very little. It appears that the government is not really committed to this stage. The current government has a surplus of some \$2 billion, which is growing day by day, and we know that because that comment is made regularly in this house. One must question why the government is not prepared to spend money on long-term projects that will benefit the state for not only one decade, but also many decades.

In June 2006, the then minister for resources, John Bowler, advertised for expressions of interest from individuals and corporations wanting to invest in the region. Despite the fact that the infrastructure that was needed, such as road and rail facilities, social amenities, schools etc, was to be funded by private enterprise, 10 expressions of interest were received. One would have thought that there would be progress at last. Unfortunately, our Minister for State Development, Eric Ripper, decided that because the commonwealth government had led the way in identifying the top end of Australia as a future source of food, Labor had to call for another set of expressions of interest to start the phase again. One would have to question why there has been a further delay. The further delay will prejudice the future ability of the Ord region to produce food. However, it is the apathy of the current government that is threatening the existence of the agricultural sector. Mr Robert Boschhammer, a leading sugar cane grower from Queensland, warned in an interview on ABC radio in 2006 that more urgency was needed in starting stage 2 or the entire sugar cane industry in the Ord could disappear. We have seen problems with the sugar-processing plant, and I certainly acknowledge that the plant was only ever an experimental one. However, this government must make commitments to the Ord if we are to make it a food bowl.

On 20 February 2007, the government transferred some \$3.5 million to a special purpose account with the Kimberley Development Commission. By 30 June 2007, how much had been spent? The answer was nil - absolutely nothing had been spent. We have a project that apparently is embraced by this government but it is going nowhere. Despite rising food prices, food shortages and the huge government surplus, we must ask what is happening. The answer is nothing. Money is being spent on infrastructure in the city, but it is certainly needed in regional areas for vital projects.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.38 pm
