

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Special Report - Inquiry into the Management of Asbestos-containing Materials in State Schools

HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [11.04 am]: I am directed to report that on 24 October 2007, the Standing Committee on Public Administration resolved to commence an inquiry into the management of asbestos-containing materials in Western Australian state schools. I move -

That the report do lie upon the table.

If I may provide a brief background, this motion merely formalises the procedure that the Standing Committee on Public Administration has been following for some time. The committee's interest in this matter arose out of an approach about two years ago by the then president of the Carine Senior High School Parents' and Citizens Association, Mr Piers Dudman. The committee followed up that approach and has subsequently made some inquiries. The committee began by asking preliminary questions of the Department of Housing and Works and the Department of Education and Training about procedures for the management of asbestos-containing materials in WA state schools. The committee's activities in 2006 were reported to the house at about this time last year in the committee's annual report. Since then, we have been conducting a watching brief that has involved some further inquiries and we have again conducted hearings with those departments. The Auditor General has also tabled a report on this matter. All this work has been done by increment without any proper structure within the committee. It was felt that the committee needed to inform the house that its inquiries had gone beyond a preliminary investigation and that the inquiry needs to be conducted in a more structured, formal basis. This motion does not mean that the committee is about to embark on a major exercise. Indeed, I anticipate that most of the committee's work has been done. However, it will permit the committee to gather some more information, relevant views and evidence - particularly scientific evidence - that can be assessed against the original concerns that were raised with the committee. We can then properly report to the house on this matter. I anticipate that we will report before the end of this year's sittings. If we cannot meet this timeframe, we will report on it early next year.

Question put and passed.

[See paper 3443.]