

WATER CORPORATION — ASBESTOS — MINNIVALE

**892. Mr D.J. KELLY to the Minister for Water:**

I refer to the serious incident that occurred recently at Minnivale, 149 kilometres north east of Perth, where 88 Water Corporation staff and contractors were exposed to asbestos during work done on a water tank because the Water Corporation allowed grinding work to be undertaken on material that is now known to contain asbestos.

- (1) Why was the asbestos material not identified and recorded on the Water Corporation's asbestos asset register so that the work could have been performed in a safe manner?
- (2) Will the minister commit to an open and independent investigation to find out why the Water Corporation failed in its duty of care to its own staff and to contractors?
- (3) Will the minister now reverse the 20 per cent cut in the staffing levels made this year to the Water Corporation's occupational safety and health unit?

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I want to tell you something, member for North West Central: if I hear from you again, I am going to call you.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) This is an incredibly distressing situation for a number of people who have been part of the Water Corporation project. I put on the record my own personal distress about this happening under my watch and the fact that no-one should come to work and find themselves advised that they have potentially been exposed to asbestos and have it hanging over their head for the rest of their lives. I am absolutely appalled that we are having this conversation in a public forum after I explicitly went to the shadow minister yesterday to advise him that this had been brought to my attention, that there were still people who had not been advised, that my preference was that they should be advised by the Water Corporation or the contracting organisation, and that until that happened it was not appropriate for us to be talking about it in public because no-one wants to find out about that kind of incident through the media, which is what will happen. You are morally bankrupt, member for Bassendean; it is absolutely disgraceful.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for North West Central, I call you for the first time. Member for Bassendean, I call you for the first time.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Bassendean! Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the first time. Let us carry on, minister.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It is an absolute disgrace. The member for Bassendean stands in this place making political points —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for North West Central, I call you for the second time, and member for Cannington, I call you for the second time.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I told the member for Bassendean that not all of these people had been advised. He asked me to advise him when that would happen and I undertook to do that. I gave him a confidential briefing yesterday afternoon. We will brief unions this afternoon so there is no question that we have been keeping this silent.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for North West Central, I call you for the third time.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** There is no question that we have been keeping this —

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Bassendean, I call you for the second time.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I told the member that not everyone had been advised. It is absolutely disgraceful that because the member is trying to score political points, there are potentially people out there who will find out about this through the media.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the third time.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** There is an investigation underway. The Water Corporation is looking at what has obviously broken down as part of its systems. It will provide that information to WorkSafe as required. Might I add that the people who have been exposed and who have been advised have been offered counselling, and support and information. They have been put on the asbestos register and they will get ongoing support and care. It should never have happened; we acknowledge that. It is distressing to be in this position, but it is more distressing that there are potentially people out there who will find out about this through the media, because the member over there is a guttersnipe trying to score political points! Does his leader support this? Is this what the Labor Party does? It is absolutely disgraceful.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Has the minister finished her answer?

**Ms M.J. Davies:** Yes.

**The SPEAKER:** I want to warn the member for North West Central and the member for Cannington that I do not want to hear any more shouting.