

TABLING OF LETTER FROM MS JEAN THORNTON TO PREMIER

922. Mrs C.L. EDWARDES to the Premier:

I refer to the tabling on the Premier's behalf in the Legislative Council last night of an undated letter to him from the Department of Health whistleblower, Jean Thornton, which states -

Firstly I apologise to you for writing to you at home but the reason for this will become clear as you read on - I don't want this letter to end up as an official 'Ministerial' and go back to the Health Dept for a response!

and I ask -

- (1) Did the Premier notify Ms Thornton that this letter was to be tabled?
- (2) Is the Premier aware that under section 16 of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003 a disclosure of public interest information that may identify anyone who has made a public interest disclosure cannot occur without the consent of that person or without reasonable notice being given to that person?
- (3) Does the Premier concede that the tabling of this correspondence is a further betrayal of a whistleblower who had explicitly written to him in confidence?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) No.

Members of Parliament will be aware that there has been some controversy about the Department of Health in recent weeks. It was revealed by the newspaper media in Western Australia that Ms Jean Thornton was the whistleblower. It was also revealed in the media, following their coming into possession of a letter sent by Ms Thornton to me in May, that she had also written to me in 2001. The media commented on that when it said that in fact the whistle had been blown to the Premier early in 2001 on the situation in the Western Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation. I believe, quite correctly, that that comment needed to be corrected. In order to correct that I needed to pass that correspondence to the media. It was in the public interest. There is no doubt that the identity of the whistleblower was well known to and discussed by the public. In no way, shape or form have I breached the principles of our disclosure legislation.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You have - no doubt.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The Opposition asks me to table something; I table it and then opposition members come into the Parliament and question what I have done. What an absolutely ridiculous approach taken by the Opposition. Let us get to the heart of this issue. The Opposition knows what is in the letter Ms Thornton wrote to me early in 2001 - it contains the revelation that under the Liberals the health system was in crisis. Money was being wasted on consultants and travel. All the issues that the Labor Party was raising in opposition were true. I passed that letter on to the minister and, as we know, he established the Health Administrative Review Committee to examine all the issues in the Department of Health. The Opposition should do a bit of homework before its members come into this Parliament and cast aspersions on my behaviour as the Premier of this State.