

FORMER MINISTER FOR HEALTH, ALLEGATIONS BY MS JEAN THORNTON

**897. Mrs C.L. EDWARDES to the Premier:**

I refer the Premier to Labor's accountability policy, which states -

Public servants who 'blow the whistle' on corruption, maladministration and waste within government and the public sector will be protected - not persecuted - under a Gallop Labor Government.

- (1) Has the Premier contacted witnesses from the Community and Public Sector Union - I note he said that they have not contacted him - to investigate the veracity of claims that his former health minister threatened and bullied public servant Jean Thornton over her claims of waste and corruption in the Department of Health?
- (2) I note also the use of the Premier's words "he did not intend to bully". However, did the former Minister for Health bully Ms Thornton?

**Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:**

- (1)-(2) I find it extraordinary that the Opposition is pursuing a matter obviously involving a meeting dealing with contentious issues about which there was a fair deal of passion. Has the Leader of the National Party ever had a meeting like that?

Mr M.W. Trenorden: A meeting like what?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: A meeting with passion and at which people have strong points of view. If, whenever that happened in a meeting, we in this Parliament were to say that it was a matter that warranted an independent inquiry, we would have some difficulty conducting government in Western Australia. The Opposition is keen to politicise this issue. However, as I have said very clearly, although I do not question the feelings Ms Thornton has about that meeting, I am very confident that my former Minister for Health does not intimidate and harass people.

A member interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: That particular meeting was held in October, and I received a letter in March the next year. The trade union involved, which often meets with the Government and is able to raise any issue with it, did not raise any concerns about the behaviour of the then Minister for Health. The member for Kingsley is obviously very keen to try to politicise this aspect of the issue; however, she is barking up the wrong tree.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Warren-Blackwood to order for the first time.