

PROTECTION FOR WHISTLEBLOWER, MS JEAN THORNTON

**911. Mrs C.L. EDWARDES to the Premier.**

I refer the Premier to the second reading speech for the Whistleblowers Protection Bill 2002 made by the Attorney General on 20 March 2002, in which he states -

This Government stands for openness and accountability of the public sector.

He states also -

Whistleblowers who uncover improper or illegal conduct or substantial mismanagement of public resources in state and local government authorities must be encouraged to make disclosures to proper authorities and must be protected when they do so.

I ask -

- (1) How does the Premier reconcile these statements with the actions of his office in referring to the Department of Health the personal and confidential letter of a public servant containing serious allegations of impropriety against the Minister for Health and senior Department of Health officials?
- (2) Does the Premier concede that these actions were a serious breach of confidence and compromised the protection able to be afforded to the whistleblower given that she is employed by that department?
- (3) Will the Premier concede that he had a responsibility to act on the contents of this letter and that his failure to do so constituted a serious breakdown in the much-vaunted accountability and openness of his Government?

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

- (1)-(3) I do not accept those comments at all. If the contents of that letter were to have been addressed properly they would have had to be referred to the Department of Health. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet consulted with the person who wrote that letter before it was sent to the Department of Health.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: It did not consult her.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: That person has never raised a complaint with me about that matter.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Why would she?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Obviously the world the member for Kingsley inhabits is a very interesting one. If the member wants me to I will go back and look at every letter that was sent to former Premier Richard Court marked private and confidential. Is the member telling me that every one of those letters that came to him he would have addressed personally? Get real, member! The member knows how government works. Unlike the former Government, which whenever a public servant criticised it went in boots and all against that person, as we saw with Main Roads -

Mr M.G. House: You let your environment minister off the hook!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: And as we saw, member for Stirling, with the disgraceful performance of the then Minister for Education when a teacher dared to criticise and he supported his suspension! I do not accept the comments that have been made by the member for Kingsley. The member is obviously trying to play politics with this situation, and frankly she is getting nowhere.