

REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES — CLOSURES

**892. Mr B.S. WYATT to the Premier:**

I ask a supplementary question. I refer to the Premier's statement that he has "no option" because the commonwealth has vacated the territory. At every turn, the Premier is happy to challenge, cajole and critique the commonwealth government. Why is it that the Premier simply is acquiescing to the commonwealth vacating the field in respect of Aboriginal policy?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:**

What a wild assumption that was!

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** No. It is correct. I quoted you—"no option", you said.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** This issue came up in successive Council of Australian Governments meetings.

Several members interjected.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Mr Speaker, the lack of courtesy, the lack of attention to policy —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Albany, I call you to order for the second time. I want to hear the Premier's answer.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** This is going to be one of the most difficult social issues Western Australia has ever faced, and all we get is snide comments from the opposition. We do not want this issue. We would much rather it was not happening, but it is happening, and this was raised at two COAG meetings. Western Australia, Queensland —

Several members interjected.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** We do not go to COAG, members might recall. Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia strongly made the point, as did responsible ministers, but —

Several members interjected.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Mr Speaker, it is pointless getting into social issues with members opposite.

**The SPEAKER:** Sit down, please. Member for Victoria Park, I call you to order for the first time.

Several members interjected.

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

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** The smaller Aboriginal communities are simply not viable. They cannot provide education. They cannot provide health. They cannot provide employment. They are not viable. And the social outcomes and the abuse and neglect of young children are a disgrace to this state.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Victoria Park, I call you to order for the second time. I just want to correct my calling. I should have called the member for Pilbara for the first time, not the member for North West Central, whom I have already called twice.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** That is the problem of the smaller communities. How can there be employment out in the desert? How can there be a fair opportunity for little Aboriginal girls and boys to succeed in life? How can there be? There cannot be, and this government will do all that we can to try to make that transition. Take some of the bigger communities such as Balgo for example. There has virtually been civil war in Balgo for the last three months—150 Aboriginal people fighting among themselves. That is not acceptable.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Victoria Park, I have called you to order now twice.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** I do not underestimate the difficulty —

**Mr P. Papalia:** Close the little communities and put them in where the grog is!

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** What a disgraceful comment that was!

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Warnbro, I call you to order now for the second time.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** I have finished, Mr Speaker.