

CHILDCARE - SITE VISITS AND SPOT CHECKS

**816. Mr J.H.D. DAY to the Minister for Community Development:**

Firstly, I apologise to the member for Collie-Wellington for any unintended offence earlier.

I refer to the recent alarming case of babies being restrained in a childcare centre and to the minister's announcement yesterday of an increased number of annual site visits and random spot checks of such centres.

- (1) How many people were working in the inspection area of the childcare licensing unit in 2005-06?
- (2) Does the department provide advance warning to childcare centres about annual site visits?
- (3) How many spot checks were conducted by the department in 2005-06, and how many will be conducted this financial year?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)-(3) I will answer the question by providing some statistical information about the exact number of spot checks. The government boosted the department's childcare licensing unit by \$3.6 million only last year. That boost increased staffing levels and significantly bolstered the investigation and prosecution arm of the unit.

**Mr T. Buswell** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is an important initiative because, obviously, we want to ensure that children in the care of childcare centres throughout Western Australia are receiving the highest quality care that they deserve.

**Mr T. Buswell** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I call to order the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for the first time.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The announcement made last year and the bolstering of the budget will result in a significant increase in numbers. I will provide the exact details to the member for Darling Range. I highlight also that my announcement yesterday means that the department will embark on at least annual inspections of childcare centres. Above that there will be an increase in the number of random checks. We do not let childcare centres know when spot checks are being made because that would defeat the purpose. Spot checks are just that. They allow the department's licensing unit officers to investigate and check on childcare centres without warning. The other important element members opposite need to understand is that all childcare centres go through a -

**Mr T. Buswell** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I call to order the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for the second time.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** All childcare centres are subject to a rigorous licensing process, which involves contact with the licensees and the proposed centres. There is also renewal of the licensing regime of the centres. The government has very clearly bolstered the childcare licensing unit, as demonstrated by the \$3.6 million injection of funding last year. However, I will continue to ensure that the department responds to children's needs at childcare centres and that the primary purpose of the department's investigations is to ensure that the children in the care of those centres have the best possible quality care they deserve.