

CHILD PROTECTION — CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE — ROEBOURNE

983. Mrs A.K. HAYDEN to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the minister's response in this house on 22 November, in which she did not deny that six identified perpetrators are attending the same school as their victims, and her public assurance that there is no risk because of oversight by authorities.

- (1) Given the evidence by the Minister for Education and Training to a parliamentary committee that the Department of Education does not know whether any of the six perpetrators are at the same school as their victims, can the minister confirm that her assurances carry no weight?
- (2) Will the minister now work with the Minister for Education and Training to determine whether victims and other children are out of harm's way?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

- (1)–(2) I have answered a number of questions on this issue in this house as well as in the other house, and I continue to give assurances that every possible protection that can be put in place for children in and around Roebourne is in place. In regard to those children who have been charged with harmful sexual behaviour, or are experiencing that, and may be attending schools, there are safety plans in place, particularly to ensure that they are not in contact with any victims who may be involved in those offences. I have given that assurance publicly, on the ABC and in this house, and that continues to be the case.

Throughout the discussions on the west Pilbara plan, and in relation to Operation Fledermaus, we have made it clear that we have responded to the immediate concerns about child safety, to make sure that those concerns are responded to and investigated, and, if necessary, there are prosecutions, and that the victims are given proper therapeutic services and responses. We are doing all of that. The other element of our response has also been articulated in this place as well as in the public arena, and that is that we are doing what we can to build up a safe community. There are, I think, 38 houses in Roebourne now that have self-selected to be alcohol free. Police data has recorded a drop in crime, and that relates to burglaries and antisocial behaviour, and there has been an increase in drug detection and assault charges in relation to alcohol abuse.

There is a lot of work to be done—I do not think anyone is in denial about that—in the west Pilbara and many other communities, to make sure that we build up the capacity of the community to deal with these difficult issues, but in relation to the specific concerns around child safety in and around Roebourne, we are doing everything that is possible to make sure that children who are victims of child abuse are given proper services and are kept safe from any perpetrators or people with harmful sexual behaviours, whether they are children or adults, and that there are proper therapeutic services available for those victims.