

OLIVE STURT - DEATH

943. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Minister for Community Development:

- (1) Why was the tragic case of baby Olive Sturt not investigated by the Child Death Review Committee in 2005-06 given that she died in July 2005?
- (2) Did baby Olive's case meet the Department for Community Development's criteria for investigation by the Child Death Review Committee; and, if not, why not?
- (3) How many more cases like this do we have to have before the minister acts and establishes a royal commission into the Department for Community Development?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (1)-(3) I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I need to premise my comments by highlighting that the case of baby Sturt is a tragedy and a matter of profound sadness. Currently a coroner's inquiry is taking place and I am not going to prejudice that inquiry. It is important that that inquiry be allowed to continue and that all the facts and issues be highlighted to it. It is important that we respect that the case is before the coroner. The case is a tragic one. Cases that are reported for criteria -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! This is a different sort of chamber. I ask members to allow the minister to answer the question.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Clearly in cases where there has been contact by the department with a child or a child's family and that death fits the criteria, it is referred to the inquiry.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Was it sent to the Child Death Review Committee, do you know?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will clarify that for the Leader of the Opposition and ensure I give him an exact answer. I am very loath to make further comment on this case given that it is the subject of a coronial inquiry. A number of representatives will need to give evidence to this coronial inquiry over the next few days. I understand that the coroner will be hearing those people until the end of the week. Until such time, I am not prepared to comment on this specific case, but I will certainly ensure an appropriate response to the Leader of the Opposition's first question.

It was in fact this government that established the Child Death Review Committee in 2003. This government clearly understands that we need to have in place very strong, independent investigative opportunities. It is interesting that during the time the other side of the house was in government, it had no such structure in place.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the members for Cottesloe and Nedlands to order.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: In the eight years they were in power they did not employ one extra case worker. This government clearly has child protection and the support of children as its foremost priority and that is why in this year's budget \$140 million was allocated to the department and an additional \$50 million was directed entirely towards child protection. Currently a very important review of the department is being undertaken and I am very confident that Prudence Ford, who is overseeing that review, will make some strong recommendations so that Western Australia has the best possible child protection systems and processes in place.