

PREMIER - BRIEFING ON HANDLING OF TEACHER MISCONDUCT

**763. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:**

Yesterday the Minister for Education and Training said that during the handover of the education portfolio, the Premier when Minister for Education and Training made no mention of an external review or the Ombudsman's investigation into the Department of Education and Training's handling of misconduct allegations. The minister said that people must keep in mind that this was not a live issue at the time; that it would have been seen as an operational matter and it certainly was not discussed. How can the Premier not have raised this issue at all with the minister during the handover of portfolios when, according to the Premier's statements yesterday, he saw it as such a priority and such an important issue?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. There is no inconsistency in any of this. It is ridiculous.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Did you brief the minister?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** When we did the handover we had a general briefing about the major issues that were on the go in the department.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** So she is not telling the truth?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** We have a day when the shadow Attorney General has been so reckless that she has aborted a serious criminal trial, yet that goes straight past the Leader of the Opposition. He seems to be running some gauge over these issues and sees nothing inconsistent. We put in a place a raft of legislative and process reforms that were intended to eliminate, as far as was humanly possible, the practices that had flourished in the department under the previous government, so that when serious allegations of sexual or other misconduct were raised, they were dealt with appropriately. We put in place a raft of legislative and process reforms that I believe were doing the job of eliminating that as far as was possible. That was the hideous legacy I inherited from the member for Cottesloe, my indolent predecessor. That is what we did.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Which one is not telling the truth? Did you brief her or not?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** As I said yesterday at the doorstep media conference, I was confident that the changes we had made would have a serious impact on that sort of behaviour. It was not a live issue for me to sit down and discuss with the minister.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** What about the Corruption and Crime Commission?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** The CCC was not investigating. As far as I know, there was no CCC at that time.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** It says that Laverton was a live issue.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** As I understood it from a television report, the Ombudsman at the time was investigating a complaint arising from behaviour at Laverton. The teacher at the centre of that complaint was taken out of the school and was put into a district office. A media report, based on information provided directly to the reporter from the Ombudsman's office, led me to the conclusion that there was an intent or an actuality that had seen this teacher about to be placed or being placed in another school. I indicated my preference, therefore, that the teacher not be placed in another school, but out of the way of children until all the issues surrounding him could be dealt with.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Did you brief the minister or not?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** We had a briefing. We were in the midst of other major reforms, which the opposition resisted, if not opposed. The reforms included raising the school leaving age to 16 and 18 years, bringing together education and training, changing the literacy and numeracy approach in schools and so on. They were the major policy reforms that the new minister needed to be acquainted with. As far as I understood it, no systemic issue was on the go at the time. As for the complaints management unit, the Liberal Party and the member for Churchlands had complained in this Parliament that I had set up an organisation that was being too hard on teachers and was unfairly pursuing teachers. Some teachers were being pursued over the very allegations that the government is now being attacked over. That is an amazing twist. It is something out of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. That very group did nothing and resisted the changes. When the changes were put in place, it said that we were being too hard on poor innocent people against whom allegations were made. It said that they did not have a chance to defend themselves and that we were pulling those poor innocent teachers out of the classes and convicting them before they had even been tried.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Darling Range and the Leader of the Opposition to order.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Let me ask the Leader of the Opposition a question. The answer to his question is that there was no misleading, there were no issues and there was no inconsistency. The Leader of the Opposition can ponder this over the weekend and get to his feet on Tuesday and answer the question. When he was the Minister for Disability Services, were any allegations of sexual impropriety by staff raised with him; and, if so, what did he do about it? He can think about that over the weekend and, if he likes, he can come in here on Tuesday and get to his feet -

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** I can guarantee that any time there was an inquiry into anybody I was fully briefed every time.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** That is good. What did the Leader of the Opposition do about it?