

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING - MANAGEMENT-INITIATED RETIREMENT

720. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:

I refer to the management-initiated retirement that was provided to the Director General of the Department of Education and Training last night following his meeting with the Premier. Why was Paul Albert dismissed as the Director General of the Department of Education and Training?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. The Corruption and Crime Commission's review of the Department of Education and Training's practices in handling allegations of misconduct between teachers and students - especially misconduct of a sexual nature - was a profoundly disturbing document. I think Mr Albert agreed with me; certainly the Minister for Education and Training agreed with me.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Weren't you the minister at one stage?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes, I was the Minister for Education and Training for four years.

When the Minister for Education and Training became aware of the content of the document, she recalled Mr Albert from an overseas trip - he was in Europe - because she wanted the issue dealt with directly. I had no opportunity to meet with Paul Albert until last night, because yesterday I was busy in the electorate of Wanneroo attending a cabinet meeting and a succession of appointments. When I met Mr Albert, I told him that I thought the situation was very grave, and we discussed various scenarios. During our discussion, we came to the mutually agreed view that it would be in the best interests of all parties if he stepped down from his position - as opposed to being "dismissed" - and left the public sector. As the Leader of the Opposition quite rightly indicated, the agreed basis on which that will happen is a management-initiated retirement. Management-initiated retirements have been in use in Western Australia for a very long time. I have the details about how many the Court government used and how many were implemented under Geoff Gallop. I think eight have been implemented during my time as Premier. A management-initiated retirement gives the person who is exiting the system -

Mr C.J. Barnett: This isn't a retirement.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is an early retirement. A management-initiated retirement gives the person who is exiting the system up to one year's salary. That is the arrangement that we came to last night. I believe that Mr Albert was correct when he said that he accepted full responsibility for the failings of the department.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: He also said that the CCC had identified several issues and that as the director general of the department, the buck stopped with him. That is the point at which we agreed that he should leave the system. I will point out one or two things. I was the Minister for Education and Training for four years and during that time I took issues such as those investigated by the CCC very seriously, more seriously than the former minister.

Mr C.J. Barnett: That is not true.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: If the member for Cottesloe wants me to, I can go into a bit of detail about that. Does he want me to do that?

Mr C.J. Barnett: You can do whatever you want.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: He does not want me to.

Although it was met with some opposition, in 2003 I introduced a system that requires all teachers to undergo a police screening. It was not just the new teachers, as it was under the previous system. All teachers had to undergo police screening. Those people with convictions would not be allowed to teach. My very strong view was that people who had -

Mr P.D. Omodei: Why was Paul Albert dismissed as Director General of the Department of Education and Training?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have answered that question. He agreed to accept a management-initiated retirement. He agreed that as director general of the department -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the members for Roe and Cottesloe to order.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We put in place a system that required all teachers to undergo police screening, and those who failed the screening were not allowed to teach. We had a very strict policy that when allegations of misconduct of this kind were made against teachers, they should be removed immediately from the classroom environment.

Mr C.J. Barnett: A shining success, wasn't it?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Did the member for Cottesloe have such a policy?

Mr C.J. Barnett: We got the police in.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There were no police checks for teachers who were in the system.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Tell the truth!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The opposition did not.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Police checks started under the Liberal government.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Liberal government introduced checks for new teachers entering the system. The Liberal government had no screening whatsoever for existing teachers. The Corruption and Crime Commission found that in one case a teacher who had a conviction had been allowed to continue teaching. That was completely unacceptable. It was quite clearly in flagrant disregard and breach of the policy. When that was brought to the minister's attention at the end of last week, she insisted that action be taken.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: On Thursday or Friday last week, when she saw the report.

Mr T. Buswell: First time?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes. That is the background to what happened last night. It is a very serious matter. It is interesting to note this: my belief is that had we not instituted that system in government, these issues would not have come to light at all. That was the situation while members opposite were in government.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You have been there six years.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes, and we put in place the systems that have created the scenario that has brought about -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the members for Cottesloe and Capel to order!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It brought about the results we have seen last night and today. There was no system of screening teachers under the previous government.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes there was.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There was not. The Liberal government introduced police checks for teachers who were entering the system. There were thousands of teachers in the system and there was no screening - none. The very model, system and culture that the CCC has criticised - a culture of not dealing with these complaints properly - was the culture that we have been seeking to break. That is what we have been doing. It is a culture that flourished under the Liberal government.