

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS - RESOURCES

441. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Attorney General:

Yesterday in this Parliament the Attorney General said that there was no problem with under-resourcing the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Today on the front page of *The West Australian* the Director of Public Prosecutions has directly contradicted what the Attorney General said, by saying -

There have been some requests for resources which have not been accepted by Government and I am not very happy with that . . .

Absolutely, we are under-resourced . . .

Given the clear contradiction between what the Attorney General said and the comments of the Director of Public Prosecutions, I ask -

- (1) How does the Attorney General justify his statement in this house yesterday that under-resourcing the DPP was not a problem?
- (2) Who should the people of Western Australia believe: the Attorney General or the Director of Public Prosecutions?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

- (1)-(2) In a press release dated 29 October 2005, the government announced an enormous boost to the funding of the Director of Public Prosecutions. That press release spelt out that in 2005-06 the DPP's budget was \$14.4 million and that it would rise by \$3.8 million to \$18.2 million. As part of that increase, a total of \$24.3 million was provided as a funding boost over the next four years to the office of the DPP. That represented in the order of a 30 per cent increase in the funding of the DPP, and it followed very extensive inquiries into the funding needs of the DPP. It was estimated that the number of prosecutors that would be employed - this gives an idea of the magnitude of the funding increase - would rise from 63 to 105. That is the magnitude of the boost that was given to the DPP's office in 2005. In fact, the rise in the 2006-07 budget was \$6.6 million, which went from \$15 million to \$21 million. That is the funding that has already been injected recently into the office of the DPP.

I was somewhat surprised to read the article on the front page of *The West Australian* this morning. I always take the articles I read in there with a pinch of salt. I spoke to the DPP, who told me that he has made three additional requests for funding: one was for rent, as he has recently shifted his office to International House, and that was a request for \$265 000; the second was for \$100 000, which was to offset the shortfall in the recovery of transcript costs from defence lawyers; and the third was for his computerised case management records system. He made a request for funding and the government agreed and provided him with \$1 058 000, being \$658 000 for capital and \$400 000 for recurrent costs.

Mr M.J. Birney: He needs more lawyers.

Mr J.A. McGINTY: We have just increased, as I said, the number of lawyers from 63 to 105.

Mr M.J. Birney: That is still not enough. That is what he is saying. That is what everyone is saying.

Mr J.A. McGINTY: He may well be saying that. However, he made a request. The third area of funding was for the case management records system, and he was given just over \$1 million for that - \$1 058 000. He pointed to a shortfall in his total request for a further \$470 000. He sought \$1.5 million and we gave him just over \$1 million.

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

Mr J.A. McGINTY: I do not know; the member for Dawesville would have to ask him that. I would not presume for one minute that he was.

I make this point: in the context of a budget that was increased by \$24 million in 2005, \$265 000, \$100 000 and \$400 000 most probably puts that into some sort of context. Up until now, the Director of Public Prosecutions has relayed to me that his major concern was spending the money we had given him. Although the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions was given a significant funding boost to recruit an additional 42 prosecutors, initially the DPP found it difficult to recruit them. He was unable to spend the money. He has since spent the money that was allocated to recruit additional prosecutors to meet the three issues that I have just described. As a direct result of the very significant boost in funding provided by the state government - the biggest the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has ever received - we are starting to see significant improvements in the performance of the office, improvements that are directly attributable to the funding that has been provided. The average time to finalise a case in the District Court has been coming down in each of the past several years. In

2004-05, before the funding had been provided, the average time to finalise a case was 69 weeks; it is now 49 weeks. The average time to finalise a case in the Supreme Court has dropped to 27 weeks; it was 40 weeks in 2006-07. In 2006-07, the number of resolutions in the Magistrates Court increased to 11 per cent. The figure was eight per cent in 2005-06 and six per cent in 2004-05. There have been improvements in indictment timeliness as 61 per cent of indictments are filed before five days of the first appearance of an accused in a superior court. That figure is up from 41 per cent in 2004-05. The number of adjournments attributed to the state is now running at 24 per cent of cases, which is down from 34 per cent in 2005-06. The very significant injection of funds that went into the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is paying dividends.