

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES - ALCOHOL AND SEXUAL ABUSE

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

I refer to comments by former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission head Lionel Quartermaine, who said that the Premier was neglectful of calls for action to deal with the abuse in Indigenous communities. Mr Quartermaine is reported to have said, "Mr Carpenter and his government need to take a backward step and look about four or five years ago. They knew about it."

- (1) When was the government informed of allegations of alcohol and sexual abuse and domestic violence in Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley?

Mr A.J. Carpenter: Sorry, Leader of the Opposition?

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I repeat -

- (1) When was the government informed of allegations of alcohol and sexual abuse and domestic violence in Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley?
- (2) What was the nature of that advice?
- (3) As a former Minister for Indigenous Affairs, what did the now Premier do to address this disgraceful situation?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

- (1)-(3) A helluva lot more than the Leader of the Opposition ever did. Shall I leave it there? I am gobsmacked that the Leader of the Opposition has asked this question.

Mr P.D. Omodei: This is from Alan Quartermaine and Percy Johnson.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Get his name right.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Alan Quartermaine was a half-forward flanker for East Perth in the 1970s, who at one stage in a very poor year for the Western Australian Football League won the Sandover medal with just 14 votes. I think the Leader of the Opposition is talking about Lionel Quartermaine.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Yes; very good.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: He is no relation to the speedy half-forward.

Mr P.D. Omodei: I can't help it if I'm an East Perth supporter!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Okay; I will deal briefly with Mr Lionel Quartermaine. My recollection is that when I was the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, I did come across Mr Lionel Quartermaine once, or perhaps twice. At that point, I believe he was a resident of Queensland whom I met at the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, where he was, as I recall, a strong supporter of Sugar Ray Robinson. That is Lionel Quartermaine.

Mr P.D. Omodei: What has that got to do with child sexual abuse in the Kimberley?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Leader of the Opposition does not know enough about it. He should throw open the doors of domestic violence and see what he gets when he starts bandying those names around in Aboriginal communities.

Mr C.J. Barnett: What are you implying?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am stating a fact. Lionel Quartermaine was never an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission representative in Western Australia when I was the minister. However, that does not matter.

Mr P.D. Omodei: He was the head of ATSIC.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I think he was an acting chair from Queensland; correct? The Leader of the Opposition should do his research. He did a good job on his research about the Hilton Police Station; he should do his research on this matter. However, that is irrelevant. Mr Quartermaine is entitled to his views, and he is entitled to criticise me and the government. The Leader of the Opposition asked a question to this effect: "When did you become aware of domestic violence in Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley?" I recall that my predecessor as Premier, Dr Geoffrey Gallop, established the Gordon inquiry at the end of 2001, and it ran through 2002. He established that inquiry to look at, investigate and reveal those very issues that the Leader of the Opposition's government had refused to deal with. I could pull out a quote from the former government's Minister for Indigenous Affairs, who is still in the chamber today. Upon his leaving the position, he lamented that he had provided no benefit, apparently, to Aboriginal people in Western Australia. Broadly, he said that he had left them no better off than when he had started. I could pull out a quote from the former member for

Ningaloo, Mr Sweetman, who reflected upon his gross embarrassment about the approach of the former government to Indigenous domestic violence, which was to turn its back on those women. However, we did not do that.

I recall the outrage that came from the Leader of the Opposition's side of Parliament - not from the Leader of the Opposition personally, perhaps - when I took the case of shutting down the Swan Valley Nyungah Community camp to our government.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Not in this house.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: In the other house. Members opposite know that is true. We had grown members of the Parliamentary Liberal Party weeping in public because we were insisting that we had to shut down Robert Bropho's camp after we learned of the disgraceful things that were going on there - a camp that was established by statute by the opposition when in government. We became aware of those issues in the early part of 2002 through the Gordon inquiry, and we began to act immediately. I think we have implemented 71 of the 120 recommendations, and we have put in place another 17. We have gone a long way towards implementing all those recommendations. We are about to finish a program and put in place nine of those facilities that I was asked about a moment ago - that is, the multifunction police facilities - to help deal with this very issue. The preponderance of those facilities is in the Kimberley. I hold that up in stark contrast to the approach that has been taken by the federal government led by John Howard, who seems to have done nothing whatsoever to help us address these issues in our time in government. Dr Gallop wrote to John Howard numerous times seeking support and assistance in our efforts to address domestic violence and child abuse in Aboriginal communities, and we received no support whatsoever. In fact, he put obstacles in our way. He refused to support the facility that we had put in place in Kalumburu. Just weeks ago he withdrew money from programs aimed at ameliorating or preventing the impact of domestic violence and child abuse among Aboriginal communities in Western Australia. He pulled the programs out. Then, in the shadows of an election, he pulled a political manoeuvre in the Northern Territory. Although I hope it becomes a success, I think he is finding it very difficult, shall I say, with the approach that has been taken, to get anywhere near producing any of the results that the federal government claims to aspire to. Since 2002, we have been operating policy initiatives and putting money into programs for Indigenous affairs to address the very issues that the Leader of the Opposition just asked about. Therefore, in response to the Gordon inquiry we have invested more than \$71 million and committed a further \$45 million to implement its recommendations. Multifunction remote police facilities are now fully operational at Warburton, Kalumburu, Balgo, Warakurna, Bidadanga, Dampier Peninsula, Kintore and Warmun. Jigalong is scheduled for completion in mid 2007. What did the opposition put there? Zero. For the benefit of *Hansard*, we could have counted to five when I asked that question and there was no response. It is zero. They put nothing there. The commonwealth and state governments recently announced the funding of a further three multifunction remote police facilities to be built at Wingellina, Looma and Burringurrah.

Additional child protection workers have been employed across the state. In February 2007, we announced a \$21.6 million package for the community at Halls Creek that will provide safe accommodation and support for children most at risk. Three regional response teams, including an extra 21 police, will be created to deal with issues facing Western Australian Indigenous communities such as child abuse. I announced that in Warmun at the end of last week.

On this side, we have an excellent record of addressing the issues that confront Indigenous communities, families and people in this state throughout our period of government. Members opposite have absolutely no reason to be anything but ashamed of what they did in government. Ashamed! In fact, it was their shameful approach -

Several members interjected.

THE SPEAKER: Order!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The one contribution the Leader of the Opposition has made to matters involving Indigenous people was to wrongly accuse a perfectly innocent Indigenous man in his home town of Manjimup of being a serial rapist and put that man's life at risk by doing so. That is the one contribution the Leader of the Opposition has made. I hold that up against what we have done.