

WADE SCALE

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

Given his comments, will the Premier explain to this house and to the people of Western Australia how the former Minister for Community Development's actions in addressing the concerns of Wade Scale's grandmother were diligent, committed and outstanding, because they were not?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

I think in three separate answers now I have endeavoured to explain just that. The minister acted upon the advice that she was given. She proceeded to act upon the concerns.

Mr C.J. Barnett: As minister she is responsible. She cannot blame the staff. She is responsible, and that is it.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The minister acted upon the advice that came from the department. The department is charged with this area of responsibility.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: To find people who are willing to work as caseworkers in these extremely difficult circumstances is very hard. Those caseworkers are dealing with circumstances that the vast majority of Western Australians would not even be able to conceive; they would not be able to imagine some of the circumstances that those caseworkers are trying to deal with.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Are you saying, Premier, that you would have done the same as the minister did?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: They are making judgments. They are not machines into which we load data and which then spit out the answer. They are making judgments about human beings and the behaviour of human beings who, in many cases, are quite willing to deceive and are quite skilled at deceiving. To expect every caseworker to make the perfect judgment in every case is unrealistic. From time to time the outcomes of such judgments will be tragic, and this is one such case. To go from that point to try to sheet home the blame to a minister who was acting in the best interests of everybody in such situations is not a position I accept or support.

The SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition to order on two occasions for those interjections.