

GORDON INQUIRY EVIDENCE

385. Mr R.F. JOHNSON to the Premier:

I refer the Premier to the report of the Gordon inquiry, which states that evidence from inquiry hearings should be destroyed. Given the Premier's commitment to stamp out child abuse and his promise that the inquiry will pass on to the Department for Community Development and the Police Service any allegations of child abuse or children at risk, I ask -

- (1) Can the Premier do what his minister has repeatedly failed to do and unequivocally assure the House that no evidence taken by the Gordon inquiry has been or will be destroyed?
- (2) Can the Premier assure the House that all allegations of child abuse or children at risk have been passed to either the Department for Community Development or the Police Service?
- (3) If not, how can the Premier claim he is serious about this issue?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

- (1)-(3) The material that was collected by the Gordon inquiry will be dealt with according to the State Records Act and the surrounding regulations. The Government will not deviate from that in the way it handles this issue. Why did we have the Gordon inquiry?

Mr R.F. Johnson: Has it been destroyed or will it be destroyed?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: We will follow the laws and regulations under the State Records Act.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Has any evidence been destroyed?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The question has been answered by the minister on many occasions. The member is either deaf or is obviously not in tune with what is going on in Western Australian politics. Let us refer to the Gordon inquiry. There was a Coroner's report in 1999 about the death of Susan Taylor. That report dealt with the shocking failure of the government system in Western Australia in respect of the rights of children in this State. That report was effectively on the administration of the former Liberal Government in this State, because it had undermined resource allocations to the Department for Community Development, and it had allowed a disgraceful agreement with the Swan Valley Nyungah community under which there was no proper accountability and gates were built around that community to prevent proper access. We have to deal with this issue and we will deal with it. This Government will make sure that services are available throughout the State of Western Australia for this issue, rather than create another bureaucracy in Perth, which is the only contribution the Opposition has made to this issue. The former Government had failed Aboriginal children. This Government will right that wrong. We will also make sure that the laws are changed so that those services can deal with this issue and that resources are available in the remote and regional parts of this State. We will not, like the Liberal Party of Western Australia, sweep these issues under the carpet. The Liberal Party has no right to put its head up on this issue. It swept it under the carpet. This Government will face up to its responsibilities. Members opposite were in the Cabinet and they did nothing about the shocking situation that exists. The Liberal Party is in no position to comment. The Labor Government will get on with the job of doing something.