

PUBLIC TRUSTEE — FEES

224. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Attorney General:

The Western Australian Public Trustee is again in the sights of media with individual cases reflecting the callous treatment of clients by the trustee.

- (1) When does the Attorney General expect to receive the report into the Public Trustee from the Department of Treasury?
- (2) Other than referring the Public Trustee's fees and charges to the Under Treasurer, what is the Attorney General doing about this serious issue?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:

- (1)–(2) I will refer to the matter on the *Four Corners* report concerning a person called “Dan”—he was given an anonymised name. I will not mention that case at all in any detail because that is before the State Administrative Tribunal, and, in any event, we never mention anyone who is the subject of a guardianship order for obvious reasons of privacy and the like.

As for the performance of the office of the Public Trustee, there are two inquiries going at the moment and I am awaiting their reports. The first inquiry is by the Auditor General. The member might remember that the Auditor General did an initial inquiry on key performance indicators, and that was tabled in this Parliament. At the conclusion of that inquiry, the Auditor General indicated that she would now start a second inquiry into the performance on particular files. I am not going to interfere or in any way get involved in that inquiry other than to wait, as the member will wait keenly, the results of the Auditor General's response.

Simultaneously, Treasury and the office of the Public Trustee are looking at and reviewing the fee structure that the office of the Public Trustee charges estates because during the Barnett government—in fact, one of the first things that Premier Barnett did when he came in was to change the fee structure of the Public Trustee. By executive order—it did not come into this Parliament—he ordered that it be a self-funding office, which meant that a lot of vulnerable and poor people whose estates were at the office of the Public Trustee could not pay, so all the Public Trustee could do was to charge those who could pay and come up with a fee structure. That fee structure was put in place by the previous coalition government. The office of the Public Trustee and the Treasury are reviewing all that and the member will no doubt be informed of that review in due course. If the member is asking me if I am going to interfere or get involved in either of those two inquiries, I am telling the member that that would be totally inappropriate conduct by an Attorney General.