

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - DIRECTOR GENERAL

**598. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:**

As a supplementary question, how can the Premier still have confidence in the director general when more than 181 children known to the department have died on her watch?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

I thank - no, I do not thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I will ask him a question in return. Is the Leader of the Opposition accusing Jane Brazier of being responsible for any one -

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** I'm asking the questions here today and you're answering them. Try answering one. You never answered any yesterday.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** I am quite happy to answer this question.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** The Leader of the Opposition should put a bit of courage behind the imputation of the question. Is the Leader of the Opposition accusing Jane Brazier of being responsible for any one of those deaths?

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** I am asking you whether you have confidence in the Director General of the Department for Community Development, given that 181 children have died on her watch.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** I have already answered that. That was not the Leader of the Opposition's question.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Just answer the question. You either have confidence in her or you haven't.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Yesterday I said that it was interesting that some people who get involved in politics, including some members of Parliament, think that everybody has an attention span a nanosecond long; they believe people forget the whole history of the universe every three or four minutes. We spent the best part of yesterday arguing this particular point. I will ask the Leader of the Opposition another question: how many young children died when the Liberal Party was in government?

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** That is a good question!

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Does the Leader of the Opposition know the answer?

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Will you let me answer the question?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** I will answer the question for the benefit of everyone in the public gallery, because everyone else has heard it. For the benefit of everyone who did not hear it yesterday, the Liberal Party cannot provide the answer to that question because it never kept the statistics when it was in government. It is only since we formed government that the government has bothered to take an interest in this area of child welfare. Yesterday we revealed in Parliament that during the eight years of the previous government, it did not appoint one single extra caseworker - not one! Each caseworker at that time had a workload of about 21.5 cases. That has now been reduced to fewer than 15.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Read the front page of *The West Australian*.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** The Leader of the Opposition is amazing. I did some research yesterday after the case the Leader of the Opposition brought to the Parliament's attention regarding the death of a young child whose family had had 17 contacts with DCD. I looked into the background of the case. Is the Leader of the Opposition attributing that young child's death to anything that happened regarding the contact between that family and DCD? Is the Leader of the Opposition attributing blame to that young child's death? I know the detail of the case now. It is interesting how low the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to stoop.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Do you know that you are there to answer questions from Her Majesty's opposition? I will continue to ask them.

Several members interjected.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** It seems that I have touched a bit of a raw nerve. The Leader of the Opposition brought the case to the attention of the house yesterday.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** The question I am asking you today is about the director general of your department, and I expect an answer.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** The Leader of the Opposition told Parliament about the case yesterday and said that the family had had 17 contacts with DCD and that the child died. The imputation was that DCD was somehow responsible for that child's death. Is that what the Leader of the Opposition is saying?

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Rubbish.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Then why bring it to the attention of the Parliament?

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Because DCD is not working, and that is why we want a royal commission.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** The Leader of the Opposition is attributing the death of that child to DCD! He should stand outside Parliament tomorrow when the DCD workers get here and tell them that they killed all those children. How low will the opposition go? It has no policies. The more mud it throws, the further behind in the polls it gets and the lower its approval rating sinks. It is polling at about 40 per cent on a two-party preferred basis. That is a historically low level for the Liberal and National Parties in this state. The opposition has spent seven months throwing mud at the government and it is suffering politically. Wake up to yourself, boy!