

CHILD DEATH REVIEW COMMITTEE - REFERRALS

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

I have a supplementary question. Given the restrictions placed on the Child Death Review Committee's powers of inquiry, will the Premier concede that it is vitally important to establish a royal commission to thoroughly and properly investigate the Department for Community Development if we are to ensure that our children are protected; and, if not, why not?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

We need to act on the areas that have been identified as being in need of action. Today, the minister outlined what the government will be doing in relation to that.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Too slow!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Did the Leader of the Opposition say "too slow"?

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: He should get up in the chamber and itemise the causes of death of all those children and not even dare to categorise those deaths as being somehow related to the activities of the department! The opposition must not use the deaths of children that have nothing to do with the activities of the department to further its political cause. Members opposite should itemise the cause of the deaths. They would stoop to any depths. Denzil McCotter's letter states further -

We do not want anything beyond what we need for our task. That is, the ability to thoroughly examine the role of the Department for Community Development (DCD) in the context of a reviewable child death. In reviewing 44 cases to date, the CDRC has both commended and criticised the DCD for its activities.

I will omit the commentary about the article in the newspaper, because newspaper reporters have their jobs to do, and so do columnists. I understand that. The letter states, further on -

Protecting children is one of society's greatest responsibilities and, as the only daily newspaper in this state, the West Australian can contribute to that by leading the debate, and providing the public with all the relevant information.

I agree with that, and the newspaper may well think that that is what it is doing.

Mr P.D. Omodei: So, *The West Australian* is wrong again?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I did not say that. We do not need another prolonged, politically motivated inquiry. We need to identify a clear need for focus on child protection. That is what the government has done, and that is where it will be expending its resources and efforts. I will round this off by agreeing that there are always serious issues that need to be addressed. However, guess which side of politics has bothered to try to address those issues. The previous government did nothing. It had a series of useless ministers who did nothing, and were either sacked or thrown out of Parliament by their electors. The government has acted in this area. It has enacted legislation and provided tens of millions of dollars extra - \$80 million - which is a 50 per cent growth in resources. Members opposite are guilty of doing nothing.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Nedlands to order.