

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, WARREN-BLACKWOOD AREA

348. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth:

I refer the minister to her correspondence to me dated 19 September this year regarding domestic violence in the Warren-Blackwood area, which states -

Certainly the figures for reported domestic violence in the area, from Police and the Department for Community Development, do not reflect an increase of the magnitude that has been reported to you. Indeed the figures provided by Police suggest a relatively small increase for the year to date.

- (1) Is the minister aware that the Manjimup crisis centre has expressed concerns that the rate of domestic violence in the area has increased fourfold, with 44 of 88 cases dealt with at the centre related to domestic violence?
- (2) Will the minister now acknowledge the adverse social effects of this Government's policies and take action to curb this disturbing trend?

Ms S.M. McHALE replied:

- (1)-(2) I thank the member for his question and concern about issues of social policy in his area. He quoted from a letter I wrote to him in which I expressed concern about the assertion of a dramatic increase in a range of social issues, including domestic violence. When we checked those figures with agencies in the Department for Community Development and the Western Australia Police Service, the figures that I quoted to the member were found to be valid. Whatever the figures were, there is a recognition of the significant pressures put on families when there is social change. This Government has recognised this in its old-growth logging policy. It has recognised that change must be managed and that change of this nature can cause social issues and impact upon families. That is why this Government has invested additional funding to provide on the ground counselling services and infrastructure to assist family members going through a radical change.

This is a period of uncertainty and it will take a while to flatten out and to introduce new industry into this area. However, the Government is very cognisant of the difficulties that families face. It has introduced new resources to cope with this and to ensure that counselling is available. The Government's approach to dealing with domestic violence is strong and committed. I am happy to provide the member with a list of the new initiatives that this Government has introduced to protect children who are witnessing domestic violence and women fleeing from it.