

GORDON INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLEMENTATION, FUNDING

855. Mr R.F. JOHNSON to the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth:

I refer the minister to the Premier's announcement on 3 December last year that the Government will allocate an additional \$67 million specifically to implement the recommendations of the Gordon inquiry.

- (1) Is the minister aware of a leaked statement from a member of the protection of children team within her own department, which states -

The recent extra resources via the Gordon Inquiry provided a little extra but nothing that will make any difference. Every day we sit on queues of cases and have to wait until they get bad enough to respond as a higher priority instead of being able to recognise there is a problem and do something early.

- (2) Will the minister confirm that much of the funding will be spent on non-specific items such as housing for police, volunteer programs, improvements to environmental health and improvements to police stations?

Mr E.S. Ripper: Don't you want better police stations?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This is embarrassing to the Government.

- (3) Is the minister aware that not one of the Premier's initiatives announced on 3 December refers to preventive measures to help break the cycle of child abuse?

Ms S.M. McHALE replied:

- (1)-(3) I thank the member for his question. Once again, it enables me to highlight the lack of action by the Opposition when it was in government. The only embarrassment is on the other side of the House and it is due to its lack of action.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Ms S.M. McHALE: I have made the point several times that, for eight years when the Opposition was in government, no new child protection workers or caseworkers were appointed. That is the Opposition's record and it will be judged by it.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members for Kingsley and Nedlands!

Ms S.M. McHALE: I will tell the member where the money has gone. Regarding new staff, 25 child protection workers and 14 Aboriginal counselling and support workers have been appointed. A total of 10 additional strong family initiatives have been established. The Princess Margaret Hospital for Children child protection unit has been expanded. Multifunctional policing facilities have also been developed. Those things are critically important. The Government will build facilities for police officers. They will be housed with staff from my department to ensure a holistic approach to child protection in rural and remote areas.

In his ministerial statement, the Premier gave the House an update of what the Government has achieved in a relatively short time. Things never happen as quickly as any minister wants. Consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission is important to ensure that, for once, a Government can get it right with Aboriginal people and communities. The Opposition stands condemned by its lack of action and its supercilious approach to child protection.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Kingsley to order for the first time.