

HALLS CREEK DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL — ATTENDANCE

**99. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Education:**

I refer to the persecution by the Department of Education of whistleblower Brock Burston, who put endemic truancy in the Kimberley on the government's radar. That resulted in an apology from the former Minister for Education and Training, who admitted that the department had failed in its response to recommendations made by the Ombudsman regarding student attendance plans at Halls Creek District High School.

- (1) Given the department initially botched the rollout of student attendance plans at Halls Creek District High School, can the minister confirm the program is now working?
- (2) As Mr Burston was found not guilty of improperly releasing information, will the new minister call off the persecution and reverse the penalty imposed on this innocent education advocate and his family?

**The SPEAKER:** I offer some advice there. Although I am not 100 per cent familiar with this issue, I am noting more and more that a lot of the questions have imputations in them. I draw the opposition's attention to standing order 77, which has some guidelines about what is allowed in questions and what is not. The word "persecution" is a very strong imputation. It may be justified, but I caution members about those kinds of imputations in questions.

**Dr A.D. BUTI replied:**

- (1)–(2) I do not accept some of the member's emotive language, as the Speaker has outlined. What is most important here is the education attendance of students in remote communities and in Halls Head, which the member referred to. The department is addressing that as best it can. A lot of effort has been put into trying to improve the attendance of students.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, can I just query whether you said Halls Head or Halls Creek?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Sorry; Halls Creek.

As the member knows, the former Minister for Education and Training made a statement in Parliament. The issue of improving the attendance of students in Halls Creek has been addressed. It is an ongoing process. We will continue to monitor that and do everything we can to ensure that the attendance rate improves.