

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

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

I refer the minister to her announcement on 12 January 2003 that she had appointed a committee to investigate the deaths of children known to the Department for Community Development.

- (1) Does the appointment of this committee mean that the minister agrees with the leaked statement of a government official that "... Child Protection Services in Western Australia are so vastly underresourced, ... that there is no other way to operate then to fish the bodies out of the stream as they float past."?
- (2) If not, why is the minister refusing to appoint a commissioner for children to look at ways to prevent these deaths or take any preventive measures to stop these deaths?

Point of Order

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: This issue always arises with the asking of questions. Members know that questions should not contain long quotes, nor should members make a statement when asking a question other than is necessary to ask the question. The member for Hillarys provided a very colourful, supposed quote, which might be relevant if it had any validity. Given that the member was not prepared to say who made the statement, it simply means that the member is seeking to place on the record a statement, as if it were a quote, in the form of a question. I am not sure whether that is outside the standing orders. I certainly consider that it would be poor practice if members could use question time to put on the record supposed quotes that might bear no relevance to the question and might be fictitious. That may be the case with this quote, as the member is not willing to say who made the statement.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It was a good attempt by the Leader of the House to deflect what is a dreadful situation for the Government. I quoted from something that has come from somebody within the government department.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The media has a copy of the documentation that I have; however, the name of the person who wrote that statement is obliterated, because I do not want any vindictive action to be taken against that person. What I have quoted is the truth. I will stand by it. The media has copies of it. It is a true comment from a government official within the Gallop Labor Government.

The SPEAKER: What the Leader of the House has said is correct. Members can use quotes. However, the quote used by the member for Hillarys was extensive and became the question. I am positive that the minister will have no trouble with the complexity of that quote. Members should avoid making a quote their complete question.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Ms S.M. McHALE replied:

- (1)-(2) I thank the member for giving me another opportunity to turn a situation back on the Opposition. If child protection services are, as the member said, underresourced, the reason in part is that from 1993 to 2001 this Opposition, when in government, did not invest -

The SPEAKER: Question time is now over.