

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE  
RESERVES (RESERVE 43131) BILL 2003**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN  
AT PERTH  
ON WEDNESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2003**

**SESSION 2**

**Members**

**Hon Peter Foss (Chairman)  
Hon Robin Chapple  
Hon Jon Ford  
Hon Louise Pratt  
Hon Derrick Tomlinson**

[8.02 pm]

**EGAN, MS COLLEEN**

**Journalist, *The Australian* and *Sunday Times*,  
examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** You have signed a document entitled "Information for Witnesses". Have you read and understood that document?

**Ms Egan:** Yes.

**Mr McAllister:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, please quote the full title of any document that you refer to during the course of this hearing and please be aware of the microphones in front of you and talk into them, as they are for recording, not amplification. Even though this is a private hearing, you should note that the committee retains the right and power to publish any private evidence. The Legislative Council may also authorise publication. This means that your private evidence may become public. Please note that you should not publish or disclose any private evidence to any other person at any time unless the committee or the Legislative Council has already publicly released the evidence. I advise you that premature publication of private evidence may constitute a contempt of Parliament and may mean that the material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege. Do you understand?

**Ms Egan:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What was your first contact with the Government over the Swan Valley Nyungah camp?

**Ms Egan:** I will say at the outset for the record that I am eight months pregnant, having a child on 9 December, and I do not think it is a myth what they say about your memory not being good. I have been putting important documents in the bin and forgetting all sorts of stuff. I advise the committee to be aware of my memory. Obviously this was six months ago. I write so many stories that any memory I give you of this will probably have holes in it, so be aware of that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**Ms Egan:** I have brought along my note pad from that time, but I take scant notes. If I am not planning to use something for publication, then I often do not write it down. I can give you a general memory -

**The CHAIRMAN:** Would it be easier if I said to tell me the story as you remember it rather than asking specific questions? The association of ideas, as you start to tell us about it, might make it easier than going through specific facts. If you tell us the story as it unfolds and, if I need to ask questions, I will do that. Is that okay?

**Ms Egan:** Yes. I normally would not really feel comfortable talking about the background of how I gather a story, but I know various witnesses have come in here talking about the fact that I have called them and that kind of thing. Since they have done that, I am comfortable with that. I am trying to remember how it came about that I started along the path of writing the story. Obviously I have been writing stuff about the Bropho camp for some time now. I have a long history. I covered the Susan Taylor inquest and I have been writing fairly steadily since then. I think I wrote a column in the *Sunday Times* relating to the Government's curfew policy and made mention of the fact that there is a good chance that a lot of the Aboriginal kids being picked up under the curfew policy

were kids who had been subject to abuse similar to that that happened at the camp and drawing a parallel between them. It might have been the feedback that I received as a result of that column that got me on the path of looking at what the latest was with the camp, what had been happening with it recently. There was the publicity after the Gordon inquiry and then things died down. I think I was talking to some of the contacts that I had had from that time, asking how things were going out there: since the Gordon inquiry, has anything changed?

[8.10 pm]

The answer that I was getting was that nothing had changed; that the lot of the victims - as these people saw them - had not improved since the Gordon inquiry. So, I think I dug out the story that was in *The West Australian* the day the Gordon inquiry came down quoting Alan Carpenter when he was talking about it being shut down as a place of misery.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The day of the final report?

**Ms Egan:** That is right. I think it was Charlene Wilson-Clark at *The West* who had done that piece. Carpenter had gone out on a limb and said that he wanted to convince his cabinet colleagues to shut down the camp as a place of misery. So, I kind of went back to that and looked at that and wanted to do a story based on what has happened since then. That is what Carpenter wanted done. It obviously has not happened - why has that not happened?

**The CHAIRMAN:** He was speaking as Minister for Indigenous Affairs?

**Ms Egan:** He was. I think he said at the time that it was not part of his portfolio and he did not have the power to do it himself so he was going to try to convince his cabinet colleagues to do it. So I rang Alan Carpenter's press secretary, which would have been Vanessa Joynt, and put that to her. I said, "Your boss, six months ago or whatever, said that he wanted the place shut down. It is not shut down, what does your boss think about that? Will he be willing to do an interview with me on why the Government has not done that and whether he still feels strongly about that?" I figured that would be a good story.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That was your first contact?

**Ms Egan:** It was my first call, I believe.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It was not when you raised certain allegations, was it?

**Ms Egan:** I have read the transcripts of some of these hearings and I know that has become an issue for this committee, but me raising allegations was not really what I was doing. I was just doing a story.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I realise that. That is how they took it, of course. Your first contact was not in the context of "these things have happened", it was in the context of "you said this - what has happened?"

**Ms Egan:** Yes. It was in terms of a general journalism principle of a minister has said something and he has said he wants something to occur; that has not occurred and how does he now feel about it? I figured that I would either get a story with him saying - if he agreed to an interview -

**The CHAIRMAN:** Either way.

**Ms Egan:** Either way it is a good yarn. Either he says yes, I am still pushing to close the camp or he says no, what I wanted was not done and I am not happy about it. That would be a split in the Government, which would be a good story.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Can I just ask you if you can get a bit of a feel of the timing of this. Was this much before the ones you probably read about in the transcripts?

**Ms Egan:** No. This all would have been probably from the time I started making calls to the publication of the first story and the announcement - two weeks maximum, more likely one. Maybe

two weeks. I remember holding off on the story a couple of times. Two weeks is a very long turnaround for a news story anyway. It did drag a bit. Normally it would be only within a day or two that I would write something.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Between a week and two weeks.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, between one and two weeks. I rang Vanessa Joynt and asked her whether Alan Carpenter would agree to an interview on the topic - expecting that he would not - and he did not. She did what I expected her to do, which was to refer me to Alannah MacTiernan's office, who has carriage of it. And so I then rang Alannah MacTiernan's press secretary, who I think was Jan Martin. I said that Alannah MacTiernan's colleague, Alan Carpenter, had said some time ago that this was a place of misery and should have been shut down and that he was going to get his cabinet colleagues - it is up to you - are you moving to shut it down; if not, why not? Do you not agree with Alan Carpenter? I did an interview with Alannah MacTiernan on it and she said that the management order had been changed.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Can you say when that was?

**Ms Egan:** No, I never ended up writing anything out of that interview but I do have my notes of the interview. She was saying that she could not get another agency that was prepared to take the vesting; that was capable of taking it. Therefore it had to remain under the control it was under, I think. I am really not sure; it was too long ago. I would have understood the issue at the time but just from my notes I cannot see exactly what that point was. I know that she was giving some reason for the fact that it was not being shut down but that the management order was being changed instead. She said that her aim was that agencies would be ensured of access to the site and that what she was doing with the management order was ensuring that that would happen. She believed that they did have physical access to the site and she said you would have to ask the agencies going in there because she had made sure they had access. She also said that there had been some elections out there and that Robert Bropho was not officially on the title as being part of the management committee, I think. She also said that she had written to a federal agency and asked them to investigate the ongoing funding of the camp or something like that. It was a commonwealth request and at the end of that interview she agreed that her office would send me a copy of the letter to the federal agency. It was a bit of a shifting of the blame to the federal agency. I asked her to send that along, and maybe it would be the lead of the story. Otherwise the lead of the story was really her saying well, we have ensured access. She was really questioning whether these agencies were going in there and doing what they should be doing. So then, from memory, I would have rung the agencies; I would have rung DCD probably.

**The CHAIRMAN:** DIA?

**Ms Egan:** I do not know if I rang DIA. I had already gone to Carpenter and he had said that it was not his area. I may have just stuck with DCD.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That would follow with what she said about the agencies not going there.

**Ms Egan:** Yes. I remember having done that interview once. I got a phone call from Alannah MacTiernan when she was in Ireland or something - it was eight o'clock at night - to do another sort of interview confirming what she had said in the interview. I do not think I have any notes; it was some days later. And then, I am not really sure how it went from there except that I know it ended up with press secretaries asking me questions about why I was saying nothing has changed out there and things had not improved. I said I had a couple of anecdotal stories from contacts. I was being asked if I could give details of those. I think I got a call from Kieran Murphy at one stage asking for that. I am quite sure I never contacted the Premier's office, so I got a call from Kieran, I think.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You did not speak to Lynsey Warbey?

**Ms Egan:** No, I actually wanted to make a point about that. I noticed in her evidence that she had an idea of who my sources were and that she was going to speak to you about that in a private

hearing. That quite surprised me because I have never spoken to this woman in my life. Well, maybe I have, but not known it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Lynsey Warbey says you spoke to her. She does not make mistakes.

**Ms Egan:** Does she not?

**The CHAIRMAN:** No.

**Ms Egan:** Does she say I spoke to her?

**The CHAIRMAN:** I think she said you spoke to her -

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** I think it might have been in consultation - speaking to somebody else when she was present.

[8.20 pm]

**Ms Egan:** On the speaker phone or something?

**The CHAIRMAN:** I cannot remember what she said, but I can tell you if Ms Warbey says it happened, I think you can take it for granted it happened.

**Ms Egan:** I do not know about that, Peter. I do not know that I would have spoken to a Ms Warbey and told her who my sources were. I am quite sure I would not have done that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** No, I do not think she said that. I think she had been involved with the Gordon inquiry and had an idea as to who your sources would be. I do not think she was saying you told her.

**Ms Egan:** All right. As a lawyer, of course, you would know that making assumptions is a dangerous thing.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes, I understand.

**Ms Egan:** I speak to all sorts of people. So, I would be wary, as a committee, to take anyone's opinion on who my sources may be for any particular information.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We are not really concerned with who your sources are

**Ms Egan:** Good.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Because it is not really relevant. We really want to know what you said because that seems to have led to a series of events.

**Ms Egan:** So it seems.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It sure did.

**Ms Egan:** So it seems, unbeknown to me.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes, it is quite interesting now that we have your story, I can tell you. Can we come to Kieran Murphy?

**Ms Egan:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Can you recall anything about your conversation with Kieran Murphy; in particular, do you have any idea what the date was?

**Ms Egan:** I have no idea whatsoever what the date was. I am pretty sure that Kieran called me and not the other way around, because I had no reason to go to the Premier's office on this. I was dealing ministerially with MacTiernan's office and departmentally with DCD.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You did see the evidence that any reference from a journalist got referred to Kieran Murphy?

**Ms Egan:** Yes, I saw that. I did not realise that. I did not know that. I think Caroline Lacy at DCD had rung back and said, "If you've got any details of any allegations, we'd be interested in

hearing them” and I said, “I’ll go back to my sources and talk to them about whether or not they’d be happy for me to relay any further information to you and I’ll relay to you what they are happy for me to relay.” These incidents were not going to form part of a story. I had not fact-checked them. I would not have hung a story on them. I knew that the people involved were people who I would not be able to interview and I would not be able to speak to personally. It would not have been worth their lives to speak to me anyway, so this stuff was just really a basis for me to -

**The CHAIRMAN:** Justify asking the questions?

**Ms Egan:** - justify asking the questions, that is correct.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I will just read you some notes we got from Mr Murphy and see if it matches. The date of 2 May 2003 has been added afterwards in consultation with Mr Murphy, so that I do not think the date was originally in there.

**Ms Egan:** My notepad is between 24 April and 30 June.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So it fits.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, it fits somewhere in there.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It starts off with “Colleen”. To do it the easiest way, I will let you have a look at it.

**Ms Egan:** Do you have his interpretation of his own handwriting?

**The CHAIRMAN:** We were hoping you might be able to solve it for us.

**Ms Egan:** Do not put that on me.

### **[Private Evidence]**

**Ms Egan:** I think I remember there being a weekend in between. Do not take this for gospel, but I think I was asked on a Thursday or a Friday by Caroline Lacy, “If you can get some more details on this allegation, on anything that anyone is saying about what’s happening at the camp, please let us know.” I would have gone back to my sources. Then I think I got the phone call the following week, having already spoken to my sources about whether or not they would be happy for me to pass it on on a confidential basis.

**The CHAIRMAN:** 2 May was a Friday.

**Ms Egan:** Okay, maybe, I do not know. I remember there being a weekend in there somewhere when I was going to go back and ask people things. I know that in my notes involving these incidents I do have some in pencil and some in pen, and I think it is because I have gone back and added more detail of a later conversation at their request. I am hoping, and I note from the transcript, that this information is not being made public about these people’s names and their identities.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That is one of the reasons we keep going into private session.

**Ms Egan:** That would have been the basis that I gave this information to Kieran, and I hope the committee will continue that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes. When we get to the end of the evidence and you get your transcript, can you give us guidance as to what you would like not to be made public?

**Ms Egan:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We cannot guarantee that that will be observed, but obviously there is a much better chance of it being observed as private if you give us a hint as to what it is.

**Ms Egan:** Sure. I know I would have received this information on the basis that it was background.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Not allegations so much?

**Ms Egan:** By their nature they are allegations, but background that I certainly would not have used in the newspaper without going back again and asking them, "Can we say it is a 13-year-old girl?" There would have been some negotiation. The way I work with sources in any of this kind of area is that they trust me to give me information and that it does not go on to anybody else, including being published in the newspaper, unless there is some negotiation over making sure that it does not do any harm to the people that it is being written about.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You would try to verify the veracity too.

**Ms Egan:** If I was writing it in the paper, yes. So, I would have gone back to my source and said, "Can I give this information on a confidential basis to these people in the Government who say if this information is given, then they might be able to do something good with it?"

**The CHAIRMAN:** You understand though that everyone in the Government seems to think that you were ringing up with a set of new allegations and therefore something had to be responded to. In fact, this all started with, "Why haven't you done something when you said you were going to do something?"

**Ms Egan:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That is interesting.

**Ms Egan:** Reading the transcript, that seemed to be their interpretation. It seems to be that there is a journalist ringing making allegations. I mean, they were not my allegations to make.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We got the distinct impression that they thought you were about to publish allegations in the paper of fresh problems at the camp and that was imminent.

**Ms Egan:** Yes. It is possible that that may have occurred. I still had not decided where the story was going to go and I would not have done it without further checking, but that certainly was not outside the realms of what I would have written. The allegations I was being given were that not much had changed at the camp, the conditions were still bad. What I had sat through in the Susan Taylor inquiry was still going on basically, which I did not find hard to believe at all, having sat through that inquest. So, it could well be that my story would have been along those lines. The start of the story was, "Alan Carpenter had said this some time ago that the place was going to be shut down, it was a place of misery. What happened to Alan Carpenter's plans and what happened to what he had said?" I think by that stage I had got it to a point where I had Alannah MacTiernan blaming the Commonwealth for something or other and criticising her own government departments by saying, "They have got access, why don't they go in there and use it?" although I had no information that government departments were accessing the site. That was not part of what I had been told.

[8.30 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** So it was Alannah who brought up the question of access, not you?

**Ms Egan:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That was something that she was concerned about?

**Ms Egan:** My question was that Alan Carpenter had said that it should be shut down, so why did she not shut it down, and her answer basically was that she could not shut it down because of some technical reason; however, her aim was to make sure the access was there, because physically they should be able to access it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So she raised it, not you?

**Ms Egan:** I cannot swear to that, but that is my recollection. This looks fairly accurate to what I would have told Kieran. I do not understand the first bit of it, though.

**[Private Evidence]**

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am sure you are aware that there are some quite deep-seated antagonisms between various people in the Aboriginal community.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, and in the white community too. I certainly am aware of that. I do not know where that is pointed to, though.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is just that we have been following some of these allegations down the line to where they come from, and not all of them quite stand up when you talk to the people involved. It usually appears that something has been mistranslated along the way.

**Ms Egan:** You only need to speak to someone like Patti Chong at the Director of Public Prosecution's office, who prosecuted the case involving the toddler, to find out what happened to **[Private Evidence]** and the difficulties that she had.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am not saying it does not happen.

**Ms Egan:** If she had not had the medical reports of when this toddler was in hospital - and I think the toddler would not have lived if she had not gone to hospital - perhaps that prosecution would never have happened. She talks about being intimidated and not being able to access witnesses out there and that kind of thing. She certainly has no politics in the Aboriginal community. Richard Bannerman is probably another person you could talk to. He is a lawyer who has represented some of these people. Having been to the Susan Taylor inquest and having heard stuff out of the mouths of these people themselves, for me they are the allegations that I have placed stock in. Anything else is just not difficult to believe, I suppose.

**[Private Evidence]**

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** At any stage in this did anyone suggest to you that there would be legal support for your source or for the people involved in the allegations?

**Ms Egan:** I think it was on the day that the Premier announced the closure of the camp in Parliament. Mick Gooda contacted me and offered for me to speak to my sources and he said that some funds could be made available for a lawyer of the victim's choice. Any victim involved in this could be given funds for their own lawyers. If I knew anyone who would like to take up that opportunity, I could put them in touch with him.

**Hon LOUISE PRATT:** Did you pass on that opportunity to anyone?

**Ms Egan:** Yes, I did.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That is the conversation -

**Ms Egan:** I have no idea what happened after that. I just passed on the phone number and said that the offer was there. It is not my role. I am a journalist. I would have gone on to another story the next day.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That is the detail of the things you said. From your point of view, do you think you got over any particular point of saying that things were still happening; for example, that the camp was going to be closed and that nothing had happened? Did you ask him what he was going to do? Did you make a point or did you just talk about incidents?



**Ms Egan:** Originally I would have made the point with each press secretary that I spoke to what the purpose of the story was, which would have been that vaguely.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did you get a response from Kieran Murphy about that? Did he say what was happening?

**Ms Egan:** Kieran contacted me on this one, specifically to ask me about any evidence that I might have and to say that things had not changed at the camp. He said on an off-the-record basis that the Premier was having a meeting with some department heads. From having covered the story all the way along, I know that the Premier feels emotionally about the Taylor findings and that he has a personal interest in the story. It did not really surprise me. Kieran said on an off-the-record basis that if nothing had changed out there, the Premier would not be happy about it. He asked me whether my sources would be willing to tell us any more detail. He said there was a meeting of department heads and I said I would go back to my sources.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did he indicate whether it was already on the agenda of that meeting or whether he would raise it at that meeting?

**Ms Egan:** I do not know that kind of detail.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did he give you any indication that things were going to happen?

**Ms Egan:** The Premier getting interested was something happening. It was enough for me to hold off the story for a couple of days.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did he suggest you might?

**Ms Egan:** Possibly. At that stage I had a lukewarm story. As I said, there is no way I would have written a first paragraph saying that a 10-year-old boy had been dragged back to the camp by **[Private Evidence]**. I did not have that kind of evidence and I was not going to end up with that kind of evidence. At best I had what Alannah MacTiernan was telling me, which was that it was a story but a reasonably wishy-washy one. I do not know whether he would have suggested it or whether it would have been implicit that if the Premier was starting to get involved and Kieran Murphy was telling me things on a background basis and I was telling him things on a background basis that I would end up with a better story than I had at the time.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There is an interrelationship between the Press and the Government in terms of stories, obviously with the wish to either suppress or improve a story. A story can be either critical or favourable to the Government, depending on the view taken about the activity that has taken place.

**Ms Egan:** It probably depends more on what information is available to write the story on.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There is an interdependency between the Government and the Press to that extent. It is sometimes in the Government's interests to tell journalists more than it would like to tell them because that might make a better story. Was there anything in what Kieran Murphy was saying that you saw as being a possible sweetener about how you might write the story as far as the Government was concerned?

**Ms Egan:** I get what you mean, but I did not see it as sweetener. There ended up being an agreement. I do not know if the agreement was made on that day. I get the feeling that the agreement was made a couple of days later. Maybe that was the Friday. There ended up being an agreement between Kieran and I that I would hold off on the story I was planning to write pending a development involving the Premier and the camp, which would end up being my exclusive story. Does that answer your question?

**The CHAIRMAN:** It answers the next question.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** It answers a lot of questions.

**Ms Egan:** That is not unusual. If I was the only journalist making calls, and the evidence to the committee shows that I was, it is not unusual for a Government to tell a journalist not to write a story if things are happening and it will end up a better story if the journalist waits. I could have said that I would write my story anyway, and I could have. However, I make those sorts of judgments on what I have in front of me and I had a lukewarm story. I could have ended up with a better one, which is what happened.

**The CHAIRMAN:** But the Government had to deliver a story. Things were happening. If the story that was ultimately given to you was that nothing much was happening but the Government would like you to write a story as if something was happening -

**Ms Egan:** That would be silly. Kieran would not try that on me.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The point is that to that degree there was an obligation on the Government to deliver you a story.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, I suppose so.

**The CHAIRMAN:** From his point of view.

**Ms Egan:** I doubt that he would have made that kind of agreement without believing that is precisely what he would do.

**The CHAIRMAN:** He believed he could deliver a story.

**Ms Egan:** My feeling was that things were happening on the Premier's floor relating to the camp and there would be some kind of outcome.

[9.50 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** Was that before or after you made the contact?

**Ms Egan:** That I cannot answer.

**The CHAIRMAN:** This question is engaging our minds - would anything have happened if you had not rung up? You do not know the answer to that.

**Ms Egan:** I do not know the answer to that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Was there nothing that Kieran said to you that indicated that it was already happening prior to your having rung, or was he speaking more at that moment in time -

**Ms Egan:** I got the feeling that it had only just come to the Premier's attention. I would not have thought that was unusual. I would have thought it is not uncommon for the Premier to find out what is happening in one of the other portfolios when the Press makes a call.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is not at all unusual!

**Ms Egan:** I got the feeling that maybe Alannah would get her knuckles rapped for not doing a great deal.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am not suggesting that anything unusual occurred. I am trying to determine whether Kieran gave you any indication of whether your intervention was fortuitously happening at the same time as action or your intervention might have had something to do with that action.

**Ms Egan:** I got the impression that the Premier's attention had been drawn to it by the fact I had been making calls. I certainly did not think that my calls would form the basis for any decision. If you see the way I eventually wrote the story, I wrote something about departments having told the Premier that the safety cannot be assured of the women and children, or whatever. My belief was that the department heads, or whatever meeting he went into, were giving him similar information to what I had. Certainly, it was not happening on my information.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** You got that information about the Premier after a meeting that he had been to?

**The CHAIRMAN:** It was probably on the Monday.

**Ms Egan:** I am sorry.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You did not get the information in the first conversation with Kieran, did you?

**Ms Egan:** Is that that there had been a department heads meeting or there was going to be one?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes

**Ms Egan:** No.

**The CHAIRMAN:** He did not say that something was happening, so hang on. Did he say that on the Monday?

**Ms Egan:** I really do not know.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** It was after the meeting.

**Ms Egan:** I really do not know. I cannot be sure.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We are on a fairly important point here.

**Ms Egan:** I cannot be sure of that. He may have said that there is going to be a departmental heads meeting, or he may have said there had been a departmental heads meeting.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** There were a number of meetings at the time.

**Ms Egan:** Having read the transcript now, he must have got this information from you prior to that meeting, I suppose.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** Your information about what happened and that there was a departmental meeting was after his getting that information from you.

**Ms Egan:** Um.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** You do not know.

**Ms Egan:** I do not know.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It seems you rang on a Friday, and he said there was a meeting -

**Ms Egan:** He rang me.

**The CHAIRMAN:** He rang on a Friday and said there was a meeting that day. It is reasonably interesting to us to know whether he gave an assurance at that stage that something was happening and you should hold off, or whether it was not until the following Monday. I realise it may be very difficult for you to answer, but it is reasonably important.

**Ms Egan:** I would be surprised if he did not ask me when I planned to run the story. What my answer was, I do not know. It being a Friday afternoon, it could have been something we planned to run on Sunday for Monday's paper, or something that we did not need until later the next week. It would be just as plausible for him to ask when I planned to run it, to know he had a few days up his sleeve - just to know that. Just as plausibly, it could have been like, "If you plan to run this tomorrow or Monday, could you hold off for a couple of days because I think you will end up with a better story if you hold off?" Knowing Kieran, and how well he does his job, he would have done either of those things.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It might have been a non-specific basis on the Friday saying, "Hold on; you will get a better story." It is quite probable that after the meeting on Friday, he might have said something is happening and you will get the story.

**Ms Egan:** It could have been more than one phone call on one day. I know that he said either there was going to be a department heads meeting or there has been a department heads meeting. I know he intimated on a background basis that the Premier was taking an interest and looking to do something. The Premier's doing something would have made the story better. I am sure he would

not have said close the camp down. It may have been that I never communicated to Kieran what my original story was going to be. He made the call to me asking about the detail of these allegations made. He was asking a question and me giving an answer, and it went from there. He may not have known what my original story was.

**The CHAIRMAN:** He may have been the one person who did not know what the original story was.

**Ms Egan:** Quite possibly.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It seems once you made the contact, it took on and you were talking about a number of incidents. That seems to be what we have been told.

**Ms Egan:** I know. I have looked at the transcript. I found it curious. If I was going to write a story about a set of incidents at the Bropho camp, I would not be ringing press secretaries for it. I would be ringing the police and trying to talk to the victims. I would not be asking for government comment. I would do it differently.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Can I ask a question? It was stated that prior to contact with Kieran you had contacted the Department for Community Development.

**Ms Egan:** I am quite sure I was talking to Caroline Lacy there. Is that right?

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** A name was not mentioned.

**Ms Egan:** She was doing their PR there.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** She was trying to get the information out, and the information had then gone through Lynsey Warbey to Kieran Murphy.

**Ms Egan:** I do not know.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** That was about 29 April.

**Ms Egan:** Originally, it was Alan Carpenter; then it was Alannah MacTiernan. I did the interview in which she sort of insinuated that the agencies were not doing their job; it was not that Alannah was not doing it right. That is why we went to DCD from there. I probably said something like Alannah MacTiernan said you have access to this camp, but you are not making use of it. It may have been more exploratory as in: how many reports have you had since the Gordon inquiry went down? My sources are saying that nothing has changed out there. What does your department's source say? It may have been exploratory and that sort of thing. I was trying to form a story at that stage.

**Hon LOUISE PRATT:** With the details of the incidents you passed on to Kieran Murphy, did you give him any indication of your sense of the veracity of those claims? Did you give the impression that you believed them enough that you were willing to write a story about it to impress on him that they were substantive matters? Do you have a sense of that?

**Ms Egan:** I am not sure. If Kieran had asked me about my view of the allegations, I would have told him I do not know; I have not spoken to the exact source. They may be right or they may be wrong. If he had asked me that question, that is what I would have said. I do not know whether he did.

**Hon LOUISE PRATT:** Do you have any indication of his personal response to the kind of incidents you had outlined to him? Was he particularly appalled by them, or just listening to what you were saying?

**Ms Egan:** It just seemed to be information gathering. In my own mind - I am sure he did not give me that idea - he was doing the following: I was giving this information so he could go back and compare it with information from the departments. That is what I expect he was doing. The reason I would have asked permission and given him a couple of names was the same reason as I have

done for this committee. You know, to make sure that the 13-year-old girl is the same 13-year-old girl we are talking about, so that he could make comparisons to information he had got. That is what I expect he was doing with it.

**Hon LOUISE PRATT:** That is an exercise we have all been trying to engage in - comparing the information. You said that you looked at some of the transcripts.

[9.00 pm]

**Ms Egan:** I have not looked at all of them.

**Hon LOUISE PRATT:** There has been some conjecture about the reliability of sources. You said that you did not have a chance to check the veracity of all the claims that were outlined to you, but you also said that it is not difficult to believe that these types of things would be happening.

**Ms Egan:** That is correct.

**Hon LOUISE PRATT:** You still give some overall weight to the claims that were being made.

**Ms Egan:** That is correct.

**Hon LOUISE PRATT:** Could you outline why you have that view?

**Ms Egan:** I have been talking to people about abuse and incidents over at the Bropho camp since long before the Taylor inquest. I knew the details of the Taylor inquest and many of the other allegations that ended up coming out there well over a year before or maybe more. I have heard an awful lot. I had gone half way to attempting to write stories but legally it was so difficult then because there was no ability for me to write without having some privilege. When the Taylor inquest happened it did not surprise me at all. It is what I had been hearing from sources and contacts. What they had told me previously turned out to be correct. I was then hearing it out of the mouths of the girls who did live there. From then on, covering court cases and speaking to Patti Chong from the DPP, and Richard Bannerman, and seeing the charges that have come out, it is all in keeping with stuff that I have been told by sources. Generally the gist of what they had told me before the inquest came out and proved to be correct when I saw the evidence with my own eyes.

**Hon LOUISE PRATT:** Post that you said you were not able to check the veracity of your sources -

**Ms Egan:** The veracity of the claims.

**Hon LOUISE PRATT:** You still had the continuity and said that you did not have any reason to doubt.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, it rang true with me, if you want to put it that way. It was coming from people I believed to be reliable. It was in keeping with the types of things I had seen in courtrooms.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What happened next?

**Ms Egan:** What happened next? Where was I up to?

**The CHAIRMAN:** We got to the point where you spoke on the Friday and you went back on the Monday.

**Ms Egan:** Monday is Cabinet.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You came back on the Monday to confirm the position from your sources. Is that what you said earlier?

**Ms Egan:** No. If it is Friday, that had already happened. I would not have given this kind of detail with names in it to Kieran without having already gone back to my sources and okayed it with them.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You think there was probably another conversation with Kieran before 2 May?

**Ms Egan:** 2 May was when?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Friday. On 29 April you appear to have contacted the DCD - that is Tuesday. Wednesday and Thursday are in between.

**Ms Egan:** A couple of days later I heard from Kieran.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Possibly Thursday?

**Ms Egan:** Possibly he rang me Thursday and possibly I contacted my sources and then we had that conversation Friday with me giving him detail, having got authority from the sources to do so. Monday would have been Cabinet. There may well have been a week.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We will move forward.

**Ms Egan:** There may have been a week when nothing happened or it may have gone straight to the Monday. The 14 May was when my story appeared.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There must have been something on 13 May at least. There is a note about 12 May with Colleen - **[Private Evidence]**

**Ms Egan:** That is my number. There was a week in between obviously.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It has Wednesday, media run closure story, "give to Colleen legis. angle" -

**Ms Egan:** I think there must have been an agreement with Kieran that something was happening. The Premier was interested. Whatever happened I would be getting the story. I have dealt with Kieran for many years. I would have left it in his hands.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** You got an exclusive.

**Ms Egan:** Yes. Actually I think I was back down covering the police royal commission. I found out on the Tuesday that it was going to be released in Parliament. I rang Kieran and said, "That is my story."

**The CHAIRMAN:** I can assure you on the day before they had written you down for that. You are in his book.

**Ms Egan:** Good.

**The CHAIRMAN:** On 12 May it refers to one GG Tuesday and then two Wednesday. It refers to "give to Colleen legis. angle".

**Ms Egan:** He was going to give that to me on the Wednesday. I heard about it on the Tuesday and said that it was not good enough and ended up getting the whole angle on the Tuesday, not the Wednesday.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You published it on the Wednesday?

**Ms Egan:** I published on Wednesday, and then he announced it later that day up here, I think.

**The CHAIRMAN:** May I just take you back a bit? Do you remember the audit in December?

**Ms Egan:** The audit of what?

**The CHAIRMAN:** The services at the Swan Valley Nyungah Community.

**Ms Egan:** Not offhand.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Were you involved in that?

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** It is quite often referred to as the raid.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It was like a raid. The services turned up with police cars and they all got together and read the riot act to them. Were you present at that?

**Ms Egan:** No, I was not.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Were you aware it was about to happen?

**Ms Egan:** Not to my recollection.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You did not get notified, because all the visual media were there?

**Ms Egan:** I remember it now. I do not know where I was. I am quite sure that I was not contacted personally. Whether the office was and the office went, I do not know. I did not do the story, so I may well not have been around.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Going back to the announcement in the Parliament, did you have any involvement after the legislation had come in or any further communication with Kieran?

**Ms Egan:** No. I just remember that I had a phone call from Mick Gooda the day that it was coming in. I met him for coffee and he said, "I just want you to tell your sources that if they want any kind of support including legal support that ATSIC will be willing to give them that." I did not even come up here for the Parliament stuff; I was down at the police royal commission. I think I spoke to you possibly. I think I may have spoken to you, and I certainly spoke to Kieran, when the legislation was supposedly going through with bipartisan support and then it stalled.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It got amended.

**Ms Egan:** You are telling the story now.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It was amended. What I want to know is whether Kieran spoke to you about the amendments.

**Ms Egan:** You would like to know that?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**Ms Egan:** I certainly spoke to Kieran that evening about whether or not the legislation was going to go through as planned. I think there were a couple of angles being juggled on the story because Bropho was being arrested or was arrested that day.

[9.10 pm]

I think he was rearrested on the old charges. I knew the charges were foreshadowed because, at the same time as having communication with the Government on this issue, I was in communication with Robert Cock for a week or two prior to this and I knew that he was going to Darwin to interview this alleged victim and that, if he was satisfied with her, the charges would be reinstated against Bropho. I was juggling a couple of angles on the story.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Angles on which story?

**Ms Egan:** The Bropho story generally.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So even though that was a separate story, it somehow -

**Ms Egan:** I melded them together, because they are both about the same person and the same issue, really, and happened at the same time.

**The CHAIRMAN:** But you did not put them together until you heard about the arrest?

**Ms Egan:** My first story actually had them together. I had the first couple of paragraphs about the closure, and then said the move comes as Robert Cock considers reinstituting criminal charges, five counts of rape, etc.

**The CHAIRMAN:** But that was your angle; it was not Kieran Murphy's?

**Ms Egan:** I do not think he even knew about that. I am just trying to follow my own memory of how the story was evolving. My next story was published on Saturday, 17 May, and I would have written it on the Friday. It was the fact that he was charged, and that the charges came as the amendments were being done. I spoke to Kieran that evening, because I remember it was getting late for our deadline. I had my story pre-written to the effect that the charges came as legislation sailed through the upper House last night, but that did not happen. I remember speaking to your

press secretary, Tamatha Smith, who was feeding me some quotes, and Kieran, who sounded quite heated.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You say “heated”.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, from memory.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That is a very ambiguous adjective.

**Ms Egan:** I will retract it, and the ambiguity is gone.

**The CHAIRMAN:** No, it is not, because I would like to know what you meant by it.

**Ms Egan:** I think I interviewed you as well, from memory, and you may have sounded heated as well. I think you were quite heated about the fact that they were trying to ram it through the upper House without proper consultation, and you had had a meeting set and only half the people turned up for only half the time, or something, and you had not had proper consultation. I recall that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Can we go back? Unfortunately, you cannot withdraw evidence; it is there, and you said it. There was obviously something about his manner that was -

**Ms Egan:** He was no more heated than you were, from memory.

**The CHAIRMAN:** But heated - what do you mean by heated? Was he upset, angry, pleased, disappointed -

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** Excited, because the story was falling into the Opposition?

**Ms Egan:** No; I think it was more a disappointment that the legislation was not getting through, from memory. After that, I do not know that I spoke to anyone again.

### **[Private Evidence]**

**The CHAIRMAN:** No, they had been told about it, and they went looking for one and could not find it. Please understand that we are not saying that sexual abuse does not occur at that camp. The evidence we are getting is that sexual abuse certainly occurs in the Aboriginal community, but it occurs throughout the community. That is the finding of the Gordon inquiry. The camp was not a little pocket of sexual abuse that is different from everywhere else.

[9.20 pm]

If we did not have sexual abuse, it probably would be different from everywhere else. However, the evidence we are getting is that it is a fairly widespread situation, and if you were going to find it in one place, you would not necessarily say that the Swan Valley camp was necessarily any worse than anywhere else. Even DCD reports say that it was worried more about two other camps.

**Ms Egan:** That would not surprise me. I think that all of what you have said is correct.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We are not for one moment saying to you that, no, there is no evidence of any sexual abuse. Of course there is quite strong evidence of sexual abuse there, but there is also strong evidence of sexual abuse elsewhere. We were given three fresh occurrences to justify urgent action against that camp.

**Ms Egan:** That had somehow come from me.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** We were not told that they came from you, but it is interesting. As you have described it, you were following a particular line and there were these allegations, which you asked about and which suddenly assumed an importance that you had not been pursuing. They were then given to members of the Opposition in a briefing as examples of why we needed to act hastily to prevent another Susan Taylor.



**Ms Egan:** Right.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We were also given evidence of an inability to access the camp, which again has been a bit difficult to -

**Ms Egan:** That is outside anything I -

**The CHAIRMAN:** I understand that, but that was another justification we had.

**Ms Egan:** That was not mine.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I will not ask you to comment on that one.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** When Peter said that we had evidence that there were some more serious problems at two other camps, you responded that that would not surprise you.

**Ms Egan:** Yes.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** Why not?

**Ms Egan:** Because the multitude of conversations I have had with people in this field reflect that this is a problem that is widespread. Also, obviously reports say the same thing.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** However, Cullacabardee, Saunders Street, Sydney Road -

**Ms Egan:** Yes, and I would say that you would find places in remote WA that are even worse than that because they have no law and order out there. The one thing that came out of the Gordon inquiry that I think is probably of some worth to those people is that some police stations will be opening in some of those places. The victims do not even have someone to report them to out there. Some of the stories are horrendous and horrific out there.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** Focusing on the network of sources and the information that you have about the Swan Valley camp, do you get the impression that the Cullacabardee, Saunders Street and Sydney Road communities are in any way different from the Swan Valley Nyungah Community?

**Ms Egan:** I suppose to me as a journalist the difference between those camps, and the difference maybe between a lot of the people involved in the area, is Robert Bropho's standing in the community and the number of years that he has had a lot of power and respect in the community.

**The CHAIRMAN:** When you talk about "the community", do you mean the Swan Valley community?

**Ms Egan:** No, not at all; I am talking about the wider community.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The Aboriginal activist.

**Ms Egan:** Exactly; the Swan Brewery activist. He is quite charismatic and very engaging.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The Pyrton activist.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, he is now. A view has been put to me since before the Taylor inquest by a wide range of people that if you are going to do something about sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities, you have to go for the big people like Bropho because they are the ones who have the power, and if victims see that those ones are being brought down, they will have more confidence to come out against others.

**The CHAIRMAN:** He is sort of an icon.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, I think so.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** Is that the sort of view that a person like Ted Wilkes would give?

**Ms Egan:** I think that if Ted is not on record as saying that, he would not mind me saying that that is a view that he has put in the past. However, he is certainly not the only one. It is certainly not a view that is unique to him and people around him.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** And people of that level in the community.

**Ms Egan:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You would also be aware that Ted Wilkes would not mind seeing it happen to Robert Bropho.

**Ms Egan:** Absolutely. I think their great-great-grandfathers used to fight each other on the Swan River and they have competing native title claims. However, Ted Wilkes does not have three separate sets of sexual assault charges against him.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I agree, but he has an axe to grind.

**Ms Egan:** He probably has many. I do not know. If you spoke to Ted Wilkes, he would say that he had an axe to grind against paedophiles in general and talk about Jack Davis, who was a very powerful, prominent man, and the victims within his own family of someone of that power and prominence and maybe draw some similarities.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I think he does have a feeling about paedophiles but, having spoken to him about non-paedophile matters, there is no doubt that Ted Wilkes feels very angry about Bropho, not only because he sees Bropho usurping land belonging to the Wilkes family, which is where the Swan Valley Nyungah Community is situated, but also because of his dispute over Derbarl Yerrigan.

**Ms Egan:** I think they have been inextricably tied up. I have written that it is hard to separate those things.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I agree. He has a genuine aversion to paedophilia; there is no doubt about that.

**Ms Egan:** Yes. At the time I started writing these stories, he was the only Aboriginal man of any standing who was willing to come out publicly and say anything. He gave evidence at the Taylor inquest that I do not think others were willing to give, and that is why I quoted him on the issue; he has actually stood up and said things whereas others have not.

**The CHAIRMAN:** When the decision to close the camp came about, did you ever see that a possible angle was that it was depriving Aboriginal people of their land?

**Ms Egan:** I think the briefing I was given was that the land would remain guaranteed for Aboriginal use.

**The CHAIRMAN:** However, these particular Aboriginals would not exactly benefit from that.

**Ms Egan:** I really do not know how many were living out there at that stage. You get such vastly wild variations of how many people lived at that camp depending on whom you speak to.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did you know the Bropho family was thrown out of Allawah Grove?

**Ms Egan:** I do not even know where that is.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** We are just showing our age.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Unfortunately, it is only people like me who seem to understand that one.

**Ms Egan:** I am not sure that Robert Bropho lived there anyway before it shut. He lived at Margaret Jeffery's house.

**The CHAIRMAN:** He did; you are quite right. He was thrown out of Allawah Grove when Allawah Grove was closed. Unfortunately, much the same sort of argument came up there; that is, people would be better off not living in the terrible conditions at Allawah Grove, so they were all

thrown out of Allawah Grove and went to live under the Guildford Bridge, which was not exactly a major improvement in their conditions.

**Ms Egan:** I remember interviewing you that night because you predicted that he would set up tents at Parliament House and that is exactly what he did.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Or that he would go to Saunders Street. Both those predictions were correct.

**Ms Egan:** I was actually quite surprised when the Government decided to shut it down in the way it did. It certainly was not pressure from my story. I was not saying to Kieran or anyone else that this place should be shut down.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You were saying that you said it should be shut down -

**Ms Egan:** My question was that Alan Carpenter made a statement from the bottom of his heart some time ago about that what he wanted his cabinet colleague to do and they have not done it, and what has been the result?

[9.30 pm]

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** One of the things that is critical in what you have just said is that you communicated that nothing had changed. If nothing had changed, why have you not done something?

**The CHAIRMAN:** If it has not changed, have you changed? That is what you said, is it not.

**Ms Egan:** I am sorry.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Well, if nothing has changed, why are you not doing what you said you would do?

**Ms Egan:** Yes, I suppose so. If the situation is the same as when Alan Carpenter made that statement, why -

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** Nothing has changed.

**Ms Egan:** Nothing has changed.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** It seems to be critical in the whole sequence of events.

**Ms Egan:** That is certainly what my contacts were telling me. If the allegations that they gave me then were not correct -

**The CHAIRMAN:** Two out of three, and one was rather an old one too.

**Ms Egan:** Yes. I do not know. I think that the most recent charge against Bropho is actually situated in the time frame.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is. It is an interesting one. I would not worry too much about that. That was not one of the allegations we had.

**Ms Egan:** It certainly was not.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** That came later.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That came some time later.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, it did. Probably my -

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am not even suggesting that nothing had changed. What I am saying to you is what evidence did people have that nothing had changed, if you see what I mean.

**Ms Egan:** Yes.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** It is the fact that you alerted, through Kieran Murphy, the Government or the Premier to the fact that nothing had changed seems to be a catalyst in the whole episode.

**Ms Egan:** It seems to be. The way I have read the transcript is that I was making allegations, which is certainly not what I believed I was doing.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is all your fault, you realise!

**Ms Egan:** Yes, it seems to be. It seems to have turned out that way.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Thanks Colleen. I just have a few questions, if I may. Did you ever hear any stories, again around the traps, about Robert's father or grandfather being a paedophile?

**Ms Egan:** No.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** It never cropped up?

**Ms Egan:** As in old Robert?

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Yes.

**Ms Egan:** No. Not at all.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** That is good. Were you ever told about one of the DCD workers taking stress leave?

**Ms Egan:** Gee, I would be surprised if one of them did not. No. I would say that it would be a regular thing in that department.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** It was not, actually.

**Ms Egan:** No?

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** But it was put out that people were out on stress leave. They were actually on courses.

**Ms Egan:** No. None of that rings a bell at all.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Okay. You mentioned that you had several contacts. Obviously you only have to look through the history of your articles over time and there were a number of people's names that came forward. Were there any other contacts that were not specific to the people you have already talked about in many of your articles that were sort of closet contacts?

**Ms Egan:** I think that would go too close to what you promised me you would not do, which was to ask me to reveal my sources.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** I am not asking for names.

**Ms Egan:** No. I would not feel comfortable answering that question.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Okay. No worries.

**Ms Egan:** The reason I feel strongly about this one is that it is not just the code of ethics. There is a genuine issue that people who work in this area and people who live in this area do face real issues with their safety. Just as I was not attempting to shut the camp by making a few calls and having leads, I am sure the sources that I spoke to, if they had been told that this information was being used to shut the camp down, may well have said, "Oh well, I'll go and double check then" or, "I'm not quite sure". That is why I was saying that it only marginally worried me. I did not sit down with this source and say, "Okay, I am going to publish this information. We have to make sure we get it right."

**The CHAIRMAN:** Your story was something different.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, that is right. If I was given information that was grey or not quite correct or even not correct -

**The CHAIRMAN:** You were calling on the Government to justify why it had not done what it said, putting up the proposition that nothing had changed and calling on it to justify why it had not done something. You were not necessarily going to -

**Ms Egan:** I think I actually faxed the article quoting Alan Carpenter about it being a place of misery. I think I faxed it to Alannah MacTiernan's office and said, "This is what Alan Carpenter wanted done. Why hasn't it happened?"

**The CHAIRMAN:** On the question of the contacts, we do not want to put you in a position of breaching your journalistic ethics. If it is just a question of protecting them from Mr Bropho, we are highly aware of that. You might have noticed that we have had one or two people suddenly say a name before we could stop them. Generally speaking, we have tried to deal with all of that in private evidence. We have a fairly good idea of who has been telling what to whom. That is something we want to keep private. You need not have concerns on that side, apart from the fact of the legal possibility that the Council can publish it. It is certainly not our intention to allow those people to be exposed to it. One of the reasons we have agreed to you giving private evidence today was to protect you, as much as anything else. The fact that it is being taken in private means that not only is there nobody here whilst you are giving your evidence, but also there was nobody here before you gave your evidence to know that you are even here.

**Ms Egan:** That is exactly why I requested it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Right. We respect that. We are aware that it is not a popular thing for people to give evidence that may damage Aboriginal communities - Mr Bropho in particular, perhaps. That particular group is very keen on people dudding them. That would certainly be seen that way. We understand all of that.

**Ms Egan:** I suppose just from the experience of having been a culprit myself in the past is that sometimes you can accidentally publish something and not realise the damage that you are doing.

**The CHAIRMAN:** They know whose allegation it is.

**Ms Egan:** Yes, exactly, and they can put two and two together, which is quite often what happens. That is why I was quite concerned. As I say, these people do not necessarily support the Government closing the camp. That is not why they said what they said.

**The CHAIRMAN:** They actually wanted someone to address the paedophilia. That is what they want.

**Ms Egan:** Absolutely.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** Do something for those kids in that camp.

**Ms Egan:** Absolutely, and every other camp.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Robin?

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** I was not trying to get any names; I was trying to make that deliberation between, obviously, people you have already mentioned in your articles and others.

**Ms Egan:** I will just say that the people I was talking to are people whom I consider reliable. There are a lot of people I talk to whom I do not.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** You obviously did quite a good story on the million dollars from WAAMS - the WA medical story in which you uncovered the mismanaged missing million dollars. Did you ever do anything on the -

**Ms Egan:** What are they called? WAACCHO.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Yes. Did you ever do anything on the missing money from Derbarl Yerrigan?

**Ms Egan:** Our newspaper has. Which particular missing money? There has been missing money -

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** The \$3.6 million.

**Ms Egan:** Where did it go? When did it go missing?

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** It has been missing quite a while.

**Ms Egan:** I have written so many stories in this area. I do not know. I think it is something that actually Gary Adshead at the *Sunday Times* may have written.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Gary has done something on it, that is for sure.

**Ms Egan:** I think Gary did it at the *Sunday Times*. Generally, if somebody else is doing a story, I do not do it. It is not news any more. I know that we have done other stuff on Derbarl Yerrigan at *The Australian*.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** The only other one is, I think, similar to what Peter asked earlier: did you ever have any evidence provided to you by anybody on Cullacabardee?

**Ms Egan:** Not directly, I do not think. Is that Gngangara? No.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**Ms Egan:** Yes?

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** No, Gngangara is Sydney Road.

**The CHAIRMAN:** They are both on Gngangara Road. Well, just down from Gngangara Road.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** One is on Gngangara mound.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** They are all on the Gngangara mound.

**The CHAIRMAN:** One is in Beechboro Road. You go up Beechboro Road and, just before you get to Gngangara Road, off to the left is Cullacabardee. To get to Sydney Road you go along Gngangara Road and go off to the right. One is on the right of Gngangara Road and one is on the left of Gngangara Road.

[9.40 pm]

**Ms Egan:** I remember Dixie Marshall doing a story on that one. I do not recall having done anything in particular.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** These are fishing trips.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** On Wednesday, 6 February you had a story, about secrets and whispers.

**Ms Egan:** When was that?

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** On 6 February 2002. You said that while Parliament worked on the inquest another Derbarl Yerrigan employee assisted alleged victims as they made complaints against the elders at the Gngangara Aboriginal Community in Perth's northern suburbs. Joseph Patrick Ryder had been remanded -

**Ms Egan:** Oh, yes, I remember that.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** That was about the community in Sydney Road, as I recall.

**Ms Egan:** Yes. Steve was arrested trying to get over the border up north, I think. I have definitely written about him.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** When did you first meet Mick Gooda - when he took on the job over here or much later?

**Ms Egan:** Two years ago, probably.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** That would have been shortly after he came here.

**Ms Egan:** Did he not work in a state department for quite some time? He was at ATSIC by the time I met him.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** He was with DAA, then he went to Canberra and then he came back to ATSIC.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much. We are sorry that we had to bring you in, but it appeared to be important that we talk to you as you will probably see from the way the evidence has turned out. You will get a transcript of your evidence. When you correct it, please return it as soon as possible. If you think anything is incorrect because you got something wrong, you can correct that in a covering letter, which the committee will receive. Anything you think is an error of transcription you can correct in the transcript. There are two types of corrections: how you were recorded in the transcript and any corrections in a letter to the committee that you wish to make after having read the evidence because you think you did not express yourself correctly.

**Ms Egan:** I want to put on record that I am keen for my evidence to be published and that I was concerned about not giving my evidence in front of a public gallery given my heavily pregnant condition. However, as a journalist, it goes against my grain for my evidence to be in secret, so I would prefer it to be made public.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I suggest you read your transcript and identify parts the publication of which you think might be injurious to your sources. We will look at that. I think our inclination is to publish the rest at your request. We will also examine it for the same reason. We do not want to cause any problem to people that might arise from that. You need to be a bit careful about your evidence in case there is anything in it that we need to suppress. If you give us your views, we will consider ours. I have discussed it with the committee and we are reasonably happy that it should be published once we have had a look at it.

**Ms Egan:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You recognise that neither of you may give anyone any account of your evidence to the committee unless we make it public and only that part that we make public?

**Hon JON FORD:** That will probably be at the next meeting.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes, depending on how quickly we get the transcript back and how quickly we get it to you. We expect that by the next meeting we can make that decision if you return the transcript to us in time.

**Ms Egan:** I might be in the labour ward by that time.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** If you think your brain has turned to mush now, wait until after that event.

**Ms Egan:** My brain has been mush lately - please do not take too much from what I said.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You did very well indeed.

**Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON:** If it is mush now I would like to have seen it before; it must have been pretty sharp.

**Ms Egan:** If it helps you, from memory, I did not speak to Mick Gooda on this issue until after I had written my story on the closing down of the camp.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Sorry to do this but you became a somewhat pivotal person.

**Ms Egan:** I do not know how that happened, really.

**Committee adjourned at 9.45 pm**