

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS — STOLEN WAGES

**1036. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs:**

In February the minister told the Parliament that he was “looking at” the issue of stolen wages; in May he told the Parliament that he would “consider” the issue of stolen wages. In relation to this year’s budget, he said that there was no funding for stolen wages because the issue had not been considered. I ask: when will the minister stop stalling on this issue and take action?

**Hon PETER COLLIER replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

I can assure the member that I am not stalling, and if I could have achieved an outcome on this matter earlier, I would have. As the honourable member would well know, it is an extremely complex situation. We are dealing with the situation of a group of people from 1905 to 1972. Access to information over that time period is very, very difficult to gain. Through the Department of Indigenous Affairs and a raft of initiatives, we are trying to ascertain the best way forward. I know that, from the honourable member’s perspective, that is stalling and looking around the issue to find a way out, but it is not. It is trying to find the most effective way forward. It pretty much consumes a significant portion of my time on a weekly basis. I would have liked to have had a solution before now; I really genuinely would have liked to have thought that I could have had a solution. Unfortunately that is not the case, but I can assure the honourable member that I am working on it, and as soon as I get a solution that provides the best outcome for that group of people, I will do so.