

DEPARTMENT OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS — BALGO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

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

I refer to the coroner's questioning of the minister's department in the Balgo inquest about what the Department of Indigenous Affairs has done to improve school attendance, and particularly his request to replace "warm and fuzzy" comments with details about what action had been taken.

- (1) What has DIA done to improve school attendance in Balgo in the last three years?
- (2) Have these measures been successful?
- (3) How were these successes measured?

**Hon PETER COLLIER replied:**

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

- (1) Low school attendance is a problem evident at not just Balgo, but a number of Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley region and other remote areas, as noted by the coroner in his 2007–08 inquest into suicides in the Kimberley region. The causes are complex and deep-seated, and cannot easily be addressed. The Department of Education has in place a number of strategies for reducing truancy and achieving better education outcomes. These measures are outlined in the state government's submission to the coroner's inquiry into suicides at Balgo.
- (2) Poor school attendance remains a serious issue at Balgo. I anticipate that the coroner will make recommendations relating to this issue when he releases the findings of his inquest. The state government will take these recommendations into account in developing solutions, in collaboration with the Balgo community.
- (3) The appropriate measure is school attendance data, which has been provided to the coroner by the Catholic Education Office to assist with his inquest.