

JULIEKA IVANNA DHU — DEATH IN CUSTODY — CORONER'S INQUIRY

1038. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Premier:

I refer to the coroner's inquiry into the tragic death of Ms Dhu in a police lockup and that inquiry being advised that she was incarcerated solely for being unable to pay fines.

- (1) Is the Premier aware that the Commissioner of Police does not know how many fine defaulters are incarcerated in the state's police lockups and that he has refused to dedicate any resources to identify this information?
- (2) How can this government reduce the number of Aboriginal people in police lockups if it does not know how many are affected?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

- (1)–(2) I think the death of Ms Dhu was a shameful episode. Having said that, I think we should wait until the full coroner's report comes out. Members might recall that I met with Ms Dhu's mother and family members in Port Hedland. With the help of the Minister for Police, I was able to meet one of their wishes; that is, they had the right to look at the cells where Ms Dhu passed away. They also requested that the coroner's inquiry come on earlier, and that has also been delivered. We should wait for the outcome of that.

There is clearly an issue about the high representation of Aboriginal people in our justice system. The Minister for Corrective Services, the Attorney General and the Minister for Police are working on that. We are doing all that we can to try to bring down that rate. I think it is wrong to try to link the tragic and shameful death of Ms Dhu in the way in which the member opposite has attempted to do.