

LAVERTON COMMUNITY — DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLAIMS

436. Hon HELEN BULLOCK to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the article titled “Claims Rejected” in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* dated 6 June 2011, which reported that the Department for Child Protection had rejected the claims of the Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission’s report, “Abandoned Children and Violence/Domestic Violence in Laverton WA”, dated 28 January 2011, and to the minister’s subsequent visit.

- (1) Following talks with the Laverton community, does the minister support the claim of the DCP that the claims of the GEDC’s report are unsubstantiated?
- (2) When did the DCP district office become aware of the report?
- (3) What investigation did the DCP undertake to ascertain those claims were false?
- (4) Did the DCP receive any reports from Laverton police, school and hospital relating to abandoned children, children without parents, child abuse and children at risk of domestic violence and alcohol abuse between December 2010 and June 2011?
- (5) If the minister and the department stand by the view that the GEDC’s report was unsubstantiated, why did the minister announce a package of measures to address the claims?

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) At an interagency meeting on 13 June to discuss the report, no agency was able to provide data to support the allegations of abandoned children. Agencies present included the police, the Department of Indigenous Affairs, the Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission, the Shire of Laverton and the Department for Child Protection. The meeting concluded that there was no substantial evidence.

I make the point that country children love going and looking on rubbish tips to see if they can find a bike tyre or something like that. These children were not down there foraging for food. There was no-one there.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Were you there?

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I was up there. I did go to Laverton and I did speak to the Aboriginal people.

- (2) The district director of the Goldfields district office met in November 2010 with a GEDC staff member who had raised concerns for children being abandoned at the Laverton rubbish tip. The GEDC staff member was advised that the department had not been provided with any evidence that children had been abandoned at the rubbish tip.
- (3) The department reviewed its records and there were no reports of children being abandoned at the rubbish tip. The department received a small number of reports over the past 12 months of situations in which children were not adequately supervised or they had been left with relatives who were no longer able to care for them. In these cases, the department took appropriate action to ensure the safety of these children. Several of these cases are still active.
- (4) It is not possible to provide these figures in the time frame provided. This data can be provided at a later date.
- (5) The 2011–12 state budget has allowed for a responsible parenting program to be set up in Laverton. This is part of the statewide rollout of parenting support services to help parents raise their children more responsibly. An earlier decision had been taken to strengthen the department’s response to a whole range of issues in the northern Goldfields, and as part of this response a team leader appointment has been announced because housing has now been made available.

I wonder how many opposition members who were former government ministers ever went to Laverton and went around and talked with the Aboriginal people and generally was interactive with the Laverton people. My guess is that no member opposite did.

Hon Jon Ford: I did.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I was talking about ministers, and that is in the member’s area and I know he takes that very seriously.