

GUARDIANSHIP LEGISLATION

**198. Mr E.S. RIPPER to the Premier:**

I refer to the Premier's statement yesterday in which he indicated that one of his Liberal-National government's achievements was the introduction of guardianship legislation to provide foster children with stable placements.

- (1) Can the Premier advise of the date this legislation was introduced?
- (2) Can the Premier detail what the legislation contains?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:**

- (1)-(2) This government will legislate on guardianship, and the minister responsible—an opposition member has laughed. How many kids out there do members opposite think live in unstable situations? It is something like 3 000 children, from memory. Look at all those members opposite giggling away. Do they know the abuse that those kids suffer? Do they care about them—some of those kids? They are not interested, are they? They come into this place and they giggle. Obviously, there was a typo in the speech or something. Okay, the legislation —

**Mr M. McGowan:** A typo? You said you introduced it! Is that a typo?

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Rockingham!

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Hasn't the member for Rockingham distinguished himself today! He made a personal attack on Peter Jones. Why? Because he is in his eighties. What a disgrace from that member. This is the same person who —

*Point of Order*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** The point of order is about relevance. The Premier is not addressing —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members! The member's point of order is raised because we are not engaging in asking and answering the question. I ask the member for Rockingham to desist from interjecting and allow the Premier to answer the Leader of the Opposition's question.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** So —

**Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan:** Acknowledge you got it wrong! Just acknowledge you got it wrong.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale, it has been a testing question time; I will be the first to admit that. I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** I apologise to the house if my speech said that the legislation had been introduced when in fact the legislation is coming. It is a bit like free transport for seniors, is it not? Members opposite carried on about a broken promise! Do members know when the previous government was going to introduce it? In July, from 10.00 am until 3.00 pm. Was it not fantastic, members? Starting three months earlier in April, from 9.00 am until 3.30 pm, because everyone knows that seniors like to get up early and get on the bus and train and go out there. So that is a broken promise by members opposite. Members opposite must hate waking up every morning—they must hate it! I would hate it if I were them.

Several opposition members interjected.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Let us get back to the question. The legislation has not been introduced but it is coming and it will provide better opportunities for guardianship. I praise the work of foster parents but I also recognise, as does the Minister for Child Protection, that so many young children —

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Once more you did not do your homework!

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Is that the best you can do?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** It is pathetic but we will continue.

I know that Hon Robyn McSweeney has in this Parliament over the past year cited examples of children who were moved more than 20 times—just continually moved from one household to another. We rely heavily on foster parents and everyone appreciates the work they do. However, we think that amongst those 3 500 or so children—I think that is the correct number—a significant number would have their best chance for a happy and healthy childhood, a good education and for stability in a more permanent arrangement. That is why we will promote—not for everyone—for children a guardianship option. I hope also that we will see more cases of

adoption in this state of children from tragic, broken situations or—perhaps a more common case—children with drug-addicted parents. What chance do those children have? What is the point of taking them back to their parents who are incompetent, often through drug abuse, often through other circumstances? If we can, we should, with the agreement of parents and in a way that is managed properly and professionally, provide more children with a stable, safe environment so that those kids can have a fair crack at life. I know members on this side, and I believe most members opposite—particularly the newer members—probably agree with me. That is what we are going to do, and I hope members opposite care for those kids and support us.