

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Question on notice

Tuesday, 18 March 2014

959. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

I refer to complaints by Mr Ronnie Carlton of Kununurra, which have been the subject of two letters to the Minister and a news report on ABC TV in September 2013, about the manner in which the Stolen Wages Reparation Scheme WA discriminates against former Aboriginal station workers, and I ask:

- (a) what is the Minister's response to Mr Carlton regarding his assertion that the Stolen Wages Reparation Scheme's WA terms of reference discriminate against former Aboriginal station workers whose pay and conditions were a direct result of decisions by the Government of the day;
- (b) will the Minister direct his department to rectify the matter and establish a new scheme that will consider the grievances of former station workers whose wages were stolen and who experienced discrimination in their workplace;
- (c) if no to (b), why not;
- (d) will the Minister apologise to Mr Carlton for the injustice and discrimination he suffered, and will the Minister now open a new, fairer scheme and have it open for several years, or enough time for people living in remote areas to hear about it, especially in view of their inability to read and write and lack of access to newspapers, television and the internet; and
- (e) if no to (d), why not?

(a) The State Government's response to the issue of stolen wages was largely based on the advice of the Stolen Wages Taskforce Report, which found that Government controls over Aboriginal people's money during the period 1905 to 1972 were at their most extensive for those living at Government Settlements including Carrolup, Moore River and other institutions across the State. After careful consideration, a decision was made to limit ex gratia payments through the Stolen Wages Reparation Scheme to former residents of Native Welfare institutions where the State Government had direct control over people's money and conditions.

(b) No.

(c) Refer to (a).

(d) No.

(e) The Stolen Wages Reparation Scheme (the Scheme) was initially open for six months, closing on 6 September 2012. In August 2012, the State Government approved an extension of the closing date to 30 November 2012. The Scheme was advertised extensively via print media in September 2012 and included advertisements in publications such as the *West Australian*, *Broome Advertiser*, *Bunbury Herald*, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, *Kimberley Echo*, *Koori Mail*, *National Indigenous Times* and *Pilbara News*. A separate media campaign reminding stakeholders of the impending closure of the Scheme on 30 November 2012 was also rolled out in early November 2012.

The number of applications received at the close of the Scheme exceeded the estimated cohort of applications based on information from the Redress program. With the number and state wide coverage of applications received, the State Government is of the view that potential eligible applicants had the opportunity to submit an application by the 30 November 2012 close date.

It should be noted that the State Government invests heavily in measures to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people. These investments, are to a large degree, based on recognition that disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal people is a result of discriminatory legislation and policy that existed during the period 1905-1972.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Gillin', written in a cursive style.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs