

Legislative Council
HANSARD
Wednesday 1 November 2023

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings - Adverse Findings

[5.30 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise on adjournment to respond to recent developments on matters briefly raised in this place. As members would be aware, I placed on the public record here a series of questions for the Government. I acknowledge the formal response provided by the Premier this morning on some of the matters and questions I raised arising from the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

However, serious questions still remain. I am also surprised by omissions in the Premier's response. While it is tempting to counter and dispute points made by the Premier in response to the questions and matters I raised in this place, I do not intend to do so in this forum.

As I stated yesterday, I believe an external independent reviewer needs to be appointed to investigate outstanding matters raised by the commission's report. Those matters include the extent that the state's interpretation of section 18 of the act made it impossible for the commission to make the findings - including misconduct and adverse - it may have otherwise have done, and the unresolved matter of the 30 section 18 notices sent to 22 individuals.

It appears there are at least two different versions of events surrounding the issues with the act: the version contained in the commission's report, and the Premier's response this morning. The best way to deliver a comprehensive assessment and clarity regarding these significant outstanding matters is via a suitably qualified, external independent reviewer, rather than resorting to a piecemeal approach.

I also take this opportunity to correct a misreporting. I raised serious questions based on specific content of a publicly tabled report. I did not make allegations against individuals or entities but, in the public interest, called for clarity about how and why they were cited - as they were - in the notes sections of the report, in light of the description of the commission of the processes undertaken and constraints experienced. As I stated, and I reiterate, those individuals deserve that clarity to be provided and independently verified, as do all those who engaged with the commission, including victims/survivors.

All elected representatives should be held accountable for their actions, including me. I stand by my statement of yesterday, that clarity was - and remains - required in relation to those cited in a specific way in the notes of the commission's final report, and other concerns raised regarding the state's interactions with the commission. For the purposes of restoring public confidence, full clarity must be delivered through a comprehensive independent assessment.

As I said, I did not take that step lightly but I have a responsibility to do my job, particularly in pursuing clarification of matters such as this, that impact so many people - no matter how uncomfortable that may be for the Government or for me.