

Abuse victims 'let down'

■ Shannon Hampton

Albany MLA Peter Watson says Colin Barnett has "let down" Katanning's St Andrews Hostel child abuse victims for not implementing a key recommendation by the Blaxell inquiry into widespread abuse by convicted serial paedophile Dennis McKenna in the 1970s and 80s.

During a Budget Estimates committee hearing last week Opposition leader Mark McGowan questioned the Premier on why a key finding of the inquiry, which was to implement a "one-stop shop" to reduce chronic under-reporting of child abuse, had not been implemented.

Mr Barnett said he believed the recommendation would not improve the reporting of child abuse.

"The concept of a one-stop shop ... was not seen to be practical," he said.

"The fear was we would have lower rates of reporting."

Mr Watson, who was approached by several of McKenna's victims and aired a grievance in Parliament in 2011, a week before the inquiry was announced, said Mr Barnett had "brushed aside" the recommendation he believed to be the most important.

"(The victims) have had the courage to come forward after all those years of suffering and the Premier has let them down," he said.

"All of the community groups I've spoken to after (the inquiry) and speaking to the judge while it was on, he said it was one of the most important things."