

PUBLIC SECTOR — REDUNDANCIES

**244. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Premier:**

I refer to the government's announcement today to axe 1 200 public sector jobs to help resolve the government's budget mismanagement and to the Premier's previous statement of 27 September last year prior to the election in which he made it very clear that no cuts were proposed or planned for staffing within the public sector—none at all.

- (1) Why has the Premier broken another election promise?
- (2) Can the Premier guarantee that no police officer, teacher, nurse or child protection worker will be affected by this round of redundancies?

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

- (1)–(2) First, I can say that the announcement this morning was for 1 000 voluntary redundancies—voluntary. People have to apply for a redundancy package. That is not sacking or dismissing workers. That is voluntary. In other words, they have to apply. That is a bit of detail that the opposition seems to have overlooked.

The legislation to introduce involuntary or compulsory redundancy—it will require legislation—will not in my view apply to that many people. Indeed, people who might come under that category are more than likely to apply for voluntary redundancy, as it is so much more attractive; it is eight weeks' pay more attractive. I think that will happen.

In any organisation, private or public, senior management has to have the ability to manage staff. If someone is redundant in their job or in their skills and simply refuses to leave and is sitting about being paid to do nothing, it is fair and reasonable and certainly in the interest of taxpayers that that person be moved on. It happens throughout the world; it happens throughout all industry and businesses in this state, and it is part of modern practice. That is why the commonwealth and every other state has similar provisions, and most of them have had them for a long, long time. It applies to those cases in which people refuse to work, refuse to move on or simply cannot be gainfully employed.

Yes, I made the statement in September to which the Leader of the Opposition referred. In September last year there were no plans. We have, however, subsequent to the election, made the decision to proceed with this voluntary package and that is what we are doing.

**Mr M. McGowan:** Huh!

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** That is true.