

Legislative Council

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EDGINGTON, MR S.

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (15:31): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the minister representing the Attorney-General questions about the WorkCover Ombudsman's office.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON: As members in this chamber will not require reminding, the legal case of Mr Tom Easling was characterised by some disturbing allegations centring on the conduct of the Special Investigations Unit of Families SA, specifically, its manager at the time, Mr Steve Edgington. Key allegations made during the trial were that investigating officers went trawling for evidence against Mr Easling, naming him as the target of the investigation to those they interviewed, failed to keep notes of off-the-record conversations and induced witnesses with cash and other material items to give unfavourable statements against Mr Easling.

Recently I was shocked to learn that the manager of this highly suspect SIU investigation has since been moved on to be appointed with the WorkCover Ombudsman's office, still very much in an investigatory role. My questions to the Attorney-General are:

1. Is it true that the former manager of the Special Investigations Unit of Families SA, Mr Steve Edgington, is currently in the employ of the WorkCover Ombudsman's office?
2. Is Mr Edgington's appointment to the WorkCover Ombudsman's office a promotion in status and income compared with his previous position with the SIU?
3. Has a Special Investigations Unit investigation been undertaken into the conduct of Mr Steve Edgington and his two fellow investigators in the wake of the not guilty verdict handed down in the Tom Easling case and the serious allegations of misconduct that were made during that trial?
4. What confidence can injured workers have that investigations into their respective complaints will be conducted fairly without risking the same system of persecution as used against, and experienced by, Mr Easling?
5. Is Mr Edgington currently the subject of any additional monitoring and/or supervision due to the allegations that have been made about his professional conduct?

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY (Minister for Mineral Resources Development, Minister for Urban Development and Planning, Minister for Small Business) (15:33): I am not sure that the Attorney-General really is the responsible minister; it may well be my colleague the Minister for Industrial Relations. I am not sure who has responsibility for the WorkCover Ombudsman's office. It was certainly done as part of the WorkCover act. I will refer it to the relevant minister.

I will just say that all Public Service appointments are made subject to the Public Sector Management Act, and I think all members of parliament should be careful about mentioning public officers' names in parliament without necessarily any evidence supporting them. The Easling case has been raised, but what particular officers of the Public Service may or may not have had to do with it is something that I believe should be investigated by the appropriate authorities, not brought into the public arena for debate. I will refer those questions to the relevant minister and bring back a response.