

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 118/2006
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The Opposition is concerned at press reports which suggest that the Social Services Agency appears to be in the midst of a civil war, with more than half of its employees forming a “cabal” designed to bring down and oust the Director of the Agency Isabella Tosso. A “cabal” is terminology normally applied to a meeting of witches. The reports appeared in Vox On-Line.

The article in question claims that those involved consist of relatives or close friends of senior staff members. Ms Tosso is quoted as saying that in the past there has been a careless use of selection processes, implying that the selection of her staff has been determined by who you know and not what you know. Indeed, it is said that the nepotism involved in the appointments took place before Ms Tosso took over.

Given that the previous head of the department was a civil servant, transferred from the Social Services Department at the time the agency was created, it seems a very serious allegation to imply that such malpractice was taking place under the previous head of the agency and that an end was put to this when Ms Tosso took over.

If indeed there is a conspiracy against the head of the Agency in which more than half the workforce is involved, all of whom have been serving there much longer than she has (since they were all recruited before she arrived) it is extremely bad news for the persons with disability and for their relatives, who look to the Agency for the protection of their loved ones.

The picture that is being painted suggests that there is something seriously wrong in the running of the Agency which has been repeatedly brought to the attention of the public by the Opposition at the request of the relatives of the users of the service. The relatives themselves have repeatedly come out publicly as well drawing attention to the deficiencies in the service.

Whenever this has happened, the response of the Government has been to come out hurling insults at the Opposition spokesman and making claims about the excellence of the service, the vast improvements that have been made, and how well things are and implying that the concerns were being aired for partisan motives and not because things were really wrong or genuine complaints were being received.

Given that the allegations now published are that Ms Tosso is facing problems because she is trying to introduce a new broom

approach, it suggests that there are things going on that she is trying to sweep away, and she is being stopped from doing this because there is an old guard in place with a vested interest to prevent it.

The work of the Social Services Agency concerns providing support in a sensitive area to vulnerable people and there appears to be serious shortcomings in the way the service has been run for a number of years, which the Government has been aware of and done nothing to address.

Ultimately, the political responsibility for what is going on in the Agency has to rest with the Minister Mrs del Agua, who has to answer to the public given that as well as being the Minister, she is also the Chairperson of the Agency and is directly responsible for employing people to a degree that would not be the case in the Civil Service.

ENDS