

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, Tuesday 18 September 2018

HEALTH CONSUMERS ALLIANCE

Mr PICTON (Kurna) (14:44): My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Health. Why does this government think that South Australia should be the only state in the country without an independent organisation, providing the voice of patients and consumers, funded by the government?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN (Stuart—Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:44): Again, the question contravenes standing order 97: it contains argument. Let me say very clearly—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, members on my left!

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: —that the member's argument is incorrect. The member's argument is completely incorrect. We have said again, we have said many times, that this issue will be investigated and will be dealt with thoroughly. We will look at the pros and cons, we will look at where it may be sensible—

Ms Hildyard interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Reynell is warned for a second and final time.

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: We will look at where it may be sensible and where it may not be sensible to do this. We will look at it very thoroughly and, as soon as the results are available, people will know about them. People will know. If the member opposite asks the same or a very similar question again, he will get the same or a very similar answer again.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Kurna, I call to order the member for Ramsay. I warn the Leader of the Opposition. I call to order and I warn the member for Elizabeth. Member for Kurna.

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Mr PICTON (Kurna) (14:46): Supplementary: if, as the minister says, this is only something the government is investigating, why have you cut every single dollar to that organisation in your budget?

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN (Stuart—Minister for Energy and Mining) (14:46): The government has put nearly \$800 million of additional—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: The government has put—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: The government has put nearly \$800 million of additional money into the health budget over the forward estimates. We understand what we need to do to get the health system working again as well as it can on behalf of all South Australians. We will undertake—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: We will—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. D.C. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN: We will undertake these investigations very thoroughly, very genuinely, and we will take the decisions that come from those investigations when it's necessary to do that. I can't tell you anything else.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Tuesday 18 September 2018

HEALTH CONSUMERS ALLIANCE

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Why is the government silencing the independent voice of patients in our health system through its removal of all funding to the Health Consumers Alliance?

The Hon. S.G. WADE (Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:30): Through you, Mr President, I—

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order! I can't hear the minister.

The Hon. S.G. WADE: The government is withdrawing central funding from the Health Consumers Alliance. The fact of the matter is that the Health Consumers Alliance already receives project funding from local health networks, and the government believes that, as we devolve management of health services to the regions, it also makes sense to devolve consumer engagement to the regions.

Statewide collaboration in relation to consumer engagement will be driven by the networks. Health Consumers Alliance has expertise in this area and, I believe, is well placed to undertake funded project work for local health networks. The alliance is a membership organisation and yet less than 1 per cent of its income comes from its membership fees. I do not believe it is healthy for a consumer advocacy body to be

so reliant on centralised funding. I trust that the changes will promote accountability and strengthen the consumer voice.

HEALTH CONSUMERS ALLIANCE

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (14:31): Supplementary: why does the minister think that South Australia should be the only state in the country without an independent voice of patients and consumers that is funded by government?

The Hon. S.G. WADE (Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:31): I fundamentally disagree with the member's negative anticipation of what will happen under the new model. I suspect, and I hope, that the Health Consumers Alliance will take up the opportunity to redraw their business model to make sure that they're responding to the needs of consumers right across the health networks in South Australia. My view is that, if they do so, they've got a bright future in front of them.

HEALTH CONSUMERS ALLIANCE

The Hon. R.P. WORTLEY (14:32): Will the local health networks make up the funding that you have cut from this association?

The Hon. S.G. WADE (Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:32): Isn't this great? Ten years ago, the Labor Party decided they would abolish boards and centralise power, and the reason why they did that is clearly because they don't understand devolution.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. S.G. WADE: The Hon. Russell Wortley wants me to devolve power to the networks and then tell them how to spend their money. Is that devolution? They just don't get it. They are centralised to their core, and I believe that leads to a lack of an independent voice. I believe that the consumer voice will be stronger through these changes, not weaker.

HEALTH CONSUMERS ALLIANCE

The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (14:33): Supplementary: given that the minister has referred to regional health boards and there being consumer voices coming from that, what does he expect to be the gap in time between the operational nature of the Health Consumers Alliance—their ability to continue—and the establishment of the regional health boards, and how does he think that people will be able to be funded to have a voice that is coordinated in the meantime?

The Hon. S.G. WADE (Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:33): There will be no gap. The Health Consumers Alliance funding goes to the beginning of the next

financial year. I have met with the Health Consumers Alliance and encouraged them to engage the chairs of the local health network boards who have already been appointed because, from 1 July 2019, they will be operating, and they have a statutory duty under our legislation to engage consumers. The Health Consumers Alliance is well placed to play a role in that service.

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The Hon. R.P. WORTLEY (14:34): Once again, will you fund the local health networks to allow them to engage with the association?

The Hon. S.G. WADE (Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:34): I don't know who the honourable member is listening to, because what I just said is that they have a statutory duty to engage with the consumers. It is their choice as to how they do it, and I believe that Health Consumers Alliance will be a stronger voice by more effectively engaging with a range of networks.

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The Hon. C.M. SCRIVEN (14:34): Can I clarify that the minister is saying that the Health Consumers Alliance will be a stronger voice because it has no funding?

The Hon. S.G. WADE (Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:34): I believe that devolution of management to the regions will strengthen health management. I also believe that devolving consumer engagement closer to the grassroots will strengthen consumer engagement.

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The Hon. T.A. FRANKS (14:40): Supplementary: will the Minister for Health and Wellbeing ensure that any government funding going to the local health networks is reliant on their use of the consumer health alliance service?

The Hon. S.G. WADE (Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:40): I can't see how that is supplementary to the question. That was related to a previous question.

The PRESIDENT: That is the minister's answer. The Hon. Mr Dawkins.