

MINISTER FOR HEALTH — TANZANIA AND ZAMBIA VISIT

752. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Health:

I was delighted on 25 June to hear the Minister for Tourism provide information about the work he has done during his trip to Tanzania and Zambia. Can the minister advise the house what has happened with supporting health care in Zambia following his visit?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

I thank the member for the question. I point out that I did that as Minister for Health, not Tourism!

Before I start, can I acknowledge the students —

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Guys, I am recognising the students.

The SPEAKER: Thank you! There seems to have been a bit of confusion over portfolios; we have covered that.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I acknowledge the students, teachers and parents from Falcon Primary School in the public gallery. Mr Speaker, you might notice that they are not in the Speaker's gallery, which is very disappointing.

The SPEAKER: Thank you for that.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It is very disappointing after 20 years of having them in the Speaker's gallery.

This was a very important trip.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Dr K.D. HAMES: It was a very important trip, which built on what we did about three or four years ago with Hon Stephen Smith, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, when he requested that Western Australia assist in providing badly needed health services in Tanzania where the maternal mortality rate was in the many hundreds per 100 000 live births compared with Western Australia where it is seven per 100 000 live births. We initiated a program through an organisation called Global Health Alliance Western Australia, which is based in the Department of Health. We send midwives and nursing students to Tanzania to gain experience and provide training to the people in Tanzania to assist them to reduce that terrible maternal mortality rate.

The Premier was in Zambia in 2013, where he met His Excellency Sindiso Ngwenya, who is the head of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. I am sure members will recall from the Premier's report that arrangements were made with COMESA for a huge amount of cooperation between mining and other services in African countries and Western Australia. While he was there, the Premier visited Lusaka, which has Zambia's major tertiary hospital. All those times we hear people in Western Australia talking about Third World health conditions, they do not know what Third World health conditions really are. We went to Zambia's leading tertiary hospital. Western Australian Brendan Clark has raised a significant amount of money to totally refurbish the malnutrition ward. The Premier went to that hospital to visit that malnutrition ward. We went to the maternity ward. The conditions are absolutely abysmal. Just to let members know, there are 80 deliveries a day in that hospital and 16 beds. Most of those beds are mattresses on the floor. While I was there, I would see four women and four babies lying together on a mattress that is no bigger than the table in the middle of the chamber. People are just processed through that. Women have to bring their own plastic sheets and gloves. Nothing else is provided for them during their very short stay in hospital. It is a huge amount of work to improve that. We have just sent, through an organisation based in Perth called Rafiki, to Zambia a container load of material from Shenton Park hospital. The container has a large pile of beds, surgical tables, chairs and other important products. The first lady of Zambia received it during this last week and was extremely impressed with what we provided.

It is our intention that with the closing of Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, we do the best we can to provide material that is not required within the Western Australian health system to assist those in Tanzania and Zambia to have a much better quality of health system than they have now.