

MRS WENDY YARNOLD

811. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the ordeal of my constituent Wendy Yarnold, a pensioner who, due to several health issues and the amputation of her right leg, is totally wheelchair dependent. Mrs Yarnold relies on a manual wheelchair to get around in her home and an electric wheelchair when she leaves her house.

- (1) Can the minister explain why, following my request to his office for assistance to repair Mrs Yarnold's manual wheelchair, she was told she was told she will be stripped of one of her wheelchairs and made liable for future repairs to the remaining chair?
- (2) Was this directive issued from the minister's office, and does the minister think it was an appropriate response to a request for help?
- (3) Will the minister ensure that Mrs Yarnold will be allowed to keep both wheelchairs to allow her to remain mobile in her home and in the community?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

- (1)-(3) I would obviously have liked some notice of this question so I could obtain the details of the patient, but luckily I got wind of what the member was up to and I was able to collect the details in advance. A letter from the office of the member for Joondalup was received at my office on 7 October, detailing concerns that Mrs Yarnold's manual wheelchair had broken—she had two wheelchairs, an electric and a manual wheelchair—and she had been told that something would need to be done. My office got straight on to that to find out what the issue was and what needed to be done. We found out that a state government program provides funding for wheelchairs, and the state government, through the Disability Services Commission, had provided funding for her to have an electric wheelchair for her use. That wheelchair obviously needed to be able to be used both inside and outside the home. Unfortunately, the bathroom door was not big enough for her to be able to use that electric wheelchair inside the house, so she was lent a manual wheelchair by Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital for three months.

Mr A.P. O'Gorman: She has had it for five years.

Dr K.D. HAMES: She was lent a wheelchair by the hospital. That wheelchair broke, and she had to get it fixed. Of course the government is responsible for funding only one of the wheelchairs, and this one was not the wheelchair that the state government had funded. Nevertheless, the hospital fixed the wheelchair and has not charged her and does not intend to charge her, despite what the member has written to my office. The hospital is working with Mrs Yarnold to make sure that she is being properly looked after.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Mean and tricky government.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Mean and tricky! We are so mean and tricky.

I apologise—I forgot to acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of the students from Dudley Park Primary School, formerly in the electorate of the member for Mandurah, now in my electorate.

What a tricky mob we are! We give her a wheelchair, funded by the government, we lend a wheelchair owned by the government, and when it breaks we fix it and do not bill her, but what a tricky mob we are! The next thing the government is doing is making sure that people go to look at her house. A funding program provides for modifications to houses to allow use of electric wheelchairs in the house. Hopefully, we can resolve the problem of her needing to have two wheelchairs, so that she can use one wheelchair both inside and outside the house—a wheelchair that will work much better, funded by the government and looked after and repaired by the government.