

METH HELPLINE

792. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Mental Health:

My question is for the minister —

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I have been very lenient on you. I call you for the first time.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Police, I call you for the first time.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, I call you for the second time and Member for Girrawheen for the second time.

Mr N.W. MORTON: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. I note the minister recently launched the Meth Helpline as part of the Liberal–National government’s meth strategy. Can the minister please update the house on how the helpline is helping our community?

Ms A.R. MITCHELL replied:

I thank the member for the question and for the opportunity to be with his student services teams at his schools earlier this week. As members know, this government has a dedicated budget for the methamphetamine strategy. We are committed to making a difference in the community by reducing harm caused by meth and to improve and preferably prevent people getting involved in addiction. The Minister for Police and I have been active in this area by getting out and about. I have also recently launched a number of strategies that have been well received. They include additional rehabilitation beds, establishment of a specialist meth clinic, additional drug support nurses in emergency departments, training for frontline workers and school training programs for students, staff and parents. We listen to a lot of people. When we go out and about many people have said that they are not sure where to go to get advice and help. We listened to them and put in our meth strategy that we would have a dedicated meth helpline.

The meth helpline is operating. I opened it on Sunday of the long weekend, just over two weeks ago, and it has proven to be very, very successful. Since then, 500 dedicated calls have been made to the helpline, which is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week because we know that people in crisis do not have a crisis only between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm; they have it after hours. This dedicated meth helpline is attended by counsellors. It is a confidential line and parents, users and loved ones can call and be directed to the best counsellor to provide them with the information they require. Not all the over 500 callers have been users; a lot have been parents and loved ones. That response demonstrates that we are on the right track. Last week when I was in Dunsborough with the member for Vasse, we held forums in Dunsborough, Cowaramup and Busselton, and in Bunbury with the member for Bunbury. We heard the same message again: people were very pleased that we have made a helpline available for anyone in the state to access. I thought things were going pretty well, we were getting the right feedback and it had been pretty quiet on the other side. I have not heard much about what members on the other side will do. I am sure we will hear something soon.

Mr S.K. L’Estrange: They’re not listening.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I know they are not listening, but that is all right. One of the things I picked up after my visit down south —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough! Can you talk into the microphone; we are battling to hear you. Thanks.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: After I had returned, some headlines came out. One was in the *Busselton Dunsborough Times* of 7 October, which reads “Meth help line cops criticism”. I thought that it was a bit unusual because it was not the message I was getting from talking to people and it was not the message people want to hear, so on reading the first line, guess what it says. Thank you for calming down the chamber, Mr Speaker. It states —

The WA Opposition has slammed the Government’s new meth help line ...

Does that surprise members?

Several members interjected.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: It did not surprise me. Let me read it again. “The WA Opposition has slammed the Government’s new meth help line ...” It says that it does nothing to stem the rising tide of amphetamines abuse in regional communities.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I am on my feet; I am on my feet.

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo!

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Police, for the second time.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, for the third time.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Police, for the third time.

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield, for the second time.

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield for the third time. Just decide. If you want to have a rest, I will oblige.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: As members opposite know, and I am sure Hon Adele Farina knows, I have never said we will stop everything. We have a suite of services that will make a difference in reducing meth and its impact. We have a suite of services; it is not the only one; it is a range of services that we will continue to provide. If that is what the opposition thinks of a major project that people have been receiving well, I am very, very ashamed of them.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany, for the first time. Let us try to make some progress.