

**SELECT COMMITTEE INTO ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA -  
APPOINTMENT**

*Motion*

Resumed from 11 April on the following motion moved by Hon Derrick Tomlinson -

That a select committee of three members be appointed to inquire into and report on -

- (1) The funding, management and provision of primary health services by the following Aboriginal health services in Western Australia -
  - Bega Garberringu Health Service;
  - Carnarvon Aboriginal Medical Service;
  - Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service;
  - East Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service;
  - Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service;
  - Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service Council;
  - Mawarnkarra Health Service;
  - Ngaanyatjarra Health Service;
  - Ngangganawili Aboriginal Health Service;
  - Nindilingarri Aboriginal Health Service;
  - Puntunkurnu Aboriginal Medical Service;
  - South West Aboriginal Medical Service; and
  - Wirraka Maya Aboriginal Health Service.
- (2) In particular, the committee is to inquire into and report upon -
  - (a) the organisational and contractual relationships between the Aboriginal health services and the Department of Health;
  - (b) the adequacy of core funding provided from commonwealth and state sources for primary health services currently being delivered and required to meet future community needs;
  - (c) the effectiveness of the primary health services currently being delivered;
  - (d) whether there is duplication, overlap or unmet need in the delivery of primary health services;
  - (e) future directions for the delivery of primary health services to Aboriginal communities; and
  - (f) any further matters relating to Aboriginal health services arising from the inquiry.
- (3) The committee have power to send for persons, papers and records and to travel from place to place.
- (4) The committee report to the House not later than 26 September 2002 and if the House do then stand adjourned, the committee to deliver its report to the President who shall cause the same to be printed by authority of this order.

**HON DERRICK TOMLINSON** (East Metropolitan) [10.03 am]: I thank the House sincerely for allowing me to conclude my comments one month after I commenced them. The order of business shows that I commenced this debate on 11 April and because I was elsewhere on parliamentary business, the House has permitted me to continue my remarks at this stage.

Hon Tom Stephens: It is a relatively expeditious handling of the matter by the standards of this House.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I commend the expeditious manner in which it was arranged.

Hon Norman Moore: You should talk, in the light of your eight-hour speeches.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think we are straying onto another topic.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think a couple of members should have a conversation outside.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Shortly after I entered this Chamber, I established what I was told by the Deputy Clerk was a record in making a one-hour speech over three successive days. As I am leaving this House, I am making a one-hour speech extend over one month. I therefore hope members do not mind me feeling some pride over that achievement. Perhaps it is futile to make these concluding remarks because already we know that the Greens (WA) and the Labor Party have signified that they will not support this motion. I accept the reality of the numbers in this place. However, in spite of the forgone conclusion of the debate, I will respond to the remarks of Hon Giz Watson and Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, both of whom spoke against the motion, as they are quite properly entitled to do. I have already thanked those persons who spoke in support of the motion.

On page 9284 of *Hansard* Hon Giz Watson is reported as describing this inquiry as politically motivated and basically disingenuous. As far as being politically motivated, I cannot respond because politics is of the nature of this House. Coming from Hon Giz Watson, whose intellect I respect, disingenuous is a very strong word. It has the connotation of a deliberate intention to deceive. The explanation from Hon Giz Watson for why my motion was disingenuous reads -

If the mover of the motion had been genuine in wanting to establish a select committee, and knowing the numbers in this place - this is why I commented that the motion is disingenuous - at the very least, it would have made sense for him to consult with other parties to see whether there was support for the motion. Perhaps if we had had that conversation, and had discussed what nature that inquiry might take, or how it would be established, we might have supported it.

I do beg the member's pardon that I did not consult with the Greens. I will leave those remarks for the time being and I will return to them. I refer to Hon Giz Watson's comments about political motivation, which read -

I again suggest that Hon Derrick Tomlinson was never really serious about establishing a select committee

I am much more attracted to the proposition that it was a matter of competition between the Liberal Party and One Nation in wanting to be seen to be acting on this issue.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich described it in the following terms -

This motion can be interpreted as nothing more than a power play by the Liberal Party and One Nation. Based on the considerations that I have outlined, the Government will not support the motion.

It is being called a power play by the Liberal Party and One Nation. In other words, the Liberal Party and One Nation have coalesced on this. On the one hand the Greens are saying it is competition between me and I assume Hon Frank Hough, and on the other hand -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Derrick Tomlinson will address the Chair and Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich will address no-one.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: On the other hand Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich is indicating that there has been a coalition. Hon Frank Hough and I have a single thing in common: we both know that God lives at Ledge Point. That is the only thing we have in common. Let us forget the notion of the coalition and turn to what else Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich had to say. In her opening comments she said -

A bibliography produced by the Edith Cowan University school of health studies indexes over 240 journal titles, theses and published articles, government reports, conference papers, abstracts and the like in relation to this subject that have been written since 1988.

She said that in a bibliography from Edith Cowan University school of health studies, over 240 titles are indexed. For the past 12 months -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich should stop behaving like a Midvale brat, grow up and be the intelligent woman that I know she is.

In the past 12 months I have set aside half a day a week to work in the State Records Office. I have been looking at the state records from 1886 to 1941. I have had to get permission to have access to some of those records. In something like 250 hours of research, I have read one per cent of the files on Aboriginal affairs - not a 280-

citation bibliography from Edith Cowan University school of health studies. I have also accessed the archives of the South Australian Museum. I have an appointment to spend a week looking through those archives. I have had access to the archives of the University of South Australia. I have an appointment to sit for a week in the archives section of the University of South Australia, and I am pursuing the works of four scholars. One of those four scholars has 200 citations. Let me assure Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich that I have a clear understanding of the amount of scholarly work on these issues - a clear understanding indeed.

I refer to the comment about my becoming aware of this issue in the past 12 months. I admit to my ignorance on these issues. However, in 1984, as Director of the National Centre for Research on Rural Education at the University of Western Australia, I recruited and appointed a scholar to undertake research on the educational needs of Aboriginal persons in the east Kimberley. That person was a scholar of some credibility in anthropology who had a close association with the Aboriginal communities of the east Kimberley and who had a skin name in those Aboriginal communities. Although the research was undertaken principally by that scholar, as the director of the centre, I worked closely with her. As I stand here now, I am embarrassed about the verbal disputes she and I had about Aboriginal matters. I was arguing from a basis of complete ignorance; she argued from a basis of informed scholarship. She was right; I was wrong, but I learned. From 1984 I have had an enduring interest in this matter.

As far as preparation for this motion is concerned, I will demonstrate some of the things that I have read. I will smash my glasses, I am sure.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You must have a case of the guilts. You don't have to tell us everything you read.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Mr President, the lady doth protest too much, does she not?

I referred to the report entitled "Environmental Health Needs of Aboriginal Communities in Western Australia - The 1997 Survey and its Findings". I also referred to the report entitled "Task Force on Aboriginal Social Justice". I think there are about eight volumes of that. I referred to the report entitled "The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 2001"; to "A Comparative Overview of Aboriginal Health in Western Australia, 1987-1996"; and to "Purchasing Intentions for Aboriginal Health 1999-2002".

I referred to all those documents, and it was not motivated by what Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich claimed. What does Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich refer to in her speech? She refers to Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service and says that I was motivated by some inquisition into Derbarl Yerrigan. I went through my speech on the matter, and I referred to Derbarl Yerrigan twice. I referred to it in the terms of reference of the select committee and when I recited an answer to a question that I asked in the estimates committee hearings in this place. I did not mention Derbarl Yerrigan except in those circumstances. However, I am certainly aware of the matters associated with Derbarl Yerrigan. I have read the Bentleys MRI Perth Pty Ltd report on Derbarl Yerrigan Health Services Inc. Has Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich read it? I read the 1994 report of Arthur Andersen entitled "Review of the Perth Aboriginal Medical Service Inc". Has Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich read it? I have almost complete financial records of Derbarl Yerrigan, which, on the face of it, indicate that there has been some malfeasance in the funds of Derbarl Yerrigan. Those records were brought to me in the middle of last year, and I was lobbied by a group of Aboriginal persons who asked me to make a political storm about this. They said, "Take this to Parliament and stir".

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: And you did not because you knew that your Government was responsible for not checking the -

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I will answer that, because there was another -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Why don't you chuck another book at us?

Hon Norman Moore: I wish somebody would.

Hon Peter Foss: And probably further across the Chamber next time.

Hon Norman Moore: If there is a prospect of hitting her, would you give it a try?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: She protests! I must be getting somewhere; I must be getting to the quick; I must really be starting to hurt her. I have only just begun.

An Aboriginal group asked me to create a political storm about this issue. Another group - including the master of political stirring in Western Australia, Robert Bropho - met with me and a group of Swan Valley Nyoongahs at the Swan Valley community. We discussed what could be done. I said, "This problem -

Several members interjected.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Carry on chaps!

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Derrick Tomlinson has the call.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I said that essentially it was a management problem in Aboriginal health services.

Several members interjected.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Are we finished?

Hon Ray Halligan: No, just starting.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: It was a problem for the Aboriginal people to resolve. I still have Robert Bropho's words ringing in my ears. He said, "Mr Tomlinson, the problem is that if you stir about this in Parliament you will bring discredit on all Aboriginal people." The misconduct of one Aboriginal person is taken so readily by the rednecks as proof of the incompetence of the Aboriginal people and that they cannot govern themselves or manage their own affairs. His asked me not to stir, so I did not. I came into this place and asked a series of questions. The parliamentary secretary knows the answers I did not get because she did not give them.

I wrote to the Auditor General and requested him to use his powers to audit the financial records of Derbarl Yerrigan. He replied that it was outside his jurisdiction because it was a non-government agency. I know about Derbarl Yerrigan. Who is the minister protecting? What is Sergeant Bob's relationship with Ted Wilkes? Is he covering up for Ted Wilkes or Mr Houston? I could have asked those questions and I could have stirred, but I did not. I sat on the problem that was brought to my attention in June last year, because there was a change in the board of management of the Aboriginal health services. Only then was the possible maleficence brought to light. I give those people full credit; they have pursued the issue vigorously and well. Mr Wilkes is no longer with Derbarl Yerrigan.

I will now return to the accusation levelled by Hon Giz Watson and Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich that I did not consult with Aboriginal persons.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: A touch of the guilts!

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: The parliamentary secretary should refer to *Hansard*. When she asked me by interjection whether I had consulted, I said, "Mea culpa, I have not." I admitted my guilt. She now says I have a touch of the guilts. She is giving me a touch of something, but it is not the guilts.

Hon Ken Travers: You need a cup of chamomile tea.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: The parliamentary secretary should crawl back into his shell, where he belongs.

The PRESIDENT: Order! It might be time for a cup of tea for the parliamentary secretaries if they do not behave themselves.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I did not consult with those people. I ask Hon Giz Watson, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich and other members to look at the issues I suggested the committee inquire into and report upon. The motion states -

In particular, the committee is to inquire into and report upon -

- (a) the organisational and contractual relationships between the Aboriginal health services and the Department of Health;

I did not approach the Aboriginal health services and say, "Do you mind if we establish a parliamentary select committee to look at these issues?" Nor did I approach the Department of Health and ask, "Please, may we have permission to scrutinise the department's operations?" I did not and I would not.

I suggested that the committee inquire into and report upon -

the adequacy of core funding provided from commonwealth and state sources for primary health services . . .

I did not approach the commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing for its permission to establish a select committee. I also suggested that the committee inquire into -

whether there is duplication, overlap or unmet need in the delivery of primary health services;

Is that an invasion of the privacy of Aboriginal communities? It simply asks how effectively public policies meet the health needs of a disadvantaged group in our community. Must I approach Aboriginal communities for permission to ask that question? I suggested that the committee inquire into -

future directions for the delivery of primary health services . . .

When a select committee's terms of reference are primarily about public policy and public administration, this Parliament need do no more than pursue the issues. If the members who said that this motion was politically motivated had read my speech they would have known that I said that -

I introduced statistical information that indicates unacceptably poor levels of health, or unacceptably poor levels of wellness, among the indigenous population.

That is an irrefutable fact. I went on to say -

... that the same data demonstrated that the major reported health problems, particularly those requiring hospitalisation and resulting in death, related to preventable diseases. High among those diseases were diabetes and renal disease, but also other preventable diseases such as salmonella, venereal disease, self-harm and mental illness, which are directly attributable to societal causes.

That is an irrefutable and appalling fact. I continued -

... the per capita cost of health treatment for indigenous persons is disproportionately high compared with the cost for the general population -

That is another irrefutable fact. I further pointed out -

... but is comparable with that for other non-indigenous disadvantaged groups in our society.

That is yet another irrefutable fact. I went on to say -

... in spite of this apparently high cost of health treatment, many Aboriginal communities, particularly in remote areas, do not have access to health services.

Once again, that is an irrefutable fact. I also said that there were multiple agencies involved in the delivery of health services and listed them. They are irrefutable facts. Those facts, which were the basis of my argument, are described as politically motivated or representing a combined effort on the part of One Nation and the Liberal Party to achieve political gain. If there is political gain to be achieved by irrefutable facts, I will pursue them vigorously. If there is political gain to be achieved by pursuing the truth, I will do that vigorously. That was the only motivation behind the establishment of the select committee.

If the two members had read my speech, they would have seen this statement -

... that there is an apparent dissonance between the financial resources allocated for Aboriginal health and the demonstrably high incidence of preventable disease among indigenous people. That apparent dissonance suggests that there may be a distortion of priorities and, therefore, possibly unmet needs.

That conclusion translated into the terms of reference proposed for the select committee. If members now want to say that I was disingenuous and politically motivated, let them deny the irrefutable facts.

This select committee will not be established. There will be no further investigation of why Aboriginal persons in our State are dying of preventable diseases. That is a shame. In conclusion, I refer to Hon Giz Watson, who said that had I met with her party, we might have been able to come to some arrangement to allow this select committee to proceed. Those are not her exact words, but that was her meaning. I am 61 years of age. I am one-quarter of the way through my sixty-second year. In all that time, I never dealt with a harlot. The greens party of Australia has demonstrated itself to be the political harlot of the Australian governmental system, and I will not deal with it.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

Hon DEE MARGETTS: I find the terminology used by the honourable member highly offensive, and I ask that it be withdrawn and never used in this Chamber again.

The PRESIDENT: Hon Dee Margetts has objected to that terminology. Will the member withdraw that comment?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Harlot is a wholesome English word. I refer to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, not the Australian *Macquarie Dictionary*.

The PRESIDENT: Order! This is not a debatable item. The member will either withdraw or not.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I will not withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: I will consider this matter.

*Debate Resumed*

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: The outcome of the debate is a forgone conclusion. I will not urge honourable members to support the motion; I know the result. I state that this motion was neither disingenuous nor politically motivated.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (15)

Hon Alan Cadby	Hon John Fischer	Hon Barry House	Hon Barbara Scott
Hon George Cash	Hon Peter Foss	Hon Robyn McSweeney	Hon Derrick Tomlinson
Hon Murray Criddle	Hon Ray Halligan	Hon Norman Moore	Hon Bruce Donaldson ( <i>Teller</i> )
Hon Paddy Embry	Hon Frank Hough	Hon Simon O'Brien	

Noes (17)

Hon Kim Chance	Hon Jon Ford	Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich	Hon Giz Watson
Hon Robin Chapple	Hon Graham Giffard	Hon J.A. Scott	Hon E.R.J. Dermer ( <i>Teller</i> )
Hon Kate Doust	Hon N.D. Griffiths	Hon Christine Sharp	
Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Dee Margetts	Hon Tom Stephens	
Hon Adele Farina	Hon Louise Pratt	Hon Ken Travers	

Question thus negatived.