

CORONAVIRUS — RESIDENTIAL AGED-CARE FACILITIES

840. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:

I refer to protocols put in place by the state government for residential aged-care facilities in the event that there is a COVID-19 outbreak and reports of flying squads being deployed to aged-care homes to provide COVID-19 training and personal protective equipment.

- (1) Will residents in aged-care facilities be treated in-place or transferred to hospitals under the protocol?
- (2) Does this also apply to regional Western Australia?
- (3) If yes to (2), would regional residents be transferred to a Perth or regional hospital?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for the question. I met with the aged-care sector earlier this week. It was one of a series of meetings I have been having with the sector because we are working closely with all sectors in the health system to make sure we have solutions for everyone in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We talked about the great work that is being done around the training of aged-care staff to ensure they have the necessary information needed to don and doff their personal protective equipment, to understand their obligations under infection control, but also to do some work around understanding what we would do if there was an outbreak of the disease in their facility.

I think it is fair to characterise the attitude of the aged-care sector as this: ideally, someone should be in a surrounding they are familiar with and most comfortable in, in the context of any illness. When the aged-care facility itself can accommodate an individual, that should be the case, regardless of their health and wellbeing. We have made it very clear. We have told the aged-care sector that if any residents require moving because they have contracted COVID-19, or any infectious disease for that matter, we stand ready to assist to make sure they can either be moved to a “like” facility—a residential aged-care like facility—which is set aside for the purposes of residents with COVID-19 or, if necessary, move them to a hospital setting. Moving someone with COVID-19 is always a difficult task because, obviously, every time they are moved, an element of risk is introduced. But the health department and the hospital system is well versed in these measures. We will make sure that we look after all residents who are impacted by COVID-19.

Our attitude stands in stark contrast with the commonwealth government. The commonwealth is responsible for overseeing the deaths of hundreds of people in New South Wales and Victoria, in a system that it —

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: “Overseeing the deaths”—that is how you are categorising it!

The SPEAKER: Member for Dawesville, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr R.H. COOK: It funds and regulates the system. If you are regulating a system, member for Dawesville, I suspect you are oversighting it. That is the situation that occurred there, and it occurred because the commonwealth government did not stand up to its responsibilities.

The McGowan government will stand up to making sure that we assist not only our partners in the aged-care sector but all residents who depend upon them to keep them safe and comforted, and to make sure we can look after them in the long term.

In direct response to the member’s query about residential aged-care facilities in regional Western Australia, yes, of course we will look after them and make sure that the WA Department of Health and the McGowan government will extend a helping hand to any residential aged-care facility in Western Australia, wherever they are.