

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN VIRTUAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

246. Mr G. BAKER to the Minister for Health:

I refer to measures implemented by the McGowan Labor government in response to increased demand for Western Australia's emergency departments.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how these measures, particularly the Western Australian virtual emergency department initiative, are addressing demand in the emergency departments?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house whether she is aware of anyone who is misleading the community about these important initiatives?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I thank the member for South Perth for his question.

- (1)–(2) Yesterday, we saw the announcement around some innovative new models of care in WA Health. We also saw the Leader of the Liberal Party falling over herself to criticise this announcement of new, innovative models of care and, in the process, demonstrating more questionable conduct in how she actually approaches her role. In the morning, the Leader of the Liberal Party spoke on radio, seemingly to support it, claiming we should already have done it. By the afternoon, she had completely changed position, attacking WAVED with a level of disinformation that is reckless and dangerous.

In an opposition media release, the Leader of the Liberal Party claimed that we were —

... attempting to shift the blame of WA's ambulance ramping on to our sick, elderly Western Australians, and our under-resourced aged-care workers," ...

Even worse, she claims —

“Telling our elderly not to call triple zero ...

This is an actual quote. That is dangerous misinformation. At no point has anyone ever said elderly people should not call 000—at no point. That is the claim that the Leader of the Liberal Party has made, so let me put a few facts so that people, including the Leader of the Liberal Party, understand.

For medical emergencies, people should always call 000, and that will always be there for them. I have said that, and I have never suggested otherwise. When something is not an emergency, aged-care staff and residents will now have the option of directly contacting a senior clinician to get advice on how to access the best and most appropriate care. The alternatives are not to stay put, as quoted. It is a direct admission to a ward or imaging, without actually having to go to the emergency department, or access to a rapid outpatient appointment.

Hours before the opposition put out the media release, I actually outlined this to the chamber. I explained that older adults are also much more at risk of experiencing harm from hospital-acquired infections, falls and reduced muscle mass. This is about a better experience for our older Western Australians. It is for exactly these reasons that it is strongly supported by the aged-care sector, the Health Consumers' Council of WA and the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, which have been deeply involved in the work of the ministerial task force into ramping and are very supportive of this vision and this program.

Chris How, the CEO of aged-care provider Bethanie, welcomed the new model on ABC radio and said it would complement the existing services and allow for decisions based on residents' need. Liz Behjat, someone familiar to the Liberal Party as a former Liberal member in the other place and now the state manager of the aged-care peak body Aged and Community Care Providers Association —

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Ms A. SANDERSON: Liz Behjat explained it was actually a result of collaboration between the state government and the sector. Clare Mullen from the Health Consumers' Council has been actively involved in doing this work and putting it together.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member, you did not ask this question. Your interjections are incessant, and I am asking you to stop. We do not need any cheering from the member for Landsdale, thank you.

Ms A. SANDERSON: Clare Mullen from the Health Consumers' Council has been involved in the development of this program, and there is no greater champion of health consumers than the Health Consumers' Council. There was general support from the consumers who have been surveyed about this pilot in east metro. The average score of service satisfaction rating was 4.6 out of five from consumers, carers and aged-care staff.

These results show why the models of care were developed by clinicians in the first place. Despite this, the Leader of the Liberal Party still continues to sow doubt and fear by claiming that we are telling people not to call 000. Again, she has failed to avail herself of the facts, ignoring my answer. It is shameless, inexcusable and reckless. It is dangerous to put out misinformation about people's lives because this is health care and people's lives are actually at stake. I expect the Leader of the Liberal Party to correct her statement immediately. My office is available to provide further details, and we are happy to engage constructively.