

EPILEPSY — MEDICAL CANNABIS

Statement

HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West) [5.25 pm]: I am really sorry to hear about your stepdaughter, Hon Colin de Grussa. I hope the medication really works for her.

Epilepsy is different from a lot of other chronic diseases in that the symptoms can vary greatly. They can be very subtle or very severe. There is often no pattern for onset either, so people may have a lot of trouble living their lives naturally because they do not know when they will be affected. Causation can also be unclear in about 50 per cent of the population as well. Although we all may know about epilepsy now, there is still a lot of ignorance about the condition itself, particularly the effects it can have on people's lives. If we look at the younger age group, they may have learning difficulties. As kids grow older, they may not be able to get a driver's licence and working may be affected as well. As Hon Colin de Grussa was saying, there are many medications available. Medications work for only about two-thirds of people at the moment and often come with side effects, which can be quite severe, too. They can have the opposite of the manias I have seen in people with epilepsy. They can be very sedated and quite dopey most of the time.

When I was first elected, a constituent who has epilepsy wanted me to help her to access her superannuation. She needed the money to buy medicinal cannabis to help her manage her epilepsy. I do not think anyone should have to apply for their super to get medication. The reason she needed to do so was that the level of cannabis required for her condition was quite high. Whereas most people might be able to get by with one or two bottles per month, I think she was on four to six bottles a month. That was simply unaffordable for her. I went to the Epilepsy WA website to have a look. It does a lot of work, which I really appreciate. Interestingly, the website has a poll asking whether medicinal cannabis should be readily available as a treatment option for people living with epilepsy. In total, 2 248 people voted and about 95 per cent of them were in favour. Hopefully, the medication discussed will help a lot of people, but also, hopefully people will be able to access cannabis more easily if it works for their particular type of epilepsy.