

HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM

883. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Health:

I refer to a constituent of mine, Mr Brian Chaney, who, at 73 years of age, is a carer to his wife, who has a debilitating illness and requires 24/7 care. Brian undertakes all the housework, washing, shopping and errands while he is caring for his wife. His only respite was three hours a week when he could go and play bowls at the local club. The state government's Home and Community Care program provided three hours' respite for \$6 an hour. He has just received notice that the cost will now be \$24 an hour, an increase of 300 per cent; an increase he cannot afford.

- (1) Why has the minister overseen an increase in the fee for Home and Community Care programs?
- (2) Does he recognise that this increase means for many that they can no longer afford the much-needed respite?
- (3) Is there any option that royalties for regions may be able to provide some funds to assist these much in-need people.

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

(1)–(3) I think I would have preferred the question from the member for Alfred Cove!

Mr M.P. Murray: What a miserable Christmas you have given these people.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Her question would have been much better!

Mrs C.A. Martin: Remember, you said that.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you members!

Mr M.P. Murray: What a miserable mob you are.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I have to say that I do not know what the question is yet.

The SPEAKER: One person has asked the question, minister, I expect you to respond to him, not to anyone else.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Obviously it is not possible for me to know the details of a single patient. But as all members opposite know, when they give me issues to do with a single patient, I deal with them. Secondly, with regard to what the member calls the state government's Home and Community Care package, he should know if he does not, that it is not a state government package; it is a combined state and commonwealth-funded package. In fact, the commonwealth funds two-thirds of it.

Mr M.P. Murray: I have it right here.

Dr K.D. HAMES: We jointly have a package. The commonwealth provides us with the funds and we then provide them through the state government to the Home and Community Care organisation. I have not heard of any case or had any briefing to suggest that those fees have been increased to anything like the extent the member says. In fact, I have extreme doubt that it is true. In the individual case where it appears that that has occurred, then that obviously —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington!

Dr K.D. HAMES: Sorry?

Mr W.J. Johnston: How much were they increased by?

Dr K.D. HAMES: I am not aware of any specific increases at all.

Mr P.B. Watson: You should be across it.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I would be if they had been.

Mr W.J. Johnston: You said they had; you said they went up but not by that much.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Would that not tend to give the impression that they have not? I think that is much more likely to be the case.

An opposition member interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I will check with my good friend Nicola Roxon next time I see her to find out whether she is aware of the fees going up by an excessive amount, because she is responsible for two-thirds of the program and I am responsible for only one-third. But I doubt that is the case. I suggest the member send me the details and we will investigate and find out what it is. We provide those funds because of the fantastic service the Home and Community Care program provides to people in our community. State and federal governments have progressively increased that fund, under both Labor and us, to make sure we improve the services that are provided. If the member gives me the details, I will investigate.