

Legislative Council

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REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (21:19):

I rise to briefly indicate my support for the honourable member's motion to establish the Social Development Committee inquiry into the future delivery of country health services and the report of health performance councils on the operation of health advisory councils.

It seems like only yesterday that this place was debating the Health Care Bill 2008, which significantly reformed the structure and management of health services, including those in rural areas. At that time, we were promised by the minister that country health services would only prosper under the new arrangements; of course, it saddens me to learn that this has not been the case.

May I say that in hindsight this is one of the top 10 issues on my list that raises my level of cynicism toward promises that governments make to get their legislation or their policies through. Sadly, I have come to learn that the only motivation for any sort of reform in this state to do with health or any other social issue is a money-saving initiative and that, when we are making those decisions based on the bottom line only, there is going to be human carnage out of that. We are seeing that over and over.

I also reiterate the Hon. Tammy Franks' remarks about members from the government whingeing about the number of committees. The fact of the matter is that if this government was actually doing its job and delivering on social issues the way a government is supposed to, we would not need all these committees to be called. If we had more information freely available to us, we would not need to have these inquiries to try to drag the truth out of bureaucrats and everybody else who has been involved in the drastic policies that have been introduced since my time in here.

I might also say that I have put in a freedom of information on fluoride data. It has taken four months, but there is still no response and they keep asking for an extension. That is one health issue that is on my list of priorities, but there are laws around freedom of information. We have actually to put in freedom of information to get the most basic of information or to try to get some sort of idea of why this government is doing what it is doing, how much it is going to cost and all the rest of it.

We do not get that in our second reading speeches, we do not get it in this parliament in the debates. We have to go hunting for it, and that is not actually our job. I know the Hon. Bernie Finnigan does not like committees and thinks that all committees are politically motivated and whatever.

The Hon. B.V. Finnigan: Always.

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON: Always—not that members in this place actually might want to have an opportunity to question people about what is really going on and get another perspective, other than the tripe we are fed in here in debates.

I have been informed that the honourable member and a colleague in the other place (the member for Stuart) have worked with the Minister for Health to draft an improved terms of reference for the inquiry, which I believe is accepted and supported by the government. If

that is the case, the government should be commended for its cooperation, although the old maxim, 'Never hold an inquiry unless you know what the outcome will be,' comes to mind.

I am sure the minister believes that the Social Development Committee will deliver a glowing report. Time will tell if his belief is well founded. Given what we are now told about the viability of the Keith hospital and other complaints that have been raised in this place and elsewhere, I do not see how that could possibly be. I look forward to reading the report.