

Legislative Council

Thursday, 18 October 2007, Page 1025

AIDS COUNCIL OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (14:56): By way of supplementary question, will the minister explain to the council exactly what professional qualifications are required for these outreach workers within the AIDS Council? Are they required to have a diploma of professional counselling or anything like that or are they just prostitutes and drug users?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health) (14:56): I am not aware. I am happy to provide details of the person specifications required for this position. I do not have those details in front of me. I have been very clear that these peer educators may be someone with significant personal knowledge or experience with injecting drug use, and that has been shown to be very effective in their credibility in engaging other clients. I have made very clear that the information I have is that the advertisement could pertain to someone with former experience, and I certainly do not endorse its being a requirement for the holder of the position to be a current drug user. I have asked for the matter to be fully investigated.

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (14:59): By way of supplementary question, is the minister saying that an NGO (non-government organisation) is being funded by state taxpayer dollars and that she has no idea of the qualifications necessary to work in that organisation? Why does that not apply to other non-government organisations in the drug and alcohol sector?

Members interjecting:

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON: That is a pathetic excuse. You should know what qualified people are working with vulnerable groups of people. There is no excuse for this. There is no excuse.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Ms Bressington will come to order or I will name her and she can leave the chamber.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health) (15:00): I remind members of the chamber that the position which is being advertised is a commonwealth-funded position. I want to stress that it is a commonwealth-funded position. The suggestion of the Hon. Ann Bressington that the minister would know the person specification and job requirements for every single position that is placed within our agency or our NGOs is outrageous. We have service contracts with about 20 NGOs that employ hundreds of different people. It is absolutely outrageous to suggest that I would be expected to know the person specification and qualification requirements of every single position within my agency, and all the service agreements that we have with NGOs. If there is anything specific the honourable member wants to know, I am happy to take it on notice and bring back a response.

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (15:01): I have a supplementary question. Is the minister saying that Mr Keith Evans, a director of Drug and Alcohol Services, who was in charge of the NGO sector and was responsible for the service agreements for the organisation DrugBeat of South Australia, does not report back to her on the requirements of people to work in the drug and alcohol sector? What is the minimum training required?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health) (15:01): Mr Keith Evans is not here on the chamber floor today.

The Hon. A. Bressington interjecting:

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: It is outrageous to suggest that a chief executive would provide me with information that would go to the detail of all the person specifications and qualifications of every single person. That is an administrative matter and chief executives are expected to get on with it. That is their job and that is what they are employed to do. If there is an issue of concern—as has been raised today—it is appropriate and reasonable that that level of detail be sought. I have indicated that I do not have that level of detail here with me today. I am happy to obtain the information and bring it back to the chamber.