

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMPLAINTS (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

10 November 2011

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 27 October 2010.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (17:08): I rise to speak to the Health and Community Services Complaints (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2010. I was on the Social Development Committee when we held the Inquiry into Bogus, Unregistered and De-Registered Health Practitioners, and our report was tabled in the parliament on 3 March 2009.

This was a very interesting committee to be on at the time. I will not go into too much detail, but there were many heart-rending stories of people that have had experiences with bogus and unregistered so-called health practitioners. There were people who had made claims to people that they could cure cancer, and these people put their absolute faith in these—well, witch doctors, I suppose you could call them. Some of these people did not even use the paths they could have through the normal health practices and doctors because they put their absolute faith in these other so-called practitioners.

We had some very emotional presentations, I must say, from people talking about loved ones that they had lost, who they thought they had done the right thing for in going to these practitioners, and the end result was that partners and friends had died, and that is very sad. They put their faith into people who are, basically, peddling snake oil. It was very moving and very tragic to hear these stories, and I commend all the people who presented to the committee or brought in written submissions. It certainly tested the emotions of everyone on the committee, and very emotional stories and submissions were presented to the committee.

Some of these pedlars of so-called health benefits, were quite voyeuristic in what they were doing, and some of the procedures they took were quite disgusting as well. I do not want to go through that too much here but some of the photographic evidence we saw was just inappropriate to say the least, on how these people operate.

So, I am pleased—having gone through the committee process, and having heard the submissions on how these bogus operators operate—that under this bill there are some provisions made for penalties for operating inappropriately, and this will bring them under legislation to control how they operate.

As I said, it was a very moving experience hearing these submissions and, again, I commend the people who presented to the committee. My condolences go to people who lost loved ones through getting poor advice from bogus health practitioners. It is my hope that this legislation will help stamp out some of these snake oil pedlars, keep them under control, and I hope it will promote people to get proper health advice and look at all the options, instead of just taking some misguided advice from people who claim that they have the ability to heal people.

The sad thing is that the end result is that someone loses their life. It was a great tragedy and you could see there was great emotion in these people because some of these incidents had happened not that long before we had the committee hearings. I commend the bill and wish it speedy passage through this place.