

**House of Assembly
2 December 2009**

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: BOGUS, UNREGISTERED AND DEREGISTERED
HEALTH PRACTITIONERS**

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Taylor) (11:03): I move:

That the final report of the committee's inquiry entitled Bogus, Unregistered and Deregistered Health Practitioners, be noted.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:19): I congratulate the member for Taylor on her excellent summing up of this inquiry into bogus, unregistered and deregistered health practitioners. Some very torrid tales of people's grief were presented to the committee by people not just locally but from interstate as well. It is interesting to note some people's differing views on what they look at as bogus or unregistered professionals (or people who claim to be professionals) and some people who have a bit of a problem with chiropractors.

I have been a client of chiropractors for many years and, with my shearing and farming experience, I would not have been able to keep going without them. However, it is one field where you can get people who are not very competent at their work but you can also get others who are, and it is up to individuals to ascertain whether they want to ascribe to that kind of treatment. I must say that, as an individual, it certainly has been very beneficial to me. In fact, I woke up one morning and my whole back had seized up and I could barely get out of bed. I made an emergency appointment with an excellent chiropractor, Ms Trethewey. She is operating on Kangaroo Island at the moment. She is an excellent chiropractor and she managed to fix my problem later that day.

However, regarding some of the other issues that were presented to the committee, it was so saddening to see the people who had lost their loved ones to practices that are totally unproven. People are making claims that they can cure cancer, including bowel cancer; people are making claims that they can feel tumours subsiding—absolute codswallop! You could see that the surviving partner—obviously, their partner had died—was very traumatised by what had gone on. I concur with the member for Taylor's comments about many of these practitioners asking people to put down a cash payment—many times, in advance. I acknowledge that these practitioners need investigating, not just for how they operate but as far as taxation purposes are concerned at the federal level.

Some of the presentations made to us by some of these practitioners were quite disturbing in the way that they indicated that they could heal people. One practitioner had some quite graphic photos—and I think everyone on the committee was shocked at how he purported to help people out by looking at samples of faecal stools. Some very graphic and disgusting photos were viewed by the committee.

I can understand, to some degree, people who are on their last legs, who have been told, perhaps, in the normal medical fraternity that there is no chance, go out with a glimmer of hope to these unregistered operators and think they can be cured. However, time and again we heard sad stories where, perhaps, if they had kept up medical treatment they may have at least had a better time towards the end of their life than what they had, because some of these people forwent all reasonable medical treatment and used the treatments of these bogus practitioners.

I have lost a couple of friends to cancer this year. It is fair warning to people that they need to get not only a second opinion from medical practitioners, such as doctors and properly registered professionals, but if they do think that they need to use an unregistered practitioner they need to get second, third and fourth hand advice on whether or not to use that practitioner.

Certainly, from everything that I saw in the committee, I would recommend that never should they walk away from proper medical treatment from registered doctors. As I said, we did hear some sad tales of people who had given up on the normal medical route and believed the codswallop that they were told, that they would be cured or that there was a 50 per cent chance that they would be cured, and it just was not going to happen.

I concur with the committee's recommendations that legislation should be changed so that some form of registration can come in. Certainly, a lot of these unregistered practitioners do have a role, but certainly the ones who are just peddling gimmicks and false truths should not be operating. In fact, if possible, under legislation, whether it be now or in the future, they should be prosecuted for peddling false hope.

As I said, it was quite an interesting reference that we ran through the Social Development Committee. We heard some very sad tales. My hat comes off to the people who came in, many speaking on behalf of loved ones whom they had lost. I recommend the report to the parliament.