



CHRONIC PAIN HEALTH CARE

Mr BROCK (Frome) (12:15): It has certainly been a learning experience today. First, let me make it quite clear that I am not in favour of drug addicts or anything like that, but I am certainly concerned, not only as a member of parliament but as a human being, about the constant chronic pain that people in our community are suffering.

People in my electorate have approached me regarding the system under the new DASSA requirements for continuation of medication. In one case a person has had 58 operations, and this person is only 39 years of age. You can imagine if you have an operation on one part of your body the amount of scar tissue that would be evident from that. Can you imagine the amount of scar tissue affecting this person who has had 58 operations in the same area?

She has that much scar tissue clinging to her bladder, or what is left of it, and she is in constant pain. This person is on medication, and what has happened now is that she has had written advice stating that as at 30 June her medication will be ceased. She is now at her wit's end. She is in fear that she is going to be in constant pain forever and a day.

I do not know if members of the house have been in constant pain, you may have. I want to relate back to six weeks ago when I was in constant pain with a suspected bowel issue. I was in constant pain for two days. I was lucky; I was admitted to hospital for a couple of days, I had intravenous medication and I got over it, but those two days were absolutely agonising. I was in so much pain, but it was only for two days.

I would hope that members of this house can imagine somebody being in constant pain for 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and then all of a sudden you get this new advice stating that even though a medically approved doctor, or specialist, has prescribed certain medication, that medication will cease. That certainly does not sit very well with me.

As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has indicated, there are some people out there, and there is one in Adelaide whom I have had contact with, and this particular person is basically indicating that he is at the suicidal stage. He does not know where he is going to go at this particular point. I am certainly not in favour of people continuing on drugs, but I believe that if a person has the need to have a suitable drug to keep constant pain under control then we need to ensure that there is the facility to keep that pain away.

I am also led to believe that you can go from South Australia into Victoria, and I have the occasion where a Victorian has come to South Australia and has asked for the same medication that he was having in Victoria. The new regulatory system states that he cannot have that drug any more. So, we need to get some clarity on this issue. This is one country; surely we can have the same rules for each of the states.

I understand that some time ago South Australia was the number one leading state in Australia for chronic pain relief. My information, and I stand to be corrected on this, is that at the moment we are about third in Australia.

The other thing is that there are no facilities in regional South Australia for any of these people to receive medication or assistance. At the moment, they have to come and make contact with somebody in Adelaide, and if they are attending somebody in regional South Australia who had the authority to do that, some of the doctors out there are a bit hesitant to even recommend it for fear of retaliation.

This is the information that I have been given. One thing that I would like to do is to ensure that when we go forward with this system we continue to review it. If we review something, that does not mean to say that our system is not working; we review it to ensure that we do not become complacent.

The whole idea of improving services is by reviewing them on a regular basis, and I think that is all that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is asking here. That is what the member for Fisher and I are asking, to continue the services that are going at the moment but to review those services to ensure that, potentially, we have the best operation and facility in Australia. I commend the motion to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs Geraghty.