

House: Legislative Assembly

Date: Wednesday, 1 June 2005

Member: CASTRILLI; ACTING SPEAKER; WALKER; THOMAS; WOODHAMS;
SPRIGG; SIMPSON; WATSON MR P

Subject: APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO 1) 2005

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Mr G.M Castrilli: Mental health services have received some funding that is long overdue. Bunbury had been identified as the worst catered for city in regional Australia for mental health services because of the inadequate care and human rights breaches. The services have been deteriorating over the past three years, and especially in the last 12 months they have gone downhill. An amount of \$8.7 million has been promised for mental health services and that is terrific. This expanded inpatient mental health service will not be completed for at least a couple of years, so the Bunbury residents obviously now have to put up with the excessive waiting list. We know that the mental health outpatients clinic recently reopened after being closed for more than 12 months. We had only one public psychiatrist for inpatients and one locum for outpatients, and by the World Health Organisation standards we should have about nine psychiatrists. Four psychiatrists have left Bunbury in the past 12 months because there were no mental health support structures for them. It was a sad state of affairs. For mental health services to be really effective members would agree that we need to have that whole package put together. We need not only the physical structure, but also adequate numbers of professional staff ready to help people. We cannot have one or the other, we need the complete package.

The living skills program was discontinued in December 2003, and it needs to be reopened. It is an absolutely essential service for people in the area. It does not get a guernsey in the budget, as far as I can see, and I sincerely hope that this program is re-established because it is a critical service.

Also, a secure future is needed for the Clozapine Clinic that is attached to the Bunbury Regional Hospital. It needs to be looked at and assessed.

The funding for the new Bunbury dental clinic is welcome, but is also long overdue. The waiting list for public dental health services has blown out to three years. It is simply not good enough and I have had people visit my office and also ring me complaining about the service because they cannot get in. It is one thing to fund a clinic, but we must look at where the staff will come from. At the moment the clinic is down to about four dentists. I know one recently left or is about to leave, and that will bring the number down to three. The appropriate number of staff for this service is also required.

I welcome the development of the cancer centre for Bunbury. I am pleased it will go ahead. At last this will enable patients in the south west to be provided with lifesaving radiation therapy close to home. For too long cancer patients have had to travel to Perth for radiation therapy. I have had a bit to do with this through people I know. Some people in the country are not used to travelling through the metropolitan area and staying overnight. It is a real strain and puts pressure on people. Some people do not realise that.

However, it is a real added strain on those people. I welcome this announcement. This facility is long overdue. I will continue to fight for better services for cancer patients in the south west. These issues that affect the lives and health of people are pretty important to me. I urge the government to pay them urgent attention.