

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PALLIATIVE CARE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Establishment — Motion

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Thornlie — Parliamentary Secretary) [1.42 pm]: I move —

- (1) That a joint select committee of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council into palliative care in Western Australia be established.
- (2) That the joint select committee inquire into and report on —
 - (a) the progress in relation to palliative care, in particular implementation of recommendations of the Joint Select Committee into End of Life Choices;
 - (b) the delivery of the services associated with palliative care funding announcements in 2019–2020;
 - (c) the delivery of palliative care into regional and remote areas; and
 - (d) the progress on ensuring greater equity of access to palliative care services between metropolitan and regional areas.
- (3) That the joint select committee consist of six members, of whom —
 - (a) three will be members of the Assembly; and
 - (b) three will be members of the Council.
- (4) That the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly relating to standing and select committees will be followed as far as they can be applied.
- (5) That the joint select committee report to both houses by 19 November 2020.
- (6) That the Legislative Council be requested to agree to a similar resolution.
- (7) That, subject to the Legislative Council agreeing to the above paragraphs, the following Legislative Assembly members be appointed —
 - (a) the member for Dawesville;
 - (b) the member for Moore; and
 - (c) the member for Thornlie.

I have moved this motion as it is part of the wonderful work that was done by this Parliament when we passed the laws on voluntary assisted dying. That debate and discussion ranged through all sorts of issues relating to end of life and much discussion was had about the importance of palliative care. As is outlined in the motion, the recommendation of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices referred to the need for members of this Parliament to be sure that palliative care receives the necessary funding that it deserves. It is very much a part of that suite of end-of-life choices that needs to be available to people. In many ways, this committee will hold the government to account and ensure that regardless of whether people are in the metropolitan area or in a regional area, they have access to the very important services for palliative care. It is important.

When I first came to this topic, I had the notion that palliative care was mostly about managing pain, but I think it is fair to say that it is about so much more than that. Yes, it is about supporting someone with their physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs. A quality palliative care system can help someone in so many ways deal with their trauma and sadness—all the emotions and all the physical feelings that go with meeting one's end. It is indeed very important legislation.

It is important to note that next week is, in fact, National Palliative Care Week. Interestingly, the theme for National Palliative Care Week is "Palliative Care ... It's more than you think". That is a very worthy theme. It is important to say that for many people, palliative care is a bit of a mystery; they are not aware of it. Part of that general enthusiasm for the voluntary assisted dying legislation has now been informed. There has been an enriching of people's level of knowledge on end-of-life choices. There is a reality that for many people, palliative care will in fact be the means by which their life ends; that will see them through. For most of us, that will probably be the case, but of course we know that there is a fairly small group for whom the pain is so extreme and the likelihood of their death is so near that a sensible voluntary assisted dying mechanism is absolutely appropriate, and that is what this Parliament has passed.

I am really honoured to be involved in this committee, following on from the tremendous work done by the Minister for Health, the member for Morley and many other members of this place who worked hard on the debate and provided valuable contributions last year and ensured that we could consider end-of-life choices at its very broadest and made the commitment to establish this committee, which, I have no doubt, will do a very diligent job

of looking at the arrangements for people, whether they are in the Perth metropolitan area or in a remote community. Ensuring that people, wherever they live in Western Australia, have access to palliative care is an important right that we have to ensure.

I have mentioned that we need to ensure that there is greater community understanding of palliative care. That will also be part of our work. Essentially, this will be about holding the government to account and making sure that the Department of Health and various hospitals and experts recognise that palliative care does not necessarily have to take place in a hospital; it could very well take place in a home, a nursing home, a primary health care clinic or a hospice. A whole suite of people is involved in palliative care, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, social workers, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational and speech therapists, psychologists, dieticians, spiritual and pastoral practitioners and, indeed—it is very important to note this during National Volunteer Week—palliative care-trained volunteers, who help people go through the whole end-of-life experience. These volunteers play an important role, and I acknowledge their contribution during volunteer week. No doubt, their work is very challenging and rewarding, and emotional at times too.

The work that this committee does will be important. I am honoured to be part of the committee and I look forward to working with my colleagues from this place—the members for Moore and Dawesville. We await word about who will be joining us from the Legislative Council. I have no doubt that this committee will be very thorough in its investigations and will be able to provide this Parliament with the reassurance that palliative care is properly resourced and accessible to Western Australians when they need it.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [1.51 pm]: I wish to address the motion moved by the member for Thornlie. The opposition supports the motion. I think it is important. Similarly, I look forward to working with the members for Thornlie and Moore, with whom I already serve on a committee, and members of the Legislative Council. I understand that those members are likely to be Hon Nick Goiran, Hon Alison Xamon and Hon Kyle McGinn, but it is up to the Council to decide. I look forward to working with them as we consider an issue that was fleshed out during the voluntary assisted dying debate and issues relating to the equitable provision of palliative care. They are important issues. It is important to ensure that a committee look into these issues. I do not know how much day-to-day or regular committee work it will take. I do not know what the schedule looks like just yet; I think it will be a good one.

Given that we have a couple of minutes until questions without notice —

Ms S. Winton interjected.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I will be two or three minutes. It is interesting to look back at what happened during the voluntary assisted dying debate. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019 is a significant piece of legislation. The debate took a significant toll on a number of members; it certainly took a toll on me. I really look forward to being part of the process going forward; it will be very important. The only thing I would say is that all members made significant contributions in this place. Hopefully, their involvement in this issue will continue, whatever that looks like. I support the motion. I think that the committee will be very important. I appreciate that it has been moved.

The member for Morley has been talking us through this. The committee was supported by the Minister for Health and the government during the debate. I am genuinely interested to see how long the committee will last, and whether it will extend into the forty-first Parliament. The issue of palliative care and its rollout during that time will remain. What will that look like in the forty-first Parliament? Will this committee last for some time, as the assisted dying regime is put in place after its enactment? I am appreciative of the opportunity that my party has given me to serve on this committee, and consider it a very important issue. I commend the motion.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA) [1.53 pm]: I rise to say very briefly that I am also pleased, on behalf of the Nationals WA, to have been put forward to serve on a joint select committee into palliative care, along with the members for Thornlie and Dawesville and the unknown members of the other place, who may be known very shortly. I had some reservations about the voluntary assisted dying legislation, but I have no reservations about the need for palliative care and for it to be equally available to people in regional areas as it is in other areas. Part of the terms of reference of this committee relate to not only ensuring that the investment by the state is undertaken in a targeted way but that services are being delivered, especially to those rural and remote areas of the state where the need is greatest. Country members of Parliament, like me, will understand that when we leave Perth, levels of disadvantage and restriction of access to medical treatment quickly emerge. In fact, on the outskirts of Perth, the City of Swan and the City of Wanneroo and their respective representatives would also face some of those challenges. As we move further and further out, those challenges multiply. By the time we get up to the Kimberley, the Gascoyne and some of those other remote areas, the challenges are very stark.

I look forward to the work of the committee. I commend the motion to the house. I understand that we need time to vote on it. I will sit down and leave the house to make its considerations.

MS A. SANDERSON (Morley — Parliamentary Secretary) [1.56 pm]: I rise to support the motion to establish a joint select committee into palliative care. I think this is an important mechanism to ensure that the work of the

Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices is carried out. Just to clarify the genesis of the committee, the committee was committed to by the deputy leader of the Legislative Council during the voluntary assisted dying debate. A number of members have, rightly, expressed concern about the delivery of palliative care. The end of life choices inquiry found that people who live in regional and remote areas, in particular, virtually have nil access to palliative care, and that was a significant health and end-of-life equity issue.

The government accepted all the recommendations of the end-of-life choices inquiry, and has made huge progress in implementing those recommendations without question. It also announced further reforms and funding for palliative care, including extra money for Silver Chain, the development of the northern suburbs hospice, increased funding into regional areas, setting up increased home care in those regional areas, and supporting our Aboriginal and Indigenous community in navigating palliative care services. Those services tend to be very fragmented, even if they are able to reach them. This is a really good opportunity for Parliament to get oversight of government announcements and how measures are being implemented. It is also important that the work is done across both houses.

I am not sure that the standing orders enable joint select committees to continue, although the clerks will advise me about that. I understand that all select committees are dissolved and any ongoing work that they have has to recommence in the following Parliament. It would be up to the next Parliament, however that may look, to determine whether it continues that work. I think there is some good work to be done in the next few months. The committee will certainly hold hearings and interrogate the Department of Health about how it is delivering a lot of those commitments. That will serve not only the Parliament, but also the government well in attempting to deliver its recommendations. I thank members for the support of the committee and look forward to reading the report when it is tabled in November.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Local Government) [1.59 pm]: I will make a brief comment to take us through to question time. As the member for Thornlie highlighted in his presentation, which has been re-affirmed by other members who have spoken, this is a very important committee. I want to reflect on the debate of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019 and the issues that were raised around the consideration of palliative care. I am reminded of the comments by the Minister for Health during that debate about the ongoing importance that Western Australia places on palliative care in the suite of services and considerations for people who are nearing the end of their lives. In speaking to this motion, I want to put on the record that the members who will be charged from this house to deliberate on this select committee's work will be undertaking very important work because, from memory, when the VAD bill was debated in this place, palliative care was one of the key issues that was highlighted and raised by a number of members as one that they were concerned about. I ask that members support the motion and I wish those members who have been charged with the responsibility of representation from this house do that appropriately.

Question put and passed.