

AGED AND CONTINUING CARE DIRECTORATE — PROFESSOR LEON FLICKER

**724. Mr K.M. O'DONNELL to the Minister for Health:**

Greetings, Mr Speaker. I refer to the front page of this morning's *The West Australian* and the article regarding Professor Fletcher —

**Mr R.H. Cook:** Flicker.

**Mr K.M. O'DONNELL:** Flicker. I knew I should have read it. I tried to get up here and do it without reading. I apologise.

**The SPEAKER:** Preamble. Get it going.

**Mr K.M. O'DONNELL:** I refer to that article. He is the chair of the expert reference group, the Aged and Continuing Care Directorate. Is the government ignoring the advice of Professor Flicker and that expert group, and can the minister confirm that that is the reason Professor Flicker resigned?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I thank the member for the question. At the outset, I pay my respects to Professor Leon Flicker and thank him for the time he has served in the role. He has been chair of the Aged and Continuing Care Directorate expert reference group for the last six years. I know Leon very well and have been the recipient of his advice and ongoing guidance since I was in opposition, so obviously I greatly appreciate the great expertise that he brings and also his status; he is a leader among geriatricians and has done, and will continue to do, great work on behalf of the community.

It is true that we have reorganised the Department of Health in the context of that reference group and where it fits into the overall directorate. That was done in 2017 as part of the reorganisation of the Department of Health when we reduced the number of senior executive service positions, which resulted in divisions and associated directorates being reorganised. Late last year, plans were afoot to move the aged-care function within the Department of Health into the governance division of the Department of Health and bolster it. This would align it with aged care being more closely related to policy and planning and intergovernmental relations, as this is a mixture of commonwealth and state responsibility. That happened a fortnight ago, and obviously we are expecting to see some great work done. There are plans to form an aged-care clinical network in the Department of Health under the Clinical Excellence division. This work was, by and large, held up as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic response, but that certainly does not diminish our commitment for aged care. As all members know, we neither fund nor regulate aged care, but it is an important part of caring for the Western Australian community. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we set up a separate work team under the State Health Incident Coordination Centre before we even declared an emergency under the Emergency Management Act. We understand the vulnerability of aged-care residents, and from that point of view they have been a very important focus for us in relation to COVID-19. I work very closely with all our geriatricians and have met with them on a number of occasions since coming to government. I will continue to work closely with them and, from that perspective, I thank Professor Leon Flicker once again for his great work.