

MINISTER FOR HEALTH — CHIEF OF STAFF — BULLYING ALLEGATIONS

52. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Health:

Before I ask my question, I acknowledge in the gallery today Dr Graham Jacobs who was the member for Eyre, now Roe, between 2005 and 2017. He joins us with his wife, Kathryn.

- (1) When was the minister first made aware of a text message to a senior adviser from his long-time friend and then chief of staff Erik Locke calling her “Kim Jong Lard” and suggesting a funding source for liposuction?
- (2) What action did the minister take?
- (3) Can the minister explain why he did not take more decisive action sooner given the conduct is completely inappropriate for the chief of staff to any minister, let alone the Minister for Mental Health?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) Issues regarding complaints about bullying and harassment are very serious indeed. No-one in this chamber, I hope, would condone any sort of bullying or harassing behaviour by one member of staff to another at any stage. It is never okay. I found out about the contents of a range of communications via formal complaint from a former member of staff following her writing to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on 20 November. I was approached by the director general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and, following his advice, it was agreed that we would undertake a formal inquiry into the complaints that were lodged. I will not provide an ongoing commentary on these issues; suffice to say that when these complaints are made, it is important that they are looked into respectfully, procedural fairness is provided and that we ultimately get to the bottom of the matter. That inquiry is ongoing.