

HEALTH SYSTEM — CARBON TAX IMPACT

335. Mr J.M. FRANCIS to the Minister for Health:

I note that this is the last sitting week before 1 July, the start date for Labor's jobs destroying carbon tax. What impact will this dreadful tax have on the state's health system?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

I thank the member, and well may he ask that question. We have a copy of a report that was put out in Victoria last year, showing what the impact of a carbon tax would be on its health system, and it is a significant impact—0.1 per cent of the budget. In terms of total dollars in Victoria, the initial cost will be \$13.4 million each year, rising steadily to \$19 million by 2020. That would pay for a lot of things. The shadow Treasurer yesterday harangued the Premier about the cost of something that was changed, and how it could have been spent on something else. It was only about \$60 000, but the shadow Treasurer referred to a project that he said should have been continued. I am sure that there are many projects around the state that would dearly like to use additional funds, and although that might not be a lot of money in terms of the total health budget, it is a significant amount of money. Treasury has done an assessment that shows, roughly, what the total cost of the carbon tax will be to the government. Its estimate is between \$50 million and \$60 million a year across all of government. That is what it will cost us to pay for the commonwealth government's carbon tax. That is a lot of money in anyone's assessment. Of course, the carbon tax does not just affect electricity prices; it affects a range of things such as transport, food and so on, so there is a whole range of things affected by the carbon tax. We have not done a detailed evaluation in health, but —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members!

Dr K.D. HAMES: — based on the Victorian estimate of about 0.1 per cent of the budget and some rough estimates done on our electricity costs, we estimate that the cost to WA Health, at 0.1 per cent of the budget, will be about \$6 million to 7 million a year. That is \$7 million a year I could be spending in so many other areas of health, such as dental health and child health services; \$7 million a year could be spent on so many other things.

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I have heard the member having a go about this, but we have not yet heard whether he supports the carbon tax. Is that something he is in favour of?

Mr R.H. Cook: What's it got to do with dental health?

Dr K.D. HAMES: I could be spending that \$6 million on a range of other things, including the dental health that the member for Kwinana keeps rabbiting on about!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members!

Dr K.D. HAMES: Does the member support the carbon tax, or does he not?

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I do not know. Does anyone else over there support the carbon tax? I know somebody who does not! I got that right!

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The Leader of the Opposition has left the member for Kwinana to defend his support of the carbon tax. This is a member who goes on about things we could spend money on —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members! Member for Warnbro!

Dr K.D. HAMES: They support a tax that is sucking money out of the health system and every other government department in this state.