

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH — VACCINATION RATES — PERTH WALDORF SCHOOL

411. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the Minister for Education:

I think we need to remind the Premier of the Legislative Council that we are all local members.

Hon Alanna Clohesy: Not once did we share a shovel.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Then we agree that we should be invited!

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: The Legislative Councillors should be invited —

The PRESIDENT: Do you want to make a statement or ask a question?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes, Madam President. Sorry.

I ask this question on the basis of my strong interest in improving vaccination rates in this state.

I refer to the “Measles Alert for Perth” issued by the Department of Health on 4 August 2017 following the confirmed diagnosis of an unvaccinated secondary school student who returned to Perth after being infected overseas.

- (1) Is the minister concerned that, if reported correctly, a significant number of students attending the Perth Waldorf School have not been vaccinated?
- (2) If yes to (1), has the minister or her department made contact with the Perth Waldorf School to inform them of her concerns; and, if yes, when?
- (3) Does the minister propose to make any changes that would enable schools to require, not request, vaccination records of a child upon enrolment?
- (4) Can the minister confirm whether any other action is being taken between the Department of Health and Department of Education to encourage greater vaccination rates in school-age children? If yes, what action is being taken; and, if not, why not?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

- (1) I thank the member for this question. This is a really important issue and I was shocked with the reports that I heard a couple of weeks ago that of the 400-odd students at the school named by the honourable member, 200 were not vaccinated. That is an extraordinary number of children in one spot who are not vaccinated and we now know subsequent to that first notification that there has been a second notification of a student with measles at that school.
- (2) I personally have not made contact with the school, but I know that the Department of Health has on several occasions tried to assist the school to get a better rate of vaccination. Indeed, the Department of Health at one point offered to put a vaccination caravan out the front of the school to make that service available to parents of students who might want to reconsider their position on vaccination. That request to put a Department of Health vaccination centre caravan out the front of the school, as I am advised, was rejected by the school.
- (3) The third part of the question asks what changes, if any, am I able to give effect to. We know that work is happening nationally to increase vaccination rates for very young children, and the Premier, for example, has expressed the view that I share. He is generally supportive of moves by the federal government to introduce the no jab, no play-type policy, but those negotiations are still to occur.

At a local Western Australian level, on the day that the report was made public I asked what action are we taking beyond that to lift vaccination rates for older children as well. I am advised that the Department of Health and Department of Education are working together on a range of strategies to address that issue in particular. When I have more to report on that matter, I will happily report it to the house and share the information with the member because I know we are of like mind on this issue.
- (4) The fourth part of the question, would I confirm —

Hon Donna Faragher: Would the minister propose any changes that would enable schools to require, not request, vaccination records on school grounds.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I support any measures to increase childhood vaccinations. The situation right now is that under the School Education Act, all schools are permitted to ask for the immunisation status of students on enrolment. If they are asked, parents must provide that information—that is for all schools. For all public schools, it is mandatory to ask for the immunisation details of students as part of the enrolment process. Recently, a letter

went to all public schools from the Department of Health spelling out the immunisation requirements. If we need to do more in this space, I will do it.