

MINISTERIAL DRUG AND ALCOHOL FORUM —
NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY COMMITTEE — NOMINATIONS

330. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum and the National Drug Strategy Committee. Has Western Australia been represented on these committees; and, if not, why not?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question. He obviously understands the importance of addressing the issue of illicit drugs, particularly meth, because of the way that it has taken hold in many of our towns. Of course, we believe that concerted action in relation to the impact of methamphetamine is an important aspect of what we do in government, particularly working with other governments to make sure that we have a coordinated effort right across our community so that we can get on top of this endemic problem. For all the bluff and bluster of the previous government on this, it is extraordinary that when we came to government we found a letter to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet requesting that WA nominate representatives to the national Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum and the National Drug Strategy Committee. It is extraordinary that prior to us coming into government, Western Australia was not represented on these important committees. A letter to the director general from the federal Department of Health and the Attorney-General's Department states —

We are writing to seek outstanding nominations from Western Australia Health for the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum (MDAF) and the National Drug Strategy Committee (NDSC).

The letter goes on to state —

To ensure timely and coordinated decision-making on policy issues, it is important that the new governance framework represents the views of health and justice portfolios from each jurisdiction.

We note that Western Australia Health remains unrepresented on both the MDAF and NDSC. As per the enclosed correspondence, Commonwealth Ministers have previously written to former Western Australian Ministers for Health, the Hon Kim Hames MLA (6 May 2016) and the Hon John Day MLA (10 October 2016), to seek health representatives under the new governance arrangements.

It is extraordinary that the Liberal–National government did not think that putting a Health representative on these committees was a priority. As we know, it will take a concerted effort from all members, from all governments and from all jurisdictions to make sure we get on top of these issues. We are putting in place policies that will help reduce the impact of methamphetamine in our community—issues that go to the elements of demand, supply and harm minimisation. We are looking at things such as additional drug treatment facilities to respond to early intervention and severe methamphetamine dependence; opening residential rehab centres in the south west and the Kimberley; introducing a mental health observation area at the Royal Perth Hospital emergency department; and dedicated drug rehabilitation in prisons—a great policy—and the plan focuses on the reduction of demand and supply, and harm minimisation, and aims to better support the communities and families that this impacts on.

I am absolutely gobsmacked that we did not have representatives on these important national forums previously, but I am very pleased to say that we have nominated me to go on these committees, and at least now —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! I know you are all happy about it!

Mr R.H. COOK: At least now Western Australia will have an important voice in this national forum, because before, for the lack of interest from this mob opposite, we had no-one.