

PEEL HEALTH CAMPUS — NEW CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

612. Mr J.M. FRANCIS to the Premier:

I refer to yesterday's motion to suspend standing orders when the opposition claimed that there was corruption at the Peel Health Campus. Can the Premier please update the house on the validity of these claims and whether the United Voice union has refuted or apologised for its false assertion that the new children's hospital will be privatised?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

I thank the member for Jandakot for the question. Before I answer the question, I acknowledge the students and teachers from Austin Cove Baptist College on behalf of the member for Murray–Wellington. I hope they are enjoying their visit.

Yesterday the opposition, in particular the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, moved a motion relating to issues at the Peel Health Campus. The Minister for Health acknowledged that there had been some anomalies relating to the billing system and said that that was due to a misinterpretation of the way in which that system was to operate and, as a result, the Peel Health Campus had to refund \$1.3 million to the public health department. That is an issue—I do not deny that. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Kwinana, went a lot, lot further. For a start, he accused the operator of the Peel Health Campus—that is Health Solutions (WA)—of being corrupt. He accused them of corruption. We know it is true because in *The West Australian* this morning appears "Health campus 'was corrupt'". The opening paragraph reads —

The State Opposition has accused the private operator of the Peel Health Campus of corruption.

To accuse someone or an entity of corruption is a very serious accusation. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition used parliamentary privilege to do so. I put to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that it is up to him now to either prove corruption or to apologise.

Mr M. McGowan: Wait until the next question!

Mr R.H. Cook: I have already done that.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Kwinana also made a claim that Health Solutions, the operator of the Peel Health Campus, had asked the government for a 60-year extension to the company's contract on the basis that the company would invest \$75 million in more private beds and would return to the public hospital existing private beds. We all remember that he said it on several occasions—a 60-year extension. Was he accurate? It sounded a bit extraordinary to me that the government would contemplate extending a Health Solutions contract for 60 years.

Mr R.H. Cook: That's what your minister said.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We will wait and see. We do not necessarily accept what the member for Kwinana said. What is the truth? Health Solutions initially had a 20-year contract. There are five years left on that contract. It sought a 15-year extension to basically renew the 20-year time line in exchange for upgrading facilities in the public hospital and for part of its proposal to build a private hospital on adjacent government land. It sought a 15-year extension to its contract. It also asked for a 60-year lease of the land on which it would build its private hospital. That is just a little different. If an organisation is going to build a \$75 million private hospital at no expense to the government, it would want about a 60-year lease. That is what it sought. It never sought a 60-year extension on its contract. The opposition is 100 per cent wrong. The opposition could not even get that right. That is what it has been working on as its big matter of public interest for the past couple of weeks.

The second part of the question from the member for Jandakot, which disturbs me far more and I would think would disturb the public of Western Australia more, relates to material distributed by United Voice. I referred to this yesterday. I want to refer to it again and remind members —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You hate workers, don't you?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I hate this. I will tell the member why.

Mr P.C. Tinley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Willagee, I formally call you to order for the second time today. I remind members that yelling unnecessarily across the chamber is likely to get me to formally call you to order.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yesterday I referred to a letter received by the member for Swan Hills from a distressed mother of gravely ill twin three-year-old boys. She referred in that letter to a pamphlet being distributed under the name of United Voice to parents and families at the Perth Royal Show. We can imagine the scene of people

from United Voice walking up to family groups at the Royal Show, with children, I presume, and handing over pamphlets.

Mr R.H. Cook: How is this different from yesterday's speech?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will tell the member why it is different. On the front of the brochure is a photo of a young boy in Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, I presume, with a nurse attending to him. The brochure was authorised by a C. Smith of United Voice. I do not know C. Smith but I do know that C. Smith is not a person who tells the truth. Whoever C. Smith is, I hope C. Smith is watching question time or reads about it.

Mr A.P. O'Gorman interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: What is her name?

Mr A.P. O'Gorman: Carolyn Smith.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Carolyn Smith, if you are watching, I hope you are ashamed of what you have authorised. Members of the Labor Party laugh.

Mr A.J. Waddell: You guys are the masters of lies.

Withdrawal of Remark

The SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield, I formally call you to order for the first time today. I will instruct you to withdraw your last comment.

Mr A.J. Waddell: I withdraw that they are masters of lies.

The SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield, I formally call you to order for the second time today. I instruct you to withdraw your last comment.

Mr A.J. Waddell: I withdraw.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This brochure, with a sick child on the front, would obviously be seen by parents.

Mr P.B. Watson: Check what you're putting in letterboxes for your candidates.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany, I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The part I particularly object to on this brochure is under the heading "The new Children's Hospital". I repeat what I now know to be Carolyn Smith has authorised. The brochure states —

The new children's hospital at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Hospital in Nedlands will be privatised by the Barnett Government.

That is a lie. The operations at Princess Margaret Hospital—the total staffing, configuration and management system—will be transferred to the new children's hospital, the \$1.2 billion project. There will be no contracting-out and no changes. It will operate at the new site as it does at the existing site, albeit in a new building with new equipment and far better facilities. Carolyn Smith has authorised a lie to parents.

Members opposite have laughed and giggled through my answer. I want to place something on the public record.

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, I formally call you to order for the second time today.

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Nollamara, I formally call you to order for the second time today.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This is a political environment. We are all professional politicians. Sometimes we go too far. Sometimes we make statements that we should not have made. This is a prepared and printed pamphlet. What I find most objectionable about it is not so much that it has been distributed or that it has a lie on it but I find it most distressing that this union, presumably with the support of the Labor Party, is preying upon the grave illness of young children. It is deliberately trying to prey on child sickness and illness to alarm parents and invite parents to complain to Liberal members of Parliament and give their address. The member for Midland smiles and laughs. Does she think it is appropriate to use the illness of children as a political weapon? I do not think it is appropriate.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: We have got through a few questions. I might be tempted to call it quits now. I might say it is the end of question time now. I will say it to everybody in this place.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I conclude. This pamphlet was a flagrant attempt to alarm parents of children, particularly parents of sick children. It is a blatant lie. I am writing to the union today, asking it to withdraw this pamphlet and to publicly apologise to the people of this state, particularly to parents of sick children. I again give the Leader of the Opposition the opportunity to reject the actions of United Voice and to condemn it as I do. If the Labor Party suggests it has nothing to do with it, I remind the public of Western Australia that the Labor Party has its office in the offices of United Voice.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah and member for Cannington, I formally call both of you to order for the first time today. I do not know what you think you are trying to achieve.