

SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY — CANNABIS SOCIAL CLUBS

**904. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the minister representing the Minister for Community Services:**

I refer the minister to recent longitudinal studies published as part of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey and widely publicised by the ABC that suggest that Australians are having less social contact than ever before, and are also reporting increasing rates of loneliness.

- (1) Does the minister share the concerns raised by her federal colleague Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury, Andrew Leigh, who suggested that Australians have shrinking social circles, and risk “becoming a nation without friends”?
- (2) What active steps and/or programs is the Department of Communities taking to counter this worrying trend?
- (3) Since many western countries, including Spain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, have allowed the formation of cannabis social clubs, will the department consider that as one possible way in which social circles might be widened for Western Australians; and, if not, why not?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The Minister for Community Services has suggested that question (1) is out of order under standing order 105(1)(b) as it seeks an opinion.
- (2) We all have a role to play in engaging with and supporting family, friends, neighbours et cetera who are lonely. Some of the initiatives supported by the state government through the Department of Communities to strengthen community connectedness include the following. It supports and funds Linkwest, the Western Australian peak body for neighbourhood and community resource centres. The 146 centres contribute to vibrant, inclusive and connected communities and anchor a range of services that can be delivered locally. The department also provides youth engagement grants and funding to support the age-friendly communities social connectivity grants program. Community garden grants assist with the planning, development and implementation of community garden projects across Western Australia. There is funding and administration of Cadets WA for more than 9 500 young people who participate in over 190 cadet units throughout the state and involving around 1 100 volunteer instructors. It also partners with the community services sector to develop volunteer opportunities and encourage and assist people to become involved in volunteering, including delivering the WA Volunteer Service Awards, and providing funding and grant programs and developing resources to assist volunteering organisations. It also supports and funds men’s shed initiatives and projects.
- (3) It is not a priority of the Cook Labor government to modify the existing laws and penalties in place regarding cannabis possession and use.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I ask that business of the house be resumed.

*Questions without Notice — Standing Orders — Statement by President*

**THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy)** [5.04 pm]: Before I resume the business of the house, I have two points to make. Firstly, I advise members to consider the use of questions without notice of which no previous notice has been provided and the impact they have on the system of questions without notice and the fairness of that in relation to other members. Secondly, I invite members to consider standing order 105 and the brevity of questions and answers. I thank members. If they need advice, the Clerk is always available.

The business of the house is resumed.