

DRUG TESTING

31 October 2006

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse a question about the drug testing of medical practitioners.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: Recommendation 13 of the interim report of the Statutory Authorities Review Committee in its 43rd report (dated 10 March 2006) states that all medical practitioners and interns practising in a clinical environment should be subjected to random drug testing with zero tolerance. One reason for this recommendation was the evidence of two deplorable cases of doctors' drug-use habits crossing over into their medical practice. The first case involved a doctor ordering drugs for his patients, injecting them into himself and then using the same syringe to inject those drugs into patients. The patients, not surprisingly, contracted hepatitis C.

The second case involved a doctor who discharged a patient from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and the patient died at home the next day. It later came to light that the doctor had been smoking up to 10 cones of cannabis a day. The AAPP reported on Friday 27 October that one in five people from a sample of some 13 000 Queenslanders believed there was no great health risk in the monthly or weekly use of amphetamines, heroin, ecstasy or other hallucinogens. An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report indicated that 38 per cent of Australians have used an illicit drug at some stage in their lives. The Australian Medical Association (AMA) claims to have over 2 000 members in South Australia.

On 27 October 2006, *The Advertiser* claimed that some doctors were working more than 100 hours per week. The same article quoted the AMA President as saying that 'once you've done 18 hours your abilities are similar to being .05 or over'. Our medical practitioners have our lives in their hands when they perform surgery, administer medicines or treat or advise us on our personal health. Will

the minister implement the committee's recommendations for the random drug testing of medical practitioners and interns; if not, why not, and, if so, when?

As a supplementary question, with respect to the minister, my question was a genuine one. Will she seek to implement the recommendations of the report?