

## **NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

**Wednesday, 20 June 2007**

**The Hon. A.L. EVANS:** It has come to Family First's attention that the government-funded SAVIVE needle exchange program has now joined an organisation called the Australian IV League. This fact is mentioned on the AIDS Council of South Australia's website, and articles obtained from the service also confirm this fact. My questions are:

1. Is the minister aware that the Australian IV League calls itself 'an international network of activists who use drugs'?

2. Is the minister aware that SAVIVE is distributing an Australian IV League petition prepared by international drug user activists (as they call themselves) which states the following:

No group of oppressed people ever attained liberation without the involvement of those directly affected by this oppression. Through collective action, we will fight to change existing local, national, regional and international drug laws.

3. Is any government funding reaching the Australian IV League through SAVIVE, either in membership fees paid or other donations?

4. Is the SAVIVE service operating within government guidelines or is it out of control?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse):** I spoke yesterday on the issue of SAVIVE and the services that I was aware of that it was currently supplying to the AIDS Council. The information I had related to the provision of a clean needle exchange program and nothing else. Since then I have ascertained that, in relation to the question the Hon. Dennis Hood asked in relation to body piercing kits, it is not part of the SAVIVE program at all—it is an issue the council has taken up, but it is certainly not part of the drug and alcohol program provided through SAVIVE in terms of supplying those kits. I put that on the record.

In relation to the relationship with IV League and funding its activities, I can only put on record that to the best of my knowledge the funds that DASSA provides to the AIDS Council pertain to a clean needle program and that is all. I am not aware of these other activities. I would be most surprised if they are linked to DASSA services, but I am happy to investigate the allegations and claims the honourable member has made and bring back a response.

**The Hon. S.G. WADE:** By way of supplementary question, in relation to the minister's comments on the issues raised by the Hon. Mr Hood yesterday, will she clarify whether, when she tells us the government is not funding the provision of body piercing needles, she is assuring us that not only the needles themselves are not being funded by the state government but also that state government workers are not providing body piercing needles?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** The information I gave pertained to the funding and services that DASSA provides to the AIDS Council. I cannot speak for any other public sector workers employed there through other departments such as health and so on. There may be Families SA staff there—I do not have that detail. I cannot speak for other government departments or workers. I was asked a question in relation to Drug and Alcohol Services Council funding and staff. I have put the information I have and have been advised of on the record, namely, that the Drug and Alcohol Services Council does not provide body piercing kits to that service or, to the best of my knowledge, to any other service here in South Australia.

**The Hon. A.M. BRESSINGTON:** By way of supplementary question, if the minister discovers that DASSA funded employees are actually providing body piercing kits, will she demand as the minister that that practice stop?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have already put on record that the information I have is that the Drug and Alcohol Services Council does not—how many times do I have to say this?—provide these services.

**The Hon. A.M. Bressington:** Look into it.

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** I have already stated that as from yesterday and today I have been informed that the Drug and Alcohol Services Council does not supply them—end of story.