

Community Grants Scheme

Mrs LAUGA: My question is to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Will the minister update the House about the community grants scheme and actions the state government has taken since coming to office?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Keppel for her question. Community based health groups do an enormous amount of work helping others in the community. Most of those organisations started because a group of people saw a problem in the community. They saw a health gap and they wanted to fill that gap by helping other people. They perform vital and highly specialised work to help in a number of areas. Some of those groups may be small, but the impact they have is great. I speak of groups such as The Compassionate Friends Queensland, based in the electorate of the member for Springwood; the Asbestos Related Disease Support Society Queensland; the stillbirth and neonatal death support group, which is strongly supported by the member for Brisbane Central; the Amputees and Families Support Group, based in the heart of Logan City in the electorate of Woodridge; and many other groups supporting Queenslanders with cancer, cystic fibrosis, epilepsy and similar health conditions. The value of the outcomes they deliver to individuals and families is immeasurable.

Today I am pleased to announce that the Palaszczuk government has restored funding to those groups. We have restored \$7.5 million to those organisations and that funding will be provided over three years. That means certainty for three years for those organisations. Today those 20 organisations will be acknowledged at the highest level of government when the Premier and I host an afternoon tea to thank them for the work they do.

What did I find when I became the minister? In 2013, when the then Minister for Health was trawling around looking for soft targets to pick off, he decided to attack those groups. Not content with attacking doctors and nurses and not content with sacking thousands of public servants, he sought out the most vulnerable groups in the health system and defunded them. That is what he did. That is his legacy. He can go around trying to pick other soft targets. We know that he is doing that, because that is his form. He tries to pick soft targets because he does not have the courage of his convictions.

Not one of those 20 organisations was funded by members opposite. Not one was funded by the member for Southern Downs. Not only did he defund groups, but also he gagged the groups that he did fund. He said to those groups, 'Your voice cannot be heard. You cannot speak up against government. If you receive government money, you are to be silent.' That is how they treated Queenslanders. We have removed the odious, offensive and objectionable gags clauses. They have gone. Organisations are free to speak against the Queensland government. We are not afraid of civil society groups and we are not afraid of civil society organisations, because their voice makes democracy and government strong in Queensland.

One of the first things I did following our pledge in opposition was to examine funding for those groups. We have done that. We have restored funding. The long walk in the wilderness is over for those groups and they will be funded into the future.