



Extract from Hansard

Wednesday, 20 March 2024

LIGHT ELECTORATE (GRIEVANCE DEBATE)

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:38): Last week, I held a forum for various ex-service organisations that service my area, not only in my electorate but also the region, so this area would cover the Barossa, Gawler and Northern Adelaide Plains. The forum was held because I have been receiving a number of representations from veterans and defence personnel about the lack of services and support available to veterans in the region. One of the major obstacles, it appears, is the lack of communication and the lack of support from government agencies to the various veterans' groups and ex-service organisations.

Sometime last year, there was an announcement that there was going to be a Veterans' and Families' Hub established in the northern suburbs, and I understand that is going to be open sometime this year in Elizabeth. Certainly, that announcement has been well received by ex-service organisations and also veterans, because it is going to make an important contribution to the delivery of

services and support for veterans in that region. The issue the ex-service organisations raised was that while this is good, they actually want to know and understand what their role is, how their role might change and what contribution they can make to service delivery.

There is a whole range of organisations out there which provide existing services and support to veterans and defence personnel in the region, and they want to know how they can complement what is being proposed for the Veterans' and Families' Hub. They are concerned about the lack of communication on this proposal between the people behind the proposal and the ESOs, but they are really keen to be involved to support and complement what is proposed at this Veterans' and Families' Hub.

The other issue which was raised by ex-service organisations was the statewide issue of the lack of access to doctors and specialists, particularly mental health services and particularly in the northern area where my electorate is based.

The wait times to receive services can be anywhere from six months up to two years, and often for veterans who are doing it really tough, that is an unacceptable time frame. I do not know what the answer is, but we need to find ways to attract more doctors and specialists to the region.

Part of the reason I held the forum was to get a better understanding of what the issues are that veterans and defence personnel are facing, and that was useful. They were quite open about the issues they raised. There are also a lot of services that are city-based or based in the south, even though a lot of personnel do live in the north, so we are working out ways that we can have outreach services to better support our service personnel.

For some veterans, driving 40 or 50 kilometres to a facility means the service is not accessible, but also it is important to understand that some defence personnel and veterans find it hard to go into what you might call health settings. They are just not psychologically prepared for that, so we need to work out ways we can deliver services in local communities. It was a very good forum. I learned a lot and I am working closely with the ex-service organisations to support our veterans and defence personnel who are doing it really tough.

Last week, along with the mayor, I was very fortunate to do a couple of sod-turning ceremonies in my community. Together, we did a sod-turning for the \$4.8 million redevelopment of the Gawler and District Netball Association and also a \$600,000 play space at Reid, one of the communities in my

electorate. Both these projects were election commitments. I am proud to say that we have been able to deliver on these two election commitments and improve the lives of women, in terms of sport, and families and children in relation to the play space.

With the few seconds I have left, I would like to formally welcome the new Catholic priest to our parish. It took a while to get his work visa in place, but the new Gawler Catholic priest, Father Sefo, started his duties late last month. Father Sefo is a member of the Salesian Order and is from Samoa. We wish him well in our parish.