



Parliament of South Australia
QUESTION TIME
24 March 2020

FRANCES BEDFORD MP JP *Member for Florey*

CORONAVIRUS

Ms BEDFORD (Florey) (14:58): My question is to the Premier, who I believe represents the Treasurer—I am Blu Tacked to this spot in the house. What measures or extra measures are being taken to ensure electorate offices and the public who use them do not become points for transmission of the coronavirus? With your leave, sir, and of the house, I will explain.

Leave granted.

Ms BEDFORD: Given the importance of maintaining the vital services to the community, especially JP services, will the Premier assure the house that urgent action will be taken to implement consistent protocols to protect the public and electorate staff?

The Hon. S.S. MARSHALL (Dunstan—Premier) (14:59): I thank the member for her question. My understanding is that this is an issue that has already been raised—the issue of people working at electorate offices—and advice to electorate offices was sent out by Paul Tatarelli yesterday. If the member has read that and if she has any further questions, I am happy for her to take them back to Paul Tatarelli and seek clarification, but my understanding was that there was a comprehensive email sent out to members and electorate offices yesterday covering these issues.

Ms BEDFORD (Florey) (14:59): Supplementary: the difficulty is that we are

on the front line. Every electorate office is different, and, while the general blanket advice may have been felt to have been adequate, it's not. In our particular area there are no JP services operating—

The SPEAKER: Is this a question, member for Florey?

Ms BEDFORD: —except mine.

The SPEAKER: A question, please.

Ms BEDFORD: The question is: are you certain that Mr Tatarelli's advice is sufficient?

The Hon. V.A. CHAPMAN (Bragg—Deputy Premier, Attorney-General) (15:00): May I just assist the member if I can in relation to two areas: one is the advice of our staff in electorate offices and how they might deal with the current situation.

As would be evident, probably from a number of sources, there have been attempts for a lot of workplaces, both in the private and public sector, to try to prepare for a circumstance where they need to work from home. Some are already exercising that, and they are operating with their laptops, iPads, etc. They are connected and doing trials, as we have heard today from the Minister for Education, for example, in relation to school education. So that's happening now.

Mr Tatarelli's advice yesterday, which was quite a long piece of advice—I had to read it a couple of times to get through the full extent of it—essentially, as I understood it, was that he was endorsing the opportunity for electorate offices to prepare for that and to be able to operate from home. He gives certain advice about providing support in those circumstances. If I were to use an example from my own office today, two of our staff are both ill—not from coronavirus, I might add, but in any event

ill—and the trainee was left there, so how do we deal with the incoming phone calls and so on? As best I understand it, consideration is being given to an inquiry now being made as to how many extra pieces of equipment might be needed. PNSG is the agency which is responsible for that and which, obviously, has funding from Treasury.

I think Mr Tatarelli is inviting people, if they have specific needs as to connection and connectivity with remote working from home—I am assuming things such as telephone redirection and the like for their electorate offices. In relation to justices of the peace, which many of our offices provide directly for the public, unfortunately it is a situation where Consumer and Business Services, which is responsible to me as Attorney-General, has given advice to me that as of the 17th (that is, last week) it is no longer providing direct in-person justice of the peace services—its volunteer service. Some of that relates to public accessibility to the premises, but it is also providing advice as to where else JPs are available to do that.

Many electorate offices may decide at present that they are going to continue to offer those services, and obviously we are not here as a government to interfere with individual members of parliament and the operation of their offices, but at present it is up to the agency. Obviously, a lot of local government services are making decisions as we speak as to what services they are going to continue to offer and whether they can do that in a social distancing responsible manner, if I can paraphrase the sort of general requirement in that regard.

If the member has any particular requirements for her electorate office, then I can only urge her—I am happy to take that myself as to any particular circumstance or otherwise—to contact Mr Tatarelli's office to indicate the extra

resource or alternate arrangement that she is seeking to implement in her electorate office.



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