



INQUIRY INTO PALLIATIVE CARE BILL

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light): The aim of the bill is to ensure that South Australians have a world-class palliative care system so people have a real choice in how they wish to be cared for at the end of their life.

The bill directs the South Australian Health Performance Council to undertake an inquiry into the South Australian palliative care system and make recommendations on how it can be made better to ensure that all South Australians have equitable access to it. By equitable access, I mean both geographically and financially. Why the inquiry?

The Joint Committee on End of Life Choices, of which I was a member, along with other members here, made the following findings in relation to palliative care. Based on submissions from professionals in the field, a

number of consistent themes emerged including, and I quote from the report:

1. Palliative Care is a critical part of our health and wellbeing system although it requires a greater level of funding to ensure that it provides more consistent and equitable access.
2. Any improvements to the Palliative Care system should design services that are appropriate and accessible for people in regional areas, Aboriginal people and those for whom English is not a primary language
3. A key focus of Palliative Care should be on the dignity of people who are approaching the end of life.
4. There is a general need to improve data collection and reporting on palliative care—including the experiences of patients, their families and loved ones, clinicians and carers.

I have chosen to have the Health Performance Council undertake the

review and that is based on feedback given to me during the voluntary assisted dying debate. The Health Performance Council is best placed to undertake the inquiry. There is legislative intent that it undertake such inquiries. I have consulted with the Health Performance Council, and they have indicated to me that the inquiry could be undertaken and also in the time frames I suggested to them. I have been advised that the review will probably take about 12 months to be completed, and they advised that they have the capacity to do that. The functions of the Health Performance Council—to read out the relevant portion—include:

(1) such other functions—

assigned to the HAC under this or any other Act;

This bill is consistent with the act itself. I seek the support of this bill at this time because I want to ensure that, when the voluntary assisted dying legislation comes into effect in about 12 to 18 months' time, our palliative care system is ready to make sure that people have a real choice. One of the fundamental questions put by people who supported voluntary assisted dying was that people should have a choice at the end of life. Choices have to be real, not just theoretical. For people to have a real choice, we make sure we have a care system that actually provides that.

The evidence is—certainly the evidence I have received in support from regional members—that it is patchy across our state, and that is why it is important that we do this now. In 12 months' time, the government of the day will have the recommendation to make sure that when VAD comes into effect we also have a palliative care system ready to respond to that challenge.