

MENINGOCOCCAL B STRAIN VACCINATION

Mr BROCK (Frome) (12:00): I would like to express my utter disgust at this amendment, which seeks to change the motion put forward by the member for Mount Gambier. The amendment basically is to the part establishing a committee. The amendment notes that the Minister for Health has established it. However, the third part of the member for Mount Gambier's motion calls on the Marshall Liberal government to implement a vaccination program. There are no time frames in this amendment—there are no time frames whatsoever—and I am very, very disappointed that it appears to be political and that there is not bipartisan support for a great motion by the member for Mount Gambier.

We look at our children and our grandchildren and see their lively faces, their innocence, their growing to young adults and then them achieving some direction in their adult lives. However, for many parents this scenario does not eventuate due to some illnesses that these young people contract. For many years, Australia has had various immunisation programs and there are immunisation programs that are getting better; however, at the same time, there are emerging new diseases coming to light every day.

One of these diseases is meningococcal B, which is emerging in addition to other strains of this very drastic and disastrous disease. As we are aware, these diseases are an intense bacterial infection that can cause death within hours if not treated. This situation was reflected in the speech by the member for Mount Gambier about the two children and the families that have already experienced these incidents.

All Australian children are vaccinated against the C strain through the immunisation program, but not the B strain. My information is there are five main strains of this disease in Australia and vaccines for all of them, but only the C strain is on the PBS and given free to children up to two years of age. The B strain is available from GPs but, as the Leader of the Opposition and others have indicated, it costs around \$500 for the vaccination period.

When I was a child, we were immunised against polio, which, at that particular time, had a very devastating effect. Over the years, we have also been immunising young infants against tetanus and other diseases. It is now time to look at the same process for this new disease. Australia is now participating on a world stage and, although our hygiene controls are excellent, there is always every chance that our young children will contract a new strain of any disease.

To lose a child is every parent's nightmare. I can talk from personal experience as we lost our grandson over eight years ago by drowning at 18 months of age. Whilst every precaution was taken that day, the accident still happened. The effect on my daughter, my family and our friends is still being felt to this very day. I ask the members on the other side to think very seriously about this amendment which has no time frame on it. The motion coming from the member for Mount Gambier asked the Marshall Liberal government to implement the vaccination program now.

I ask them how they would feel seeing their child or their grandchild being held by the mother and the mother saying, 'Dad, I cannot wake the child up. The child is not responding.' That is what may happen if this vaccination program is deferred. This motion by the member for Mount Gambier is just common sense and needs to be endorsed by the Liberal government straightaway.

As the member for Hammond mentioned earlier, the Marshall Liberal government supports the previous motion of No Tobacco Day, where only policies and promotions can be undertaken. This motion by the member for Mount Gambier asks the Marshall Liberal

government to implement a vaccination program and establish a committee. The amendment already says that they are going to establish a committee, but it does not give any time frames about the immunisation program. Starting an immunisation program straightaway reduces the chances of contracting this disease and will allow a child to have a life.

As has been mentioned earlier, this has already been costed at about \$24½ million over four years. That is \$6 million per year. What is the value of a child's life, to allow them to grow up and enjoy? What is the value of not having a parent worry about trying to wake up a deceased child? What is the value for some people out there who cannot afford to have this immunisation? A cost of \$500 for four immunisations for this disease is out of the reach of a lot of people in South Australia.

In my view, the Liberal government should implement the meningococcal B vaccination program. This program would dramatically reduce the risk of a child contracting this devastating disease. This would result in prevention, increasing the opportunity for a child to have a life.

If there is another death due to a vaccination program not being in place, I ask members to look at their soul and ask very seriously: if that program had been implemented straightaway, could that have saved that child? I ask members to ask themselves: if the motion by the member for Mount Gambier had been agreed to then, would the risk of that child dying have been reduced?

I ask everyone here to seriously consider the amendment put forward by the member for Newland, and to defeat that amendment and allow the motion by the member for Mount Gambier to go through unaltered and allow this program to be implemented immediately. I commend the motion from the member for Mount Gambier to the house.