

SELECT COMMITTEE ON OFF-PROTOCOL PRESCRIBING OF CHEMOTHERAPY IN NSW

Inquiry into off-protocol prescribing of chemotherapy in New South Wales

HEARING: SYDNEY, TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2016

NSW Health – Dr Kerry Chant

Question taken on notice during the hearing

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Yes, it is an important point. You just said that you did not contact anyone in the department between November and February. You have now gone further and said "other than the head of the media unit".

Dr CHANT: I want to clarify this. In my opening statement I was specific around members of the senior executive team. As I said, I do not have a clear recollection of informing the media unit. However, given that the context of the call was media related, I may well have spoken to the media unit.

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Do you not think that it related to the health of the St Vincent's Hospital patients rather than a media story?

Dr CHANT: I clearly think this was fundamentally about the health of the patients. As I said, the information I received from Professor Schembri was that there was no patient harm, that they were going to undertake an external review, and that he was giving me the heads up about that. I believe I then took appropriate action in connecting him with Professor Currow to find and assist with potential external experts.

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I understand that.

Dr CHANT: I do not want to mislead the Committee, but I have no specific recollection of notifying anyone else. However, it would not be unusual for me to have made a passing comment in that context.

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: A passing comment to whom? To the head of the media unit?

Dr CHANT: There may have been some exchange with the head of the media unit.

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: An email?

Dr CHANT: Just saying—

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: How would that passing comment have been made?

Dr CHANT: I do not have any recollection that I mentioned it to him. However, it would not have been unusual for me to have said, "Look, this issue has been raised. We might get queries about it given the context of the call from Professor Schembri." My recollection is that there may have been media interest in the issue.

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Can you look into that further and report back to the Committee with regard to whether or not you did that?

Dr CHANT: I would be very happy to do that.

ANSWER:

Dr Chant confirms she has no recollection of advising anyone other than Professor Currow as outlined in her testimony and has found no record of any exchange with the head of the media unit (Public Affairs) following her call from Professor Schembri in November 2015.

Further enquiries indicate that the Director Public Affairs, NSW Ministry of Health, recalls Dr Chant mentioned to her in November 2015 a potential media issue involving St Vincent's Hospital. It was a "heads up" for her to be aware there may be a story or media inquiries about St Vincent's, possibly in relation to a clinician at the hospital, although she could not be definitive on this last point. It was a passing remark for her information and the Director Public Affairs did not inform anyone else.