

CONSTITUENT QUESTION

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Kristie Johnston MP, Independent Member for Clark

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

QUESTION:

Fiona is a constituent of Clark, and her 7-year-old daughter Emily lives with ketoacidosis, a condition that is accompanied by rapid onset of symptoms that can lead to severe ill health or death. Ketoacidosis is associated with diabetes, but for a definite diagnosis Emily needs to see a paediatric endocrinologist, who is only available in Tasmania through the public health system. Despite Emily's paediatrician strongly advocating for Emily to see a paediatric endocrinologist, all requests for an appointment have been refused. Emily's condition means she misses a lot of school and is constantly lethargic and drowsy, which I am sure you agree is not much fun for a 7-year-old.

1. Fiona would like to know why Emily is unable to obtain an appointment with a paediatric endocrinologist.
2. Considering the principle of equity underpinning the scheme, how is this fair to families who are relying on this funding to make medical treatment affordable?

ANSWER:

I have responded directly to the Member for Clark on the specific case raised, which would not be appropriate to table given it contains personal health information. Speaking generally, I can advise:

1. The THS has advised that ketoacidosis and ketosis are transient, physiological, secondary responses to primary conditions, such as

illness or fasting, and are not chronic or lifelong conditions. The THS encourages the family to engage with their primary health provider for advice on the nature of ketosis/ketoacidosis and to review the results of previous screening for diabetes.

2. The THS agrees that equity is an important element of access to public health services. Referrals from general practitioners and general paediatricians enable specialist staff to make equitable assessments of the need and urgency for access.

Paediatric endocrinology clinics are held at the Royal Hobart Hospital, Launceston General Hospital and North West Regional Hospital. The THS encourages families to consult with their primary health providers to arrange a referral to THS specialist paediatric services as required.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guy Barnett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Guy Barnett MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date: 11 June 2024