

20.11.02

**11 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence of the Minister for Children and Housing regarding the proposed care memorial. (OQ.293/2020)**

Following the protest by care survivors against the proposed care memorial, what steps, if any, is the Minister taking to ensure the protestors' views are heard, taken into account and have an effect on any future decision as to whether or not to create a memorial?

[15:30]

**Senator S.Y. Mézec (The Minister for Children and Housing):**

In advance of the protest, I met with the organisers and the Government put out a statement offering an opportunity to bring those with different views of the proposed care memorial around the table. So I can confirm that there are arrangements being put together for how that can be best facilitated so it can be as inclusive as possible. In the meantime, while that is done, there has been a pause of the care memorial project.

**4.11.1 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Would the Minister advise the Assembly as to why he felt it was necessary to let the people against the care memorial reach the resort of protesting before he was willing to sit down at the table with them?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

I regret that the Deputy chooses to ask the question like that. Right throughout this whole process I have made clear to everybody with any view on this that my door has been open and that I have been interested to meet those and hear what they have got to say. Remember, this is not my project, I just happen to be the Minister acting as government spokesperson for it on this occasion. But earlier in the year when it became clear that there were some people who felt strongly about this, I said to all of them: "If you want to talk about this, my door is open to do so." Several took the opportunity to take that up and I had good conversations, and I have continued to have them with those since then. What is different now is that it is more of a cross-government invitation but, as I said, there is still work to be done to work out exactly what the format of that meeting will be so that it can be as inclusive and sensitive as it needs to be.

**4.11.2 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Can I congratulate the Minister, first of all, for attending the protest and listening to the voices of those who did attend? My question is: does he agree that there is divided opinion in the community but we also must not forget how the recommendation arose from care leavers themselves who gave evidence to the Care Inquiry and the Care Inquiry recommendation and the citizens' panel that comprised of care leavers came up with the idea. So does the Minister agree that there is an opportunity here to suspend the division that some have tried to create and get something that all, if not the vast majority, of care leavers can get behind in suitably commemorating and reminding Government, in fact, and government institutions that this kind of neglect, which led to abuse in the past, will not be tolerated again in the future?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

I thank the Deputy for his question, which I think really gets to the essence of what this was meant to be about from the start. This whole project started under the previous Government offering an open invitation for people with experience of the care system in Jersey to come together to help

shape what the response to the Care Inquiry would be. I think that that was the right thing to do, rather than Government dictate that part of the response, to invite people to come in. It is sad that as time has gone on emotions are running high and people feel very passionate about that, but then that is also why it is right now to say this started off with the best of intentions and was led by people with care experience themselves but there is division. We have to accept and recognise that, so let us bring people around a table and focus on getting a joint position that unifies people rather than exploiting divisions about it.

#### **4.11.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Does the Minister agree, as has been expressed to me by some care leavers themselves who do support a care memorial, that the location and type of care memorial should not necessarily be where it has been proposed? The purpose of the care memorial, they think and does the Minister agree, is not so much to remind the survivors themselves of what happened, because they know full well what happened, but to remind Government and government institutions about what happened and, therefore, the best location for a care memorial may well be somewhere in the Royal Square or similar?

#### **Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

To reiterate that I have played no part whatsoever in forming the designs or the proposals themselves. That has been led by the citizens' panel and they came up with their suggestions in good faith. But it is the case, as Deputy Tadier suggests, that among those who have expressed that they are not in favour of these particular proposals, many of them have alternatives that make perfect sense as well, some of which include what the Deputy has just suggested about having some sort of mark that more focuses at Government rather than the wider public, and that view is as legitimate as any other view that there is on this. That is why I think having some sort of engagement across those different groups that have different perspectives on this to come together and see if there is a way forward that everybody can buy into and feels will meet its objectives.

#### **4.11.4 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Does the Minister accept full responsibility for this project going forward and does the Minister agree that if one survivor, let alone one group of survivors, from the care system feel that they will be traumatised by any memorial or by a memorial that is an option that is on the table, that that is too many and that he would not go ahead with any memorial in the case where one survivor is saying that this is going to traumatise them and by doing so acknowledging that the trauma of abuse in care is multifarious and diverse and he has to accept that?

#### **Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

Like his previous questions, I regret the tone of them. I think it is ill-informed and not conducive to finding some sort of unified way forward on this. As I said in a previous answer, this is not my project so do I take full responsibility for it? No, I do not. This started under the previous Government inviting members of the public and those with care experience to shape that response. I will endorse that. I think that was the right thing to do but it is also the case that there are people who feel very strongly in favour of this and whose well-being could also be affected by a Government deciding to U-turn on it. So, let us be frank, there is no perfect solution to this and I do not accept any attempt to divide groups and try to play one off against the other. I think that the way forward is to invite all of those with experience of this who have strong views to come and let us have a discussion about how we move forward together.