

2.2 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the circulation of copies of the Verita Report before the presentation on 1st February 2010:

Will the Minister state which Members received copies of the Verita report ahead of the presentation on Monday 1st February 2010, and why the majority of Members were denied copies until the actual presentation?

Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I can confirm, apart from myself, that Senator Alan Breckon in his capacity as chairman of the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel is the only States Member to receive a copy of the Verita report ahead of the presentation made to States Members yesterday. Copies of the report in draft were shared with Senator Breckon and both of my Assistant Ministers. One of my paramount concerns throughout this very difficult time has been to ensure that the interests and welfare of Mr. Rourke and the family have always been taken into account. This approach, I am pleased to say, was endorsed by Senator Breckon in his email he sent to all States Members last Thursday. Commitments previously given to Mr. Rourke to keep him fully informed of the progress of the review have required that he should have had proper opportunity to read and reflect upon the report prior to its publication and general release. This commitment has now been fulfilled to the best of my ability and a series of meetings with Mr. Rourke and also with Verita, with members of the family.

2.2.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Will the Minister accept that it is normal practice that the documents are produced and circulated to Members, and indeed the media, the day before to allow them ample time to read the documents which would have course been embargoed? Does the Minister not agree that to ask Members to have read the report, of well over 300 pages, just an hour before the actual presentation, was unreasonable?

The Deputy of Trinity:

With all due respect, I think this is not a usual report that one would expect from any department or like a Scrutiny Report. This is, and continues to be, a very highly sensitive report. One which is about a death of a nurse and a patient, Mrs. Rourke, and that has been my concern for the family all the way along. I understand the Deputy's concerns and I said yesterday at the States Members' presentation that 2 members of the Verita team will be coming back at the end of this week and that there will be a follow-up meeting for any States Members who wish to speak to them there or, in fact, contact Verita direct so they can begin to understand the report.

2.2.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister outline whether the purpose of giving the draft to the chairman of the Scrutiny Panel was information only, or was there an expectation that if that person thought there were faults or whatever with the report they would be expected to respond?

The Deputy of Trinity:

During the debates last July - and that was confirmed in the letter that I sent to Verita - to make sure that it is truly independent and Verita did confirm that yesterday, that it is totally independent, it was agreed it went to the 4 people and one of them was Senator Breckon as his role as chair to keep an independent check over it. I am sure if

Senator Breckon thought that there was anything missed or wanted to make a comment, I am sure that he would have done and he would have done it straight to Verita.

2.2.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

Does the Deputy accept that any report which is embargoed, presumably, does contain a certain amount of sensitive information otherwise it would not be embargoed in the first place? Secondly, does she agree that it is completely unacceptable to keep Members in the dark with only 2 hours notice before a presentation of such an important document?

The Deputy of Trinity:

As I said, I understand Member's concerns but my priority is the family and Mr. Rourke. **[Approbation]** It has been a very difficult time for him over the last 3 years and following on from this report, just to remind Members too, that there still needs to be an inquest.

[10:00]

2.2.4 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I think all of our priority is the family and that is why we would have appreciated more time to read and digest the document. Would the Deputy be frank with us and tell us which Members of the States it is that she does not believe can be trusted with a document before ... yes, will the Deputy please tell us, and be frank, what the real reason was and if there are Members in here which she does not trust with information that she classes as sensitive, but is essential for us to all do our jobs properly.

The Deputy of Trinity:

How can I answer that? I can say that it is, and remains to be, a very sensitive and delicate report. There is a family... and the question I think you asked me, you said do I trust States Members? I will throw that back to States Members, that is for everybody's own conscience.

2.2.5 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Of course there will be additional costs now having the Verita team back and I would like to compliment them on their report, from what I have seen of it, it is well read and obviously more to come. But could the Minister give the Members the date and time of this particular meeting, and if it is possible maybe we could have more than one hour with them. So, is the Minister able to give us the date and time of the meeting - possibly Thursday, I think the Minister mentioned?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Yes, I hope I can; we are looking either Thursday or Friday but it is a long States agenda so I would like to think it is Thursday but it all depends how long the States agendas go, if we use the full day on Thursday. I will try and work something out because I agree, I think States Members need more than an hour and I will try and fit something and let Members know as soon as I can.