



PRESS RELEASE

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The GHA totally disagrees with the comments made by the Opposition spokesman for Health, Neil Costa, regarding the provision of dental care for children.

It is obvious that Mr Costa is not aware of the workings of the dental department, despite the considerable amount of information that the Minister for Health provided him with during the last session of Parliament.

It is absurd for Mr Costa to suggest that the dental department ring fences appointments for emergencies, to the detriment of non-urgent routine cases. Due to the unpredictable nature of emergencies, ring fencing appointments for emergencies would result in slots being wasted and ineffective use of the capacity available. Therefore, logically, emergency cases are treated between scheduled routine appointments, and not at the expense of the latter, as Mr Costa claims.

The Minister for Health, Yvette Del Agua, has said:

“The Government has made a huge investment in the dental department over the years. It has trebled the number of dental officers from the two which it inherited from the GSLP, to 6 now. As a result of this significant investment, both in human resources and in equipment, the Dental Department now provides a very comprehensive, high quality service, with treatments ranging from minor surgical procedures for children, orthodontics and paediatric dentistry.

Only two years ago, another children’s dental officer was recruited, which has resulted in approximately 1000 children being successfully treated. Approximately 2,000 children access the dental service every year. Last year alone, 16,000 children were seen, the majority of whom were non-emergency cases. Considering that during the Opposition’s term of office, the majority

of children concluded their educational life without ever being able to see a dentist, the set-up today, in comparison, is excellent by anyone's standards.

Whilst agreeing with Mr Costa that there is room for still more improvement, the Government rejects his argument that the existing procedure is totally unsatisfactory; a statement which he makes on the strength of one complaint allegedly brought to his attention. Furthermore, in the last Question and Answer session of Parliament, I asked Mr Costa to provide me with the details of the patient so that the alleged shortcomings by the GHA in that case could be investigated. Despite his apparent concern on the matter, 4 weeks later I am still waiting for this information".