

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

117/2006 **13 December 2007**

The Opposition notes that the Minister for Health considers that it is disingenuous to inform people of what she stated in Parliament, namely that affected persons cannot be required to give details of their income to the Health Authority, nor can they be required, on penalty of being excluded from health care, to authorise the Commissioner of Income Tax to give the Health Authority access to tax files.

There is nothing in the law of Gibraltar that requires the Health Service to do this, and there is nothing in the law of Gibraltar that requires persons registering with the GPMS to provide that information.

Until the matter was raised in Parliament, pensioners who came to complain to us were being told that it was compulsory to give this information. Even after the Minister admitted in answer to supplementary questions that there was no such legal requirement, the Opposition have continued to receive reports that persons have been told that they have to provide such information.

What is clear is that in order to establish what such a law requires, one does not need to be a lawyer, so that fact that Mr Costa is a practicing lawyer is totally irrelevant. All that is required is a minimal command of the English language which seems to be beyond the capacity of Mrs del Agua.

Having been forced to back down in the Parliament on the position adopted by her department, for which she is politically responsible, she has confirmed in her response that there is no need to provide such information.

The Minister, instead of seeking to undermine the credibility of Mr Costa, whose analysis is correct, should be gracious enough to admit that this is something that is wrong and that it should be put right. Indeed, she should be grateful to the Opposition for bringing the matter to her attention.

The sooner that the Minister does something to ensure that the form makes clear that such information is not a requirement, and is

only there to be given voluntarily, the better it will be for all concerned.

Given the entrenched and intolerant attitude adopted by the Minister on this issue, it is apparent that Mrs del Agua is already preparing herself to do to the health service what she did to our social services department. Patients, staff and families, beware!

ENDS