

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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The Government continue to try to mislead the public by deflecting attention from the central issue whenever their shortcomings are exposed on any matter. Their response to the points raised by Shadow Health Minister Neil Costa regarding the delay in setting up a routine, structured mammography service is typical of this tactic.

The plain fact is that the commencement of this service has been subject to delay after delay. This has been both of an equipment and of a staffing nature, central to which was the Government's claim that a third radiologist needed to be recruited before the service could start. Therefore the assertion by the Opposition that the delay in recruiting a third radiologist would affect the start of the routine, structured mammography service was based on the reasons given by the Minister for Health herself in Parliament.

In answer to questions in September 2008, December 2008, June 2009, October 2009 and February 2010 it was made clear that having a third radiologist in post was part and parcel of the service. This was not an assumption it was based on information provided in answer to questions by none other than Mrs Del Agua herself.

The Government has now changed its tune through the implication in its latest statement that it may be possible to start the service without having the third radiologist in post by using Teleradiology. This system allows a radiologist to provide services to a hospital by analysing the images which are sent over the internet, using specialised software, without being based at the actual hospital. In other words, the service is outsourced.

This is all very well and it may indeed be good news for the women of Gibraltar but it begs the question as to why the Government did not go down this route earlier given the difficulties that were being encountered with the recruitment. This would have saved a

considerable amount of time and trouble and the service could have already been underway. Moreover, when questioned in Parliament in February the Government said nothing about its intention to explore the use of Teleradiology and instead they informed the House that the third radiologist had actually been employed on 18 January on a locum basis for two months. The decision of the Government to explore Teleradiology is an indication of its failure to recruit a permanent radiologist and a reflection of the fact that everything is not well with that department because clearly nobody wants to work there.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Health Minister Neil Costa said:

“The Minister’s response betrays a Government that is on its way out and that is desperately clutching at straws in order to defend its position. The reality is that the Minister has done herself no favours by now indicating, after all this time, that there was another option open to them other than appointing a third radiologist. For years the Government has chosen to wait until a third radiologist had been recruited and made the commencement of a routine, structured mammography service conditional on this appointment. In the meantime the women of Gibraltar have been made to wait for years and years and now in 2010 the service is still not operational. The public are fed up with the pathetic excuses offered by the GSD administration on this and every other issue. The Government are tired and worn out and the sooner they are thrown out of office the better it will be for Gibraltar as a whole.”