

DIRECTORS OF NURSING, SOUTH WEST AREA

538. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I am sorry that the question is a bit wordy.

I refer to the minister's plans to abolish 12 full-time dedicated director of nursing positions in the south west, which are currently filled by senior nurses who are on call 24 hours a day. These positions will be replaced by just seven cluster managers, who will be responsible for running two or three hospitals, community health programs and staff, and making emergency and day-to-day decisions at hospitals separated by round trips of more than 100 kilometres. I ask -

- (1) How does the minister anticipate that the new cluster managers will find time to manage those additional hospital staff and health management programs, given that at present the management of one hospital is a full-time job?
- (2) Is the minister aware that this plan will result in key decision makers at hospitals often not being present on site to assess the situation because they will be on the road or at a different site, or will be unable to be contacted because of poor mobile phone coverage?
- (3) Will the minister concede that this ludicrous plan has the potential to seriously compromise the health and safety of patients and hospital staff, especially considering that the new positions may be filled by people without a medical background?
- (4) Why has the minister failed to respond to requests from the Australia Nursing Federation to help this restructure, pending the finalisation of enterprise bargaining negotiations?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I must apologise to the honourable member because earlier I indicated to him that I had the answer to the question. I do have an answer, but that answer is that providing the information in the time available is not possible and the minister, therefore, requests that the member place the question on notice.