

GENERAL PRACTITIONERS — AFTER-HOURS SERVICES

**190. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Health:**

I know that the Liberal–National state government, as one of its election commitments, has been putting substantial funds into encouraging doctors’ surgeries to remain open after hours to better serve the needs of the community. What, however, is the state government doing to make people aware of which general practitioners are available after hours?

**Dr K.D. HAMES replied:**

Members will be well aware that this government, on coming to power in 2008, put in \$8.4 million to assist in keeping general practices open after hours. A large number of general practices took advantage of those available funds and added themselves to the list of those that were open after hours. As part of that process, we launched a phone app, which is one of most frequently downloaded phone apps in this state; more than 12 000 people so far have downloaded that app. It is an after-hours GP app, and I have used it myself. People can get on the site and it shows their location and the nearest GP practice open near their location. People click on that and get the phone number to ring and get an appointment, and if they want to get there, it will then give directions on how to get there. It is a fantastic app. Lots of GPs have listed their practices on that app. I have the figures here; there are 53 after-hours clinics. By “after hours”, I mean mostly Saturday afternoons, Sundays or public holidays, so 53 practices have now done that across the state, with 38 in the metropolitan area, both locum services, and 13 in regional Western Australia.

The funding to do that was provided over four years, and the federal government, as I am sure members have heard, will now put in its own funding to support after-hours GP clinics. Therefore, we are now initiating a large campaign to make people aware of the existence of that phone app. That will be a media campaign to make everyone aware. It is critically important. People can use it on an iPhone or on a computer; in fact, any phone that has linkages to the internet can use that app. Also, if people ring HealthDirect, it can provide not only a list of GP practices that are open, but also information on how to download the app.

If members do not have the app on their phones, it is free, and I strongly suggest that they get it. People never know when they might need it, particularly if they have family who are sick after hours. Rather than going to a hospital when it is not necessarily a serious injury, people can get on the app, find doctors’ practices located around them that are open, and go there. Another fantastic use is if people are at sports events with their children, and children are injured, and in an area where they do not know where the nearest doctor is located, they can just get on the phone, find the nearest doctor, ring them up, and get the child there straightaway. It is a fantastic app to have. I recommend that all members get it.