

OSBORNE PARK HOSPITAL, MATERNITY WARD

Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to the government report entitled "Clinical Reform" - I know that the minister will be well aware of that report - which is dated August 2001. It states on page 17 that it is proposed that the obstetric services at Osborne Park Hospital should be closed.

- (1) Does the Government intend to close the maternity ward at Osborne Park Hospital?
- (2) If not, will the Government immediately replace those specialists who have recently resigned or are about to leave the services at the hospital?

Mr KUCERA replied:

- (1)-(2) First, the report was not a government report as such. It was prepared by a member of the hospital staff as a suggestion to government.

Mr Board: Who appointed Dr Beresford?

Mr KUCERA: The member's Government. Secondly, the simple answer to the question about the closing of the maternity ward at Osborne Park Hospital is categorically no. Nobody intends to close the obstetric services at that hospital. Thirdly, if the member for Murdoch were doing his research, in which he seemed to be lacking greatly last year, he would know that the head of the Australian Medical Association, who is not always my best friend but we do get on very well, says that there is a worldwide, Australia-wide and statewide shortage of obstetricians.

Mr Board: What do you intend to do about it?

Mr KUCERA: Of course we intend to replace the obstetricians at that hospital. In fact, one local obstetrician has already indicated that he is interested in taking up a position at the hospital. Secondly, there have been a number of firm overseas applications for the position of obstetrician. However, this also comes down to the issue generally of talking down services like those at Osborne Park Hospital and across the State. This week, a country member of the Liberal Party whipped up absolute hysteria in a country town, where the country town's hospital board had set out to do great things to its hospital. I now think that member has egg on his face.

I come back to the member's question about what I will do about this situation. I certainly will not do what the member for Murdoch suggested we do at Armadale; that is, pay people \$3 000 a night to sit in a motel room. What a great way to run a health system! We will have a health system that will reflect the needs of this community and this State.