

Mr Mike Board; Mr Kucera; Speaker; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Matt Birney;
Mr John Hyde

HOSPITAL BYPASSES, INCREASE

444. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

Can the minister please explain, given that the Premier has failed to do so, why there is a tenfold increase in hospital bypasses in Western Australia? We want to hear the answer.

Mr KUCERA replied:

I would be delighted to answer this question. It is amazing. We hear the questions today, and see the flagpole on which the rabble opposite has nailed its colours. It is the same single-interest group that today puts "Money Money Money" before the health of this community. What is this question about?

Several opposition members interjected.

Mr KUCERA: If Colin the cockerel wants to listen, we will go down that track. This is about money; this is about a pay dispute. This is about the Australian Medical Association showing its true colours. This is the most blatant piece of electioneering I have seen by an interest group so far. I put opposition members in the same boat as the people on whose mast they have nailed their flag. Can any opposition member honestly say that the AMA can justify the debacle that has become aged care in this country?

Several opposition members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murdoch has asked the question, he does not need to repeat it seven times by way of interjection. The minister is endeavouring to answer the question.

Mr KUCERA: Can the AMA or members opposite justify the fact that Western Australia has copped an absolutely raw deal -

Point of Order

Mr BRADSHAW: The question has nothing to do with the AMA; it is to do with ambulance bypasses, and the minister should answer the question.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Question time is an opportunity for members to ask questions, and the minister answers those questions as he sees fit. I remember sitting on that side of the House and thinking that the minister had not answered the question. Members may not like the answer, but the answer they get is the answer they get.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr KUCERA: Can the AMA and opposition members in this House justify the serious decline in the number of doctors and health services in country areas? The Commonwealth has to justify, and has to bear -

Several opposition members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The level of noise is such that the minister cannot get a word in. I do not know whether the Opposition wants an answer.

Mr Day: It is nowhere near an answer yet.

The SPEAKER: Order! To interject on me is highly disorderly. Members who do that run the risk of being brought to order in a way they will not like. It is time to listen to the answer.

Mr KUCERA: For the federal coalition Government to say it is a friend of the public hospital system is a joke. The people are faced with a choice: Howard and Bishop or Kim Beazley and Jenny Macklin. I know who cares about the health system in this country.

Yesterday, as a member of the West Coast Eagles Football Club, virtually from the first day, I was very proud to see John Worsfold back as coach of that great football team. John Worsfold said himself that no-one expected him to win a premiership in his first year as coach. I do not expect to win a premiership. The difference between the previous minister and me -

Points of Order

Mr BARNETT: This is question time. Two questions have been asked on this topic. We are now hearing about John Worsfold's coaching career. Question time is part of the accountability of this Government in this Parliament.

Mr KOBELKE: The Leader of the Opposition has a reputation as a dummy spitter, but that does not help the processes of this Chamber. There is no point of order. The Minister for Health has been -

Mr Mike Board; Mr Kucera; Speaker; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Matt Birney;
Mr John Hyde

Several opposition members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Barnett: This question time has been a farce.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is right; this question time has been a farce because of the number of interjections that have prolonged the answers well beyond what was necessary.

Mr KOBELKE: I was seeking to make the point that there is no point of order from the Leader of the Opposition, because the Minister for Health is attempting to answer the question, but most of the time has been taken up by the uproar from the opposition side that has made it impossible for him to answer the question. The minister will answer the question within the standing orders. That is his right. He will do that as he wishes, and the Opposition will not, through noise or some other form, dictate what the answer will be.

Mr BOARD: This is the second time we have asked this question. We asked the question of the Premier and we did not get an answer. We asked the question of the Minister for Health, because we could not get an answer. Now the Minister for Health is talking about football! There needs to be some relevance in the answers given in this House.

Mr BIRNEY: The Leader of the House said that the Minister for Health will answer the questions according to the standing orders. Standing Order No 78 states clearly that the answer must be relevant to the question. I ask the minister to make his answer relevant to the question, and to answer the question according to standing orders.

Mr HYDE: The Minister for Health had begun a sentence; he had not even got to the verb, such was the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. Until the minister has the chance to get one sentence out, there cannot be a point of order.

The SPEAKER: Under Standing Order No 78, it is clear that the answer must be relevant in some way to the question. I am sure the minister is endeavouring to do that. I ask the minister to bring his answer to a conclusion.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr KUCERA: The point I was making about John Worsfold is that he expects to build a team around him - as do I in health. He will not fix the problems that he faces overnight, and neither will I. I have never said that, and neither am I in denial.

The ambulance bypass arrangement is a management process that has been in place for many years.

The Government has faced three major industrial disputes within the health system since it has come to power - two of which have been fixed. I will make two quick comments. Last year's President of the AMA, Dr Simon Towler, was reported in an article in *The West Australian* of 17 October as saying -

Like anything there is room for improvement but I would still choose to go to a WA public hospital if I was sick.

We must congratulate him for that.

An article in *The West Australian* this morning reported that Bunbury doctor Jon Mulligan had been awarded the Sidney Sax Medal for his outstanding contribution to the nation's health care system. In that article Dr Mulligan said -

Because it is so complex it is absolutely critical that doctors contribute, along with other key players, particularly health professionals.

They've got to be in the game rather than on the footpath watching, but not everyone has that as their principal interest . . .

The article stated -

Dr Mulligan denied Australia's health system was in crisis, but said it needed to carefully manage growing problem areas.

The Gallop Government is doing that.