

NURSES, SOUTH WEST, ABOLITION OF POSITIONS

2242. Hon Barry House to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Health

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 responsible for the running of two to 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 these additional hospitals, staff and health programs given that at present the management of one hospital is a full time job?
- (2) Is the Minister aware that this plan would 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 even uncontactable 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 is it that the Minister has failed to respond to requests from the ANF to halt this restructure pending the finalisation of enterprise bargaining negotiations?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

- (1) The model of service delivery is based on the Multi Purpose Service (MPS) model, which has proven to demonstrate considerable benefits to local communities through a coordinated and integrated approach.
All sites within SWAHS will retain a senior Nurse Manager with an enhanced clinical focus. Administrative functions will be undertaken by the District Manager to allow the nurse unit manager to concentrate on running each site on a daily basis.
- (2) A Senior Nurse Manager will have delegated responsibility to manage the site on a daily basis.
The District Manager will have the ability to oversee a group of health service units. In addition there is a senior nurse available on call 24/7 to the SWAHS units to provide advice and support to the health services.
- (3) Patient and staff safety will not be compromised; in fact having a senior nurse manager available at site with expanded clinical input will enhance it.
Clinically qualified staff including nurses, allied health, and managerial staff with relevant experience and/or qualifications within health will fill the positions.
- (4) The restructure is not related to the enterprise bargaining negotiations.