

WAR WIDOWS, PRIVATE PATIENTS

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

- (1) Do the State Government and Minister for Health support the repatriation private patient principles to provide care for war widows on a private patient basis?
- (2) If not, why not?
- (3) Does the Busselton District Hospital honour these principles and treat gold card carrying war widows on a private patient basis?
- (4) If not, what are the Government and the Minister for Health doing to see that these principles are being honoured?

Hon KEN TRAVERS replied:

On behalf of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health, I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question. I note that it was originally asked on 9 April. The question has been updated and is current as at 7 May; therefore, I assume that it is correct. I say that so that people understand the history of it in case any issues arise in the future.

- (1) Yes. Eligible veteran beneficiaries who choose to access public hospital services under the repatriation private patient schemes - RPPS - which the Department of Veterans' Affairs reimburses to the State, are entitled to a choice of public hospital with a minimum shared-ward accommodation and a choice of doctor, provided the doctor has admitting rights to the hospital. However, the private patient status under the RPPS is not the same as receiving treatment on a private patient basis under private health insurance such as Medibank or HBF. A private patient may have a private room and the patient may have to pay some gap if health insurance does not cover it in full. It is important to note that all public hospitals provide services to patients on the basis of clinical need and available resources at the hospital, regardless of the patient's insurance status.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Yes. The Busselton District Hospital honours the RPPS principles. However, as previously indicated, the hospital does not treat those patients on a private patient basis as though they are covered by private health insurance.
- (4) Not applicable.

The PRESIDENT: I call Hon Alan Cadby, followed by Hon Bill Stretch. I indicate to Hon Alan Cadby that if he wishes to ask two questions, I will allow him to ask two questions today. It appears that I have ignored him twice during the course of the week.