

HOSPITALS - WAITING LIST, ELECTIVE SURGERY

26. Mrs PARKER to the Minister for Health:

What is the current status of the waiting list for elective surgery?

Mr DAY replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. I am pleased to advise that there has been a further significant fall in the number of people waiting for elective surgery in our teaching hospitals to below 10 000. The number of people waiting has fallen by almost 50 per cent over the past two years to 9 880, as it was at the end of July this year. That is the lowest level since September 1993 in spite of a significant population increase over that seven-year period. That is very good news for people who are waiting for elective surgery or who need that form of treatment at our public hospitals. I am pleased to say that there has been a decrease in all categories of people waiting for surgery in the urgent, semi-urgent and non-urgent categories. The median waiting time currently stands at about 5.68 months compared to a maximum in excess of eight months as it was a couple of years ago.

This has been brought about by a number of policy initiatives implemented by this Government: Firstly, the allocation of \$125m over five years; secondly, the establishment over two years ago of the Central Wait List Bureau, which has led to patients being offered treatment in hospitals other than where they may have been waiting for treatment or initially contemplating treatment; and, thirdly, through the establishment of the Getting Patients Treated program, in which a number of general practitioners are involved in reviewing cases to determine whether surgery is still needed and, if so, whether it can be provided at an alternative facility. This is another example of the significant and tangible benefits flowing from the changes in the health system which this Government has put in place through substantial increases in funding, increased capacity through the construction of new facilities such as Joondalup and Peel Health Campuses and better coordination and reduction of duplications through the establishment of the Metropolitan Health Service Board.