HEALTH, POSITRON EMISSION TOMOGRAPHY SCANNERS

505.   Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to the announcement last Thursday by the federal health minister, Dr Michael Wooldridge, that successful tenders for the positron emission tomography scanners have been awarded to all States except Western Australia.

(1)   Will the minister explain why more than three months after the tender was due for submission he is no closer to lodging a tender despite the granting of an extension of time by the Commonwealth?

(2)   Does the minister concede that Western Australians are missing out on this vital cancer detection technology as a result of this mismanagement and may wait years to receive it?

Mr KUCERA replied:

(1)-(2)   The patients who desperately need the positron emission tomography scanner do not miss out. As I have already said in this House, we fly people to the eastern States on a regular basis. The member for Murdoch and the former Minister for Health know that we were unable to meet the tender because this State has unique problems in setting up a PET machine. Unlike members of the previous Government, I will not dishonestly enter into any contract that will expose this State to over $30 million expenditure. I have already said -

Mr Board: You play politics.

Mr KUCERA: I wrote to the federal minister outlining the difficulties and explaining why we could not meet the tender process. Dr Wooldridge subsequently rang and spoke to me, and I have written back and also spoken to him. His department is negotiating with the state Department of Health to find ways of recognising the unique situation of this State. In addition, this State Government has put aside in the budget money for a PET machine and a cyclotron machine. The money is already there. I have a responsibility to the people and taxpayers of this State to not expose them to over $30 million expenditure without doing things properly.