

HEALTH SYSTEM, OPPOSITION'S REPORT CARD

449. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the state Opposition's mid-term report card analysis of the Gallop Labor Government and ask if the claims made in it about the health system are accurate?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

Occasionally I turn on the Opposition's web site for a bit of a chuckle. After reading its mid-term report on health in this State, I must say that the level of inaccuracy, untruths and hypocrisy in it is quite outstanding. I will go through a few of the untruths. To those members who wish to know the facts, the short answer to whether it is accurate is absolutely not. Let us examine a couple of the report's claims. First, it claims that the health budget has been effectively cut.

Mr M.F. Board: We proved that in Treasury.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: The member for Murdoch has proved nothing. In fact, the best Treasurer in this State's history has put \$1 billion extra into health over the term of this Government. The report claims that this Government cut capital works spending when it committed \$375 million over the term of the Government, including \$109 million for capital funding in this year alone.

The most hypocritical claim of all is that this Government has done nothing to address the shortage of nurses. There are 361 new nurses in the system already. So far there have been 2 454 responses to our advertising campaign.

Mr M.F. Board: What is the net increase?

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I hear criticism of an advertising campaign that has made nursing one of the key occupations in this country. What is the real barrier? This year nursing schools will take in 600 student nurses. There were almost 2 500 applications from the brightest and best young people in this State who cannot get a place in a university because of the federal Government's refusal to fund them.

The member for Murdoch wants to criticise us. However, I will go to the worst untruth, and the reason it is the worst untruth is that it affected our negotiations with the federal Government about the children of this State. The member for Murdoch has said in this House on a number of occasions that the previous Government had allocated \$2 million from the sale of AlintaGas to the purchase of a magnetic resonance imaging scanner for Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. I challenge this member to prove that statement. The Department of Health has gone back and looked at every cent of that balloon full of gas that members opposite keep talking about, and not one single dollar was aimed at an MRI machine for the children of Western Australia. Apart from some wild accusations that members opposite made in this place, the only reference to the AlintaGas money for PMH was \$700 000 for a paediatric theatre. Those allegations were just like the AlintaGas money - so much gas and hot air.

In May this year, the children of this State will have an MRI machine at their hospital. This Government will put that machine into that hospital. The Government is getting on with the job and fixing the system.