

HARVEY AND YARLOOP HOSPITALS

**565. Mr BRADSHAW to the Minister for Health:**

I refer the minister to his statement in this House on regional health boards when he said -

At the end of the day, voices need to be heard; their voice needs to be at the corporate table . . .

- (1) Has the minister abolished the south west health services boards to silence criticism of the Government's slashing of rural health services?
- (2) Can the minister guarantee this is not the first step in a plan that will see the eventual closure of the Harvey and Yarloop hospitals?

**Mr KUCERA replied:**

- (1)-(2) Has the member read the report?

Mr Bradshaw: I have had a quick look at it.

Mr KUCERA: The member has not read it. I find it surprising that the member would raise this issue. He was one member of the Estimates Committee who very sensibly talked about the levels of bureaucracy he found in the administrations of small country hospitals. I repeatedly see small country hospitals that have about 25 staff members and an occupancy level of 1.4 that need to be configured with other small hospitals in their areas so services are used properly. Enormous pressure from aged care is being brought to bear on small country hospitals. I have had recent discussions with the federal Minister for Health and Aged Care about the capacity to configure such hospitals so that the Government can deal with aged care issues. None of this can be done in an environment of constant carping and whingeing, whereby people stand in the way of reform that will make rural hospitals and health services able to improve the capacity to deliver the services required. I suggest that the member read the report. He should read the answer I gave to the previous question asked of me when I quoted from the report -

The Minister for Health invites members of the existing Boards to assume the roles of local Health Advisory Councils, and the Board Chairs be invited to form an interim South West Health Advisory Council to replace the South West Health Executive.

Nobody has been sacked. This is the first stage of a reform process that will give the country people of this State the capacity to have the health services they need. The Government has the courage to make these changes. As I have said to the member for Murdoch in the House a number of times, doing things the same way and expecting reform and change is insanity. It has to be done properly and sensibly. This is a sensible decision and I applaud the board for its courage in putting this on the table.