

PEEL HEALTH CAMPUS, MEDICAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE PREMIUMS OF VISITING MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

24. Mr A.D. MARSHALL to the Minister for Health:

I refer -

Dr G.I. Gallop: Why do you not ask me a question about health? Then I could inform the House about the reality of your Government.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: The Premier thinks he is a know-all, but this question is to the Minister for Health.

I refer the minister to his statements in the House that the State Government would not pay the medical indemnity insurance premiums of visiting medical practitioners performing vital maternity services at the Peel Health Campus because they are paid on a fee-for-services basis.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the Department of Health has paid the medical indemnity insurance premiums of visiting medical practitioners at Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital and Geraldton Regional Hospital?
- (2) On what basis were those premiums paid, how many specialists were involved and what was the total cost to the taxpayer?
- (3) Why is the State Government discriminating against the Peel Health Campus by refusing to provide similar support for its visiting medical practitioners?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for his question and for some notice of it.

- (1)-(3) The simple answer to the member's questions is yes. All specialist obstetricians and rural general practitioners in Western Australia providing obstetric, anaesthetic and general surgery services in rural areas, including the Peel region, are eligible for a part reimbursement of the 2002-03 medical indemnity insurance subscription. The amount of subsidy effectively freezes the premiums for eligible GPs at the 1995-96 indexed level, and at the 2000-01 level for specialists. The amount of reimbursement is the difference between the indexed rate and the current costs. The note I gave the member contained a definition of what is covered for obstetric, anaesthetic and general surgical services, but I will explain it to the House. The indemnity covers accredited specialists providing obstetric delivery services but not shared care, accredited anaesthetists providing general spinal and epidural services, and accredited general surgeons providing major surgery under a general anaesthetic or a major regional block. To date, 117 GPs have submitted an application for the payment of medical indemnity subsidies through the Western Australian Centre for Remote and Rural Medicine. Additionally, there are eight eligible specialist obstetricians in country Western Australia. The total cost to the State this year could be as high as \$1.5 million. All rural specialist obstetricians and rural GPs in Western Australia providing obstetric, anaesthetic and general surgery services in rural areas, including the Peel region and Geraldton - which the member mentioned - are eligible.