

AGED CARE CRISIS, PUBLIC STATEMENTS

496. Mr BOWLER to the Minister for Health:

Will the minister outline the significance of statements by the owner of one of Australia's largest private nursing homes on the aged care crisis now in Australia?

Mr KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for Eyre for his question. I recognise the enormous amount of work he is doing currently in his electorate to keep open aged care homes because of the crisis that is obviously occurring in the aged care industry. However, although I thank the member for the question, the worm turns again. One of the most fundamental supporters of the Liberal Party in this country, Mr Doug Moran, has correctly, in his view, told the Liberal Party to get stuffed. It is as simple as that. In fact, I shall quote what he said -

... the Liberal Party can get stuffed.

Withdrawal of Remark

The SPEAKER: The language used by the minister is unparliamentary and I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr CARPENTER: Mr Speaker, I understand that it was a direct quote from Mr Moran using his words.

The SPEAKER: My direction stands.

Mr KUCERA: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I withdraw that remark. However, that is the quote in *The Weekend Australian*. I take your point, Mr Speaker, about it being unparliamentary.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr KUCERA: Obviously the view of Mr Moran is that the federal Liberal Party is being unparliamentary at the moment because he went on to say -

Labor's prepared to do something for aged care, and they will get my vote at this election.

Doug Moran obviously does not believe John Howard. I suspect that anybody who is trying to get his or her parents into aged care currently in this State would realise that there is a crisis in aged care. Kim Beazley has recognised the problem nationally. I spoke with him about it when he was in Western Australia the other day, and he has promised an additional \$180 million to fix the problem.

It is interesting to note that since 1997 the number of nursing home beds in Perth has reduced by 150; in that same period the number of people over the age of 70 has grown by 11 000. Currently there is a shortfall in the State of 450 beds, and some 1 500 beds need to be capitalised. It is obvious that the shortfall is placing pressure on public hospitals and their emergency departments. I checked yesterday and was advised that Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital currently has 16 aged care patients occupying hospital beds in major wards. On any given day, up to 150 people occupy beds in acute care hospitals and right across the State sometimes up to 300. The State has spent this year up to \$30 million to move people out of acute care hospital beds and into appropriate nursing home beds and other hospital beds. Members talk about cost shifting but we must now find \$30 million in the state budget for a problem that John Howard says we do not have. It is time members realised that only Kim Beazley clearly understands that elderly people deserve their place in the sun.