

SOUTH WEST AREA HEALTH SERVICE, WEEKEND ROSTER FOR OBSTETRICS SERVICES

72. Hon Barry House to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Health
- (1) Why is the South West Area Health Service refusing to negotiate a weekend roster of local doctors in Margaret River to deliver obstetrics services?
  - (2) Is the Minister aware or concerned that of the four doctors in Margaret River currently delivering babies, two have already announced they will stop obstetrics if this decision is pursued?
  - (3) Is the Minister also aware or concerned that this will force women to give birth in Bunbury, or some other distant locality?
  - (4) Why is this decision being pursued in a vibrant, growing regional town, especially in light of the fact that the long awaited \$3 million hospital upgrade, currently under way, will provide a brand new Obstetrics Unit?
  - (5) How will this decision enhance Regional Development in Western Australia?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

- (1) The South West Area Health Service (SWAHS) has declined to vary long-standing arrangements not to separately roster GP Obstetricians at Margaret River as it considers the establishment of an "on-call" roster in the community unnecessary.

Four GPs have Medical Service Agreements (contracts) with SWAHS to provide Obstetric Services at Margaret River Hospital. On-call payments are not made as part of these Agreements as they are over and above the fees for the "inpatient " component of care paid by SWAHS for patients electing public rather than private status. Those fees are paid whether or not an on-call roster operates.

The provision of ante and postnatal care in the community is a private arrangement between each patient and their chosen Obstetrician in which the Health Service plays no part. The Health Service supports the Obstetricians by making hospital facilities and midwifery staff available when admission is required.

For a small number of pregnant patients - most often visitors to the area - a need for hospital care may arise without a private arrangement for pregnancy care being made with a local Obstetrician. In these instances, "on-call" obstetric services are available at Busselton District Hospital and Bunbury Regional Hospital.

Both Busselton and Bunbury hospitals have rostered anaesthetic services and surgical and pathology back up which is not available at Margaret River.

- (2) Yes. If the two doctors resign the South West Area Health Service would facilitate a process of referral to those doctors in the south west that practice obstetrics in Margaret River, Busselton and Bunbury according to patients choice and doctors willingness to provide obstetric services.
- (3) Yes. Women who are booked for delivery via their GP Obstetrician may continue to access services at Margaret River. On-call services for unbooked deliveries are available at Busselton District Hospital (within 30 minutes) or at Bunbury Regional Hospital.
- (4) The availability of Obstetricians rostered "on-call" at Busselton and at Bunbury makes a similar arrangement at Margaret River unnecessary. The current Margaret River Hospital upgrade will incorporate improvements to a range of facilities, not only those used for obstetric care.
- (5) It is not anticipated that the issue will impact on Regional Development. South West Area Health Service is committed to the continued provision of high quality obstetric services within the South West area including GP Obstetrics.