

BUDGET, HEALTH

**1023. Ms RADISICH to the Minister for Health:**

Can the minister respond to claims by the Leader of the Opposition that there does not appear to be a \$99 million increase in this year's health budget?

**Mr KUCERA replied:**

I, like the member for Swan Hills, was a little concerned at some comments made by the Leader of the Opposition last week. He is reported as saying on the Barnett and Murray show on radio station 6PR -

Well, they're claiming to have announced all sorts of things. If you look at some of the expenditure, it's very strange. For example, the Government's claiming a \$99million increase in health, and claimed in the Budget speech this was the greatest increase ever, well that's simply not true. . . I don't believe that's a \$99million increase at all . . .

That is very misleading. A simple reading of the *Budget Statements* shows that the increase is very clearly laid out. The next statement I will quote is not an attempt to mislead; it is simply a misunderstanding. The shadow health minister, the member for Murdoch, said in a media statement of 16 May -

. . . though Labor had announced an extra \$99 million for Health, the money was not evident in the budget papers.

Mr Board said the budget showed a total increase in health spending of just \$48 million, representing a real cut, after inflation, of one per cent.

"I hope I can be proved wrong," Mr Board said.

I direct the attention of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Murdoch to the *Budget Statements*. I am sure that this year they will be able to read them properly. On page 1203, it is clearly shown that the estimated budget outcome, excluding capital expenditures, for this financial year will be \$2.282 billion, which will increase to \$2.381 billion in the 2002-03 financial year. I must compliment the Treasurer on a very balanced and sensible budget for health which, as the Australian Medical Association stated the other day, is a real foundation to build on in this State. I say to the member for Murdoch and the Leader of the Opposition - the much exalted economist who keeps talking about this matter - that by anybody's simple mathematics the difference is \$98.6 million.

In answer to the comments made about the capital account in that same program, this Government, unlike the previous Government, likes to plan for the future. That is particularly important when replacing equipment such as imaging machinery and important but outdated medical facilities. The 2002-03 budget provides for capital expenditure on health of \$109 million.

Mr Board: How much is in new works?

Mr KUCERA: If the member for Murdoch would like to read page 1237 of the *Budget Statements*, he will see outlined there a holding allocation of \$67 million and a further \$38 million capital contribution. I ask the member for Murdoch, before he makes any more of these kinds of misleading statements, to save his questions for the estimates hearings and to state the situation properly.

Mr Board interjected.

Mr KUCERA: We talked about a bipartisan approach. Health is so important in this State that I put the member for Murdoch on notice now that these kinds of misleading statements help nobody.