

SWAN DISTRICT HOSPITAL, STAFF

287. Ms RADISICH to the Minister for Health:

Will the minister advise the House about the progress that has been made to resolve the staffing problem at Swan District Hospital, which has led to the temporary and partial closure of its emergency department?

Mr KUCERA replied:

I will first indulge members by saying that the daffodils in the Chamber represent the excellent work done by the Cancer Foundation of WA, and I remind members that it is Daffodil Day tomorrow. I thank members for agreeing to allow those daffodils to be placed in the House. Daffodil Day celebrates all the people who do excellent work in that foundation, particularly the volunteers who support the people who have encountered that dreadful disease.

I thank the member for some notice of this question and I acknowledge her active and constructive involvement in our efforts to ensure that the Swan District Hospital emergency department returns to full capacity as quickly as possible.

The Department of Health and I have worked very hard over the past week to secure suitably qualified staff to work at the Swan District Hospital. Unfortunately, a number of impediments appear to be in our way, despite the interest shown by locum services to provide staff on a short-term basis, and interest from doctors from the Western Australian health system and overseas. Although the Government is committed to ensuring that the Swan District Hospital's emergency department returns to full strength, and although we have some options before us, I am forced to conclude that there may be people within the system who are standing in the way of an immediate solution.

It is incomprehensible that, with all its resources, the Western Australian health system is unable to arrange appropriate provision of services throughout the metropolitan area, including the Swan district, which has a rapidly growing population. This afternoon I will meet with senior doctors to discuss this issue, and I hope that we will agree to a resolution. I will also raise a matter that I believe is a major structural problem in the health system that has led in part to the current situation in the Swan district. I hope that we can work together to improve those services and address those structural flaws.

As I have said before, the closure of the Swan District Hospital's emergency department is not acceptable to this Government or to the community that relies on the vital services it offers. I am determined to get a resolution to ensure that this important service requirement is restored. It is vital that everyone who has a stake in the Western Australian health system works cooperatively to find a solution as quickly as possible. I retain my confidence in senior medical staff and in their ability to work with me to find a solution.