

HEALTH, COMMUNITY MIDWIFERY PROGRAM

841. Hon P G Pental to the Minister for Health

- (1) Is it correct that the Government funds the Community Midwifery Program?
- (2) Is it correct that the program allows women to remain at home or attend birth centres for the birth of their children?
- (3) Has the Guild Insurance Company been providing professional indemnity insurance to midwives in private practice?
- (4) Is it correct that the company intends to cease providing such indemnity insurance from 31 August 2001?
- (5) What steps does the Government intend to take to ensure that the option of home births and birth centres remains a viable option for women in Western Australia?
- (6) Will the Minister report to the House as a matter of urgency on what action will be taken?

Mr KUCERA replied:

- (1) The State and Commonwealth fund the Community Midwifery Program. This is the only program of its type in Australia.
- (2) The program provides for 150 women who meet the eligibility criteria and who reside in the metropolitan area to receive midwifery led care for the antenatal care, birth either at home or in hospital and post natal care.
- (3)-(4) Yes
- (5) The Department of Health has been working closely with King Edward Memorial Hospital management and the Community Based Midwifery program staff to determine employment contracts that will allow the home birth program to continue for public patients. As an interim solution the midwives will be employed from 31 August 2001 by the Metropolitan Health Service and continue to provide services to those women enrolled in the program. King Edward Memorial Hospital provides services at the Family Birth Centre for public patients and service delivery is not affected by the withdrawal by Guild Insurance of Professional Indemnity Insurance.
- (6) The Department of Health and Community Based Midwifery program staff have been working together to develop an interim solution that will ensure this valued service is maintained. In the interim the midwives will be employed from 31 August 2001 by the Metropolitan Health Service through King Edward Memorial Hospital. This will enable the midwives to be insured, as they will be employees. The program will continue to provide services to those women enrolled in the program. The Department of Health, King Edward Memorial Hospital and the Community Based Midwifery Program are committed to continuing to work together to find some medium term solutions to ensure the continuity and integration of the community based midwifery service for women and families in Western Australia. The Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council (AHMAC) has convened a national AHMAC Jurisdictional Working Party on Medical Indemnity and as part of the consultation process the issue of midwives' indemnity insurance will be addressed.