

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING MACHINE, PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN

897. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to the \$500 000 on offer from the federal Minister for Health and Ageing towards the establishment of a magnetic resonance imaging machine at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children.

- (1) Has the minister received a letter from the federal Minister for Health and Ageing outlining a decision from the MRI evaluation group on a Medicare licence for PMH?
- (2) Is it true that the current financial offer is a carryover of last year's federal budget and is available only until 30 June 2002?
- (3) Knowing the evaluation group will take some time to deliberate on the case for special licences for children's hospitals in Australia - a position we support - why put at risk this financial support, when the minister knows it is the responsibility of the State to provide these services, especially for in-patients?

Mr KUCERA replied:

- (1)-(3) The question makes a mockery of the so-called deal that was worked out by the member for Murdoch with the federal minister, Senator Kay Patterson. I remind all members that last week the member for Murdoch made a great play of the so-called deal. I understand that this kind of arrangement was discussed as long ago as October last year by the management of the Department of Health following the deal that was worked out with a South Australian hospital to try to get a second-hand machine. I have received a number of letters from Senator Patterson. More importantly, I took the time and trouble to meet with her last week when I was attending the Australian Health Ministers Conference and discussed at length with her the priorities of this State. I was absolutely firm that this Government's commitment is to the key priority of Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. She agreed that the previous Blandford report recommended an additional licence for this State. She also agreed that the issue was overridden by the previous minister, for whatever reason. I have agreed with her that I will await the outcome of her decision on the program that is being put together for the issue of licences in this State generally. Instead of the member for Murdoch and opposition members constantly getting in the way of a program to make the federal Government face up to its responsibilities, I ask whether they raised their voices when they were on this side of the House and whether the previous Government refused to honour the recommendations of the Blandford report. A public licence has not been issued in this State for nine years. Four licences have been issued to private operators, who now have 11 machines in this State. The member for Murdoch wants me to enter into a grubby little second-hand deal for the lives of the children of this State. He is a disgrace.