

AMBULANCE BYPASSES

298. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to his recent comments on ABC radio that having hospitals on bypass is, and I quote -

No different from going down to get your sandwich at lunchtime . . . if you go down at 12.30 you're going to stand in a queue, if you go down at 2.00 o'clock, you're not.

That is not a good call.

- (1) Will the minister admit that likening patients attending a hospital emergency department to standing in line at a deli is not good taste?
- (2) Given there have been at least 260 ambulance bypasses since February this year and ambulance drivers are ignoring bypass notifications due to concerns that patients' lives are being put at risks - the ambulance drivers are saying that - will the minister take some action to resolve this issue?

Mr KUCERA replied:

(1)-(2) As usual, the member for Murdoch tries to make frivolous everything that is said on these issues.

Mr Barnett interjected.

Mr KUCERA: The Opposition is exhibiting the usual level of statesmanship. Ambulance bypass -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not know whether the member for Murdoch wants an answer, but every time the minister endeavours to answer the member's question he yells the minister down.

Mr KUCERA: The ambulance people have acknowledged that there are peak periods. I have been working with them ever since the Government came into power. Obviously the member for Murdoch is choosing to ignore the answers I give during question time. As I said in the House the other day, a proper emergency management process has been implemented, of which ambulance bypass is part of the process. They have been under extreme pressure.

Mr Pandal interjected.

Mr KUCERA: I will ignore that interjection, if I may, Mr Speaker.

A proper process is in place. In fact, this evening I will meet with all the emergency management people, including St John Ambulance, with whom the Government is in constant touch. The emergency department information system - EDIS - operates in such a way that allows the bypass to be a proper management tool. Nobody wants that. Along with the other examples that I have given, I was trying to highlight the fact that in all parts of life we reach peak periods.

Mr Pandal interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for South Perth.

Mr KUCERA: I will not answer that, because today it is insensitive to make that interjection in this House.

Mr Pandal interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for South Perth.

Mr KUCERA: I will ignore that interjection because it relates to a very sensitive issue.

Mr Pandal interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for South Perth, I am sure that this issue is distressing to many people. If the member wishes to address this matter, I suggest he do so in a separate motion. However, at the moment the Minister for Health is attempting to provide an answer to the last question of question time.

Mr KUCERA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is insensitive and inappropriate to make that interjection today, because I attempted to speak to the family concerned yesterday evening, and their baby's funeral is being held today.

The New South Wales emergency department plan is almost identical to the emergency department plan to which I referred in the House earlier this week. That plan was put together by the emergency management people in this State. Hospital bypass, as it has now become known, was introduced under the previous Government, and it is a proper management tool. However, as I have constantly stressed, there will always be times when that tool will be used. The figures that indicate the difference between this year and last year were

presented to the House yesterday, and they can be found in *Hansard*. It is a proper management tool. However, as usual, the member for Murdoch continues to denigrate our health system.

Mr Pandal interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for South Perth, it is disorderly to speak when I am on my feet.