

DR JUSTIN VIVIAN, ACCESS TO HOSPITALS

**692. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:**

This is a long question on an important issue.

- (1) Is the minister aware of a current offer from a urological surgeon, Dr Justin Vivian, who currently consults at Margaret River Hospital, to perform some procedures for local patients at the Busselton District Hospital?
- (2) Why has access to operating theatres at these hospitals been denied to Dr Vivian?
- (3) Is the minister aware that, as a result of this refusal of access to local operating theatres, at least two more Margaret River patients have been added to the waitlist for Royal Perth Hospital, which has delayed their treatment for some time?
- (4) What will the estimated patient assisted travel scheme payments be to these patients when they eventually receive their treatment in Perth?
- (5) What would have been the cost of providing an operating theatre at the Busselton District Hospital for these patients?
- (6) Does the Gallop Government expect all medical procedures of this nature to be centralised in Perth?
- (7) If so, how does this Government expect elderly patients in rural Australia to continually meet the cost and inconvenience of not being able to receive relatively minor treatment at their local hospital?
- (8) Why does the minister continue to express a wish to increase health services to rural Australia when all the evidence, in a case like this and others, indicates the contrary?
- (9) Is it the minister's wish that all patients in rural Western Australia, especially the elderly who require medical attention, pack their bags and move to Perth?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The Busselton health service does not propose to increase urology services in 2000-01.
- (3) Specialist urology services are available at Busselton District Hospital and Bunbury Regional Hospital.
- (4) Patients may not be eligible for assistance through the patient assisted travel scheme for urological surgery in Perth, as PATS assistance is provided only for referral to the nearest available service. PATS does not provide access to a choice of specialist.
- (5) Not known. Costs are dependent upon the scope of surgical procedures undertaken.
- (6) No.
- (7) Not applicable.
- (8) The Government has committed an extra \$6 million over four years to increase the availability of specialist services in rural areas.
- (9) Medical services are provided in rural areas where it is viable and safe to do so. If patients are required to travel to Perth to access specialist medical services, assistance with the costs of travel and accommodation is provided through PATS.