

**KING EDWARD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN**

*Statement by Minister for Health*

**MR R.C. KUCERA** (Yokine - Minister for Health) [9.06 am]: In line with the Government's commitment to keep the people of Western Australia fully informed about the implementation of the recommendations arising from the 1999-2000 report of the inquiry into obstetric and gynaecological services at King Edward Memorial Hospital, I will outline the progress that has been made since I last reported to the Parliament in June.

As members know, a high-level implementation group was appointed in January this year to oversee the implementation of the 237 recommendations made by the Douglas inquiry. Since my last report to the Parliament at the end of June, a further 45 recommendations have been signed off; and, as at 18 September, a total of 99 recommendations have been reviewed and signed off. Eight of these have been signed off in an amended form to reflect the current scarcity of specialist staff and organisational practicalities. The progress of the remaining 138 recommendations are at various stages.

I am pleased to report that King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women has recently implemented a range of new procedures, including the involvement of midwifery and medical staff, who have attended comprehensive training in foetal monitoring, in the care of pregnant women; workshops on perineal repair for new resident medical staff prior to commencing work in the delivery suite; a policy to manage a situation in which a woman requires an emergency caesarean section when all theatres are busy; the rostering of a consultant obstetrician to the delivery suite on a weekday, which will mean that he or she will no longer be rostered to any other area during that time; and, five committees with statutory protection under the Health Services (Quality Improvement) Act 1994 have been established at the Women and Children's Health Service to monitor and evaluate the safety and quality of health services, including reviewing incidents and deaths.

In addition to these important steps, King Edward is working to ensure that women are fully informed about the treatment options available to them, as well as giving patients their own antenatal records. The hospital has also reported improvements in the past six months in its decision-to-delivery interval for non-elective Caesarean sections - that is, the interval from the time of decision to perform the operation to the delivery of the baby, as well as the development of a formal program of compulsory training in surgical skills for registrars and residents of the hospital.

The Douglas report's recommendation to provide senior obstetric cover on-site 24 hours a day has been examined in detail and the hospital will move towards this, although we acknowledge that that could take some time due to the limited number of consultant obstetricians. Although the staff at King Edward Memorial Hospital have been working diligently to implement the recommendations, it may take longer than the end of 2002 for all the recommendations to be fully implemented.

Finally, an operational review by the internal audit branch of the Department of Health commenced this month to examine and report on the process of implementing the recommendations by the implementation group up to June this year. The Government is steadily working through all the recommendations of the Douglas report in line with its four-year \$25 million commitment to restore public confidence in our leading maternity hospital. I look forward to reporting further progress to Parliament in three months.