

PERTH DENTAL HOSPITAL, WAITING LISTS

474. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to ALP policy, which states -

Dental waiting lists are growing. Over 3 000 people have been waiting more than 9 months for treatment at Perth Dental Hospital.

Given that it is expected that replacement general dental services are to be provided by three new dental clinics at Armadale, Morley and Coolbellup when the Perth Dental Hospital is closed later this year -

- (1) Can the minister confirm that only one of these three general dental clinics will be functional when Perth Dental Hospital is closed?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that the Morley dental clinic will not be functional until at least July next year, and that work has not even commenced on the third dental clinic in Coolbellup?
- (3) Is it true that there will be a substantial lapse in services in the period between the closure of Perth Dental Hospital and the opening of the replacement service?

Mr KUCERA replied:

- (1)-(3) I thank the member for Murdoch for this question. What was surprising to me when I became minister was the mess that I inherited for the Perth Dental Hospital. I mentioned this during the debate on health the other day. The Perth Dental Hospital is due for closure and it will be closed. A number of provisions have already been put in place to extend the hours and the usage of the existing clinics. In addition, we are looking at support from the Como Dental Centre, which uses only one of its 15 chairs. At the moment, industrial as well as human resources processes are being put in place for all staff who received no indication from the previous Government about what their future would be.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr KUCERA: If that is the view of the member for Murdoch, it does not surprise me that we have the difficulties we have in health at the moment.

Mr Board interjected.

Mr KUCERA: The member for Murdoch asked the question.

Mr Board: You have not answered it.

Mr KUCERA: This is one of the problems we have inherited in health. A brand new facility is being built. I compliment the member for Darling Range for making sure that that facility was under way to support the dental profession in this State, but at the end of the day no transitional planning was done.

Mr Day: It was started off.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Darling Range.

Mr KUCERA: No provision was made for the transitional process, not just for the people who work in that hospital, but also for the patients. Those transitional issues are in place, they are being looked at, there is provision to move ahead, and the old Perth Dental Hospital will be closed. One of the things the culture in health has to realise is that as new facilities come on board, old facilities must close.