

PUBLIC DENTAL CLINIC, BUNBURY

1. Mr M.F. BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to the public dental clinic in Bunbury, which serves much of the south west of our State.

- (1) Is the minister aware that the waitlist at that clinic has tripled in the past two years?
- (2) Is the minister further aware that many patients - particularly elderly patients - are now being forced to wait up to 22 months for a standard consultation and 10 months to have dentures fitted?
- (3) Will the minister guarantee that the clinic will receive its long-awaited capital works allocation in the coming budget to replace one of its buildings which was built in 1956, and increase staff to deal with the ever-expanding blow-out of the backlog of patients?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

- (1)-(3) I remind the member for Murdoch that six years ago during the term of his Government the federal subsidy for dental health in this State was revoked by the federal Government, but we have now provided for it. Obviously, the amount of money to be spent in various budgets is a matter with which we will deal in the normal course of allocating the budgets. I am aware of some of the difficulties that have been experienced at Bunbury. Some of the difficulties have been linked to obtaining the services of dentists to work at clinics. I understand that maintenance has been an issue, but much of it has been attended to, which unfortunately was not the case under the previous Government. Again, that was an area of neglect.

I was very proud and pleased on Friday morning to attend the Returned and Services League homes in my electorate and, for a change, to give time to issues in my own electorate as well as my ministerial duties. I met with the dental team that has been put together.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who is the member for the Bunbury area, obviously does not want to listen to the answer of the question. I met with the team that is now attending aged care homes across this State. That is a \$6 million program that we had to put in place because pensioners and concession cardholders have lost their federal government subsidy. That program is now available across this State to deal with these issues.

I am very proud of what we are now doing with dental services in this State. Unlike the previous Government, we will continue to support the people in this State who need dental services.

The SPEAKER: I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.