

HOSPITALS, NON-URGENT ELECTIVE SURGERY

322. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to comments made on ABC radio this morning by the President of the Australian Medical Association in Western Australia relating to the backlog of cases in non-urgent elective surgery. He made assertions that it is unlikely that any non-urgent elective surgery will be undertaken in public hospitals in the next three years. Will the minister give members an indication of what will happen with non-elective surgery over the next 12 months?

Mr KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for Murdoch. As a result of some of the statements made yesterday by the AMA, I asked the Central Wait List Bureau to examine the figures. The median waiting time for category 3 surgery, to which the member for Murdoch referred, is 257 days as at 31 July 2001, which is eight and a half months. Medical conditions that require category 3 surgery are not life threatening, although they certainly interfere with the patient's quality of life. I would be concerned if the AMA were to suggest that its industrial relations campaign would interfere with the provision of that type of service. I also urge the member for Murdoch to not support that kind of movement within our hospital system.