

CANCER SCREENING PROCEDURES, WAITING LIST

597. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Health:

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I gave the call to the member for Joondalup. However, I could not hear him because of the interjections.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. There are currently more than 6 700 people waiting for cancer screening procedures in Western Australia. Can the minister advise what the State Government is doing to ensure these people receive their procedure -

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan interjected.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I will repeat the question. There are currently more than 6 700 people waiting for cancer screening procedures in Western Australia. Can the minister advise what the State Government is doing to ensure these people receive their procedure as quickly as possible?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

I thank the member for his ongoing interest in health and for his question. This morning I opened a new \$11.3 million state-of-the-art operating theatre suite at the Osborne Park Hospital. That money was spent on three new operating theatres, a purpose-built procedure room, a new endoscopy suite and a new central sterile supply department. While I was there I announced an innovative, new \$2.4 million initiative to help thousands of Western Australians waiting for cancer-screening procedures to have their treatment fast-tracked. The initiative will see an extra 150 gastroenterology procedures performed each week so that the waiting list for these treatments is cleared within the next 12 months. The new initiative will target procedures such as colonoscopies, gastroscopies and cystoscopies, which primarily screen patients for cancer, bleeding disorders, bowel infections and ulcers.

Dr J.M. Woollard interjected.

Mr J.A. McGINTY: The member might like to join the member for Mitchell in the whingeing department. We are offering treatment to 6 700 people and all we hear is whinge, whinge, knock, knock. I will go on and tell members about the good things that we will be doing.

There are currently more than 6 700 people waiting for these procedures in the metropolitan area. Urgent cases are always dealt with immediately, but some non-urgent patients have been waiting for almost three years for their procedures. The longest waiting patients in this State include cystoscopy patients waiting 892 days at the Royal Perth Hospital and endoscopy patients waiting 912 days at Fremantle Hospital. That is totally unacceptable and we will fix it. This initiative will completely clear the waiting list, ensuring that in future every patient requiring one of these screenings will be given a date for their procedure almost immediately without the need to go on a waiting list. The plan will mean that Osborne Park Hospital and Armadale-Kelmscott Memorial Hospital will perform the bulk of the extra procedures. The Government has committed \$826 000 for equipment and capital works upgrades at both hospitals, including a new procedure room at Osborne Park Hospital. A further \$1.6 million is recurrent spending for theatre staff and the like.

The initiative came about as a result of a meeting I had on 3 February this year with the federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, in Sydney. As a result of that meeting and subsequent discussions, arrangements were put in place under which the commonwealth agreed to pick up the surgical costs for the procedures under Medicare and accept electronic bulk-billing from the surgeons at those two hospitals. Those arrangements have already been put in place. This enables the Western Australian Government to significantly increase the number of procedures it can undertake.

The elective surgery wait lists are at a historic all-time low in Western Australia. This initiative will drive them even lower and offer peace of mind to the thousands of people waiting for these cancer screening procedures.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the member for Alfred Cove for the first time.