

BUNBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL, GENERAL SURGEONS ROSTER

154. Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to the roster of general surgeons for the State's largest regional hospital in Bunbury.

- (1) Can the minister explain why there is no surgeon available on the September roster to handle emergency cases for 15 days out of the 30 days?

A government member interjected.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Is that the sort of ridiculous response we are to get to something like this from the Labor Party: "Don't get sick"? It is a disgrace.

The SPEAKER: When members are asking questions I suggest that they do not take interjections. During the asking of questions I ask members not to interject and break the train of the question.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: To continue -

- (2) Can the minister explain why he has allowed the situation to deteriorate, thereby putting lives at risk and forcing ambulance services to ferry patients to Perth instead of commuting patients to the closest hospital?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

- (1)-(2) The surgeons roster at Bunbury has been of concern to us for some time. We have been working towards making sure that the availability of surgeons is, wherever possible, covered. I remind the member for Mitchell that surgeons work privately in this State.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: It is their fault, is it?

Mr R.C. KUCERA: The member should listen to the answer. Very few surgeons in this State work for salaries, most are visiting medical practitioners, which is of concern to us. If the member for Mitchell was in the House yesterday when I was speaking in the debate on nurses, he would realise that there is a general shortage of senior trained medical practitioners right across the world, not just in this State. We will work towards making sure, wherever possible, that we can cover those rosters. Dr Brian Lloyd has been in Bunbury, as I understand it. I am advised that he has been talking to staff there to see whether we can achieve that. At the end of the day, surgeons choose what time they take off and where they work etc. In the meantime, we have set up contingency plans at Peel and Fremantle and all our other major teaching hospitals to cover that matter. I remind the member for Mitchell that visiting medical practitioners by and large assist enormously with the health system in this State. We cannot work without them. However, they are the ones who have the choice of when they work rosters.