

HEALTH SERVICES, EXPENDITURE

971. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to an article in today's *The West Australian* which clearly points to a massive increase in the State's revenue, including stamp duty resulting from the property boom and a record \$1.136 billion in mining royalties, which is at least \$200 million more than the royalties received by the Court Government. Given those massive increases over the past year -

- (1) Why have the 65 new beds at already overburdened tertiary hospitals gone unfunded?
- (2) Why is the Government closing health services in the country, particularly in obstetrics?
- (3) Why will the minister not purchase magnetic resonance imaging scanners for Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and Fremantle Hospital and fund their operation, at least until the licence is issued?

The money is coming in, why does the minister not prop up our overburdened health services?

Mr KUCERA replied:

I am amazed that the opposition spokesperson on health can get up and repeat the same question every day, yet he never gets up the courage in this House to talk about drugs. That is beside the point.

Several opposition members interjected.

Mr KUCERA: I would also like to congratulate our premier soccer team, Perth Glory. I suspect that the Leader of the Opposition will not be singing Glory's theme song on the weekend, because he would not know it. For the information of the Leader of the Opposition it is *You'll Never Walk Alone*.

I compliment the Treasurer on the figures that he has already provided, and the certainty he has given us that this year's budget will not repeat the mistakes made by the coalition Government or contain the kind of nonsense that the Opposition's health spokesperson is talking about.

- (1) I said this yesterday. The 65 beds to which the member for Murdoch referred will be fully funded through the good, astute management of a new management team in health in this State that has some vision and is working to fix the mess that members opposite left us.
- (2) This part of the question shows the ignorance of the current Opposition, in particular, its lack of knowledge of the health system. The member for Murdoch obviously did not notice when all thinking health ministers and the federal Government met in Canberra to talk about the issue of public liability costs. The reason that obstetrics services are not provided in the country is that the cost of professional indemnity insurance for obstetrics services has gone through the roof. It has nothing to do with funding the system. The quicker the member for Murdoch learns that, the quicker he will become a decent opposition spokesperson.
- (3) I wrote to Senator Kay Patterson, the federal Minister for Health and Ageing, last week about some disturbing matters that have come to my notice about MRIs right across this country. The minister has not yet responded on that issue. We have put the money on the table. We will deal with the issue. I will not resile from my statement that the federal Government sold us a pup. Members opposite allowed 11 private MRI machines to be installed so that gang busters can take money off everybody in this State, while WA's public hospitals received licences to operate only two machines in the past nine years. I told the member for Murdoch three weeks ago in this place that he was a disgrace, and he has not changed.

Several opposition members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Once again I have not been heard because of persistent interjections - mainly from the Leader of the Opposition. If opposition members want question time to continue and to ask the usual number of questions, I will need a little more cooperation from them.