

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING SCANNER

814. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the Minister for Health's refusal to provide a magnetic resonance imaging scanner for Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, despite the fact that \$2 million was set aside by the previous coalition Government for the purchase of this machine.

- (1) Why has the minister failed to negotiate a resolution to this issue with the federal Minister for Health and Ageing?
- (2) Will the minister accept an offer sent to him today, which I have negotiated, that will provide \$500 000 of commonwealth funding towards the location of an MRI scanner at PMH?
- (3) Will the minister confirm that this money can be used to substitute the cost to the State of the Medicare rebate to assist with recurrent costs, to help purchase a machine or to transfer a Medicare licence to PMH from a private operator?
- (4) Will the minister accept this offer and now move to immediately establish the facility at PMH?

Mr KUCERA replied:

- (1)-(4) Yet again we see another set of grubby little deals worked out in backrooms by the Liberal Senators in Canberra. I would be delighted if Fremantle Hospital got a machine with an MRI licence. The previous Government was deafening in its silence last year when the Blandford report said that this State should get another machine. I will be very pleased to talk about the way in which the member for Murdoch has today wilfully misled the people of Western Australia. I do not have the original letter from Senator Patterson; however, I have a copy. It is important that everybody in the House note the first paragraph of this letter from Senator Patterson, which states -

Following representation from the Liberal Western Australian Senators and Members and the West Australian Opposition Health Minister I wish to propose a way forward for MRI for the Princess Margaret Hospital.

Is it not amazing that the federal Minister for Health and Ageing does not even have the decency to talk to the state Minister for Health? The letter also states -

The Commonwealth Government offers up to \$500,000 towards the cost of locating a MRI unit at this site to assist you in providing care . . .

Members must listen to this -

Provision of this funding will not in any way mean that services provided through the unit would be eligible for Medicare Benefits Schedule. . .

Members can tell me whether this is political blackmail -

A condition of the grant would be that the Hospital could not apply for MBS eligibility for this unit for at least two years.

What a grubby little deal. There is more. The member for Murdoch has the gall to ask the question. I remind members that Princess Margaret Hospital for Children is our only children's hospital. It continues -

While Princess Margaret could participate in future tenders for Medicare eligibility for this unit after the two-year period . . .

Members should not forget that in two weeks there is a meeting of the committee that will evaluate this. It continues -

. . . this should not be taken to imply that the Hospital will be given priority in allocation of Medicare eligibility under future processes . . .

The minister does not even say that the State will get it in the future. This next part is important too, because it also shows how grubby this little deal is. It continues -

. . . including future deliberations by the MRI Monitoring and Evaluation Group . . .

Let us not forget that this is from the federal Minister for Health and Ageing. She further writes -

I note that children aged less than 14 in Western Australia receive scans paid for by Medicare at a rate almost 10 per cent higher than the national average.

If that does not indicate the absolute need of our kids, I do not know what does. Members should listen to this part of the letter, which shows why the deal is so grubby, and reads -

This was confirmed yesterday by the independent committee advising me on such matters . . .

I am happy to facilitate the transfer of Medicare eligibility from another eligible machine in Western Australia.

How many machines does Western Australia have? There is one in Royal Perth Hospital that is working flat-out. There is also one in Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Where are the rest of the machines? The member for Murdoch asked the question, so let me remind him. Will the people at the Mount Hospital give us the machine that they are making millions of dollars a year from, as a result of the other little deal that was done? Of course they will not. We in this State asked for a licence for our Medicare machine, not \$500 000 to shut us up for two years. Anybody who reads this letter will realise that the federal Minister for Health and Ageing is talking about capital investment in a machine. What does the member for Murdoch, as such a wonderful champion of the children of this State, say in his press release? He states -

. . . help fund the purchase of a machine or pay for its operation for outpatients for up to two years.

Will the member for Murdoch tell me where it says that in this letter? This grubby little deal is nothing more than a political deal to get the member for Murdoch and his Liberal mates in Canberra off the hook for something that they have neglected for the past eight years.