

ARMADALE-KELMSCOTT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, HIGH DEPENDENCY CARE UNIT

515. Mr M.F. BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to the high dependency care unit at the Armadale public hospital built over 12 months ago.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that no staff or equipment has been allocated to this unit since the hospital opened over 12 months ago?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that the lease with the private provider cannot be finalised until the high dependency unit is opened?
- (3) Is the minister aware that the failure to finalise the lease has already cost the Government \$1 million in lost revenue?
- (4) Given the minister's recent rhetoric on reforming the health system and helping to reduce the burden on our tertiary hospitals, will the minister immediately commit staff and equipment to open the Armadale Health Service high dependency unit?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

- (1)-(4) I am pleased that the member has raised this matter in this form at long last in this House. The question highlights the bizarre contractual arrangements entered into by the previous Government in private hospital arrangements. I think everybody in this State, and particularly in this House, is well aware of some of the issues that have arisen in the last two years concerning the relationship between our health system and private providers. I am advised that this unit was built as part of the contractual arrangement with the private hospital, and that the bizarre nature of the contract was such -

Mr M.F. Board: It's in the public hospital.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I do not think the member for Murdoch wants to hear the answer. The bizarre nature of the contract is such that we are having it investigated in detail; that is, whether rental arrangements should have been tied to whether we put in place a major unit in the hospital that was not needed at the time - it was linked so that specialist doctors could approach the hospital, as I am advised, to talk about opening up yet another heart unit in this State. That is the kind of advice I am getting on the contractual arrangements at that hospital.

The Government's priorities in health in this State have been made clear. Three hundred and forty two beds were taken from our major tertiary hospitals, which contain our level 1 emergency departments, to support the building of places like Armadale-Kelmscott Memorial Hospital. The pressures are quite clearly on all of our major teaching hospitals as a result of federal policies for the public health system. My priorities as a minister, and those of the Government, are the same three issues we have been pushing consistently since day one. The first is nurses, and nearly 400 have now come back into the system. The second is emergency departments and ambulance bypass, which the Opposition wants to bring up every day of the week. The third is to make sure that surgical waiting lists are kept at the lowest level for 11 years. The priorities of this Government do not extend to picking up bizarre contracts to support private industry. It is as simple as that. My priorities will remain where they are, with nurses, emergency departments, and those who need our support.