

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

616. Mrs D.J. GUISE to the Minister for Health:

In light of the passage of the Nurses Amendment Bill 2002, can the minister now advise the House of the progress made to get nurse practitioners working in our hospitals and health services?

Mr B.K. Masters: Who are you going to blame?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

I certainly will not blame the member for Vasse, because he did nothing when he was in government. In light of the passage of the Nurses Amendment Bill, members may recall that the Government has allocated a total of some \$600 000 over three years for the sponsorship of nurse practitioners. I am pleased to advise the House that the Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Specialisation (Nurse Practitioners) is already up and running at Curtin University of Technology. It is already gaining a reputation and a great number of people have inquired about the course. I am also pleased to report that 12 students have already commenced the course on a part-time basis. In addition to that, briefing sessions on the implementation of nurse practitioners have commenced, with over 75 people indicating their interest in attending the course at Curtin University. On top of that, a total of 132 country health services have been briefed by the Department of Health through a video link program, all of which have shown a great degree of interest in this historic piece of legislation.

The nursing web site at www.nursing.health.wa.gov.au also contains a broad range of progress information for interested nurses and members of the public who are seeking information. A special nurse practitioner newsletter will be distributed next week and the Nurses Board of WA has developed a registration application form and established an assessment panel.

A code of practice has been drafted by parliamentary counsel and is being reviewed by both the Department of Health and the Nurses Board. Once this process is complete, the code will be tabled in this Parliament. I am particularly heartened by the way all our health professionals are embracing this legislation. All the doom and gloom that was spoken of by medical practitioners and others over the past 20 years is not coming to pass; indeed, the sky is not falling. General practitioners in particular are embracing the program with a great deal of enthusiasm. This legislation will raise the qualifications of nurses and the level of nursing to the appropriate professional level, which should be recognised in this House and in this State.