

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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

I refer the minister to the Auditor General's report tabled in Parliament yesterday, which revealed an alarming lack of financial control within the Department of Health and the Auditor General's statement on ABC radio this morning that this is a serious matter and of concern to taxpayers.

- (1) How will the health reform committee headed by Professor Michael Reid, appointed by this Government in March this year to bring about changes to the public health system, be able to make sound financial decisions based on such unreliable and suspect financial controls and the lack of performance indicators?
- (2) Given that the minister and the Department of Health were warned 12 months ago about the lack of financial management and poor performance indicators and was given numerous extensions of reporting periods, will the minister now admit that the community has lost confidence in his control of the Department of Health?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

The coalition Government had eight years to make the mess that this Government is sorting out.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Hello; I can hear those numbats again.

Mr R.F. Johnson: We can see the wombat.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Yes I can see him; he is looking right at me. I was going to use the definition of a wombat for the member opposite, but it applies more to the member for Kalgoorlie. I withdraw that.

- (1)-(2) The answer to the last part of the question is no. The member for Murdoch asked a question about financial issues. I am concerned that he has not read the report properly or he did not listen closely to what the Auditor General said. The Auditor General referred to his report on performance indicators. Nothing in the report says there was anything untoward in financial terms. They were given a completely clean bill of health. I will read out Mr Daube's statement in his media release this morning -

This year we have had to continue with 44 reports, . . .

As I said yesterday, there were more than 101 different boards and authorities in the health system when this Government took office. It was a mess. For the very first time, we have a unified system. Some 44 reports had to be prepared this year. The department was aware that they would be late. There is no indication that that will happen this year. We are talking about the Auditor General's 2001 report and a period in which the previous mob was in power for part of the time. This year, the department has had to continue with 44 reports, including what was required from the metropolitan health services. The Auditor General's report is damning only from the member for Murdoch's point of view.

Mr M.F. Board: It was damning this morning. Did you listen to it?

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Mr Daube also said, and I quote -

It is also vital to draw a distinction between outcome indicators and financial statements.

All the Department's critical financial statements were compiled and submitted on time.

Dr G.I. Gallop: Hear, hear!

Mr R.C. KUCERA: With the exception of the two minor issues to which I referred yesterday involving remittances being submitted through doctors' confidential mail - that has been accepted; I spoke to the Auditor General yesterday - the department was given a clean bill of health. The member for Murdoch has either not read the report properly or he is deliberately trying to mislead this Parliament. Mr Daube went on to say that the health sector has undergone significant reform to create a unified health system and this has had an impact on the annual reporting cycle of 2001-02. I have demanded of the Director General of Health and the Health Department that this year's reporting process comply with the Auditor General's requirements. It is as simple as that.

The department has undergone a massive reform process to pull this State's health service out of the mess left by the previous Government, and it will continue to do so.