

OBSTETRIC SERVICES REVIEW

**623. Mr M.F. BOARD to the Minister for Health:**

I refer the minister to the Western Australian statewide obstetric services review conducted by Dr Harry Cohen that was released yesterday.

- (1) Does the Government intend to implement recommendation No 1 of the report to establish the metropolitan and integrated services model, which would involve the closure of up to five secondary obstetrics units?
- (2) If so, can the minister indicate which obstetric units may be subject to closure or modification of services?
- (3) What does the Government intend to do to address the critical issue in obstetrics by which obstetricians are leaving the profession and cannot be attracted; that is, the crisis in indemnity insurance?

**Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:**

- (1)-(3) The following is a statement put out on 27 March 2003 by the Australian Medical Association -

“The State Government agrees with the AMA that this is an urgent issue affecting the patients of Western Australia,” . . .

“The Minister agreed to regular meetings with the AMA to fast-track solutions to ensure reform and address key concerns.”

. . .

“While there is still much to be done, the pressure on doctors to retire by July 30 is now easing,” Dr Pearn-Roewe said.

The Government is aware of the indemnity issues, which have nothing to do with Dr Cohen’s report - other than that the quality issues and the means of delivery of respective services outlined in that report will greatly reduce the risk of people being damaged at birth. This will have an impact on indemnity services, which will be dealt with in due course and within the time frame asked for by both doctors and the AMA. I remind the member for Murdoch that only last Thursday week the federal Government moved on the legislation to allow us to do these things; we had been waiting for that to happen. In terms of the obstetrics review, I said yesterday that I welcomed what I thought was a very challenging report from a group of clinicians that, as a result of the Douglas inquiry, looked at what is needed for the safe and quality delivery of babies in this State.

In terms of implementation, I have already said that I have appointed Dr Cohen to a review group to look at what are the issues for government. As Dr Cohen has said, this is a very courageous report. This Government does not back away from courageous decisions, particularly when they relate to the provision of human services. I will listen to the clinicians, but it is important that the community of Western Australia have an opportunity to debate this report, and not in the cloud of misinformation that has been put before this House on other matters. The community should be allowed to debate the matter properly and sensibly. I hope that the shadow spokesperson for health shows the same degree of honesty and sensibility that he did in this House this morning when it comes to addressing health issues.