

HEALTH SYSTEM IN CRISIS

**1154. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:**

I refer the minister to the Premier's campaign launch speech, where he said that when doctors and nurses are forced into public revolt over the management of our hospitals, that is a crisis, and when ambulances are forced to drive the streets of Perth to find an emergency ward that can accept patients, that is a crisis. I ask -

- (1) Is the minister aware that Western Australia's enrolled nurses went on strike today over pay negotiations?
- (2) Is the minister aware that on Monday, four major public hospitals were simultaneously on ambulance bypass?
- (3) Will the minister admit that the 65 extra beds recently promised for major hospitals are not staffed and cannot be staffed?
- (4) Will the minister concede, that with winter almost upon us, the Western Australian health system is in serious crisis and that the bandaid solutions he has put in place are not adequate?

**Mr KUCERA replied:**

- (1)-(4) Members of the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union are today taking industrial action in one of our hospitals, in spite of the fact that we have offered the enrolled nurses exactly the same percentage pay increase as the registered nurses were given earlier this year. They have their own reasons for taking that industrial action. As with all industrial disputes that have occurred since I became minister, we work through them methodically and sensibly. I told members of the miscellaneous workers union that their compatriots in the Australian Nursing Federation accepted the pay increase they were offered earlier this year, which is the same percentage pay increase we are offering to the enrolled nurses. I note that the ANF was very happy with that increase and I hope that the members of the miscellaneous workers union see their way forward. When I look back at the claim these nurses made and some of the things that were done to them by the previous Government, I can see that the trust of that union and its members was destroyed. The member for Murdoch and other members should hang their heads in shame. There is a fair and equitable offer on the table for the enrolled nurses, who are members of the miscellaneous workers union. I hope they work through that offer sensibly, as did the Government with the four enterprise bargaining agreements that it concluded last year. The member for Murdoch should realise that we fixed it; they did not.

In relation to the ambulance bypass and other issues, there will be a full opportunity -

Mr Board interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Murdoch!

Mr KUCERA: If the member for Murdoch were a little less noisy he might hear my answer. He should just take a deep breath and settle down. On this occasion I will take an interjection. The reason I do not take interjections is that I do not reply to smarties. If the member for Murdoch were less noisy, he would hear some of the noises.

I pay tribute to the people in our emergency departments. The first winter peak is with us. For those who did not notice, we had the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, last week and we are right in the middle of the winter peak. This time last year our hospitals coped with a maximum peak of about 390 admissions on one day. On Sunday alone, 450 people presented for admission to our emergency departments. Those departments were under enormous pressure, as were the ambulance drivers and the other fantastic people throughout the health system. Guess what? I will let members in on a little secret. They coped magnificently, because there are peaks and troughs right throughout the health system. The only people who use the term "crisis" in this House are those who sit on the other side. We have moved on.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr KUCERA: Settle down. Take a deep breath. The Leader of the Opposition should take a deep breath, and, if he listens, he will find that the truth always wins out. In relation to the issues that have been raised -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr KUCERA: Dr Brian Lloyd and his team have put together a system of programs for 65 additional beds. Like everything else, these things are not done overnight. As those on the opposition side found, during their eight years of neglect, they could not just snap their fingers and do something. The sad part about all of this is

that just after I became minister I sat down with the previous Minister for Health and it was amazing how our views coincided on what should happen for the development of health in this State.

Mr Day interjected.

Mr KUCERA: The member for Darling Range knows he was going in the right direction. What happened to him? He was rolled. It is amazing. It is nice to know there is one person with a shred of decency on his side of this place. It is nice to know that the member for Darling Range stood up proudly for the same people who did a magnificent job last weekend in our hospitals; but he got rolled. That is the nature of the people he is working with. They are dead in the water!