

HEALTH FUNDING

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

I refer the minister to his admissions on ABC radio on Tuesday morning that the Government is claiming superannuation and capital user charges, which are payments to the Department of Treasury and Finance, as part of the Government's spending on Western Australian hospitals.

- (1) Is the minister aware that in the 2003-04 financial year capital user charges and superannuation funding within the Department of Health will be in the order of \$230.9 million?
- (2) Can the minister also confirm that the \$230.9 million claimed as part of the Government's record health spending will not be spent on health services?
- (3) Can the minister also confirm that \$24 million of the State Government's record health budget is contingent on signing the health care agreement with the Commonwealth that the minister has announced he will not sign?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) There is a \$232 million bonus to health this year in terms of services - it is as simple as that. The member for Murdoch's difficulty is that he has enormous trouble reading figures. I wonder how he got on in business; how did he get his balance sheets to work?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr R.C. KUCERA: He had someone else working with him - I am told it was a joint venture!

- (3) A gun is being held to our head by the Federal Government. I fly out today at four o'clock to meet with all the health ministers of Australia, except one. Guess who will not be there again to talk to the health ministers of Australia about the health of the Australian nation? I will let members guess. I have some information with me that I will run out quickly. Senator Patterson will not front up tomorrow, yet again. How does one negotiate an agreement, member for Murdoch, when one party refuses to turn up?

Mr M.F. Board: They offered you an agreement, and you refused it.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I told the House yesterday that the senator is offering \$400 million less over the next five years than would be received if the State maintained the current agreement. It is not just this Government having difficulty with the agreement. Mr Speaker, I know these answers must be brief. I had a call today from the Australian Health Reform Alliance. This man over here, the member for Murdoch, who purports to represent the people of Western Australia, and John Howard's poodles are the only ones speaking out against the people of Western Australia. The member says I keep arguing with the Federal Government. I will tell the member who wants to meet the health ministers tomorrow. The Australian Health Reform Alliance comprises Access Economics, the Doctors Reform Society of Australia, the Australian Consumers Association, the Australian Council of Social Service, the Australian Health Promotion Association, the National Public Hospitals Clinicians' Task Force led by Professor John Dwyer, the Australian Healthcare Association, the National Rural Health Alliance, the national office of the Australian Medical Association, the national office of the Australian Nursing Federation, the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation, the Public Health Association of Australia, Catholic Health Australia, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges and the Rural Doctors Association of Australia. Every one of those groups will meet us tomorrow in Sydney to stand up for the health of this nation. Only two people are not attending - John Howard and this man opposite, the member for Murdoch, who is one of John Howard's poodles. He should be ashamed of himself!

Withdrawal of Remark

The SPEAKER: I call the Minister for Health to order for the first time and direct that he withdraw the comment about poodles.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. I am very passionate about this issue. I hate to see the people of this State short-changed. I apologise to the member for Murdoch.

Questions without Notice Resumed