

AMBULANCE BYPASS TIMES

794. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to his statement in *The West Australian* that there has been a decrease in the incidence of ambulance bypasses since December. I assume that he was quoted correctly and ask -

- (1) Will the minister confirm that, according to statistics kept by St John Ambulance, ambulance bypass times at tertiary teaching hospitals more than doubled between December last year and January this year and almost doubled between December and February?
- (2) Will the minister concede that he has misled the public of Western Australia and admit that he has done nothing to address this breakdown in our public hospital system?

Mr KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)-(2) In a letter to me dated 15 March, he said -

Contrary to the rhetoric that we heard leading up to the election, I know that Ambulance bypass is used as a management tool in peak periods by our tertiary hospitals.

The member is correct. As a result of his letter I provided him with the figures he asked for. As I have said from day one, ambulance bypass is not a new problem. It was a management tool introduced by the previous Government in recognition of the problems -

Mr Board: While we were in chaos, minister.

Mr KUCERA: While the previous Government was in chaos! That is a very good word from the member for Murdoch. While the previous Government was in chaos, it introduced the ambulance bypass program.

There has been an approximate eight per cent increase in emergency department attendances in the past two years. One difficulty is that approximately 42 per cent of patients attending EDs are now admitted. That is a five per cent increase on 37 per cent five years ago. Ambulance diversion requires a long-term solution. The Premier issued a statement last month that the Government intends to spend \$17 million on a long-term, planned redevelopment of neglected emergency departments in the State's hospitals. I was very pleased last week to support the Premier and the member for Armadale at the opening of one of our newest facilities. I also compliment -

Several members interjected.

Mr KUCERA: Mr Speaker, when the noise subsides, in addition to complimenting the Premier and the member for Armadale, I will also extend my congratulations to the member for Darling Range for the effort that he and the community put in to ensure that the area had a community hospital.

Ambulance bypass is a management tool that is used all over Australia. Statistics indicate that Western Australia is no worse off or no better off than any other State. This Government will work towards a planned outcome, not the ad hoc system that was used before, and towards making sure that this State has a world-class hospital system.