

HEALTH, NURSE WEST, SAVINGS

1715. Mr C.J. Barnett to the Minister for Health

I refer to the establishment of Nurse West, and ask –

- (a) will nurses employed under Nurse West be paid at the same rate as nurses currently employed by private nursing agencies;
- (b) if not, what is the gross saving per annum expected to be made through this reduction in salaries;
- (c) what other savings, if any, will be achieved per annum through the establishment of Nurse West;
- (d) how will these savings be achieved;
- (e) what is the cost of establishing Nurse West;
- (f) what is the total estimated cost per annum of operating and administering Nurse West;
- (g) will nurses employed by Nurse West receive any benefits that they do not currently receive such as sick leave, family leave, annual leave, long service leave and study leave;
- (h) if so, what is the total cost of providing these benefits to nurses employed under Nurse West expected to be;
- (i) what, if any, other costs will arise from the establishment and operation of Nurse West;
- (j) will the Minister confirm that public health services will no longer be able to deal directly with private nursing agencies;
- (k) will Nurse West deal with nursing agencies in order to hire nurses to work in the public system;
- (l) has the Minister or the Health Department sought any legal advice as to whether barring public health services from dealing directly with private nursing agencies contravenes any State and/or Federal statutes; and
- (m) if so, what was the nature of this legal advice?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

- (a) Nurses employed by Nurse West will be paid as per the Nurse (WA Government Health Services) Agreement 2001.

There is no set rate that nurses working for private agencies are paid. The public hospitals and health services pay the agencies directly and the agencies pay the nurses thus the nurse is an employee of the agency. The cost of engaging an agency nurse include an hourly salary plus on-cost and agencies commission.
- (b) Refer to answer (a). Nurse West is expected to deliver savings of \$4.1 million on the current expenditure on agency nurses after the operating costs of Nurse West have been deducted.
- (c) Improved co-ordination, rostering and administration by implementing a single point of contact. This will improve management efficiency and also the continuity of patient care.
- (d) Refer to answer (c).
- (e) The costs of establishing Nurse West is \$380K.
- (f) The administration costs per annum is estimated to be \$984K.
- (g) Nurse West is developing options of employment for Nurses. Nurses will be able to be engaged as a casual employee and paid a casual loading for any work undertaken in the public health system or be employed on a fixed term contract. Fixed term employment will entitle Nurses to the same terms and conditions currently offered to salaried nurses on fixed term contracts, including sick leave, family leave, annual leave, long service leave, study leave, access to scholarships and professional development.
- (h) All costs have been incorporated in the establishment cost and ongoing operating costs within the health budget.
- (i) Refer to answers (e) and (f).

- (j) The Department of Health and its public hospitals and health services are designed to operate as a unified system and as such Nurse West is a part of this system. Nurse West will be the single point of contact for nursing agencies.
 - (k) Refer to answer (j).
 - (l) Refer to answer (j). The Minister for Health and the Department of Health has not barred the public health services from dealing directly with the private nursing agencies but has set in place a process where all public hospitals and health services will be required to use Nurse West to manage the supply of agency nurses.
 - (m) Not applicable.
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