

HEALTH, REGIONAL HEALTH BOARDS, CLOSURE

560. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the minister's decision to effectively close down five regional health boards in the south west following the release of the interim report of the Bunbury Health Task Force.

- (1) Why has the minister acted with such haste on the recommendations of what is only an interim report?
- (2) Will the minister admit that by adopting the interim recommendations to amalgamate five country health boards, this Government is silencing the voice of country people on health issues?
- (3) Can the minister categorically rule out the similar devastation of local representation through the abolition of regional health service boards in the wheatbelt and other country regions?

Mr KUCERA replied:

(1)-(3) Has the member for Murdoch read the interim report?

Mr Board: Yes, I have it here.

Mr KUCERA: When did the member for Murdoch read it? Did he read it before he put out his media statement this morning?

Mr Board: Yes, I did.

Mr KUCERA: That is a change; the member for Murdoch has actually done some research. I refer to page 7 of the report. In their presentation to the task force, the Bunbury Health Service board and executive also recommended the establishment of a single area structure for the provision of health services across the south west. I spoke with the head of that board just a few moments ago. He supports fully the recommendations contained in this report and wants to move with them. The whole process will be worked through properly and sensibly as part of the reform process in health that the other side never had the courage to consider, let alone implement. This is about peeling off layers of bureaucracy to make sure that the funding goes where it should - to patient care. I am also concerned about the structure of the boards. Many of those good people on the boards give their services voluntarily. They are exposed to the kinds of financial management problems that occur with the management of enormous amounts of money. This is not about boards and bureaucracy, but about patient care. This is an excellent report. I commend the members of the task force for putting down a footprint that will allow the reform to continue across this State.