

HOSPITAL BED CRISIS

885. Mr T.K. WALDRON to the Minister for Health:

In this House on Tuesday the minister suggested that the members of the National and Liberal Parties are the only members who have referred to “a so-called bed crisis in hospitals”.

- (1) Will the minister finally concede that there is a hospital bed crisis given that Mrs Thompson, an 81-year-old heart attack victim, had to wait for more than 27 hours to be admitted to a ward in Royal Perth Hospital this week?
- (2) Will he also finally concede that there is a crisis given that Mrs Thompson was one of 30 patients waiting in a corridor among emergency cases for admission to a ward in Royal Perth Hospital on Wednesday morning this week?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

An additional 59 beds have been created in the past month - 27 in the north metropolitan area, 10 in the south and 22 in the east - and 60-plus more will be opened within the next two to three weeks. At the end of the day, no matter how many hospital beds there are, hospitals sometimes get full, particularly because of the collapse of Medicare.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr R.C. KUCERA: It sounds like the crows from Rottnest are here again. The other day we were talking about numbats; we have wombats, dingbats and fruit bats! It is amazing. The only two occasions on which I ever see the Leader of the Opposition being noisy are when he is in this Chamber or he has a glass of red wine in his hand.

Some 59 beds have been opened in the past week.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I do not think we should talk about jobs, not with the member's record when she was in government - especially her family record.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Can I look over my glasses at you?

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Especially the member's family record on jobs.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Really!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I urge the Minister for Health to answer the question through me and not to invite interjections.

Mr J.N. Hyde interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Perth!

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Over the past couple of days our hospital emergency departments have been under a great deal of pressure. The average number of presentations has increased from 320 per day in the past month to over 352 in the past two or three days. A number of strategies have already been put in place. The metropolitan emergency departments are currently subject to an \$18 million redevelopment. The stage 2 redevelopment of Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital will cost \$9.3 million and it began over a week ago. Of course issues exist at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital; of course there are pressures when a hospital is being rebuilt around the existing emergency department. I pay tribute to the people within the health system in this State who are able to get on with the job, particularly since Mt Henry Health Service closed and 350 beds were taken out of the hospital system. We had to deal with the machinations of a Government that did not care about our public hospital system. A \$2.6 million redevelopment of Princess Margaret Hospital for Children has commenced. I was very proud to lift that machine into that hospital the other day. At the end of the day, we have better hospitals and more nurses.