

HEALTH SYSTEM, PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

422. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer to one of the minister's first media statements in which he states that the Government needs the input and support of doctors, nurses and other health professionals if it is to improve public confidence in our health system. Given the Australian Medical Association's announcement yesterday that a survey of salaried doctors in the public health system shows that 90 per cent of them believe the public health system has deteriorated since he was appointed Minister for Health, and 77 per cent of doctors rate his performance as below average or poor, will the minister admit that he has lost the support of our doctors and as a result, by his own definition, will not be able to deal with the problems in our public health system?

Mr KUCERA replied:

I was pleased to learn that the member for Murdoch reads the Australian Medical Association's own web page, because that is where the survey was conducted. I suppose it is a bit like asking the Cottesloe branch of the Liberal Party to judge the performance of the current Leader of the Opposition; it would be about the same.

The health system in this State is a partnership between all the people who run it, including the doctors. We currently have reached settlement with the nurses, we almost have settlement with the Hospital Salaried Officers Association - it is voting on the matters this week - and from the information I received this morning from the Commissioner of Health, we are moving forward at a steady pace on the pay settlement with the doctors. I also watch with interest the partnership that needs to be put in place with the federal Government. I have a real dread when I learn that in a future Liberal Government, Bronwyn Bishop is likely to be the Minister for Health.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr KUCERA: Having watched her performance and having dealt with her at the last three meetings, I think we should have a real sense of dread of her ever becoming the Minister for Health in this country. If that happened, there is no way we could have a partnership that would allow us to deal with the vast majority of doctors who are general practitioners. I also suggest to the member for Murdoch that we look at the number of doctors in this State who are not salaried doctors, but are paid by the federal Government - our GPs. We should also look at the extreme shortage of GPs and the lack of consideration they have been given by this current federal Government. It will be a black day for us if we have to move forward in a partnership with somebody who does not care about the health and the conditions of aged people in this State.