

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CORPORATE SMARTRIDER CARDS —
SIR CHARLES GAIRDNER HOSPITAL AND JOONDALUP HEALTH CAMPUS

658. Mr A.P. O’GORMAN to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the Department of Health’s corporate SmartRider card, which is being introduced by the agency’s metropolitan access and parking department, in conjunction with the Public Transport Authority.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the card is not available to nurses at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital or Joondalup Health Campus?
- (2) How can the minister justify not including Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in the scheme, when that is the hospital under the most acute parking pressure, and the site of the minister’s two failed attempts to create parking areas at local parks?
- (3) Why is it that nurses and other hospital staff are not worthy of taking part in this scheme, when others in the health system are eligible?

Ms M.M. Quirk: Good question!

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

- (1)–(3) Yes, it is a good question, and unfortunately I do not know the answer to it. However, I can talk generally about parking, and I am certainly across what is happening with our parking in different areas. In particular, the member will know that at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital we have a lot of problems creating the parking that is required while we go through this major reconstruction program. In doing that, we have had to have a lot of nurses park off site and get transport in, and in fact provide support to those who seek public parking. One of the issues that I was pushing was that with the increase in parking fees that we are requiring largely at our tertiary hospitals, some of those funds would be able to be used to help subsidise people who have to get public transport. The parliamentary committee that looked at that matter had an issue with us doing that and said that that was cross-subsidisation. But I think it is very important to do the best we can to promote public transport where that is possible. I do recall that when we were in opposition, the former Minister for Health had a proposal that there would be a massive reduction in parking availability at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital as part of his planned expansion to 1 000 beds from the current 600-odd beds.

In terms of the access card, I am not aware that those two hospitals have been denied access, and I have to say that it would seem unusual, because I have been pushing for increased availability of support for public transport, particularly for Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. I do not know about the issue at Joondalup. But what I can say to the member is that I will look at the issue the member has raised. I apologise for not being across what the member has raised, but I will make sure that I am and provide the member with detailed information. Can I say that I am strongly supportive of us providing every opportunity to support use of public transport by our nursing staff, because as we go through building the new children’s hospital, and in fact the parking and the over 3 000 bays that we will be building at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, we are going to have severe difficulties in providing the parking that is required.

As the member says, we have had two failed attempts. I have to say that is not through any fault of our own. We have worked very hard to get agreement with local government to be able to use those parks, and in fact to provide significant funds to the local community if we are able to use areas that are currently parks and recreational areas. But both of those attempts were rejected by the local community. So we have to bend to their wishes. That is what they want.

Mr R.H. Cook: The community did place you at fault, saying that you tried to do a secret deal behind their back.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Well, yes, but that was not true, that we tried to do a secret deal. We cannot go to the community until we get agreement from the council. The council cannot do a deal with us until it has gone to the community. It was a bit of a catch 22. We went to the council first. We agreed to pay for the community consultation process. When we started that, they said we have done a secret deal with the council. Well, we had not. That was the start of the consultation. As soon as they said no, we backed away and said, “Okay; we will not do it.”