

REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

492. Mr B.J. GRYLLS to the Minister for Health:

The minister's Government has shown a total disregard for regional Western Australians through its reckless plans to target regional services for closure. Is the minister therefore prepared to constrain the Health Reform Committee's terms of reference to guarantee the Labor Government will not -

- (a) downgrade or close any regional hospitals;
- (b) downgrade or remove any core health services from regional areas;
- (c) downgrade or remove key emergency services; or
- (d) further reduce the budget allocation to regional health services?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

This morning I spent an hour and a half with a shire with real vision. I am very happy to see the people from the Shire of Esperance at the back of the Chamber today. We talked broadly and widely with the shire about the issues involved in providing an integrated health service to the Esperance area. It is amazing that at this time every year, just before the budget is brought down, out of the swamp, which I suppose that other side of the Chamber could be called, comes a big alligator that snaps around and starts talking about closures of hospitals in the country. I remind members opposite that this Government has not closed a single service in the country. It has made those services better; it has developed them and built them up. A \$40 million new hospital -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: When members stop arguing among themselves, the minister can continue his answer.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. For a start, there is a \$40 million new hospital at Geraldton. The good people from Esperance were complimenting us this morning because they have a dental service that is just about under way - there is a new one at the hospital there. Above all, the fundamental difference between us and this Government -

Mr C.J. Barnett: You are the Government!

Mr R.C. KUCERA: The fundamental difference between this Government and the previous Government is that there is now a single, unified country health service that is about improving the delivery of services across the State. What does the Opposition have? Today I found a media release that states that the member for Murdoch is opening a new health web site online to the public. Obviously the Opposition is not receiving enough complaints about health so it is encouraging people to record complaints on its web site about health, even to the extent that it spells out what they should complain about. In the debate yesterday I referred to the policy vacuum. The member for Murdoch said that the reason for that will be in the formulation of the Liberal Party's health policy for the forthcoming election. It does not even have a policy on health.