

BUNBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL, UNDER-FUNDING

875. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is the minister aware of an article in last week's the *South Western Times*, in which it was revealed that two women who were scheduled for breast cancer surgery at the Bunbury Regional Hospital had their operations delayed, and then cancelled, as a result of chronic under-funding at the hospital?
- (2) Is the minister aware that a surgeon from the hospital has warned that the under-funding will result in serious clinical dangers?
- (3) Will the minister admit that Western Australia's regional health services are in desperate need of financial support, and rectify this problem in the upcoming state budget?

Mr KUCERA replied:

- (1)-(2) Last week I was in Melbourne, and involved in talks with the federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Kay Patterson, about forthcoming health-care agreements. Therefore, I saw the newspaper report only this morning, and I have asked to be briefed on the matter. Having read the newspaper report, it is my understanding that the rejigging of the surgeon's listings caused the problem.
- (3) It is interesting to note that, regardless of all this year's rhetoric - particularly by the leader and members of the National Party - virtually all our hospitals are meeting their budgets, working within the system, and trying to manage all the issues that have been raised. I remind the member for Hillarys that there is a shortage of nurses in this country. There is also a shortage of specialist doctors, and we are working very hard towards solving these problems. A raft of issues affect the way our hospitals operate. There was sufficient money in this year's budget - in fact, the south west budget was increased considerably. We have worked towards solving the shortage of staff in the south west in a logistical and sensible manner. The Government will work through all the problems methodically. However, such issues must be approached in a sensible and rational way, and not in an attempt to score cheap political points.