

MINISTER FOR HEALTH, SUPPORT FOR SOUTHERN RAIL PROJECT

115.Mr M.F. BOARD to the Minister for Health:

By the minister's own admission quoted in numerous newspaper articles in recent weeks, public hospitals in Western Australia are under funded. Given -

- (a) the constant overcrowding of emergency departments in tertiary and most secondary hospitals;
- (b) bed shortages;
- (c) record levels of ambulance bypass;
- (d) the admission in estimates hearings this year that the real increase in the health budget after inflation was 1.5 per cent - or three per cent, as now admitted by the minister in answer to the last question; and
- (e) the cancellation of surgery in recent weeks at many hospitals, both tertiary and secondary,

how does the minister justify to the Western Australian community his support for hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money being used on a poorly planned southern rail project that could otherwise be used to upgrade tertiary hospitals, create more beds and really help the people of Western Australia? What is the minister's position?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

Is this not an interesting question coming from somebody who just admitted by interjection during the last answer that he supports the federal Government's privatising health in this country? I will quote some figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's report released last week and in a moment I will refer to a media release from the member for Murdoch in which he quotes those figures. The figures really show that in 2000-01 the Commonwealth spent \$501 per person in WA on Medicare and pharmaceutical benefit schemes, which is about \$75 less than the national average.

I remind members in the House that the \$150 million relates to a period when members opposite were in government. It also relates to a health care agreement that was negotiated by members opposite. If we had been treated equitably, some \$150 million would have flowed to the Western Australian health system in that year alone. It is interesting to note that that is almost the amount of the shortage that was required every year during the previous Government's term to make sure that health was supported in this State.

It is an absolute disgrace for the member for Murdoch to raise these issues when it is clearly an obligation of the federal Government to support every single Australian citizen. The figures have been quoted and it is about time the member for Murdoch got off his bot and started to say to his federal people, "Support Western Australia."