

NURSES, ADDITIONAL POSITIONS

1. Mr M.W. TRENORDEN to the Minister for Health:

Some notice has been given for this question. The minister claims to have created 578 new nursing positions in Western Australia, yet the Australian Nursing Federation has been unable to identify where many of the additional positions have been created.

- (1) Has the minister responded to the Australian Nursing Federation's request for details on where 361 of the positions have been added?
- (2) If yes to (1), will the minister please table the response?
- (3) Will the minister now advise where each of these 578 new nursing positions have been created and when each position was, or will be, filled?

The SPEAKER: I am sure the Leader of the National Party is not seriously asking the minister to list 500-odd positions. Was it more of a general statement?

Mr M.W. Trenorden: I gave notice. The minister can table the information.

The SPEAKER: I encourage the minister to not list each of the 578 places.

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

I thank the Leader of the National Party for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(3) Yes, I have responded to the Australian Nursing Federation's request, and I will table the letter I wrote to the state secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation.

I assume that in reaching the figure of 578 positions, the member took the figure of the 428 full-time equivalent nurses who have been employed since we came to government and added the recent budget commitment for the coming financial year of an additional 150 nursing FTEs. As has already been publicly stated, the figure of 428 nursing FTEs is the rounded-off difference between the number of nursing full-time equivalents employed in February 2001 - 8 082.06 - and in February 2003 - 8 510. This comparison produces a figure of 427.94 additional nursing FTEs in the public system, which is obviously rounded off to 428. I will not detail now where each individual FTE is located, but I can supply that information to the member if he wishes. Additional nurses were recruited for all areas requiring nursing staff. No particular specialty or area was targeted. The funding commitment of a further 150 nursing FTEs was made only last week; therefore, these positions are yet to be filled. In accordance with the Government's announcement, and pursuant to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission workload order, the 150 positions are to be created specifically for emergency departments, mental health areas and critical care units across the State.

The letter to the Australian Nursing Federation, reference No 18166, contains a typographical error. The figure of 472.94 should read 427.94. I table that correction, which is self-explanatory, with the letter.

[See paper No 1115.]

Mr R.C. KUCERA: While I am on my feet, I take the opportunity to comment on the nursing excellence awards, which were presented at the Sheraton Perth Hotel the other evening. I was proud to see the Premier present the awards. It was absolutely amazing to see the change in the attitude of the nursing professionals who attended compared with the attitude that existed when I entered the ministry two years ago. The way those people reacted to the recognition and the value that is now placed on nursing in this State was laudable and incredible. It was the proudest night I have experienced since I have been a minister in this Parliament. A magnificent group of young men and women were present, and the awards they received were richly deserved. We have now put nursing in this State on the level at which it belongs.