

CHANGES TO COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICES AND HOSPITAL BOARDS

**1061. Mr WATSON to the Minister for Health:**

Will the minister explain to the House the recent changes announced by the Government to country health services and hospital boards?

**Mr KUCERA replied:**

I thank the member for Albany for some notice of this question. I also thank him for his assistance on our trip to the Ravensthorpe and Esperance region the other day to meet with the boards of the Albany Regional Hospital, the Denmark District Hospital and the Mt Barker Plantaganet District Hospital. I also thank the member for Roe for arranging for me to meet with the people down there to talk about dental and board issues.

As announced last week, in addition to the south west board, we are now in the process of establishing six regional health authorities that will take the place of the current formal board structure. The establishment of those authorities will place the financial accountability for clinical health services on the shoulders of the local general managers and allow the health services to work together so that this State can once and for all get a single unified health system.

The Health Administrative Review Committee report is part of a wider plan to establish a single, unified health system in this State. Developing new and innovative approaches to health required change.

Mr McNee interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Moore to order for the first time.

Mr KUCERA: The alternative is to simply put our heads in the sand and go on the way we are. The member for Avon interjected earlier but nobody has been more vociferous than he has about the problems in our health system.

Mr Trenorden: I am just starting.

Mr KUCERA: I say to the member for Avon that if we continue going exactly the same way that we are going, we will end up in even more mess than the mess the previous coalition Government got us into. The wonderful part about talking to people in the country is to hear about their involvement in health services and the pride they have in owning them. However, volunteers in the health services - the member for Albany will reflect on this - should not have placed upon them the onerous responsibility of medical liability. We all know about the problems associated with liability, particularly medical liability, that we will have to face in this State. It is not fair to expose the people who work in a voluntary capacity to that liability.

I spoke to Dr Graham Jacobs, the President of the Rural Doctors Association of Western Australia, when I was in Esperance with the member for Roe. His statement in part reads -

The re-organisation in the Rural Health Services made by the Health Department is a positive step according to RDAWA President Dr Graham Jacobs.

“A Hospital Board concept did not work for us in my town of practice”

“The board were in the invidious rock and a hard place”

That was the key issue that came across when I was talking -

Mr Masters: Who placed them between the rock and a hard place? You did.

Mr KUCERA: The member for Vasse should listen to this: the difficulty for board members as community volunteers is in trying to implement the hard decisions that need to be made to run health in this State and then to have the onerous task of having to stand and defend their actions against community members. That responsibility is absolutely unnecessary.

This is a very positive move forward for health and all the people in this State and I applaud it.