

HEALTH — SERVICES PRIVATISATION

41. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Health:

On behalf of the member for Southern River, I acknowledge and welcome student council members from Excelsior Primary School, who are in the chamber today.

I refer to comments made in this house yesterday in relation to the unpopularity of contracting out health services at the Midland and other public hospitals. Can the minister advise the house whether this view is shared by the community at large?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

I was very interested to hear the comments by the member for Bassendean yesterday along the lines that the majority of people in Bassendean are opposed to contracting out services—privatisation, if we like. Indeed, the union circulated a brochure during the election campaign. There is a good looking bloke there!

Mr T.R. Buswell: Where? It's an old photo.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It shows a beautiful hospital and indicates that 81 per cent of Western Australians oppose privatisation. We would think that would have been somehow reflected in the election results, would we not? We would think it would mean something. This Labor Party policy has been adopted only under the current leader. Remember, when in government the previous Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, the person then sitting in this seat, strongly supported the concept of contracting to the private sector. In fact, when he developed the proposal for Fiona Stanley Hospital, clearly in his document about developing public–private partnerships was the concept of contracting out to the private sector. Indeed, the previous Minister for Health contracted out lots of things to the private sector, including contracting out renal dialysis, which used to be done at Swan District Hospital. Suddenly, the new leader has decided to have this anti-privatisation policy as the key plank of the Labor Party's last election campaign. Indeed, we wondered how much the Labor Party spent on that campaign when we saw ads on TV and heard radio ads. I wonder how much the member for Bassendean's union spent on that election campaign opposing privatisation of hospitals and getting hospitals to be run by the public sector.

I refer to the last federal election when the previous federal member for Hasluck, Hon Sharryn Jackson, advertised at length the contracting out of services in Midland. Remember, she ran all those ads on TV. I was worried; I thought maybe the government's decision had had a bad effect on results in Midland, so I went through the polling booth results for the new Liberal Party federal member for Midland, Mr Ken Wyatt. The second biggest swing against the Labor Party occurred at the Midland polling booth—4.2 per cent to the Liberal Party in the heart of Midland where Sharryn Jackson had been advertising the negative aspects of privatisation. What happened in this state election? One would think, "This is the Labor Party's big plank; we are out there fighting against privatising hospitals; this is the key plank of our election." Not only did we see their worst election result in 90 years of government, but these are the results at the booths around the three hospital seats that contract services. First, Joondalup, three seats; Ocean Reef—well done, minister—16.3 per cent swing to the Liberal Party —

Mr P. Papalia: Sit down; you'll be asked to sit down.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I will read through them quickly.

In Joondalup, the swing to the Liberal Party was 7.8 per cent and in Butler it was 8.6 per cent. I am winding up very quickly. The swing to the Liberal Party in the electorate of Riverton, where Fiona Stanley Hospital is located, was 7.2 per cent; in Jandakot, 6.2 per cent; and in Alfred Cove, 23.8 per cent. What happened in Midland? That is where we have contracted out services at the Midland hospital. There was an 8.3 per cent swing to the Liberal Party in Midland. This opposition is carrying on with nonsense. It has to realise that it lost the election. Opposing the contracting out of services was the Labor Party's key election plank and it had its worst result in 90 years. It is time for the Labor Party to dump its failed policies and make sure that it does not carry on with policies that are a waste of time and space.