

DERBY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

**11. Mr M.F. BOARD to the Minister for Health:**

I refer the minister to an ALP policy paper titled "Indigenous Affairs", which states that Labor will -

engage in genuine consultation and partnership with indigenous communities and experienced health professionals on the best forms of health service provision which empowers communities to have control over health services and self-determination;

- (1) Is the Minister for Health aware that in 2000-01, 75 per cent of patients at Derby Regional Hospital were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders?
- (2) Which, if any, indigenous communities did the minister consult before making the decision to remove the public health unit and a specialist paediatrician and obstetrician-gynaecologist from the Derby Regional Hospital?
- (3) Why is the minister draining specialist services from this high need area of indigenous health?

**Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:**

I thank the member for Murdoch for getting out of the city, even though it was to ensure that the Leader of the Opposition had his biggest opponent by his side!

- (1) Yes, I am aware of the statistics for Aboriginal health.
- (2) The Government established a group - headed by Parliament's first ever elected indigenous woman - which is involved in constant and ongoing consultation. I will meet with people from Derby Hospital when I visit Derby on Sunday.
- (3) The member for Murdoch used another of his emotive terms - which I have become used to - when he referred to the "draining" of specialist services. The Government is looking at the bigger health picture rather than looking at it on an individual hospital or individual town basis. The Government is looking at the Kimberley's overall health service and the overall provision of services to that area. The member for Murdoch may be interested to know that it took nearly four years to attract specialist services to Derby. It is as simple as that. It took approximately three and a half years to attract the same specialist services to Broome. I cannot force people to live or work in a particular area. The overall specialist services continue to grow in the Broome area. Broome's international airport allows us to provide services to people in that area. More importantly, it allows for people to be transported to health services when they need them.

I have heard nothing but negativity from the Opposition. I chuckled when I read that the member for Murdoch had suddenly discovered that less than 70 per cent of doctors in this country bulk-bill. He also suddenly discovered the fact that he had to talk to his federal counterpart. Indeed, another grubby deal was probably being made. The member for Murdoch stated that -

It is ridiculous when the question of whether the Commonwealth or State -

Mr M.F. Board interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: The member for Murdoch should listen, because I am reading what he stated. It goes on - picks up the bill comes down to which building in town the doctor works out of . . .

That is interesting. At the very first meeting of the Ministerial Council of Health Ministers that I attended in the eastern States I started fighting with Dr Wooldridge over that same issue of putting GP clinics into our hospitals. This year the member for Murdoch went to the eastern States with a parliamentary committee and saw that virtually every other State in this country has GP clinics in its hospitals. We do not. Why not?

Mr J.H.D. Day interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I am glad the member for Darling Range opened his mouth. The Health Insurance Commission is now challenging the system that the member, as the former Minister for Health, started at Fremantle Hospital.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: The member should not talk about Kalgoorlie, because one of the dignitaries in his area is a member of the Health Insurance Commission and I do not see him doing much for this State. The Health Insurance Commission is now threatening Western Australia with prosecution because we have a GP clinic at Fremantle Hospital to try to alleviate some of the problems there. That is the kind of problem that Western

Australia is having with GP clinics. All of a sudden the member for Murdoch has discovered this issue. The Opposition is a disgrace. I only hope when the member goes -

Mr M.F. Board: What have you done about it?

Mr R.C. KUCERA: That comment shows the member for Murdoch does not talk to the Liberal federal Minister for Health. I have raised this issue on a number of occasions with the federal minister. I was told categorically by the Liberal federal minister that any attempt to do that would result in a clawback of federal funding.

Several opposition members interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I will finish my answer, which was interrupted by interjections.

Mr M.F. Board: How have the other States done it?

Mr R.C. KUCERA: If the member for Murdoch listens, I will tell him. Whoever negotiated on behalf of this State in 1997 allowed that to occur knowing full well that all the other States had already done that. Dr Wooldridge told me last year that if Western Australia tried to move down the track of trying to cross-shift expenses, he would clawback the funds. My answer to the member for Murdoch is that his Government negotiated that agreement. He was part of that Government, yet he has the cheek to suddenly raise this issue.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You do not stand up for Western Australia.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Alongside the member for Murdoch is his bosom buddy, the Leader of the Opposition, with whom he has obviously kissed and made up. I was thinking of a job for the Leader of the Opposition. We might give him a job in the Lions Eye Institute, because the only word he knows is "I".