

KALGOORLIE REGIONAL HOSPITAL, SPEECH THERAPY AND AUDIOLOGY

319. Mr BIRNEY to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to the Australian Labor Party policy paper entitled “better regional health”, which states that “Priority will be given to those services frequently required by children and young people, such as speech therapy and audiology”.

- (1) Is the minister aware that, despite available funding for four speech pathologists in Kalgoorlie, there is not one speech pathologist at Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital?
- (2) Is the minister also aware that there is no audiologist at that hospital or in the region?
- (3) What action is the minister taking to ensure that these vital services are provided for the people of the goldfields region?

Mr KUCERA replied:

- (1)-(3) I thank the member for the question. I remind the member for Kalgoorlie that we have stripped a layer of bureaucracy from the health system, and the funds saved will go into the patient assisted travel scheme this year to allow people to get the kinds of services that obviously are not available in country areas. I know full well the difficulties of getting these specialist people into country areas. That is an issue for us and one that we will tackle head on. It is interesting to consider an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of Wednesday, 22 August, headed “Liberals’ poll strategy: all hands to the parish pump”. The article states -

The Liberal Party has hitched its Federal re-election chances to a strategy of keeping local candidates to local issues, particularly those that have nothing to do with Federal Government responsibilities.

Yesterday, the federal member for Forrest, Mr Prosser, used words that are almost exactly the same as the words used in the two questions that have come forward today.

Points of Order

Mr DAY: The member for Kalgoorlie asked about speech pathologists and audiologists in the Kalgoorlie region. The minister has a responsibility to provide information on that subject. If he does not know about that subject, he should tell us and we will understand.

Mr KOBELKE: I put it to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there is no point of order and the member is simply wasting the time of the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the minister was about to conclude the answer to the question.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr KUCERA: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The member for Kalgoorlie is doing what all the other Liberal members across the State are doing; namely, trying to hitch their star to a Liberal Government that is not supporting us in health matters in this State in any way. We are well aware of the problem with allied health professionals, and we will deal with it in due course.