

HOSPITALS, AGENCY NURSES

22. Mr M.F. BOARD to the Minister for Health:

The minister did not answer the question. As a supplementary question, during the estimates committee hearings the minister promised to phase out agency nurses in this State by early next year. In which hospitals will the minister do that, how will he do it, and how can the minister justify his statement that the previous Government privatised nursing agencies, when in fact the number of agency nurses has increased considerably under the current Government?

The SPEAKER: The first part of the question is a supplementary question.

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

As I said during yesterday's debate, it is intended that Western Australia will follow the same line as that taken by Victoria. It will take us 18 months to have such a situation put in place so that a proper pool of nurses can be created for both the city and the country. It is our intention eventually, if it is ever possible, to phase out agency nurses in every hospital. It is as simple as that. Whether that is achievable in the short term, we will not know. However, we will certainly move towards creating a pool of nurses within this State, run and controlled by the Government at a proper cost and in a proper and sensible way to service the health system in this State.