

OPHTHALMIC SURGERY — WAIT LIST

**384. Dr A.D. BUTI to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the over 3 200 people on the state's wait list for ophthalmic surgery and the almost 200 people who received this operation at the Armadale–Kelmscott Memorial Hospital in the last three months.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the government intends to cut ophthalmology services at the Armadale–Kelmscott hospital?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that no ophthalmology operations will be undertaken at Fiona Stanley Hospital?
- (3) Can the minister also confirm that ophthalmologists previously working at the Armadale–Kelmscott hospital have been told to find theatre time at Bentley Hospital, which is already struggling to cope with demand for its theatres?

**Dr K.D. HAMES replied:**

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for the question. I am well across this issue, because I have received a number of letters about it and made my own inquiries. I can confirm, not that the government has done those things, but the government—as in me as minister—has allowed those things that were put forward by the South Metropolitan Health Service. The reason given to me by the managers of that system is that we had a significant problem in Armadale–Kelmscott Memorial Hospital for other surgery—critical surgery to people who were on a long waiting list and who were desperately waiting for surgery in the member's electorate but which was not able to be done because of a lack of theatre space. Whereas Bentley Hospital—often those same ophthalmic surgeons were operating in both hospitals—had the capacity to do that same surgery without affecting the waiting time. Bentley Hospital would be able to expand its theatre and keep up the workload so that patients from Armadale would not be disadvantaged. They have reassured me that they will not be disadvantaged; in fact, I have sought further reassurance that that is the case. On a particular case that has come before me—the specialist himself is waiting for surgery—I have asked the health service to make sure that there will be no additional delay for patients on that waiting list. The member for Armadale should welcome the fact that many of his constituents who were waiting for theatre space for other procedures at Armadale–Kelmscott hospital will now have more surgical time.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** You should be increasing the capacity, not decreasing it and taking one from the other!

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The hospital has a set number of theatres and they can only work a certain amount of time. The reality is that Bentley Hospital has the space and there is demand at Armadale–Kelmscott hospital for other things. We are ensuring that those other procedures can be done at Armadale–Kelmscott hospital, because that is a better hospital to do them in, and some of the other stuff can be done at Bentley.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Bentley can't cope!

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** That is not the advice I have got. Just because someone writes a letter about what is happening, it does not mean that the answer is that they will be delayed. It may well be that the answer that comes back to me is that the particular person we are talking about will not be delayed and there is capacity to do it within the Bentley system. Of course, I rely on my staff to do what is right. I reiterate to them that I do not want people to be disadvantaged. They reassure me that they will not be, and I take their word on that.