

MIDWIVES, ENHANCED ROLE

416. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Health:

With the introduction of the Nurses Amendment Bill in this place last week, it is clear that the implementation of an advanced practice nurse is imminent. Will the minister advise the House on the progress of implementing an enhanced role for midwives?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for his interest in this question on midwives. I would thank him in any case for the work he does for the health system and for aged care in this State. He is doing an enormous amount at the moment.

A report of the National Health and Medical Research Council of 1998 confirmed a trend towards increased responsibility in midwifery practice. A key recommendation of that report was an enhanced training role and an enhanced role generally for midwives to interpret routine diagnostic tests and to initiate pregnancy-related medications during normal pregnancy, birth and postnatal care. I am pleased to advise that Western Australia has taken the lead over every other State in this country and has awarded an education tender for the enhanced role of midwives which will see the development of two self-learning packages that will be available as early as next year. For the first three years the Gallop Government will allocate \$395 000 for the development, implementation and evaluation of the course. As was stated during the debate concerning the enhancement of the nursing role generally, this also takes into account the second factor that needed to be addressed, that is midwives. After many years of neglect this Government is very proud of its record with nurses in this State and that at long last we can see the true professionalism of nursing.