

HOSPITAL SERVICES - AMBULANCE BYPASSES

679. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Minister for Health:

First, I acknowledge the students from Ocean Road Primary School in Dawesville and their teacher. They are in the back row of the gallery.

I refer to an incident at Parliament House this week when a student visitor had an epileptic episode. The member for Dawesville attended the student to ensure that she was okay. However, when the ambulance arrived to take the student to see her neurologist at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, she was told that that was not possible as it was on bypass at 10.00 am. The student was then taken to Royal Perth Hospital.

- (1) How does the minister justify his inaction to improve our hospital services when one of our major hospitals was so full at 10 o'clock on a Monday morning that it was refusing to take ambulances?
- (2) Does the minister concede that this is a prime example of why we must keep Royal Perth Hospital open, so that patients based in the central business district who need medical treatment do not have to travel an additional 20 to 30 minutes before receiving medical help?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

- (1)-(2) I think the answer to the Leader of the Opposition's last question is that Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital was regarded as the appropriate hospital to which to take the patient. That is the simple answer to that question.

Dr K.D. Hames: Only because I said that that was the appropriate place to take her to see a neurologist.

Mr J.A. McGINTY: I congratulate the member for Dawesville for his assistance to the person concerned. As everyone knows, Monday morning is the most pressured time in our public hospital system when patients who were admitted over the weekend and not discharged are being dealt with. Monday is always the day of greatest pressure on the hospital system. This shows that the ambulance service works very closely with the public hospital system in the distribution of ambulances. It distributes ambulances according to a predetermined formula, based upon the capacity of the relevant emergency departments. The decision to take a patient to a particular hospital will be determined in accordance with that formula to make sure that between the three major emergency departments, St John Ambulance distributes the load evenly, so that the burden or the pressure is shared equally between the various hospitals. I expect that that is what happened on this occasion.