

GERALDTON REGIONAL HOSPITAL, MEDICAL SERVICES AGREEMENT

1610. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the medical services agreement between the Department of Health and doctors for medical services at the Geraldton Regional Hospital, which expired on 31 December 2003, and ask -

- (1) Has the new six-month medical agreement been forwarded to the doctors; and, if so, how many doctors have signed the new agreement to date?
- (2) With just four weeks to go, can the minister guarantee to have a full contingent of medical services available at the Geraldton hospital on 1 January, 2004?
- (3) If not, what alternative arrangements will be put in place for the people of Geraldton and the surrounding area?
- (4) Is the minister aware that the new medical services agreement being promoted by the Department of Health for the Geraldton hospital is not cost neutral to the WA Country Health Service as proposed in the Department of Health letter dated 2 September 2003, and will cost an estimated extra \$2 million per year?
- (5) Will the minister confirm, as per the Department of Health memo dated 31 October 2003, that staff numbers and beds have been reduced at the Geraldton hospital to accommodate the additional costs of the service grant?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Health, the minister has provided the following response -

- (1) The medical services agreement signed by visiting medical practitioners at the Geraldton Regional Hospital in December 2002 was for an initial period of 12 months and has now been extended to 30 June 2004. This extension is in response to a recommendation made in a medical service review undertaken in June 2003. The intention was to bring the MSA into line with the current contractual indemnity arrangements.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) Future medical service options for Geraldton Regional Hospital, which have been costed by the WA Country Health Service, have been cost neutral.
- (5) The memo of 31 October 2003 was to provide for higher medical costs - not to save money. Also, staffing and bed arrangements for the forthcoming Christmas and holiday season routinely witness lower levels of patient demand and activity. The director of medical services also plans for medical and nursing staff to take recreational leave during this time.