

MEDICARE FUNDING, COMMONWEALTH GUARANTEE

**229. Mr MURRAY to the Minister for Health:**

Can the Minister for Health advise whether the Commonwealth Government will guarantee Medicare funding to Western Australia?

**Mr KUCERA replied:**

The Commonwealth Government has failed Western Australia by not guaranteeing that there will be no reduction in hospital funding to this State during the life of the current Medicare agreement. This essentially means there is a risk that Medicare funding will be reduced over the next two years, which is the term of the current agreement. I sought an assurance from federal health minister Dr Michael Wooldridge about the safety of Medicare funding, but he remained non-committal and refused to provide any guarantee. Despite an increase in private health insurance, there has been no decrease in the demand on public hospitals. On the contrary, the revenue from private health patients amounts to \$25 per capita of population, compared with an Australian average of \$38. I find it disturbing that the Commonwealth continues to redirect money from public hospitals to help pay for its efforts to increase private health insurance membership, which is still failing to take the pressure off our public hospital system.