

HOSPITAL SERVICES - AMBULANCE BYPASSES

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

I have a supplementary question. Why will the minister not concede that it is absolutely essential that Royal Perth Hospital be retained for that very reason?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

Members of the public of Western Australia do not all live in the central city area. A very small proportion of the population lives there. There is a massive population in Perth's northern suburbs and in Perth's southern suburbs. The thrust of our health reform measures is to locate our hospitals closer to home, so that people can be treated in their own area. For that reason, in the country areas, for instance, we are spending a fortune upgrading and rebuilding our hospitals and building new hospitals so that people can be treated in their own region. I know that the concept of treatment closer to home is a bit hard for the conservatives opposite to accept, because it will represent a change from where the Swan River Colony was formed, and we could not possibly do anything other than replicate colonial patterns of settlement; we could not possibly recognise that we are in the twenty-first century, when the population of Perth is no longer distributed along the banks of the Swan River, which is where our tertiary hospitals are all located without exception. We could not possibly change that, could we? We could not possibly reflect the reality of the twenty-first century. I invite members opposite to take a step into the twenty-first century and look at where the population is, and they might well then change their minds.