

AIMEE BLAKISTON - DOUBLE-LUNG SURGERY

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

I have a good news question. Will the Minister for Health please give the house an update on the condition of 17-year-old Aimee Blakiston, who underwent double-lung surgery two weeks ago at the Royal Perth Hospital?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

I thank the member for Collie-Wellington for this question regarding Aimee Blakiston, who is a constituent of his. She is a truly remarkable 17-year-old woman who, as the question indicated, recently underwent a double-lung transplant. Members will be very pleased to know that Aimee is progressing well and that her treating physicians are very pleased with her progress. She has had a very tough time. She was very sick and still has great challenges ahead of her. As a sign of her progress, yesterday Aimee was moved from the intensive care unit to a normal ward. This means that she no longer requires intensive cardiac or lung support. However, she still faces a very long and difficult rehabilitation.

I pay tribute to the brilliance of our public hospital surgeons and other staff who performed the operation and provided Aimee with ongoing care. During the 10-hour double-lung transplant surgery, a team of 20 highly skilled staff operated on Aimee. In addition, the intensive care unit staff and many others made up a large and magnificent team who saved Aimee's life. They described it to me as being as difficult as it gets. I congratulate Drs Rob Larbalestier and Dan Chambers, who led the team of surgeons. Today Aimee has had her first bronchoscopy, and her new lungs are functioning well. Lung transplants were performed for the first time in Western Australia two years ago. The funding for that was made available by this government. The outcomes of lung and heart transplants through the lung and heart unit at the Royal Perth Hospital are the best in Australia and are equal to the best in the world, which is something of which we can all be proud. I take this opportunity to thank the federal government, and in particular the Minister for Defence, Dr Brendan Nelson, who very promptly responded to the request I made on behalf of the staff of the Royal Perth Hospital to make available a military jet to fly a heart and lungs from the eastern states to Perth should a donor become available in the eastern states. As it turned out, we did not need to take up that very kind offer. I appreciate that very late one Friday night, Dr Brendan Nelson rang me to confirm the federal government's great willingness to do whatever it took.

The state government is providing a \$4 billion investment to rebuild hospitals throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia to accommodate the reform program that is under way. We will be building modern facilities to ensure that the highest quality of care can be provided to all Western Australians.

I take this opportunity also to say a brief word about organ donation. Four or five years ago Western Australia was rated among the worst organ donor states in Australia. A very intensive effort saw Western Australia record the highest rate of organ donation per capita of any state in Australia in 2005 when Western Australia had 30 organ donors. Members in this place are aware of the recent organ donation that the member for Southern River received, and I am sure that everyone is watching the progress of Aimee Blakiston with great interest. However, in 2006, like most other states in Australia, for some reason there was a significant drop in the number of organ donations made. Only 21 organ donations were made last year. We must do everything we can to increase the level of organ donation. People like Aimee Blakiston show first-hand what the gift of life can mean. Often it is the result of a tragedy for other families. However, the generosity of spirit involved in organ donation can leave a lasting legacy to overcome the hurt caused by a tragedy. I urge all members to become organ donors if they are not already.