

WARREN DISTRICT HOSPITAL, MANJIMUP

1058. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to the Government's recent decision to close nearly a quarter of the beds at Warren District Hospital, Manjimup.

- (1) Will the minister confirm that those beds were closed because of insufficient permanent nurses?
- (2) How does the minister reconcile this with his claim on 3 July that his Government has recruited nearly 700 nurses.
- (3) Can the minister guarantee the people of Manjimup that those beds will be re-opened immediately, and categorically rule out any further cuts to hospital services in the area?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

- (1)-(3) I can certainly confirm that as soon as we can recruit sufficient nurses to reopen those beds, they will be reopened. We are giving priority to the recruitment of nurses for the Manjimup hospital.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Without further cuts?

Mr J.A. McGINTY: Manjimup is the centre of that region in the south west. It is one we want to promote. I cannot see any justification for cuts to health services in the Manjimup area. We are seeking to recruit nurses so that we can reopen the beds that we had to close due to the shortage of nurses in that area.

I can confirm that the reason for the closures was the inability to recruit nurses to the Manjimup hospital and a shortage of nurses that prevented us from being able to safely keep open those beds. On 3 July, I announced that 700 more full-time nurses were employed in the state government hospital system at that time than there were two years earlier. I am delighted with that because, by and large, that has taken pressure off a number of important pressure points throughout the system. In some areas, there are obviously a greater number of nurses than are needed, while in others, such as Manjimup, the number has fallen below what is needed. Nonetheless, 700 more full-time equivalent nurses are employed in the government hospital system. That has enabled the opening of a number of beds to cater for the emergency department problems experienced during the past month or two. It is a problem at the Manjimup hospital that I hope is very short term.