

GERALDTON REGIONAL HOSPITAL - ELECTIVE SURGERY

**1051. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:**

- (1) Can the minister explain why Geraldton Regional Hospital will be closed for elective surgery for five weeks over Christmas, given earlier guarantees that the hospital would consider closing for elective surgery for only three weeks?
- (2) Can the minister also guarantee that during this period, emergency surgery will be covered adequately?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) Geraldton Regional Hospital has traditionally closed the operating theatre to elective surgery during the Christmas and New Year period - two to three weeks - as happens in many public hospitals in Western Australia. This occurs as patients usually do not want to have procedures done at this time. This short closure to elective surgery allows the majority of the operating theatre staff to have recreational leave and for routine maintenance to be carried out on the plant and equipment. The resident and visiting surgeons, and many of the general practitioners who provide anaesthetic services, also elect to have time off over this period. In previous years, closures have been for two to three weeks; however, this year, the cessation of elective surgery for a five-week period is due to the holiday leave of the local surgeons and general practitioner anaesthetists, and the need to have suitably qualified operating theatre staff to provide both emergency and elective surgical services. The planned operating theatre closure to elective surgery will ensure that patient and staff safety is not compromised, while emergency surgery will continue to be provided.
- (2) Geraldton Regional Hospital has secured the services of a locum general surgeon for the period 22 December 2006 to 14 January 2007 and is awaiting confirmation from a surgeon, who is overseas at present, of his availability to cover from 15 January 2007 to 29 January 2007. This will provide cover for emergency surgery during the period of absence of the resident private practice general surgeons. An adequate number of GP anaesthetists and nursing staff are available during this time to allow emergency general surgery to be performed at all times at Geraldton Regional Hospital.