

ELECTIVE SURGERY — WAITLISTS

**569. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Health:**

I understand that in the interests of transparency, the Liberal–National government is publishing elective surgery waitlist reports. Can the minister inform the house of the latest reports that have been published?

**Dr K.D. HAMES replied:**

The latest elective surgery waitlist figures were released this week. They are extremely good. Health has been through a tough week. It is important that people understand that there is some good news in health and that the Department of Health is working through the tough times.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Your colleague seems really enthusiastic about that statement!

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I can see that they are enthusiastic. Come on!

Even though our hospitals were under enormous pressure because of increased numbers in our emergency departments, I insisted that they continue with the waitlist surgery program and not let it slacken off. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition pointed out last week, an increasing number of people are moving onto the waitlist. I am not bothered by the increase in those numbers because it reflects that we have been working very hard to get people who are waiting to get on the waitlists—in effect, they are waiting for outpatient clinic appointments—seen and put on the waitlists. The total number of people on the waitlist—this is the August figure—has increased to a little more than 14 000. We are almost 0.1 off the record that was set last December for those who had their operations done within the recommended time and the record low for those who were outside the boundary. Of the patients who have been added to the waitlist, 89.5 per cent are having their surgery done within the recommended time; only 9.4 per cent are over boundary. I compare that figure with the January 2009 figure, which was less than two years ago, of 12.9 per cent. That is a big reduction. The figures have steadily increased from 87.1 per cent to 89.5 per cent. Elective waitlist surgery has continued to be done. As I said before, people need not focus on how many people are on the waitlist. If 100 000 people are on the waitlist and 100 000 people have their surgery done within the recommended time, there is no problem.

It is only when those people do not get their surgery within the time and go over boundary that we do not have a system that is functioning well. Therefore, I am extremely pleased to see that this surgery is still being done.

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** You have changed the boundaries.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** What does the member mean when she says that I have changed the boundaries?

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** How come my constituents who used to go to Royal Perth have to go to Charlie Gairdner now? There is no public transport between Midland and Charlie Gairdner.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** It does not matter where they go; the point is that those people are getting their surgery.

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** It does matter to them because there is no public transport to the western suburbs.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Is the member saying there is no public transport out of Midland? Get real!

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** To Royal Perth, yes—not to Charlie Gairdner.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The Labor Party was going shut down Royal Perth Hospital. If members opposite were in government, there would not be a Royal Perth Hospital. It would be gone!

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** You will tell a sick person to catch two busses to the western suburbs to get medical treatment.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members! Minister, you took the interjection from the member for Midland. My counsel is that perhaps you should not take the interjection. However, members, let us make some progress.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Thank you, Mr Speaker; I liked the interjection because it gave me the opportunity to say that the Labor Party was going to close down Royal Perth Hospital, and the Liberal Party saved it as a tertiary hospital. Therefore, it is critically important that that hospital —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, members.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Therefore, that hospital is critically important for the people of the eastern corridor, particularly those in the member for Midland's electorate, who rely on it for their service.