

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — LEAD CONTAMINATION

348. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Health:

I refer to page 158 of the report the government commissioned—the Chief Health Officer's report on Perth Children's Hospital's potable water.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, please. I want to hear the question.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The report outlines the design specifications for the FM Mattsson Pressure Balanced Thermostatic Mixing Valve, which clearly state that it meets Australian Standard 4032.1 requiring it to be made of dezincification-resistant brass.

Mr P.C. Tinley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Housing!

Is the minister still categorical that the TMVs in the assembly boxes are the source of lead in the hospital and can he once again confirm his position that the QEII ring main is free from lead and is not a source of lead in the precinct?

Mr D.J. Kelly: Kind regards, John Holland.

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

Written and authorised by John Holland!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: You have to back up an accusation like that!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.H. COOK: To the last point that the member raised, yes; I can confirm that the ring main is not the source of the lead contamination. On the thermostatic mixing valves, the observation that the Chief Health Officer made in his report and also in his press conference on Friday was that it is not the thermostatic mixing valves, it is the assembly boxes, which have within them a range of fittings with a predominance of brass. He made the observation that some of that brass did not have watermarks. He does not have a judgement about that; that is an observation he makes. That will be something for the Building Commission to resolve. He makes the observation that the photo of the specific assembly box that is detailed in the contract looks very different from the ones that he inspected; that is, there is a predominance of silver or stainless steel fittings in the assembly boxes in the contract specifications, but the ones that he observed in the hospital had a predominance of brass fittings.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.H. COOK: On the dezincification process, that is why he suspects that the assembly boxes are the chief culprits for the elevated lead levels. He went on to test that theory with some scientific rigour. He tested the water behind the assembly box and in front of the assembly box and noted that there was a peak of lead in the water sample at the point at which it would have originated from the assembly box. After that, with more flushing, the lead levels dropped. It is a very good report and I highly commend it to all members of Parliament to have a good read of because it provides a good deal of clarity.

I want to also make the observation that although we asked the Chief Health Officer to go in and do this report, it is his report. It is not our report. The Chief Health Officer is a statutory officer.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.H. COOK: We are not in a position to instruct the Chief Health Officer on that. That is something that those on the other side are overlooking; that is, the Chief Health Officer is there to protect the health of all of us. Thank God for the Chief Health Officer because if we had not brought him in to provide some clarity and oversight on this, we would never have got to the bottom of these sorts of issues and we would never have got to the bottom of just how poorly managed this contract was under the previous government.