

HOSPITALS — EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS — STAFFING

103. Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE to the Minister for Health:

I thank the minister for his answer, which was, of course, that he does not accept the comment by the physician. As a supplementary question, because the minister will not accept the finding of that physician, will he immediately intervene to address the ward bed shortages, emergency department staffing and funding requirements and infrastructure needs of our public hospitals?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

No, I will not, because there is no need to intervene. For the first time since activity-based funding was brought into being, hospitals are becoming more efficient. They remain well funded, commensurate with the needs of those hospitals. If there is a need to increase those staffing levels, the health service providers go to the Department of Health and they renegotiate the contract between them and the Department of Health.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr R.H. COOK: I am advised that there has been no reduction in staffing. I believe that, as one of our older hospitals, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital is one hospital that we are increasingly looking to for redevelopment, because, ultimately, it will become more and more constrained because of the age of the infrastructure. But we continue to do a good job. I remind all members that our emergency departments are the best in the country.