



# Callous McGinty snubbed me, says victim's widow

**YASMINE PHILLIPS**

The widow of Yalgoo farmer Bill Rowe last night accused Health Minister Jim McGinty of a callous snub, saying he ignored her in Parliament and refused to explain why her future son-in-law had to charter a plane to Perth after a Christmas Day attack that led to her husband's death.

Ellen Rowe drove to Perth in the hope of finding answers to Luke Neil's struggle to get medical treatment but today the mother-of-five will return to her remote sheep station with no clearer understanding.

"I'm disappointed with the Health Minister's response to our experience," she said. "The lack of information and the transport options that were offered were insensitive. For the Minister to downplay the situa-

tion . . . is very callous."

Liberal MP Brian Ellis said he had notified Mr McGinty's office that Mrs Rowe would be sitting in the Upper House last night to hear the response to a question he had submitted to the Health Minister's representative, Child Protection Minister Sue Ellery.

But when the question was asked, Mr McGinty referred Mr Ellis to a debate in the Lower House last week with no acknowledgement of Mrs Rowe's attendance.

Last night, she said she found strength in ensuring no other family had to endure what hers had and rejected Mr McGinty's earlier explanation.

Last week, Mr Neil said his head, shoulder and chest was slashed by a broken beer bottle, an ear was almost severed and his jaw was badly broken.

He spoke of his family's anguish at paying \$1500 to find his own way to Royal Perth Hospital because he had been told the RFDS was committed to other patients, all commercial flights were fully booked and he would have to travel to Perth in a road ambulance.

The RFDS has said it would have transported Mr Neil if it had been told of his situation. The WA Country Health Service said a clinical decision was made not to call the RFDS.

Outside Parliament, Mr Ellis said he would call for a parliamentary inquiry into the Geraldton Regional Hospital's handling of the case, the police response times to the incident and the adequacy of Geraldton counselling services.

Mr McGinty declined to comment.



**Dejected: Farmer Bill Rowe's widow Ellen wants answers.** Picture: Dione Davidson