

DENMARK DISTRICT HOSPITAL

847. Mr WATSON to the Minister for Health:

Has the Government recognised the need to redevelop Denmark District Hospital?

Mr KUCERA replied:

I understand that Denmark is not in the member's electorate but he is doing tremendous work with the people in that area who are looking for support. The Denmark District Hospital is in need of replacement and has been for several years. The Department of Health has adopted a two-pronged attack; it has an immediate strategy in hand to remedy the short-term problems at the hospital, which include undertaking some urgent structural repairs to subsiding floors in the older parts of the hospital, and also relocating an office and building a new bathroom at the existing hospital. Options include providing and operating a larger residential aged care permanent care unit. The real problem in Denmark, as in many country towns at the moment, is not one of services in the hospital, but one of providing aged care in the places where people live. Far fewer people are leaving country towns. They prefer to reside there, which presents a difficulty for us.

There is also a need to consider the most suitable site and whether it should be linked to a hospital. There needs to be an urgent assessment of primary and acute services to be delivered in Denmark. I have asked the Department of Health to ensure that the preparation work for a new Denmark facility gets under way as soon as possible so that the project is well positioned for the next round of capital works program decisions. I will correct a report in a newspaper that I received this week from the member for Perth, which related to the provision made by the previous Government. In fact, no provision was made by the previous Government to redevelop Denmark District Hospital, but that Government made many promises, particularly in the last week of its term. As is the case with all issues, this Government is not responding to the Opposition's hollow promises on health issues; it is dealing with its own commitments.