

BUNBURY HEALTH TASK FORCE

Statement by Minister for Health

MR KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Health) [12.05 pm]: Today I table the final report of the Bunbury Health Task Force. The establishment of the task force was an election commitment outlined in the Australian Labor Party policy document “Bunbury 2020”. The policy committed the Government to a comprehensive review of Bunbury Regional Hospital and to identify solutions to a number of issues of concern. The task force was chaired by the member for Bunbury, Tony Dean. Its members included my parliamentary secretary, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich MLC, Dr Ern Manea, Gerry Riordan, Judy Jones and Robert Prestage. In establishing the task force, I asked that a number of issues be addressed. These included: a review of hospital and public health services available to the people of Bunbury including the availability of beds, waiting times for patients in the emergency department and staff shortages; a review of current and future levels of post-acute care services; an identification of strategies to attract specialist doctors to Bunbury; a review of the introduction of rehabilitation services at the South West Health Campus, including restorative care services for older people; and an identification of strategies to ensure an adequate supply of nurses and support personnel to the South West Health Campus.

In November last year I tabled the task force’s interim report, and the Government has since implemented a number of the recommendations contained in that report. Significantly, on 1 January this year, we amalgamated the five south west health boards to establish a single south west health board. Subsequently, I have delegated to the Director General of Health my powers and duties relating to South West Health Services, and an inaugural chief executive officer has now been appointed.

The task force has observed that as the largest single provider and funder of health services within Bunbury and the south west, South West Health Services should assume a lead role in establishing linkages between all health care providers and carers within Bunbury and the south west. The task force also emphasised that south west communities must be given opportunities to participate and engage in health decision making at a local level on specific issues such as access to services and equity in service provision. There now exists a unique opportunity for the leadership of the south west government health service to engage with its community and identify and establish mechanisms for meaningful community participation in local health decision making on a broad range of resource allocation and policy issues. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to provide the community with the ability to inform and influence policy decision making at the system level.

Some of the key recommendations of the task force include that: a formal consultative framework be developed to ensure the community has input into its health services; capital funding be made available to upgrade the emergency department at Busselton District Hospital; an intensivist medical specialist be recruited to Bunbury; a review of mental health services in the south west take place; and consideration be given to the introduction of a rehabilitation service to Bunbury and the south west.

The final report provided a very good blueprint for future planning of health services in the south west. I sincerely thank the task force members for their report and table the final report of the Bunbury Health Task Force.

[See paper No 1511.]