

**FREMANTLE HOSPITAL, MEDICAL SERVICES CENTRE**

*Statement by Minister for Health*

**MR R.C. KUCERA** (Yokine - Minister for Health) [9.26 am]: Before I present the statement, I note with great sadness the passing of William Henry John Neilson, the police superintendent who brought to an end the blackest period in this State's history with the arrest of Eric Edgar Cooke. Bill Neilson - the Big Swede - passed away on Monday and we will miss him sadly.

I had the pleasure yesterday of officially opening a world-class medical research facility at Fremantle Hospital. The Medical Sciences Centre is the result of a close and productive partnership between the University of Western Australia and Fremantle Hospital. The UWA made a substantial contribution of \$1.67 million to the new facility, while the hospital provided three floors of its Education Centre to house the research. This new facility recognises the growing significance of both teaching and medical research at Fremantle Hospital. It also adds to Western Australia's growing number of outstanding research facilities, ensuring that we keep this State's best and brightest here and remain at the forefront of important advances in medical research. The talented researchers based at the centre are conducting a number of important investigations into cancer, diabetes, malaria, endocrinology, dementia and many other areas. The work being done by the dedicated teams at the Medical Sciences Centre has the potential to transform many lives and, indeed, to save them, and deserves our support.

While our universities and top hospitals are recognising the importance of teaching and research, the Commonwealth Government has failed to keep pace. In 1992 the Commonwealth allocated just 120 higher education contribution scheme-based domestic medicine places to Western Australia. In 2001 - 10 years later - the number of places had risen by only 11. If we take into account population growth over that period, we are actually going backwards. We are training fewer doctors per head of population than we were a decade ago. Compared with other States, we are worse off. For example, in 2000 the Howard Government allocated South Australia 148 places compared with Western Australia's mere 123 places, despite South Australia's smaller population and size. The Government is supporting an application by the University of WA and Notre Dame University that will see an additional 80 medical places allotted to Western Australia. This in no way will deal quickly with our current shortage of 300 doctors but will lay the foundations for the future and ensure that WA has a reliable, well-trained supply of doctors in the years to come. If we are to build on the work being done by the Medical Sciences Centre, we must ensure that we have the doctors needed to pursue important areas of teaching and research.