

PATIENT ASSISTED TRAVEL SCHEME — FUNDING

**781. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:**

I have a supplementary question. The minister has now had four budgets to address this. He told this place in 2018 that he would look at the recommendations of the 2015 PATS inquiry, and, again, in 2019 that he was ready to start the investment cycle. Why is the minister dragging his heels and why is there not significant investment in the state budget to support this critically important program for regional patients?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I want members to appreciate that because of our investment in the WA Country Health Service and advances in telehealth—this is an eye-watering statistic—we have saved the equivalent of going to the moon 32 times and back in air miles that patients do not have to travel because this government is investing in telehealth and new digital ways that we can deliver their health care. WA Country Health Service has never been in better shape. We will continue to invest in the PATS service by making sure we overcome the waitlist that existed when the member left office, continuing to digitise the service and continuing to invest in PATS so that it can support patients. There is one way we can better serve WA country patients, and that is not necessarily having them come to Perth at all. That is why we are investing so much in telehealth. That is why we are investing so much in the redevelopment of our hospitals. That is why we are investing in medihotels, so that we can better support those patients when they do come to Perth.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member! Member for Dawesville, you have been very quiet today.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** I was thinking of a patient in the member for Central Wheatbelt's electorate. She came from Toodyay. She had been discharged from hospital around 6.00 pm.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Sorry—the member for Moore's electorate. She was discharged at 6.00 pm and was confronting the prospect of having to drive home that night. Rather than having to be driven home, that patient was put up in our medihotel at Royal Perth Hospital. She was cared for, she was able to be catered for, and she had a great night's sleep, and the next morning she was able to drive home at the comfort of her own pace. This is what governments do when they invest heavily in health care. This is the reason we need a McGowan Labor government.