

COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICES, FINANCIAL REPORTING

1065. Mr TRENORDEN to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the plan to abolish country health service boards and introduce a regional management structure.

- (1) What form of financial reporting will be put in place to inform the public of how much is spent in each country health service?
- (2) Will the minister receive an annual report from each individual health service?

Mr KUCERA replied:

- (1) The amount spent in each country health service will be an aggregation of the existing budgets of the individual hospital boards. They will be aggregated into the regional health authority areas, so there is no change in that. In fact, the arrangement will assist in many ways because, as I explained to the member for Roe the other day, we will be able to get some synergies in the services through economies of scale.
- (2) Annual reporting processes will not be in place in the same way that they are now. That is one of the difficulties in health. There are currently 35 country health boards, and there were some 71 individual boards and authorities in total. Each year great piles of paper were delivered. The reality is that it will be a proper global budget. During the Estimates Committee, I undertook to report on the breakdown of those. I am more than happy to provide that information; I believe it is coming from the Estimates Committee anyway. In terms of an annual report to the minister, I will require from the director general regular status reporting throughout the year from each of the seven authorities, which will aggregate into the types of annual reporting processes the member is talking about. That is not dissimilar to what virtually every major government department does. It is a bit of an anachronism to still have those individual boards. The one thing that became clear to me - at Esperance, Mt Barker and other places - was the need for community involvement. That is one thing we will insist upon. The rural forums have already started. The idea behind those forums and the reviews that are being conducted by Chris O'Farrell and her team is not about making sure that we have seven regions - those have already been put in place - but about deciding what mechanism is needed in each of those regions and towns to complement the kinds of machinery that we want to put in place. It is as simple as that. The member for Avon will see the benefits from that. I am sure that if he does not, he will be the first to tell me.