

HEALTH, SPECIALIST SERVICES IN RURAL AND REGIONAL WA

**650. Mr WALDRON to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the health budget on page 1239 of the *Budget Statements* and the additional \$6 million allocated over four years for specialist services in rural and regional Western Australia.

- (1) Is this \$6 million to be used specifically to get additional specialists to move and reside permanently in country areas, or to get additional specialists to visit country areas?
- (2) If so, how will that money be used?

**Mr KUCERA replied:**

- (1)-(2) I thank the member for some notice of this question. He is aware, from the discussions I have had with him, of the difficulties of getting specialists into country areas. The simple answer to both questions is yes. The money is there to assist specialists to live in country areas. It is also there to assist people who travel into country areas to carry out specialist services. I will come back quickly to the real need; it is about establishing health service facilities with sufficient client bases to encourage specialists to remain within the country areas. Specialists go through long years of training; they deserve to get a return on the amount of training they have undertaken. However, without building a patient base, bringing together health services, allowing the facilities to be developed and also allowing the hospitals to link together throughout specific country areas in order to ensure that these people get a decent return for the amount of effort they put in, we will never encourage specialists to stay in the bush. The Government wants to make sure that all of those services are brought together to allow that to occur.