

WHEATBELT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION - AGEING GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

287. Hon NIGEL HALLETT to the Minister for the Mid West and Wheatbelt:

Page 13 of the Wheatbelt Development Commission's annual report for 2004-05, under the heading "Summary of key achievements, setbacks and issues", lists one of the issues or setbacks faced as the ageing government infrastructure, specifically electricity and hospitals. Could the minister please provide details of government spending rectifying this position for 2004-05 and 2005-06, as well as the budgeted expenditure for 2006-07?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank Hon Nigel Hallett for providing some notice of the question. Since the Wheatbelt Development Commission's 2004-05 annual report referred to ageing government infrastructure for electricity and hospitals, the government has put in place a number of improvements. The Wheatbelt Development Commission and the Western Australian Country Health Service have a memorandum of intent, which has created a formal partnership between those two organisations to guide changes in health service delivery in the wheatbelt. I believe that this is the first time such a partnership has been put in place in rural Western Australia. The future use of existing hospitals and the use of the region's health infrastructure in general is part of that ongoing process. It is a process that actively includes local governments and general practitioners.

Following the creation of four electricity trading enterprises, the government has overseen significant upgrades to feeders in the wheatbelt serving Merredin, Dandaragan, Watheroo and Narrogin. The rural power improvement program achieved a reduction of 14.5 per cent on the average total length of interruption between May 2005 and May 2006. Budget expenditure details for electricity should properly be sought from the Minister for Energy, Hon Fran Logan. The budget expenditure details for hospitals should be sought from the Minister for Health, Hon Jim McGinty. I am happy to advise as the Minister for the Mid West and Wheatbelt that since the recognition by the Wheatbelt Development Commission of shortcomings in those key services, along with other government agencies, the commission has been able to initiate very significant and meaningful improvements. That is precisely what development commissions are established to do.