

REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES, FUNDING

377. Mr WATSON to the Minister for Health:

Due to a high level of speculation in the lead-up to last week's state budget, will the minister please outline the level of funding received by regional health services?

Mr KUCERA replied:

The delivery of health services and direct patient care is a major priority for this Government. The eight per cent increase in funding delivered in last week's budget to rural and regional health services is a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment in this area. In addition, some \$15.4 million has been allocated for new and existing capital works in rural and regional areas during this financial year.

Of the current financial year's capital works program, 22 of the 38 works projects are in regional Western Australia. I am sure that the member for Geraldton is as pleased as I am that one of the major initiatives in the capital works program is the \$35 million redevelopment of the Geraldton Regional Hospital.

This Government has made it clear that the first priority for health services throughout the State is to deliver services to their local communities. The increased funding that has been provided to rural health services in this year's budget will ensure that they are able to deliver the same level of services that they have in the past. To help them achieve this, the Department of Health will continue to work with local health service managers to help them achieve greater efficiencies in their corporate support structures.

As I have stated on many occasions previously, the Government's overall aim is to ensure that funding in health is better allocated to meet the community's needs. The increased funding announced in the budget, along with the improved targeting of other resources, will ensure that this happens.

I ask the member for Avon to look at the line items in the budget that refer to superannuation. I can only conclude from his recent statements to rural health boards that he obviously does not know how to read a budget paper, which shows a \$91 million line item for superannuation. I suggest he read the budget papers.