

HEALTH, BREAST CANCER SCREENING

734. Ms GUISE to the Minister for Health:

Given the significance of preventive action to address breast cancer, can the minister inform the House what is being done to address the fact that women who have had private breast screening can access public screening only every two years?

Mr KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for the question. I also acknowledge the interest of the members for Churchlands and Nedlands, both of whom have written to me about this issue. It saddens me to say that one in 11 women in this State are at risk of breast cancer. It is the biggest single killer of Western Australian women, with about 200 women dying of breast cancer each year. BreastScreen WA has played an integral part in reducing the death rate from breast cancer for Western Australian women. If I may quote some figures, a recent Productivity Commission report has shown that for women aged between 50 and 69 years screened by BreastScreen Australia, the small invasive detection rate was the highest in Western Australia. This clearly indicates the quality of this State's service. Despite a constant focus on what is apparently wrong with the health system, the early detection of breast cancer is a significant health outcome for women in this State. I am pleased to announce that BreastScreen WA has now come into line with the other States' criteria for eligibility for screening. This means essentially that all eligible women who request a screening mammogram, including those who have had a private mammogram, will now be eligible to be screened by BreastScreen WA, provided that 12 months has passed since their last mammogram. Therefore, they can be screened each year. Screening mammograms are carried out by BreastScreen WA at six strategically located metropolitan services in Mirrabooka, Midland, Fremantle, Joondalup, Cannington and Perth city. As well, the mobile rural services are scheduled to visit more than 100 locations in a targeted program throughout the State in the current two-year itinerary.

I had the pleasure shortly before Christmas of visiting one of the units when it was on display in Forrest Place. What a great job the units do for the women of this State. There has been a rescheduling of the rural mobile services so that they can be provided effectively to as many women as possible. For example, women in centres such as Yarloop and Tambellup will be offered transport to the closest towns, such as Katanning, Gnowangerup, Cranbrook and Harvey. I thank those women members of the House who have shown such an interest in this issue. I strongly urge all women who are eligible for a screening to make an appointment with their appropriate clinic.