

HEALTH SERVICES, ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN THE KIMBERLEY

**765. Mrs C.A. MARTIN to the Minister for Health:**

Can the minister advise what is being done to improve health services to remote Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley region?

**Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:**

I congratulate and thank the member for Kimberley for the enormous amount of effort she puts in on behalf of people in the Kimberley and particularly those remote communities. I was very pleased that on a visit to the Kimberley last week I had the pleasure of announcing a new health clinic at Oombulgurri. Construction will begin in the near future and it should be completed by late 2004. Oombulgurri is one the most remote communities in Australia. To be able to bring a new health service to that area to replace a service that is now some 20 years old is a huge boost to that community. I pay particular tribute to the people who work in that area. I met a marvellously committed woman by the name of Brenda Walker, who lives and works full-time in the community as a community nurse servicing the clinic, along with an Aboriginal health worker by the name of Pam Conway. We have to take our hats off to these people, who go to extraordinary lengths to make sure that the people in that area have health services.

I was also pleased to announce an additional \$7.7 million in funding for capital works in the Kimberley, bringing the total amount that we have pledged to that area to a massive \$41.7 million. The extra funds will also be used to upgrade facilities at Broome Hospital, and that extra building capacity at Broome will allow more people to be treated in the Kimberley.

Mr M.F. Board: What about Derby?

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Derby will get a state-of-the-art facility that will suit the health services at Derby. Through the efforts of the Kimberley health services we have for the very first time physicians and clinicians who want to reside in the Kimberley and service the Kimberley, because we are giving them choice, we are giving them decent accommodation, and we are giving them health services that they are proud to work in and that the people there are proud to go to. We have a model for the Kimberley that is working. That shows that with a bit of commitment, both the federal and State Governments can work together to pool funds -

Mr M.F. Board: I thought we were going to get through question time without a mention of the federal Government!

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Is it not amazing! The only person in this State who is an apologist for the federal Government is the member for Murdoch. The member for Murdoch is more than happy to kiss away \$400 million over the next five years in precious health funding for this State. I was very proud last week to meet the likes of Brenda Walker and to make sure that people like the 300 people who live in Oombulgurri have decent health services. That is the aim of this Government, and we will continue to get on with the job.