

PAEDIATRICIAN — ALBANY

938. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the government's decision to hold a review next year about the need for a full-time paediatrician in Albany.

- (1) Does the minister believe that a hospital servicing a catchment of more than 60 000 people in the great southern and parts of the south west warrants a full-time paediatrician?
- (2) How much would the review cost and when will it be complete?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1) Yes, I do. I think it is important that we have a good base of workforce in all these smaller regional settings. That would be the ultimate, but, unfortunately, one of the issues that we confront in the WA Country Health Service is attracting staff, particularly specialists, to practise in regional settings. The member will be familiar with the situation at Katanning, where, quite frankly, for all our efforts, we have not been able to maintain the services of obstetricians and, as a result, we rely upon the great work of the GP obstetricians. Nevertheless, we continue to struggle to attract staff to that area. Indeed, one of the situations in Albany is that because it is a big population centre, we have the justification for these higher levels of specialisation. Paediatrics is a good example of that. But the same scenario goes. Even though we have the need for the specialist services, we will continue to struggle to attract members of the medical workforce to practise there. My preference is that we have staff who are able to live and work in the community. The City of Albany is a fantastic place to live, I understand, Mr Speaker, and I cannot understand why people would not want to practise there. But we have to live with realities, and one of the realities is that sometimes we have to rely on a fly in, fly out workforce; and, if that is the case, I prefer that to not offering the service at all and requiring members of the public to have to travel to Perth to the receive those services.
- (2) In relation to the other aspects, how long and how much, I do not have that information to hand, but I am happy to provide that as soon as I can.