

WA COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICE

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

I refer to an article in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* of 1 August that stated that the minister had issued a directive to the WA Country Health Service in order to attract medical staff to, and retain them in, regional Western Australia.

- (1) When was this directive issued?
- (2) Will he today commit to tabling the detail of this directive in Parliament?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(2) I do not recall the date of the directive. I do commit this government to making sure that all our country hospitals have the contingent of staff that they deserve. This is a very serious issue and it is one that has impacted on governments for some time. It is difficult to make sure that we attract the right people to our regional hospitals, and this has been a challenge for some time. As the member for Roe would know, attracting obstetricians to Katanning Hospital is a difficult task. Mr Speaker, you would be aware that making sure that we have people living in Albany practising at Albany hospital is difficult work because we have to try to recruit these people to make sure that we have joined-up services and continuity of care. This is an important mission for our country health service and I commend the work done by the leadership of the WA Country Health Service to try to make sure that that is the case.

The harsh reality of this is that often fly in, fly out staff have to work at these hospitals, sometimes from great distances. That is regrettable. We know that if Western Australians live in a community and practise at the local hospital, it is better for everyone. It is better for the patients; it is better for the community. Our highest priority is to make sure that at least those positions are filled.

I will endeavour to get the information to the member in due course. As I said, the McGowan government puts patients first. We put country patients first and we will continue to strive to make sure that we have these services in the community.