

PILBARA HEALTH SERVICES - DIALYSIS UNIT

573. Hon NIGEL HALLETT to the minister representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to recent statements in *The West Australian* on 17 June by the Minister for Health about spending \$6 million on improving health services in the Pilbara.

- (1) Will one of those services include dialysis treatment at Newman District Hospital?
- (2) If not, why not?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd has entered into a partnership with the state government, known as the Pilbara Health Partnership, in which BHPB will provide funding support to both government and non-government agencies to improve health services. The \$6 million will provide better population, emergency and preventive health services to the people of Newman and Port Hedland.

The Western Australian Country Health Service will implement nine new initiatives over a six-year period, totalling approximately \$5.4 million, commencing in 2006-07. The initiatives will focus on complementing existing services and targeting areas of identified need. Although this does not include the provision of dialysis services at Newman, a number of initiatives will specifically benefit the Newman population. The nine new initiatives are -

the appointment of a child and adolescent mental health professional to be based at Newman to provide early intervention and treatment services for mental health clients: \$908 000;

the provision of fortnightly charter flights from Port Hedland to Newman to provide regular and guaranteed inland service provision for allied health services, medical specialists and support staff to visit Newman: \$516 000;

the development of increased accommodation options for pregnant women from Newman who travel to Port Hedland Regional Hospital to give birth, as there are no elective obstetric services at Newman. This will involve the upgrade of the Port Hedland Regional Hospital patient hostel and the securing of a self-contained unit at a privately owned facility in South Hedland, the Lodge: \$236 000;

the establishment of postnatal depression support groups in Newman to provide mothers with valuable guidance and assistance: \$7 500;

the appointment of a medical specialist, who is a fellow of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, to Port Hedland Regional Hospital. This role will provide ongoing staff training for both doctors and nurses while also improving hospital emergency systems in the region: \$2.458 million;

the appointment of a regional telehealth coordinator to facilitate the establishment of an improved telehealth service for the Pilbara: \$838 000;

the continued upgrading of diagnostic and therapeutic medical equipment at both Newman District Hospital and Port Hedland Regional Hospital: \$193 000;

the enhancement of community health promotion initiatives in physical activity and nutrition in Port Hedland and Newman: \$180 000; and

the provision of health promotion to both expectant mothers and health professionals of the risks associated with alcohol consumption during pregnancy as part of the foetal alcohol syndrome awareness program. Presentations in Newman, Port Hedland and surrounding indigenous communities will be conducted to increase understanding of the syndrome and reduce its incidence in these areas: \$60 000.

- (2) The possibility of providing both safe and sustainable renal dialysis services in Newman has previously been investigated, and it was found that dialysis services could not be established or sustained at Newman.

The dialysis service provided at Port Hedland is currently adequate to meet the needs of all the Pilbara patients who are well enough to be dialysed at a satellite unit. Other Pilbara patients remain in Perth under the medical supervision of the renal physicians; these patients are not considered well enough to be cared for in the Pilbara. There is no resident renal physician in the Pilbara, and the patients are reviewed on a visiting basis only or return to Perth to be seen by the specialists, if medically required.

There is difficulty in both attracting and retaining nursing staff with the skills to operate the dialysis machines and care for patients' needs. The shortage of experienced, trained dialysis nurses is experienced at Port Hedland, other dialysis units within regional settings and even within the metropolitan tertiary hospital dialysis units.