

HEALTH — 2021–22 STATE BUDGET — REGIONS

**512. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's significant investment in addressing the unprecedented demand on our health system, including the \$1.9 billion investment outlined in the state budget. Can the minister outline to the house what this significant investment will mean for those who rely on our health system, in particular those in the regional and remote parts of our state?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I thank the member for the question and for her tireless advocacy for health services in her electorate. In this budget, we have funded a significant number of projects, not all of which I will be able to outline in the short time that I have available. As I said in my last answer, the McGowan government is investing \$1.9 billion in health and mental health services throughout Western Australia. Regional communities, member, will be an important part of that expenditure, making sure that we continue to boost health services right across the state, particularly during this time of unprecedented demand. We will be delivering more beds, more doctors and more nurses, and improved services in country WA.

In addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars to boost the capacity of health services around the state, we will be delivering regional-specific initiatives. These include commitments made in the 2021 election. There will be a \$19.7 million increased investment in the patient assisted travel scheme. This will not only allow patients to get better accommodation support, with an increase in the nightly rate from \$60 to \$100, but also expand the eligibility to make sure that if patients who have to travel to the city for an operation or any level of care need a support partner, that partner will also be eligible for PATS.

In addition, we are investing \$10.9 million to enable the Royal Flying Doctor Service to refurbish and replace some of the engines in its Pilatus PC-12 aircraft fleet. We are spending \$15.7 million over the forward estimates to begin construction of a new consolidated health service at the existing Meekatharra Hospital site. We are funding acute recovery teams in the wheatbelt and midwest to support people in their recovery journey and to enable them to stay well in the community after a hospital stay. We are investing \$2.2 million to establish a women's community health service, member, in the Peel region, which will offer health and support services and information to those experiencing mental illness, family and domestic violence or sexual violence, or who have experienced sexual assault or childhood sexual abuse. We are investing \$4.2 million to fund the operating costs of a new adult public dental clinic at Narrogin Hospital, as well as \$2.8 million to expand women's community health services in the Kimberley, which includes services for people experiencing mental illness, family and domestic violence or sexual violence.

In addition, we will spend \$8.6 million to fund regional methamphetamine action plan initiatives, which includes the expansion of community alcohol and other drug services in the Peel region, and that will build on the McGowan government's comprehensive \$473 million methamphetamine action plan.

I could go on for some time, but I will not. As members can see, we are investing heavily in health services right across regional Western Australia as another demonstration of the McGowan government putting patients first.