

RURAL HEALTH SERVICES, MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS, PACKAGES

473. Mr L. Graham to the Minister for Health

I refer to the package to attract medical professionals to Three Springs announced in August 2001 and ask: -

- (a) what similar programs are to be, or have been, implemented in the North West of the State;
- (b) in which towns and communities will the funds be, or have been, spent;
- (c) who will be, or was, responsible for administering the funds; and
- (d) when will, or did, the programs commence operation in each town referred to above?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

The 'package', a Regional Health Services (RHS) Program project, is a Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing initiative under the National Rural Health Strategy. Detailed information about this Commonwealth program could be accessed through that Department and I understand they also have information available on a web site. However, in general, the RHS Program aims to help small rural communities expand their local primary health care services. The Program is flexible in that it provides for consideration of projects that meet the particular needs of and have the support of a community.

- (a) I am informed there are 11 projects throughout rural WA including in the Kimberley, Murchison and Gascoyne. The projects are understood to be significantly different from each other.
- (b) Health agencies and Local Government throughout country WA were able to submit applications for primary health care enhancement projects to be approved. The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing made the decisions as to where the funds were allocated. I understand that they have endeavoured to balance their investment of these funds across the sector. WA Country Health Services were successful in accessing some RHS funds for primary care enhancement projects. For the Northwest, these are identified in the areas outlined in (a).
- (c) The recipient of RHS funds allocated by the Commonwealth is responsible to ensure projects are implemented and funds are deployed accordingly.
- (d) A number of project approvals were advised during 2001-02. Commencement of the various projects depends upon the individual projects, the project sponsor and a range of implementation factors. However, many of the projects appear to be in the active phase of implementation and service delivery.