MENTAL HEALTH, BUDGET ALLOCATION AND PSYCHIATRIST NUMBERS

2688.   Mr M.G. House to the Minister for Health

(1)   Will the Minister provide the total budgetary allocation for Mental Health in the 2003/2004 State Budget?

(2)   Is the funding provided by the Western Australian Government for Mental Health sufficient to satisfy the demand?

(3)   How many psychiatrists are employed by the State Public Health System?

(4)   Are sufficient psychiatrists available in the Public Health system to meet the need?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

(1)   The Mental Health program budget allocation for 2003-2004 is $235 085 366.

(2)   While in general the total budgetary allocation for mental health is sufficient to meet most needs, as the report of the Health Reform Committee has emphasised, demand for mental health services will continue to grow.

(3)   There are currently 91 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) consultant psychiatrists employed by the State Public Mental Health System.

(4)   There are currently 7.5 vacant FTE positions in the State public mental health system, and it is anticipated that there will be a continuing shortage of psychiatrists in the public sector in both the metropolitan and rural and remote areas.

Several initiatives are used to attract trainees into psychiatry:

> Trainee psychiatrists are remunerated at 2 levels higher on the salary increment scale of the doctors' industrial agreement;

> Consultant psychiatrists are paid an additional 15% on the base salary prescribed in the industrial agreement.

> By agreement with the hospital or health service concerned, consultant psychiatrists may also be provided with up to one and a half days paid time or three sessions per week for agreed special research interests.

Despite these initiatives, the training program for psychiatrists has difficulty in attracting doctors into speciality training in psychiatry. Currently the training program has 63 trainees, which is 17 less than are required.