

MEDICAL GRADUATES, INTERN POSITIONS IN HOSPITALS

210. Mr BAKER to the Minister for Health:

What action is the State Government taking to ensure that graduating medical students, who will contribute to the medical work force needs of the State, are given positions in Western Australia's hospital system to undertake intern training?

Mr DAY replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

I am pleased to say that out of the Government's health budget there will be an allocation of approximately \$1m to the Metropolitan Health Service so that it can provide an additional 21 intern positions. It will then be able to employ a larger number of medical graduates than would otherwise have been the case. Approximately \$330 000 has been allocated for seven intern positions for the period from July to December of this year and an additional \$780 000 will be contributed for 21 intern and seven registrar positions for the period from January to June 2001. The positions are required because of the increase in the number of Western Australian medical students who are expected to graduate and seek internships in January 2001. A number of factors have led to a high number of graduates who will seek positions. The University of Western Australia has increased its retention of medical students. The number graduating will rise from 105 to over 120. There are a number of reasons for the increase. In addition, there are now four graduate entry medical schools in Australia and some of the graduates come from Western Australia. It is expected that some of them will apply to work in public hospitals in Western Australia. The Federal Government has decided to fund additional places in medical schools to provide more graduates for rural and remote areas of Australia. Consequently, there is additional pressure for intern positions. The Government has taken significant action to ensure that additional intern positions are available. It will provide greater certainty for medical graduates in Western Australia and it means that there will be a larger number of medical graduates able to be utilised in the medical work force in Western Australia, given that the State has a growing population.