

CHILD HEALTH SERVICES

**14. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Health:**

As a father of two young boys and as a teacher for 10 years, I was proud to see that the government in its first term made great inroads to improve access to child health services. Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** With this in mind, could the minister please advise the house what is planned to further improve child health services in this coming term of government?

**Dr K.D. HAMES replied:**

I thank the member very much for that question.

This is something for which I have been pushing for a very long time. In fact, the former member for Alfred Cove likes to take a lot of credit for the report that came out of the Education and Health Standing Committee, but of course there are other members of this house who were part of that committee. I think all members on both sides of the house should take a lot of pride in the report they put forward to the government—and I include the former member for Bassendean whose initiative it was that got us to this particular view on child health services. The report showed a significant deficiency in the provision of child health services in a number of areas of the state, and we addressed them—all of them—over that period of government. The first commitment was for \$49.7 million over four years to assist children who need speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and the like; subsequent to that, we fixed the severe deficiency in community child health services with a \$58.5 million commitment over four years; and during the election campaign we announced the final stage of that trifecta, which is \$57.2 million over four years to strengthen the number of school health nurses. That will provide 155.6 full-time equivalent school nurses to work in health services across the state.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** You can put them in the same room as your police in high schools!

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The opposition would need to take out of the schools those who are looking after the health of kids in our schools and put them in something else. What a joke! Your members on the committee strongly recommended the provision of these services.

There will be 110 FTEs in the metropolitan area and 45 FTEs in the country. As part of that, I will be looking to get speech therapists working in schools, helping kids who have speech disabilities and working through with them to make sure they have much better access to treatment and management.

Several members interjected.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I am sorry, member; I was thinking of you when we decided on doing that.

Mr Speaker, this is a great initiative. It will make sure that children coming into our schools have great access to health care assessment. Working together with child health nurses, physiotherapists and speech therapists will ensure that children who get health care in this state are second to none in Australia.