

HEALTH — REGIONAL SERVICES

734. Mr D.T. PUNCH to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment of putting patients first through its significant investment in health services, particularly across regional Western Australia.

(1) Can the minister update the house on this government's investment in health services —

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Dawesville, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Can I start again, please?

The SPEAKER: Start again, member for Bunbury.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment of putting patients first through its significant investment in health services, particularly across regional WA.

(1) Can the minister update the house on this government's investment in health services in Bunbury, including the progress of the Bunbury step-up, step-down mental health service?

(2) Can the minister outline to the house what other regional communities are being supported by this government's investment?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I would like to thank the member for the question. Once again, we see the member for Bunbury on his feet championing the interests of people in his area and across the regions.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I am sick of your voice. I call you to order for the first time.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.H. COOK: Mr Speaker.

(1)–(2) The McGowan government has made boosting mental health services in the regions a priority for our government. In addition to the other regional health services that we have invested in, we want to make sure that people in regional communities continue to enjoy strong growth in their mental health and alcohol and other drug services. I was delighted to be with the member for Bunbury on 23 August when we were able to look at the emerging construction of the Bunbury step-up, step-down facility. The member for Bunbury and I assisted some of the local builders, and the step-up, step-down facility in Bunbury is being built with 87 per cent local content. Not only are we creating great facilities for the people of Bunbury, but also jobs around the construction of these important facilities. Nevertheless, the member for Bunbury and I assisted them with bricklaying. I think our work looked fine; I think we were doing a great job, although, member for Bunbury, they may have been pulling apart what our hard efforts went into as we left the site.

It is an important process. We are investing over \$22 million in making sure that we boost mental health services in our regional communities. The Bunbury facility, which will open in early 2020, will join the already open step-up, step-down facility in Albany. In addition, we are looking to invest in these communities to create step-up, step-down services in Broome, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Karratha. They will be important facilities, because they will provide the opportunity for patients who are becoming mentally unwell to get subacute care before they enter a hospital system or those transitioning out of hospital to get transitional care, so that they can move back into the community. They are tremendous services and we are committed to making sure that people in regional communities get those services. In addition, Bunbury and the people of the south west will also benefit from our 44 new alcohol and other drug beds in the south west. The beds complement and build on an existing system of AOD treatment and support services across the state and meet, ahead of time, a significant election commitment that we made. As part of the government's response to the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce, we are planning on expanding the award-winning police mental health co-response program, which I am championing, partnering with the Minister for Police, making sure that we grow those award-winning services in the regional areas and include AOD support.

We should be proud of the work that the WA Country Health Service is doing creating outstanding services right across our regional communities. I am sure that the member for Geraldton will be pleased to hear that in 2019, the Geraldton Health Campus was named Australia's most outstanding regional hospital

from the Australian Patients Association. In addition, the WA Country Health Service outperforms many of its metropolitan peers.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I can hear that voice again.

Mr R.H. COOK: I appreciate that health services in the regions are not a high priority for the member for Carine, but they are a high priority for the McGowan government. That is why the WA Country Health Service continues to outperform many of its metropolitan peers in the Western Australia emergency access target and the WA elective services target. The telehealth service continues to grow. Seventy-five per cent of emergency telehealth service patients are assessed, diagnosed, treated and discharged locally. In late July 2019, the mental health emergency telehealth service commenced, providing 24/7 access to specialist mental health nurses and psychiatrists. This enabled 75 per cent of patients to remain at site. We are continuing to grow our health services right across the state and—as I am sure the member for Geraldton will be pleased to hear—make sure that Geraldton Health Campus continues to receive its resources as part of our election commitment to redevelop that hospital. We are the first government since the Carpenter Labor government to undertake that work.