

HALLS CREEK AND KUNUNURRA, HEALTH FACILITIES

545. Mrs C.A. MARTIN to the Minister for Health:

Can the minister provide an update on the new hospital planned for Halls Creek and the new aged care facility for Kununurra?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for Kimberley for her assistance with these two projects, and compliment her and the Aboriginal groups in the Kimberley who are working towards some very appropriate facilities there that will deal with Aboriginal issues in the area. I was very heartened last year when I spent time with the member for Kimberley and the group from Fitzroy Crossing led by Maureen Carter, who pointed out that it was absolutely essential now that the Aboriginal communities in that area have input into the building of facilities. I am very pleased to announce that the architects have been appointed to design the new eight-bed hospital in Halls Creek, and a new 10-bed aged care facility in Kununurra. The project working groups in both towns will meet next week with the architects, who have extensive local experience, as I understand, to discuss community input into the design and planning of the facilities. Tenders for the building works will be called at the end of the year, and construction will begin, weather permitting, in early 2004. I am pleased to say that the 10-bed facility in Kununurra will provide elderly people in the region with their first ever local aged care facility. It is expected to be completed by late 2004. This, as you will know from your own electorate, Mr Speaker, will allow elderly people, particularly members of the Aboriginal community, to remain in their own town instead of moving to another high care facility.

The new Halls Creek hospital will be completed by early to mid 2005, depending on the wet seasons, and will provide local people with a modern, culturally sensitive hospital. It will form part of that network of facilities right across the Kimberley. Thanks to the efforts of people like the member for Kimberley and the upper House member Hon Jon Ford, whose electorate encompasses Eyre, we are now starting to see the development of facilities for the whole of the Kimberley, not just individual towns. Funding for both these projects has come from a \$34 million pool to improve health services across the entire Kimberley.