

DRUG USE, REGIONAL AREAS

833. Mr T.K. WALDRON to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the report titled “Indicators of Drug Use in Western Australia” released by the Drug and Alcohol Office and the conclusion that drug use in regional Western Australia is more endemic than in the Perth metropolitan area. Will the minister now undertake to increase the number of drug teams in regional Western Australia?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for Wagin for a very good question. For the first time we now have a clear picture of drug usage. However, although from my understanding of what is happening the percentage of drug use is higher in country areas, we need to understand that the volumes are based on a percentage of the population, so obviously with 1.3 million people in the city of Perth the volume of drug usage is higher. I cannot give a definitive answer at this stage because we received the report only last Friday. However, the report indicates that we need to look at that issue. There is no doubt that parts of the wheatbelt are under-resourced with teams. I acknowledge that, and it is a challenge for us to push those issues. It is also a challenge in terms of education and making sure we have long-term plans in place. I am happy to look at the issue when the report comes in and to work with the local member to make sure that his area is catered for. I congratulate the Drug and Alcohol Office for giving us for the first time a definitive study. The study presents challenges for government; there is no doubt about that. It also presents some challenges for the local communities. This issue transcends politics, particularly in country areas, and it is imperative that we work together on these issues.