

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH — STAFF MORALE

**699. Dr A.D. BUTI to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to recent reports detailing the low levels of staff morale in our health system, including at Armadale–Kelmscott Memorial Hospital in my own electorate.

- (1) What is this government doing to engage with our health staff?
- (2) How is this government responding to any concerns raised by staff?
- (3) What does the minister intend to do in the future to ensure that the health and wellbeing of our health staff are looked after?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I thank the member for the question and acknowledge his role and concern about staffing issues, particularly at the hospital in his area.

- (1)–(3) As members know, we have made some difficult decisions around staff morale of late. I have called on all the boards of health service providers to be responsive and deliberate in ensuring that we keep staff morale and wellbeing uppermost in our minds at all times. Our health system plays a vital role in underpinning the wellbeing of people in our community. There is no more important task beyond that than keeping up the morale and wellbeing of the people who provide care in those hospitals. We aspire to do better things for our doctors, nurses, midwives and allied healthcare professionals and the support staff who work in the hospitals. That is why we have embarked on a dedicated employee engagement process in the health system. It is about making sure that staff feel valued and feel listened to.

I am pleased to report that over the past couple of weeks I have engaged in a process of staff forums right across the state, with over 1 100 staff participating in the forums. There have been frank discussions dealing with the issues that came forward at those forums. The forums included Royal Perth Hospital, with another five sites included via teleconference—Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Rockingham Hospital, Fiona Stanley Hospital and the Western Australian Country Health Service, with 600 staff from the country health service linked in from 21 locations across the health system. We talked to those staff about the issues that concern them and made sure that they understood that although we might not always make decisions that they would agree with, they will always be respectfully communicated, and we will continue to maintain a close link with them and ensure that our ears are open at all times. These forums were a fantastic way of engaging with staff, and we had great feedback in response to them.

In addition to that, we have engaged in a number of statewide staff surveys. We are conducting two system-wide surveys; one in February next year to provide staff with the opportunity to have input directly into the sustainable health review and another online survey in May 2018 to provide an annual benchmark feedback mechanism so that we can continue to monitor and make sure that we are improving our performance in maintaining staff wellbeing and happiness in the workplace. We will be undertaking that on a regular basis so that rather than boards having to continually respond to crises that are reported from time to time, we meet the needs of the patients as those issues emerge. This is a really positive issue. We are taking health beyond the question of simply being the bricks and mortar of hospitals and starting to address the concerns of people who deliver the care in those hospitals. It is a positive development and one that I hope will continue to improve the wellbeing of staff in our community.