

HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE — RECRUITMENT

564. Ms H.M. BEAZLEY to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's record investment in our health system. Can the minister update the house on the initiatives this government has implemented to attract more healthcare workers to Western Australia and outline how this is supporting our hospitals?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I thank the member for her question. In fact, I got to meet the latest group of nursing and midwifery staff who have joined the East Metropolitan Health Service in the last 12 months. I met the 1000th nurse to be recruited in 12 months by East Metropolitan. It was a delight to meet that group of women. Aires Jamalul was the 1000th nurse to be recruited. That mix of nurses and midwives are now working across Armadale and Royal Perth Hospital, which is fantastic.

Our public healthcare workers are incredibly dedicated and hardworking. The great thing about our public system is that it sees every person who walks through the door. No matter their income or their circumstances, they all get access to a world-class health system. That is what draws people to public health. We are doing everything we can in a globally competitive market to make sure that we are recruiting the healthcare workers that are needed now and in the future.

A number of initiatives that were launched before my tenure as minister under the former Minister for Health, as well as new initiatives, are helping to secure the kind of healthcare workforce that we need, including the refresher program, which was launched in August last year, and for the future graduate workforce. The refresher program supports AHPRA-registered enrolled nurses, registered nurses and midwives who require recency of practice to get back into the workforce. This calendar year, 865 nursing scholarships have been allocated, and in 2021, 1 276 newly qualified midwives were offered contracts. In order to support our primary care partners in aged care, we also extended the GradConnect recruitment process to aged care to support Amana Living, Baptistcare, Brightwater Care Group, Hall and Prior Aged Care, Juniper and Southern Cross Care. Our investment in mental health graduates is also picking up, with a total of 81 newly qualified nursing midwives participating in the mental health program last year. This year, 62 nursing midwives participated in the mental health program.

We are also looking at new models of care, in particular for nurse practitioners. We know that nurse practitioners are highly skilled practitioners. We need more of them, particularly in regional areas, and we need to support them. We are also looking at nurse practitioner-led emergency department models of care and nurse practitioner candidacy to support cancer services across Western Australia. We are looking at transition-to-practice programs focused on increasing the number of newly qualified registered nurses within the workforce and supporting upskilling into key specialties. A public health transition-to-practice program for 190 FTE newly qualified registered nurses supports the WA Health COVID response and is a pathway for undergraduate nursing students to seek employment in Assistant in Nursing positions, particularly around the provision of vaccinations. We are upskilling to support nurses to transition into perioperative services, including sponsored postgraduate education and extensive skills acquisition. The Belong campaign has recruited hundreds of health workers into our state over the last 12 months that it has been running, including significant incentive payments.

We know that this is a global and national issue. We need a coordinated national response or we will continue to be poaching staff from other jurisdictions, which is why I am so pleased that the commonwealth government has established the health workforce task force, which will look at aged care as well as mental health and our broader health systems. It is nice to finally have a partner in this space rather than a Liberal coalition government that denied anything was wrong.