

DENTAL CARE

Mr MINSON to the Minister for Health:

What action has been taken by the Government to ensure that dental care is made more affordable and accessible to those most in need?

Mr DAY replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

I know that the member for Greenough has a close interest in this matter, as I do, of course. The reality is that for some time I have been concerned about the ability of people on low incomes to access affordable dental care, in particular those who have not until recently qualified for subsidised dental treatment.

As the member for Greenough understands, good oral health care is very much a part of good overall health care.

An additional \$7.6m was allocated in the last state budget for the provision of increased oral health services throughout Western Australia. That was over and above the previously allocated \$34.5m, giving a total of \$42m being spent on oral health care throughout the State. Of the extra \$7.6m, \$4m will be spent on increasing access to people on low incomes, in particular those who have a health care card or a pensioner concession card. Those people will be able to access a 50 per cent subsidy. Of course, those who were previously eligible will continue to receive a 75 per cent subsidy. In addition, \$2.4m has been allocated to increase the number of oral health services provided in rural and remote areas and \$1.2m has been allocated to increase services provided to people in aged care facilities.

I am pleased that this scheme has now been expanded. It is yet another example of the comprehensive way in which this Government is expanding the provision of health services to people in Western Australia.