

MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

226. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Health:

Can the minister update the house on the latest initiatives introduced as part of the state government's \$173 million mental health strategy?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

I thank the member for Collie-Wellington for the question, and some notice of it. Last weekend, I announced two multimillion-dollar initiatives that will boost the mental health work force and help people suffering from persistent mental illnesses. Firstly, \$2.8 million was allocated to establishing a scholarship program to provide an extra 120 mental health nurses for the state's health system over the next four years. The Postgraduate Diploma in Mental Health Nursing is a joint venture between the Department of Health, Curtin University of Technology and Murdoch University, and will qualify registered nurses as mental health nurses.

The second initiative involves the establishment of the Reflections art studio in Northbridge, which will provide art instruction and therapy for adults who suffer from a persistent mental illness. The success achieved by the Creative Expressions Centre for Art Therapy at Graylands Hospital has reduced hospitalisation and relapses in mental health patients. That was one of the main reasons the new art studio was developed. Art therapy has been successfully used at Graylands to treat disorders such as depression, abuse-related trauma and schizophrenia. The new Northbridge studio will offer an innovative art program to about 20 people at a time. The state government has spent \$185 000 to upgrade the studio and will provide an additional \$300 000 a year towards operational costs. These initiatives form part of the government's \$173 million strategy to improve the state's mental health system which for many decades has been neglected by both sides of politics.