

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, REMOTE REGIONS

55. Hon GREG SMITH to the Attorney General representing the Minister for Health:

In a recent speech by Hon Tom Stephens a claim was made that the only thing preventing qualified health professionals from working in the remote regions of the State is the provision of adequate pay and conditions. Will the minister indicate to the House what incentives exist for health professionals to work in these areas, and whether it is as simple as the provision of more money?

Hon PETER FOSS replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

Qualified health professionals working in remote regions in the State typically receive benefits such as enhanced pay and allowances, respite leave, respite airfares, overtime benefits, subsidised accommodation, professional development and support and retention payments for completion of service in the remote area. As Hon Greg Smith implies, the Leader of the Opposition was not correct in suggesting that the provision of more money is all that is required to attract to and retain health professionals in remote regions. Other factors are involved. These include addressing the perceptions of remote practice, clinical and continuing education support and the availability of community and social facilities.