

TOM PRICE DISTRICT HOSPITAL — REDEVELOPMENT

736. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the redevelopment of Tom Price District Hospital. Can the minister provide an update regarding the status of significant works at the existing hospital site, the feasibility study and land assembly work on the proposed new site, and the time line for commencement and completion of the project?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I thank the member for North West Central for some notice of the question. The Cook Labor government is absolutely committed to improving health services across our region in Western Australia both through investment in infrastructure and upgrading different models of service and care. WA Country Health Service staff do an incredible job. I think we all agree that they do an outstanding job in regional Western Australia in often very challenging circumstances, and the government is absolutely committed to delivering them and the community world-class facilities and resources.

Planning for the Tom Price hospital is continuing, and I am continuing to work closely with the WA Country Health Service and Rio Tinto, which has provided \$20 million in funding towards the project, to ensure that it progresses as quickly as it can. We have identified a site that is currently vested with the Shire of Ashburton. The shire is working constructively with WACHS to deliver appropriate land tenure outcomes so that we are able to build the hospital on that land. As with all infrastructure projects, once a managing contractor is appointed, we will work with it to establish the program of works that will include indicative time frames for construction and completion.

The reality is that it is an incredibly challenging construction market at the moment, particularly in regional parts of Western Australia. It does not get much more regional than Tom Price. It is very challenging to build within the metropolitan area, let alone in regional Western Australia, and at a reasonable cost to taxpayers. It has to be done responsibly. We are absolutely committed to redeveloping and rebuilding Tom Price hospital, and we will have more to say once we have resolved the land tenure issues with the Shire of Ashburton. I acknowledge that this project has taken sometime, as it has with other regional projects, because of those challenging construction markets and making sure that the taxpayers of Western Australia get best value for money. We will continue to work with the sector to deliver those outcomes. The government is frustrated by some of the time frames and the limited market available. There simply are not many market-ready construction companies that can build in regional WA. That is the reality. We are working to invite other international players into the market to make sure that we have a competitive market and there is broad interest in these projects. We continue to invest, but not only in Tom Price. With the former Premier, we recently opened the \$61.4 million redevelopment of Newman Health Service that is absolutely outstanding. That project also had a \$15 million contribution from BHP.

Infrastructure is one way that we upgrade and deliver high quality services. Models of care and upgrading technology is a really important way to deliver emergency care into really remote and regional areas. We are doing that by upgrading our emergency telehealth service with our \$24 million investment. We have introduced the virtual 24/7 stroke care services that are world leading in an area the size of Western Australia. We have provided mental health emergency telehealth service teams and midwifery and obstetrics emergency telehealth teams that give emergency care and support to women and staff on the site and tele-chemotherapy. Innovation is as important as infrastructure, and we are absolutely committed to both.