

WA COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICE — NURSES

**92. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:**

I refer to the outrageous report this morning that up to 90 nurses at south west hospitals have had their contracts terminated due to a budgetary decision made by the WA Country Health Service executive.

- (1) How is it possible that the Department of Health or WACHS can terminate staff at the same time as the Minister for Health has flown to recruit staff from overseas due to extreme shortages?
- (2) Have any staff at other regional hospitals had their contracts terminated due to similar issues?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. It gives me an opportunity to provide some clarity and perhaps a bit of truth about the situation. The fact is that, as a result of some administrative errors, when some casual nurses went to clock on at the beginning of their shift, they found that they were no longer in the system and, essentially, it appeared that their contracts were terminated. Obviously, that is not the case. We want all nurses and we value them, particularly those who work in our regional communities. That situation has been rectified and those nurses continue to work within our service. We want to welcome more nurses to our system. Since 2017, the health budget has grown by 33 per cent and our nurse workforce has grown by over 4 000, including 1 600 additional doctors. The health workforce generally has grown by 30 per cent; however, that does not mean that we will not have challenges into the future.

We have an ageing population and an escalation of chronic disease within our community, and we will need to make sure that we have carers to stand by the beds of Western Australians who go to a hospital to receive world-class health care. I commend the Minister for Health for taking this innovative initiative, making sure that we look at all options to attract world-class nurses, trained in a similar style with a similar curriculum to Western Australian nurses, and obviously, if they want to come work in one of our great hospitals right across Western Australia, particularly in regional hospitals, we will welcome them coming to Western Australia.