

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE — REGIONS

Statement

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [6.43 pm]: I want to add to the debate that we had in the house earlier today on the motion on notice moved by Hon Nick Goiran regarding health care in regional and rural areas of Western Australia. It was a very noble motion. However, I want to make a few things clear. Back in 2010, when the now Premier was a member of the Assembly—he still is, but he was not Premier then—he said —

For people who live in the country and those people who live just outside the metropolitan area there can be no greater issue than the provision of health care. The lack of that care, of course, can be a life and death issue for people living in communities throughout regional Western Australia.

That is from 2010. It is now close to 10 years later and, obviously, given the motion put up by Hon Nick Goiran, there is still a problem with health care in our regional areas. Just the other day, I mentioned how good our healthcare system is in general. I am now a member of the South West Region and I have lived most of my life also in the metro area, so I have been fortunate to benefit from fantastic health care in the metro area and now in the south west. If I have to travel a distance in the south west, it is not too far to get to Busselton Health Campus, Albany Health Campus or Bunbury Hospital at South West Campus. I get great care and so do my constituents. It is not too much trouble. However, there are members in this place who represent the Mining and Pastoral Region and the Agricultural Region. I was very impressed with what Hon Rick Mazza had to say. It was a very impassioned plea on behalf of people in country areas. I note that we will never have a perfect system. I take that on. However, in the 2019–20 budget, the additional spend for hospitals is \$216.7 million. I note that only \$21.5 million will go to small rural hospitals and nursing posts. That is about 10 per cent of the total health budget. Regional areas have a lot of catching up to do. I would like the government to increase that figure and maybe make it 20 or 25 per cent of the budget in the future.

I also note that the government has done many good things in health. I do not want to knock it for that. There has been an allocation of \$13.1 million to Albany Health Campus, \$800 000 for the replacement of the Narrogin helicopter landing site, \$700 000 to the Jurien Bay Health Centre and \$4 million to Laverton Hospital. I am not having a go at the current government or even at the previous government, because health is too big for that. Health is too big for politics to be played and the debate earlier today sometimes entered that realm.

I also want to mention that, according to the *Budget Statements*, improving healthcare outcomes and enhancing services in rural and regional Western Australia remains a key priority. I have not seen enough evidence of that at this stage for that to stick out in my mind. I listened to the parliamentary secretary talk about palliative care; I am happy that the government is now adding more money to palliative care. In roundabout figures in the forward estimates, it is \$40-odd million every year for the next four years. That is impressive when talking about figures and sums, so I applaud the government for that. However, we need some details. It is hard to say, “Well done”, until we really find out how that money is going to be spent and whether it will be spent, because sometimes budget estimates and actuals are quite different. We need the details on that. There are only 27 palliative care specialists in the whole state; I believe that figure should be in the region of 55, so a lot of work needs to be done. I am sure the health minister knows that. In the spirit of the motion, I say to the government: well done on the work so far. It has a lot of work to do and it needs to inform this house as it progresses that work.

Statement

HON ROBIN SCOTT (Mining and Pastoral) [6.48 pm]: I would also like to comment on Hon Nick Goiran’s motion on primary health care. What a brilliant motion. I thought I was going to be hearing a really good debate and members coming up with answers—maybe not all the answers, but some solutions to regional health. Instead, all we got was a bickering and yelling session, which was very unfortunate. We heard the previous Liberal–National government get blamed for eight and a half years of doing nothing. The federal government did not escape either. It was blamed for doing nothing and still not doing enough. We heard about health reviews, pilot plans and clear pictures of reviews—all just fill-in remarks.

Hon Nick Goiran also mentioned painting a room blue and chucking in a crochet blanket and calling it a palliative care room. That is nothing like a palliative care room. I have been in a few of them; in fact, most of them are painted pastel colours. Blue is a very cold and aggressive colour; they do not use blue in palliative care rooms. True palliative care is just non-existent in the regions. Registered nurses, God bless them, take on the role of palliative care nurses in the regions. There is a big difference between a registered nurse and a palliative care nurse. A registered nurse takes the oath that she will work hard, do her duties, give the medication, provide the treatment and do everything she can to help her patient recuperate and walk out of hospital. A palliative care nurse is completely different. Their patients are not going anywhere. Those nurses deal with death every day. Their patients

do not recover; they are there to die. Palliative care nurses are trained to control their emotions. They are also trained to understand that they did their best for their patients.

After two years and three months in Parliament, I have not seen any improvement—nothing at all—with regional health. Last year the Labor government spent \$39 million on Local Projects, Local Jobs. The money was spent on sheds, sails and mobile coffee vans. That money could easily have paid for the upgrade of the Laverton Hospital, it could have helped with the Leonora aged-care facility or it could have even brought forward the MRI machine for the Kalgoorlie Health Campus.

It was a brilliant motion. Unfortunately for me, the debate was just a waste of two hours of valuable chamber time.