

HEALTH SERVICES — NEWMAN

**86. Hon HELEN BULLOCK to the minister representing the Minister for Health:**

My question is about health in regional health, specifically health in Newman.

- (1) What is the plan for regional health; and why do shires and local governments have to fund doctors and health care themselves?
- (2) Are there plans to upgrade the existing Newman District Hospital?
- (3) How many dentists currently work in Newman?
- (4) Is the government aware of concerns regarding the high staff turnover for dentists in the town; and, if so, what does it intend to do to address this issue?

**Hon HELEN MORTON replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) WA Country Health Service has outlined, through “Revitalising WA Country Health Service 2009-2012”, a series of key action plans for country health services. This strategy document is available at <http://www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au/uploaddocs/booklet%20final.pdf>. The funding of general practitioners is the responsibility of the commonwealth government, and runs on a private business basis. Local shire councils often provide incentives to attract private general practitioners into their towns, as medical services are seen as an essential part of supporting the local community.
- (2) A high-level service plan has been developed and is currently under consideration, and that will inform further facility and master planning for the existing Newman hospital site.
- (3)-(4) There are currently no dentists in Newman; recruitment for a full-time replacement dentist is in progress. In the interim, the use of a fly in, fly out relief dental team is being arranged to provide a limited emergency service. There has generally been stable staffing in Newman since October 2004, with short periods of time when a relief dental team covered absences. The dentist who recently resigned had been working in Newman since January 2010. A dental therapist will be in Newman from 8 March 2011 for approximately one month to treat enrolled schoolchildren.