

PODIATRIST POSITION — NEWMAN

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

The town of Newman has not had a resident permanent podiatrist since November 2009.

- (1) What actions has the government taken to ensure the position is filled?
- (2) Has a review of the employment conditions been undertaken?
- (3) Will a visiting or fly in, fly out service be offered in the interim?
- (4) How many patients have been required to travel outside Newman to access podiatry services since 2009?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question to the Minister for Health, who responds as follows —

- (1) The WA Country Health Service, Pilbara has a regional podiatry position based in Port Hedland. This position will travel to Hedland, Newman and Tom Price. WA Country Health Service, Pilbara has unsuccessfully advertised the regional podiatry position twice a year since 2008 and the position remains unfilled. The allied health pool of qualified Podiatrists is limited, resulting in a scarcity of the available workforce. WA Country Health Service is currently in negotiations to contract a visiting regional podiatrist, whose caseload will include services to Newman.
- (2) No.
- (3) Once the recruitment process for the regional visiting podiatrists is completed, estimated to be by the end of October 2010, the WA Country Health Service, Pilbara anticipates fly in, fly out podiatry services will be offered to Newman from November 2010.
- (4) Due to the ineligibility of access to allied health services through the patient assisted travel scheme, WA Country Health Service, Pilbara is unable to provide an estimate of the number of patients who have been required to travel from Newman to access podiatry services elsewhere. The data is not collected.