

BUNBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL — CARDIAC UNIT

Statement

HON COL HOLT (South West) [5.36 pm]: I want to touch briefly on what Hon Jim Chown just spoke about. During the debate, we have heard a lot from everyone about the media vision and their responses to it. Quite a lot has been expressed through television reports, with one particular report highlighting Paul Holmes `a Court. I thought that what he had to say was quite interesting. He says that the industry members need to pull up their socks and do something about the problem as well. I found his leadership as a key player in the industry to be quite extraordinary. From my perspective, one guy who sits in this Parliament has shown a great deal of leadership. He absolutely has the welfare of animals and producers at heart. I congratulate Hon Terry Redman, the Minister for Agriculture and Food, for playing a leading role in this issue.

However, I really want to talk about another subject. I guess those of us in the National Party talk quite a bit about royalties for regions. We often talk about it in the millions of dollars and the broad projects being delivered. Tonight, I want to bring the conversation back to how government funding can impact lives. This matter really does impact on life. I am talking about the recent announcement of the cardiac unit in Bunbury—which really can be a life-and-death situation.

About 18 months ago I found myself in the cardiac ward of Royal Perth Hospital for an angiogram. After spending a day and a night there, I woke up to find a guy from Busselton in the bed next to me. After chatting and sharing our war stories I discovered that, although I had had one stent put in one of the arteries in my heart, he had had seven or nine. His was an emergency dash; mine, a routine check-up. His was an emergency dash firstly to Busselton and then to Bunbury Regional Hospital and finally, by way of ambulance and the Royal Flying Doctor Service, he arrived in Perth. We all know that the speed at which we respond to heart problems is critical. After his journey, he found himself lying in bed with a reconstructed heart and, I think, feeling very, very lucky to have been only in Busselton and not further away from the cardiac unit at Royal Perth. That is why the announcement of the cardiac unit in Bunbury is critical and important.

I have read a few reports about the number of patients who travel from the South West to Royal Perth—some say 2 000 and some say 3 000 patients a year access cardiac units in Perth. If we split the difference, that is 50 people a day from the South West who are coming to Perth for cardiac medication or medical treatments. That to me is a pretty significant number. That is seven people a day from the South West who are coming to Perth for cardiac treatment. Therefore, this investment of \$5 million from royalties for regions, matched with the private funding from St John of God, is about changing people's lives—indeed, not just changing people's lives, but saving people's lives. We will be able to look back on that as an incredible achievement that will deliver a state-of-the-art cardiac unit in Bunbury to meet the needs of the people in the South West.

The flow-on effect of having a specialist cardiac unit in Bunbury will not only be that people in the South West who need cardiac care will be able to get attention immediately, or at least much more quickly; it will also be that Bunbury will be able to attract to the region not only cardiac specialists, but also specialist technicians and a range of people who will be able to provide important skills for the community.

Although this investment of \$5 million may seem small in the scale of things, it is a significant investment, and it is good to see. I hope that my mate from Busselton, who was sitting in the bed next to me, will never need to go to this cardiac unit, and I hope that none of us will ever need to go to this cardiac unit. However, when I am travelling around the South West, there will be some relief in my mind that if I do experience any further heart problems, I will be a fair bit closer to help than if I had to go to Royal Perth Hospital.