



the

# EGGLESTON



report

Senator Alan Eggleston: Working for Western Australia

September 2004

## Howard Government working to strengthen health system

**a**s a former rural GP I am pleased that the Howard Government is making GP services more affordable to all Australians.

From January 1 2005, the rebate for all GP services will be increased from 85 per cent to 100 per cent of the Medicare Schedule Fee. For a standard 15 minute surgery consultation, this would mean an additional rebate of \$4.50 a visit for the patient.

A rebate of only 85 per cent of the scheduled fee is an anomaly long in need of rectification.

This will apply to services provided in GPs surgeries, after hours, home and aged care facility visits, and services provided by GPs to their patients in a hospital.

This initiative will cost \$1.8 billion over four years.

The Howard Government is able to deliver this benefit to all Australians because competent and focussed economic management over the past 8 and a half years has produced a strong economy and a strong Budget.

This means that health services can be made more affordable for all Australians while keeping the Budget in surplus and keeping pressure off interest rates. This initiative also builds on the Government's

*Strengthening Medicare* strategy announced earlier this year. This strategy delivers:

- The new Medicare Safety Net that has brought greater peace of mind to all Australians and substantial new benefits already to thousands of Australian families;

- Targeted incentives to encourage GPs to bulk-bill children under 16 and concession card holders; and

- Measures to ensure that the Australian health workforce remains capable of meeting community needs as our population grows and ages.

Access to the GP rebate is a pillar of Medicare, Australia's universal health benefit system. The decision to increase GP rebates to 100 per cent of the Schedule Fee is further proof of the Coalition Government's 100 per cent commitment to Medicare.

This and previous enhancements to Medicare, particularly the introduction of the Safety Net, means that the

Coalition is a stronger supporter of the Medicare system than the Australian Labor Party.

Moreover, the Coalition's proven track record of support for the Private Health Insurance Rebate means that the Liberal and National Parties have a much stronger commitment to the public/private partnership in the provision of health services in Australia.



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## New website now online

*My new website is now online at [www.senatoralaneggleston.com](http://www.senatoralaneggleston.com) and for those with access to the internet, I encourage you to take a look.*

*Included in the new site is a web poll, which enables everyone to have their say on current issues. Additionally, I invite you to sign up to get an electronic version of this newsletter. To facilitate interaction I have also provided a form*

*for you to raise issues of concern with my office.*

*Those familiar with my previous website will recognise that many features have remained, including a collection of my speeches and sections on the North West.*

*Importantly, I have retained the links page featuring sites important to the WA economy.*

## Nursing home receives accreditation

I recently presented an aged care accreditation certificate to Amaro Village in Gosnells.

Accreditation was introduced by the Howard Government to maintain standards in nursing homes.

In its 13 years of Government, Labor neglected aged care, left office with a 10,000 aged care place shortage, failed to introduce national legislated care standards and refused to act when an independent report found nursing homes delivering poor quality care. Labor ignored the desires of older people who wanted to remain in their homes.

The Government recognises there is more to be done, and continues to build on our 1997 reforms to aged care with our comprehensive response to the Review of Pricing Arrangements in Aged Care (the Hogan Review).

This \$2.2 billion Budget response includes:

- \* An extra \$877.8 million in subsidies for aged care providers to enable them to continue to provide quality care and to help them pay competitive wages to staff;
- \* Almost \$1 billion in Australian Government funding



*Alan discusses accreditation with some residents of Amaro including 105-year-old Mrs Gladys "Granny" White, the oldest resident. (front).*

for capital works to enable aged care providers to build new, and upgrade existing, aged care homes to meet 2008 certification standards, particularly in relation to fire and safety;

- \* The allocation of 27,900 new aged care places over the next three years, including 13,030 in 2004-2005.

# What does the US Free Trade Agreement mean for the West?

The AUSFTA is the most important bilateral economic agreement ever undertaken by Australia. It will build on our \$40.9 billion two-way trading relationship, and deliver real benefits to all sectors of the WA economy. The FTA will:

- \* Immediately eliminate over 97 per cent of US tariffs on Australia's non-agricultural and manufacturing exports.

- \* Immediately improve access for Australian agricultural products, eliminating two thirds of US tariffs from the day the Agreement takes effect, and cutting a further 9 per cent to zero within four years.

- \* Provide unprecedented access to the \$200 billion US federal government procurement market and those of key US State Governments.

- \* Guarantee market access and non-discriminatory treatment for Australian service providers.

- \* Deliver a \$6 billion boost to Australia's annual GDP within a decade, according to independent analysis. **Based on the state economy, WA is expected to benefit by approximately \$700 million each year.**

## WA's trade with the US

The US is WA's fifth largest two-way trading partner, and its fifth largest destination for exports. In 2003, total WA merchandise exports to the US were worth \$1.8 million. Key WA exports to the US such as crustaceans, jewellery, lamb and beef will receive an immediate boost under the Agreement. Other emerging export industries such as cut flowers will also see barriers eliminated, while the expanding wine industry will see benefits grow over time. WA's growing services sector will also benefit from the certainty and predictability delivered to Australian service providers in the US.

## The US: the world's largest economy

With a population of nearly 300 million and a GDP of almost US\$11 trillion, the US is the world's largest market. It is the world's largest importer, the world's largest investor and the world's largest purchaser of goods and services.

## Trade with the United States supports WA jobs

It is estimated that about 200,000 Australian jobs depend on exports to the US, including about 20,000 in Western Australia. Research shows that exporting companies, on average, pay better salaries and wages than non-exporters.

## Did you know?

WA's Total Flower Exports employs 20 staff and has been exporting cut flowers to the US for 20 years. Its exports to the US are currently worth about \$1 million per year. Under the AUSFTA Total Flower Exports and other cut flower producers will benefit from the immediate removal of the 6.4 per cent US tariff on their products.

To find out more visit the DFAT website: [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au) or, for advice on exporting, call Austrade on 13 28 78.



## Major WA merchandise exports to the US

Export to the United States—2003	Value \$A
Crude petroleum	552,411,000
Medicaments (incl. veterinary)	165,435,000
Rock lobsters	85,579,000
Pearls and gems	37,519,000
Lamb	33,113,000

# Rotary project shows value of researching cord blood

The Cord Blood Bank is an exciting project undertaken by the Rotary Clubs of Western Australia. This project has the potential to save many lives and so I was very pleased to present an award to Karen McKenzie of the Albany "Inner Wheel" Club who successfully proposed the Cord Blood Bank as a centenary project for Rotary WA

In September 2002, a committee was formed to bring the three Rotary districts of WA together to make Rotary's Centennial a state-wide celebration.

Rotary, Inner Wheel and Probus clubs as well as current and past presidents were asked to seek out the idea project to celebrate Rotary's Centennial. Rotary's wish was to support a project of similar stature to the School of Medicine at the University of WA, which was its gift to the WA community in 1955 for its 50th year.

Cord blood banking involves collecting, processing and storing umbilical cord blood collected from the placenta after the birth of normal healthy babies.

The blood can be used instead of bone marrow to treat children and adults who require a bone marrow transplant but for whom

no matched donor can be found. All church leaders have endorsed Rotary WA's proposed Cord Blood Bank with enthusiasm as a project that will assist many extremely ill people. They state that it has no moral or ethical problems.



*Pictured with Albany Inner Wheel president Karen McKenzie (Rotarian wives), Gail Lazzaro from the Red Cross and Rotary past president Neil Smithson.*

## UWA Politics Debate

It's election time again and this month I was invited by the University of WA Politics Club to participate in a policy discussion with Democrats Senator Brian Greig, Federal ALP president and Fremantle MHR Carmen Lawrence and Greens Senate aspirant Rachel Siewert.

