



Call for Bentley to be a health and medical hub

• Health services

BY KATE MURPHY

Federal Member for Swan Steve Irons and WA Senator Alan Eggleston were hoping Bentley would become a hub for health and medical services.

Mr Irons and Mr Eggleston were working to retain services at Bentley Hospital as well as supporting long term plans for a private hospital in the area.

They were also helping to secure federal approval for a medical school at Curtin University which Mr Irons said along with new medical research programs, would put Bentley on the map as a centre of medical expertise.

"If the medical school is successful there is potential for a great partnership to be forged with Bentley Hospital, which would strengthen the hospital in the community and further justify the retention of maternity services," she said.

As a former medical practitioner Senator Eggleston was keen to address the severe doctor shortage faced in Western Australia.

"WA has the highest vacancy rate of GPs, the highest rate of overseas trained doctors working in rural and remote regions, the lowest number of medical student places per capita and is the only state without an undergraduate medical school intake," he said.

"If approved, this five-year di-



Senator Alan Eggleston, Curtin University vice-chancellor Professor Jeanette Hackett, Professor of medicine William Hart and Federal Member for Swan Steve Irons during a visit to Curtin University on November 15.

rect-entry undergraduate bachelor of medicine and bachelor of surgery degree could help fill this shortage which is now at breaking point."

Curtin Professor of medicine William Hart said there could be a delay to federal approvals for new medical schools with focus now being put on the lack of postgraduate medical training opportunities.

Prof Hart said Curtin was part of the Bentley community and being involved in community development and health services provision was important to the university.

"With the population growth in WA there is a general shortage of GPs in metro and rural

areas, particularly the outer metro areas and areas of lower socio-economic conditions," he said.

"The Curtin proposal is to both select students in the first place and then to train them in such a way that they have a particular interest of primary care or general practice, more so than other universities and so we really think we've got a proposed medical school that will help solve that workforce crisis.

"But we do agree that there is a problem with postgraduate training and clinical supervision that must be solved and we want to be part of that solution not just cause more of a problem."