

AMBULANCE RAMPING — ELECTIVE SURGERY WAITLISTS

370. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:

I refer to comments made by the Premier in opposition that 16 000 hours of ambulance ramping and 19 464 people on the elective surgery waitlist were shocking statistics. If they were shocking statistics, what does the Premier call ambulance ramping being the highest ever recorded at 66 000 hours last year and 27 000 people now waiting for elective surgery, which is an increase of 42 per cent since 2017?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

That sounds remarkably like a question we had yesterday, but I am happy to answer it again. As I said, the Western Australian public expect to see their government investing in their health system to make sure that it can withstand the shocks to the system that it receives from time to time. That is why we have increased the health budget in excess of 33 per cent since coming to office. The Mental Health Commission's budget has increased by over 50 per cent since we came to office. That is what the Western Australian public want to see: a government that backs the health system and continues to provide the resources it needs to meet the challenges that it faces. Something has happened since I was in opposition. Apart from the fact that we now have a decent government, we have had a global pandemic. Maybe the member missed it. Maybe she was too busy trying to tear down Western Australia's border to really notice the impact of the pandemic. The pandemic has basically created imbalance in all health systems right across the country, and that is why health systems everywhere in Australia at the moment are struggling to cope with the change in patterns of consumption by patients and people seeking care.

In the last two years alone, we have increased the number of beds in our hospital system by over 540. That is almost the equivalent of a whole new tertiary hospital. That is what we need to do to make sure that we get on top of these shocks to the system as a result of the global pandemic—we need to increase investment. The other thing we need to do is provide strong leadership. I am very proud of the work that the Minister for Health is doing as we continue to make sure that our health system has great resources and great leadership and can continue to adapt and respond to the needs of the Western Australian community.