

NURSES AND MIDWIVES — RECRUITMENT

**101. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:**

I refer to the 10-day mission to recruit overseas healthcare staff undertaken by the Minister for Health.

- (1) Can the Premier explain why we have to attract staff from overseas given that when he was the Minister for Health, he relocated hundreds of nurses to the United Kingdom in 2019, and that almost 70 per cent of applicants for graduate nurse jobs in Western Australian public hospitals that year missed out?
- (2) Will the Premier admit that his government has simply run out of ideas and he is now —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members! The Leader of the Liberal Party had almost finished the question. Start the second part again please, leader.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Will the Premier now admit his government has simply run out of ideas and he is now rehashing a failed 2007 Carpenter government idea?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

- (1)–(2) We are the party in government that protects the health system. Under WA Labor, Health always does better. Under WA Labor, Health always performs better. Since 2017, we have seen an increase of 4 000 additional nurses.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Liberal Party!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Let us contrast that with the time the others were in office. Between July 2015 and July 2016, we saw a decrease of 645 nurses under the Liberal–National government. Between September 2015 and July 2016, we saw a reduction of 60 midwives and 131 doctors. When the member comes into this place and critiques us on our recruitment policies around nurses, please come in here with two things: one, a half decent track record—fail; two, ideas—double fail.

It is true that we provided an opportunity for some nurse graduates to get valuable workplace training in the Grampians some years back to meet the practical requirements of their nursing course, because at that time we had a significant increase in the number of people studying nursing and we struggled to provide them all with the practical experience they needed to complete their nursing qualifications. Roll forward some years later and we are in a position to bring those nurses back to Western Australia with an innovative solution to make sure that we continue to grow the number of nurses who live, work and practise in Western Australia.

As I said, since 2017, an additional 4 000 nurses are now practising in our hospital system, and we will do more through innovative technology that allows nurses to receive the support they need through initiatives like the virtual emergency department or the health in a virtual environment program, which provides an extra set of artificial intelligence eyes on a patient whose bedside they might be standing next to. In other innovations, we are also looking to opportunities to recruit nurses from overseas who want to take advantage of the valuable opportunity of working in one of the world's best health systems. Nurses from Ireland, England, Scotland and India are interested in working in our system, so let us provide them with that opportunity when we can. We know that we will continue to need more nurses in not only our hospitals, but also other care settings, such as urgent care clinics, aged-care accommodation and domestic visitations through great organisations like Silverchain, which is a reality as a result of our ageing population. Nurses will be a key workforce target for us now and in the years ahead. I am really pleased that we have a health minister who is thinking creatively, innovatively and out of the box and is looking at all options to continue to improve and increase our great healthcare workforce.