

WOMEN'S AND BABIES' HOSPITAL — RELOCATION

765. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Is consulting after a decision has already been made really consultation?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

We continue to consult both before our decisions and after our decisions. One of the important things we have to do is undertake the necessary oversight of the business cases and other challenges that we have in relation to this. That is why we have taken the business case for the women's and babies' hospital to Infrastructure WA—to get it to provide its advice on all the challenges, the risks and the opportunities that come from developing the site. Infrastructure WA represents an important opportunity for us to be informed by the experts and that is what it is charged to do under its legislation. It is legislation that the member for Vasse supported when it was brought into this place in 2019. At the time, the member for Vasse said —

... IWA as a statutory authority that will provide independent advice to government on the state's infrastructure needs and priorities. Although it is only right, appropriate and just for a bureaucracy to provide such advice, and there is much support for this legislation, it is also essential that decisions are made by government.

Mr R.H. COOK: We roll forward to May this year when the member for Vasse and, I think, the member for Central Wheatbelt had the explicit request in estimates that the business case for the women's and babies' hospital be referred to Infrastructure WA to make sure that they could be satisfied that the advice that the government was getting was robust and, in the words of the member for Vasse, independent.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Mr R.H. COOK: Now I believe the member for Vasse is saying that she did not ask for that information to be referred to Infrastructure WA.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please.

Mr R.H. COOK: Although the member for Vasse said in 2019 that IWA provides independent advice, when she commented in the media on 11 August, she said that that advice was political trickery. She went on further to say that Infrastructure WA's assessment had basically manipulated data to support its own decision.

This is an extraordinary piece of hypocrisy that we see coming from the opposition. On the one hand, members opposite believe that we should be subject to independent advice and they call for our projects to be subject to that independent advice, but then when it comes back with the wrong decision, they repudiate that advice and call it political trickery. This is breathtakingly hypocritical.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please.

Mr R.H. COOK: I am not sure what we can do or say to satisfy the member for Vasse that the government has done what it needs to do in order to provide the right rigour, the right oversight and the right discipline to this decision, but it is clear from her comments in the media and in this place that she is not interested in making sure that we have rigour, discipline and oversight on this project. She is simply there to try to pick up the rank political opportunity.

Coming back to the question, Madam Speaker, because I am sure that you want me to do that, I have all respect for the clinicians who are providing input to this consultation process. It is an important one and it is one that the minister and the director general of Health take very seriously. It is one that we will continue to undertake in good faith and with an open mind and an open sense of understanding of the important role that they play in the delivery of world-class health care.