

WOMEN'S AND BABIES' HOSPITAL — RELOCATION

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

I refer to the new, leaked King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women correspondence to the director general of Health, Dr Russell-Weisz, that outlines the significant neonatal risks proposed by the separation of the new women's and babies' hospital from quaternary paediatric services provided at Perth Children's Hospital.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Given this letter states the Child and Adolescent Health Service has written to the government at least four times since 19 April 2023 to outline inherent risks of this decision, including neonatal mortality and morbidity, workforce recruitment —

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**Ms L. METTAM:** — retention and training implications, how can the Premier justify his decision regarding the Murdoch site and claim he is putting patients first?

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Before I give the Premier the call, member for Landsdale, your interjections were incessant during that question.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I am just following the example of the member for Vasse.

**The SPEAKER:** I did not give you the call and you should not have risen to your feet or spoken without being given the call, member for Landsdale. Member for Vasse, your question was very lengthy and very wordy. I think you should give some thought to the questions that you ask and how they are phrased, but I call the Premier in response.

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

Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minister for Health and I respect the points of view raised by the clinicians in the document, but this is not a universally held view. We appreciate the sincerity and the passion in which it is held, but it is not the only view that is out there. The member for Vasse really should understand that particular perspective. We absolutely want to consider sensible solutions to ensure we deliver the best possible services for women and babies. But I understand this particular document is not a complete document—as in, it is in draft form. My understanding is that it is not an official document of the Child and Adolescent Health Service but I understand the points of view that are in it.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** For instance, one of the solutions proposed in the report is that we should, firstly, relocate Perth Children's Hospital to Murdoch to be with the women's and babies' hospital or, secondly, that we should demolish all the residential housing on the other side of Monash Avenue and build the women's and babies' hospital there. Clearly, these are not practical solutions, but we understand that they are passionately held views. That is why we continue to make sure we work with all clinicians to understand those views and to identify any issues and move forward in a way that is informed. As I said, clinicians at Fiona Stanley Hospital have been providing expert maternity and neonatal care since that service was opened.

The Minister for Health raised yesterday in Parliament that she had received correspondence from clinicians working in neonatology at Fiona Stanley Hospital. They say, amongst other things —

We are writing to you ... regarding the recent announcement of the development of the new Mother & Babies' Hospital at Fiona Stanley Hospital ... We, as tertiary neonatal intensive care clinicians ... welcome this important decision for the Western Australian ... people by the WA Government.

...

We are deeply concerned about the potential for unsubstantiated reputational damage to Fiona Stanley Fremantle Hospital group these will cause, as well as the unnecessary and frankly, irresponsible level of public anxiety they will cause the Western Australian public, in particular those families attending FSH for perinatal care.

This is a very extensive letter from the experts who work in this field and it is heartfelt. This goes to the fact that there are a range of views out there in relation to that. The government's role is to make sure we take on all the advice. Sometimes that advice does not concur and agree, but we need to take on all the advice and make sure that we take decisions in the best interests of Western Australian patients and Western Australian taxpayers. We continue to be informed in relation to these things. The member opposite has made much of my comments in 2019, which is another example of how she selects evidence by way of convenience rather than by way of rigour. She takes my

comments from around 2019 as being what should be set in stone in terms of the government's opinion. The thing about government is that things change; the facts change. It is important to take the opportunity to listen to the advice we receive. We received the business case and the project development plan, which we tabled, that show there would be insurmountable issues at Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre if we were to develop the new women's and babies' hospital at the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital building. We also have received an independent review from Infrastructure Western Australia, which the member for Vasse called for, that shows the excessive delays and issues associated with developing the project at that site. I hope, Madam Speaker, with your indulgence if I may, I can quickly show to the chamber two pictures. One is of the QEII site in 2004 and the other in 2023. The circles represent all the developments that have taken place on that side since the Reid review brought out its findings.

We have seen the development of the multistorey car park, Perth Children's Hospital, Ronald McDonald House, significant upgrades in term of power infrastructure taking away further parts of the footprint, the Ralph Sarich building, and the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research. This is a particularly constrained site.

In some respects, I would love to have seen the Reid review come out in full throat, and that we implemented all those things. The Reid review came out and everyone got behind it. The Reid review called for the closure of Royal Perth Hospital. That did not happen. The Reid review said that the trauma unit should be transferred to Fiona Stanley Hospital. That did not happen. The Reid review said that the women's and babies' hospital should be developed at the QEII site before Perth Children's Hospital. That did not happen. The Reid review was silent on the privatisation of parking at the QEII site. I do not think Mick Reid thought that any government would be crazy enough to do that, but that has happened. We are now left with the facts as they are today. We do not have a perfect world in which we operate. I wish we did, but we do not, and so we are making a decision in the interests of Western Australians, and that is about bringing the new women's and babies' hospital onstream now. Mick Reid said in 2004 that we should be moving the women's and babies' hospital. That was in 2004. We are in 2023, almost two decades later, and we still have not got there, yet the solution of the member for Vasse is to delay it by another two decades. King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women has the most outstanding clinicians working in it, but they are working in a building that is over a century old and it is time we take the responsible step and move forward in this manner. This is on the basis of the best advice. We understand there is a lot of clinical concern, anxiety and passion out there, but we have to take on all the advice, the expert advice, and that is why, with a clear head, we are making this decision.