

WOMEN'S AND BABIES' HOSPITAL — RELOCATION

782. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Is the Premier's refusal to listen to world-leading advice of WA clinicians simply due to the Premier's political motivation to open this facility before the 2029 election?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, it is lovely that so many people are having so much fun in question time, but we will not get many questions up if we continue to have these interruptions.

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

This is not a question of elections; this is a question of developing world-class health facilities and the provision of care for Western Australians in a timely fashion. Experts have said to us that if we continue to develop the women's and babies' hospital on top of Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, it will represent an unacceptable risk for the patients at both the children's hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. It would also cause significant disruption and delay for the commissioning of the new women's and babies' hospital by between 10 and 20 years. That is what the experts are saying. We obviously care about what the clinicians say, which is the reason that we are having this extensive consultation process around obstetric, maternity and gynaecological services right across the state. We want to make that happen.

Ms L. Mettam: They don't agree with you.

Mr R.H. COOK: It is important that we understand their concerns and work with them to make sure that we can take them on board, but I caution the member that not all clinicians are thinking in the way that she nominates. There are others, including neonatologists across the state, who disagree with those who say that we cannot have the women's and babies' hospital at Fiona Stanley Hospital. We have to accept that there is not a unanimous view out there in relation to this.

I draw the member's attention to her comments in a press conference earlier today when she was asked, "So it wouldn't be completed until 2040", referring to the new women's and babies' hospital, "Are you okay with that outcome?" The member for Vasse said, "The concern, as Roger Cook stated in 2019, is just because this process is challenging does not mean it cannot be pursued." There we have it. The member for Vasse is clearly committing the Liberal Party to making Western Australians wait at least 20 years for the new women's and babies' hospital. She might as well say that she has pretty much cancelled it.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please.

Mr R.H. COOK: I will leave this other thought with the member for Vasse. I remember there was a time when the Liberals and Nationals would actually listen to Clive Palmer before they listened to health advice. They are coming to this party particularly late. It is important to remember that we want to make sure that the people of Western Australia have a new women's and babies' hospital in the speediest possible time. The way to do that is by taking on the best technical and clinical advice to ensure that we can do that at the Fiona Stanley Hospital site.

It means better services for regional mothers who will have to be evacuated to the new hospital because it will be closer to Jandakot Airport. It is a good outcome for the more than 3 600 babies that are born at Fiona Stanley Hospital today. Fiona Stanley Hospital has the highest intensive care capabilities in the state and it is important that we take all views on board.

I conclude by saying that we understand the anxieties that this is causing, and the concerns of our clinical teams. We admire their work and we greatly respect their skills and expertise. We will continue to talk to them about how we can best ensure that Western Australians enjoy some of the best maternity, paediatric and gynaecological services that this state can provide. We will continue to listen to them and work with them as we work through these complex and difficult issues, but we will deliver a new women's and babies' hospital to the people of Western Australia in the fastest possible time.