

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — CLINICAL INCIDENTS — PREMIER'S COMMENTS

718. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:

I refer to the number of severity assessment code 1 incidents at Perth Children's Hospital increasing 200 per cent in 2022–23, resulting in the medical errors and preventable deaths of six children—an increase from two deaths last year. Does the Premier stand by his incredibly insensitive comments and implied justification this morning that the death of six children in 2022–23 due to clinical incidents was acceptable as it was the same as two years ago?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I refer to the member for Vasse's statement to the media of 11 October, today, which says —

WA Labor failing West Australian kids with six preventable deaths in hospitals last year

Unfortunately, as per usual, that has a glaring indifference to the actual facts of the situation. Six SAC 1 clinical incidents were reported with an outcome of death. However, following investigation, three were declassified, as no healthcare-related preventable factors were identified. I want to put on the record the number of SAC 1 events with an outcome of death. In 2019–20, it was four; in 2020–21, it was five; in 2021–22, it was two; and in 2022–23, it is three.

Any adverse outcome from care in a state medical facility is regrettable. What is more regrettable is if that incident is not reported. To paraphrase the president of the Australian Medical Association, Michael Page, who spoke on radio today, what we need is a culture that encourages the reporting of SAC 1 events, whether they are incidents that simply relate to an adverse health outcome or, regrettably and tragically, cases that relate to the death of a patient. An important part of our healthcare system is to make sure we report these, from the point of view of not only accountability, but continued improvement—that is something the health system is committed to—and making sure that we learn from these incidents and continue to commit ourselves to improving health care at all times.

One of the other issues the AMA president pointed to was that what sometimes contributes to an adverse health outcome is when there are not enough staff or staff are working under intense pressure. That is why I am very proud of our record that since 2017 we have 3 000 additional nurses and an extra 1 400 doctors and the health workforce has grown by nearly 30 per cent. Let us contrast that with the performance of the previous Liberal–National government when we saw a decrease of 645 nurses between July 2015 and July 2016; a decrease of 60 midwives between July 2015 and July 2016; a decrease of 131 doctors between September 2015 and July 2016; and a decrease of 70 paediatricians between July 2015 and January 2017. That is why only a WA Labor government can provide the resources and investments that our health services need to keep Western Australians safe. That is the reason only a Labor government will provide the investment, such as the extra \$10 billion since 2017, to continue to provide the health service that Western Australians need. Only a WA Labor government will invest in health and look after patients and put Western Australian patients first.