

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — OPENING

304. Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI to the Minister for Health:

I refer to Perth Children's Hospital, which after years of delay is finally treating its first patients and providing a world-class workplace for WA's hardworking and dedicated medical staff.

A member: Outstanding.

The SPEAKER: It would be outstanding if you were quiet!

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: Can the minister update the house on how the McGowan Labor government has delivered on its commitment to open Perth Children's Hospital safely and to the highest standard?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question. Upon coming to government, the Premier charged the Treasurer and myself with a simple mission: to take control of Perth Children's Hospital and open it as quickly and as safely as possible. I am very proud to say as the Minister for Health: mission accomplished! I joined the Premier on the weekend at the opening ceremony for Perth Children's Hospital, and it was an honour to do so. It was not an easy task to get to that point. When we came to government, we were basically confronted with a sense of chaos in the way this project had been managed and the issues that confronted it. I said on the weekend that this is the most reluctant of hospitals. It was a tricky project, and it is one with which the other side of the chamber struggled, but it is one to which we were all committed. This project spanned four governments, five Ministers for Health and five directors general of health. It is a long-term project and it is one that I am very proud to say we were part of.

Yesterday, I had the absolutely wonderful task of greeting the first patient at Perth Children's Hospital. Little Imogen and her family arrived at 9.00 am yesterday for an ophthalmology appointment with Dr Lam at clinic A, marking the start of our clinical services. Imogen was excited to be there, but I think I was more excited to see Imogen than she was excited to see me. It was great to get to that particular point.

I want to thank a number of people who were involved in the opening of this hospital. First of all, I thank the thousands of dedicated Western Australians who were involved in the conception, planning, construction and commissioning of Perth Children Hospital. That goes for everyone from the clinical leaders, to the construction workers, to the dedicated staff of the Department of Health, for bringing to fruition this difficult project. In particular, I want to thank the director general of Health, Dr David Russell-Weisz; Dr Robyn Lawrence, the chief executive of the Child and Adolescent Health Service; and Ms Debbie Chiffings, the executive director of Perth Children's Hospital.

I also want to thank the Chief Health Officer in Western Australia, Professor Tarun Weeramanthri. It was because of Professor Weeramanthri's commitment to the science and to making sure that we had rigorous testing in place that we were able to get to the bottom of the issues. Today, we announce that Professor Weeramanthri has decided to finish up as the Chief Health Officer. I would like to thank him, on behalf of all Western Australians, for his tireless work on not only this project, but also many projects. Professor Weeramanthri was responsible for Australia's first statewide meningococcal vaccination program, for WA attaining the second highest human papilloma virus vaccination rate in Australia, and for the state's inaugural preventive health summit.

I want to point out to members a fact that people are not aware of. Professor Weeramanthri is also a man of international reputation. He also worked for the World Health Organization in Sierra Leone and Iraq, coordinating the activities of foreign medical teams after the 2014 Ebola outbreak, and coordinating trauma services around the Mosel offensive. On behalf of all members of Parliament, I thank Professor Weeramanthri for his tireless service to the people of Western Australia and wish him very well and all the very best for the future.

I would like to thank two other people if I may: Peter and Julian from local WA business AVG Plumbing. As the Premier commented on Saturday, they are regarded as the McGowan government's knights in shining armour. Despite the international status of this building project, this local plumbing company was responsible for providing the primarily plastic components for the new thermostatic mixing valve assembly boxes. Were it not for Peter and Julian, we would be in real difficulties. They have done a fantastic job in assisting us to bring it to fruition.

To have overseen this project as Minister for Health has been an honour, but it has been the most trying and testing aspect of my job to date. We took some difficult, risky decisions in taking control of this project with the water and minor defects. It was a tough decision, but we took it so we could take control of the hospital and have it commissioned. I am very pleased to say that the people of Western Australia now have an outstanding hospital so that the doctors, nurses and allied health staff can continue to provide world-class health care to the sick kids of Western Australia.