

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Motion

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan) [11.24 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house notes the findings of both the Langouant report and the report from the Legislative Assembly's Public Accounts Committee in relation to the new Perth Children's Hospital and —

- (a) recognises the poor project management by the former Liberal–National government; and
- (b) commends the current Minister for Health for taking charge of the project to ensure the problems with the new construction are promptly dealt with.

My motion relates to a matter that is very close to me, and that is the provision of best-practice health care for our children in Western Australia. It is about how the previous government let down those children with its poor management and poor oversight of the construction of the new Perth Children's Hospital. We have been fortunate to have a world-leading medical facility in this state to provide for the health needs of our children for a very long time. But in the physical sense, Princess Margaret Hospital for Children is an outdated medical facility at best and at worst it is a dilapidated and run-down facility that fails to meet the standards expected by our community. Of course, that is why in 2008, the Carpenter Labor government first committed to building a new children's hospital to replace PMH and why when the Barnett Liberal–National government came into government, it went on to commission the building of that new hospital.

I recently spoke in the chamber on the meaning of value when I outlined our opportunity to improve government procurement practices. This opportunity—the change—has largely arisen from the failings of the previous Liberal–National government's years of poor procurement management. The issue that has captivated Western Australians, me included, is the Perth Children's Hospital debacle. The spotlight on this project is well justified as it directly affects the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of children in Western Australia. We stand here today only weeks from the opening of the hospital and we must ask ourselves where it all went wrong and why it took so long for it to be fixed. We need to remember that we were initially promised practical completion of the hospital in June 2015, then August 2015. Another 15 dates were promised for practical completion until practical completion was finally reached on 13 April 2017. I think we need to briefly pause and reflect on those 17 promises of practical completion and the failure of the previous government and the head contractor to meet those commitments. Often in this chamber, Hon Nick Goiran has used the term “shifty”. If that is not shifty, I do not know what is—17 promises of practical completion and not one was met.

The narrative here is one of poor project management, poor procurement practice and abysmal delivery leading to real world consequences. Nothing sums up this fiasco more than a photo recently posted in an online ABC article. It is a picture of an empty hospital room and an empty bed with a rather lonely teddy bear sitting on the bed. The bed is surrounded by expensive and what was new hospital equipment. For almost three years, that equipment could not be used for its intended purpose. Every day for almost three years, this critically important infrastructure has sat idle, not being used for its intended purpose. Every day that there has been an empty bed at the Perth Children's Hospital, a child in this state has not been receiving the best treatment available.

The Langouant “Special Inquiry into Government Programs and Projects: Final Report” was tabled on 20 February, which members of the Legislative Council have heard much about. This report was damning of the previous government's procurement practices and project management. During the inquiry, 31 programs were looked into. Although Perth Children's Hospital was referred to in the report, I believe it was left mostly for the Legislative Assembly's Public Accounts Committee report to deliver the findings on that. It is clear that in reflecting on the practices of the previous government, we must learn from its mistakes and ensure that, in future, the state is more capable of handling important projects like Perth Children's Hospital.

The title of the Legislative Assembly Public Accounts Committee's report on Perth Children's Hospital is very apt—“PCHA — A Long Waiting Period”—although unfortunately in a rather sad way. The committee report explores the project with vigour and detail, which was not undertaken in the Langouant report, of course. It provides a thorough account of key events, failings and stakeholder accounts, which is pivotal to developing a coherent conceptualisation of the building of Perth Children's Hospital. The report notes the despair and frustration of not only the Western Australian government, but also the people of this state. The committee focused on the effectiveness of governance structure, specifically in identifying and responding to risks; the processes in place to ensure that materials and systems adhered to the required standards; and the risks and benefits associated with granting practical completion.

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Even though it was not the committee's aim to examine this matter, it was clear that one of the central issues in this whole debacle was the awarding of the contract to John Holland Pty Ltd. John Holland's name was mentioned no less than 295 times in the report. The then Liberal–National government accepted an extremely low tender from John Holland. John Holland had no experience of handling a project of such scale and complexity. This was effectively the first failure in this project. Other major findings in the committee's report include the convoluted and overly complicated governance structures, which led to confusion and conflict throughout the project. These findings were a symptom of poor project management by the previous government.

In reviewing the failures in this project, we need to ask what are the real-world consequences of these decisions and practices so that we can comprehend the necessity for change. The Langouant report clearly outlines the general fiscal and managerial ineptitude of the previous government. The Public Accounts Committee report relates this to a real world example of Perth Children's Hospital. Who has borne the brunt of the consequences of this ineptitude? I can tell members it is the people of Western Australia—the mums and dads, but, most importantly, the children, who have copped the consequences. It is the children of this great state who have missed out the most.

For me, the long waiting period has had real practical effects. I have spoken previously about my middle son, Mitchell. He has a range of complex medical issues, and my wife and I have been regular users of the wonderful facilities at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. In May 2015, Mitchell was diagnosed with two tumours growing in his little body—one in his stomach and the other attached to his vena cava. In July 2015, a month after the new hospital was to have reached practical completion, he underwent major surgery at PMH to remove the two tumours. I do not wish those hours of waiting on anybody, but when the surgeons came out and told us that they had been successful in removing the tumours, to say we were relieved would be a gross understatement.

However, as anybody would know if they have been, or have supported a person, through major surgery, the recovery can be just as hard as, if not harder than, the procedure. This was certainly the case for Mitchell. His pain was so bad that one of his lungs collapsed, forcing him to go into the PMH paediatric intensive care unit for four days as they tried to inflate his lung. When we sit in the PICU for hours on end with the doctors and nurses, we get the opportunity to learn things that we otherwise would not know. One alarming thing I learned was that in the event of a code black at the hospital—which is a life-threatening emergency that usually requires resuscitation—the PICU staff are required to grab a resuscitation pack and attend to the child in whatever part of the hospital they might be. If I remember correctly, the PICU is on the fifth floor of Princess Margaret Hospital. Princess Margaret Hospital has nine floors. Normally, the PICU staff would use a key to recall one of the lifts and take it to whatever floor they need to attend. Unfortunately, this function has failed, and the hospital does not intend to repair it. When I asked why it was not intended to be fixed, I was told they anticipated to be moving to the new Perth Children's Hospital very soon and the decision had been made not to invest further money in significant maintenance at PMH. The consequence was that the great staff at PMH have to use the stairs. I do not know whether members have used the stairs at PMH, but they are rather steep. If my child was in a ward on the ninth floor and went into cardiac arrest, the staff who were trying to save him would have to run up the stairs all the way from the fifth floor. They would then have to engage in an extremely stressful and high-energy procedure to resuscitate my child. I would not like to think what the consequences might be for the staff and the child. However, the staff are dedicated and devoted to their jobs. They do not complain. As is often the case when people are waiting for long hours, we just talked about these things. That was in July 2015. It is now April 2018 and children are still being treated at Princess Margaret Hospital. I am not sure whether the lift was ever fixed, but the thought that some child might have died because the staff were too puffed out after running up several flights of stairs or did not get to the child quickly enough is almost too hard to bear. Regrettably, my wife and I are likely to find out whether the lift is working, or whether the economic rationalists have decided that the cost of repair outweighs the possibility of the death of a child, because on Monday we will be back at Princess Margaret Hospital for Mitchell to have further surgery on his metastatic tumours.

This motion makes me angry. The previous motion that we dealt with makes me angry as well. There are real-world consequences for the decisions of previous governments. There are real-world consequences for the decisions of all governments. It makes me angry that due to the dismal failure of the former government in delivering on a new children's hospital, my child and other children have not been getting the best care that can be given to them. As I have said, the care that is delivered at Princess Margaret Hospital is world class. However, there is a reason that a new children's hospital has been built. PMH is dilapidated. It is falling down, for want of a better term. We need that new children's hospital. However, I am grateful that Mitchell will be attended to by some of the best medical practitioners in the world and that the care he will receive will be first class.

Governments do not undertake projects like Perth Children's Hospital as a public relations stunt or for a headline. Governments undertake these projects out of a sincere intent to address a need in the community. I am sure that is why the previous government committed to building Perth Children's Hospital. An essential requirement is that

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these projects be completed to the highest standard. The failure to deliver that project to the highest standard is at the heart of the mismanagement of the former government. Despite the good intentions of the former government, it failed to grasp the need for quality, experience and certainty in its decision-making about who should be responsible for building this hospital. The consequences of this failure are reflected not only in the delays, but also in the lead and asbestos content scares at that hospital. How exactly a hospital for children can be caught up in a lead and asbestos content scare in this day and age is completely beyond my ability to comprehend. If it were not so serious, people would think we were having a lend of them—lead in the water and asbestos in the materials of a new children's hospital. Firstly, it is dangerous, and, secondly, it has damaged the reputation of Perth Children's Hospital. Parents are apprehensive about their children attending that brand-new facility on the basis of what they think might still be contained in that hospital. Who could blame them for being apprehensive? I will run out of time to go through the many reasons for this, but I would like to say in closing that I appreciate that the government and the Minister for Health have announced that Perth Children's Hospital will soon be open. That is not soon enough for Mitchell, and he will still be treated at Princess Margaret Hospital. It is time to put aside party politics and think about how we can best deliver for the children of our state.

HON ALANNA CLOHESY (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.40 am]: I thank Hon Matthew Swinbourn for bringing this important motion to the house for members' consideration. I acknowledge his, his family's and his son's experiences throughout the years. I also recognise what families, children and the staff of Princess Margaret Hospital for Children have had to put up with over the years while waiting for the new hospital to open. Hon Matthew Swinbourn rather poignantly described his experiences, and that is why I am very pleased that Perth Children's Hospital will soon be open. Unlike the previous government, the McGowan government took control of the project and got the job done. I am so very proud of that. Western Australia will have a world-class facility that it so deserves. More importantly, that hospital will provide the most important service that any government can provide—that is, helping sick kids. That is what is important; that is what we have to remember. The government has done that by doing what the previous government failed to do—that is, to fix the water issues and to set an opening date.

I am sorry that the honourable member's son Mitchell will not be able to have his surgery in the new hospital and I hope that he will not have to use the new hospital. But what is really important is that the new hospital will be available to our kids at the earliest possible date. That could only have been done through the decisive action that the government took in accepting and taking on practical completion of the hospital. I note that that decision to take practical completion continues to be questioned, but I think the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. The decision to take practical completion continues to be questioned, particularly by the opposition, but the facts are that if the government had not taken practical completion of the hospital, it might still be sitting there idle. I cannot fathom how long it may have taken for that fantastic facility to be made available for sick Western Australian kids and their families if that decision had not been made.

I acknowledge that it was a difficult decision to take practical completion. The Public Accounts Committee inquiry into the management and oversight of the PCH project highlighted successive failings within the scope of the project. That committee and the Education and Health Standing Committee inquiry highlighted successive failings in governance and other management issues. Both reports highlighted consecutive delays and failure to meet what at the time were 16 proposed practical completion dates. In fact, as the honourable member identified, there were 17 practical completion dates. None of them were questioned by the former government. The Langouant report looked in part at Perth Children's Hospital. It highlighted that Perth Children's Hospital was one of the many projects stunted by the former government's poor management. When we came to government, we were committed to ensuring that government infrastructure projects were managed tightly and effectively. PCH, as I said, is proof that we are achieving this goal.

Part of our government's success in getting such a good outcome has been its strong liaison with stakeholders. In particular, it listened to staff and union representatives. The honourable member raised the spectre of asbestos. It was the union that first raised concerns about the use of asbestos in the Perth Children's Hospital building. The government listened to unions, staff and community members involved in the day-to-day activities of Princess Margaret Hospital. The government noted their concerns and took their advice; it took steps to fix the mess left by our predecessors.

I now want to talk about how the government went about fixing the water problem and its decisions to get to this important point. The government wants Western Australians to be confident that it is opening a facility that is safe for children. As I said, since the government came to office, it has been resolute in its commitment to fix the remaining issues at the hospital. Fixing the water problem was the key issue.

The hospital has now undergone one of the most rigorous water testing regimes in the world. The remediation work approved by the minister to replace thermostatic mixing valve assembly boxes and brass components, which were leaching lead into the system, was completed in March. I would like to highlight the selection of

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a Western Australian company chosen to supplement the parts required to remedy the excess lead in the potable water. The Australian Valve Group delivered all outcomes ahead of schedule. Extensive water testing and sampling throughout the process culminated in the Chief Health Officer's second-stage testing. A total of 304 water samples were taken at randomly selected locations across the hospital using approved methodology. Those samples were sent to the ChemCentre for initial analysis. The pass mark remains the same as that set by the Chief Health Officer prior to baseline testing in June 2017. On 27 March, the Minister for Health announced that the water at Perth Children's Hospital was safe to drink after the Chief Health Officer signed off on the hospital's potable, or drinking, water. It complies with Australian drinking water guidelines. That achievement could not have been made without the hard work and perseverance of Western Australian Department of Health staff and project staff who worked tirelessly to deliver those outcomes. I commend and thank all those involved in delivering that outcome.

As I said, a priority of the government has been to confirm the safety of the hospital, and that has been assured. I echo the Minister for Health's delight that we can move in and finally open this wonderful facility so that we can continue our commitment of putting patients first.

The staged opening will run over four weeks. PCH is set to receive its first patients throughout outpatient appointments from Monday, 14 May this year, followed two weeks later by the commencement of elective surgery on Monday, 28 May. The final move for all remaining patients at Princess Margaret Hospital is due to take place on Sunday, 10 June, when the Perth Children's Hospital emergency department opens. This is a significant milestone and is a result of our decision to take control of the project, fix the problem and get the hospital open. I thank everyone who has been involved in that process, and I say to the sick children of Western Australia and their families that I look forward to 10 June, when everyone can have access to this wonderful world-class facility.

HON NICK GOIRAN (South Metropolitan) [11.50 am]: I rise on behalf of the opposition to speak to this motion, moved by my learned friend Hon Matthew Swinbourn. At the outset, on a personal note, and on behalf of the opposition, I wish Mitchell the very best for his treatment on Monday. Our thoughts and prayers will be with him and his family.

There are effectively three parts to the motion. Firstly, it notes the findings of the Langoulant report and the Legislative Assembly's Public Accounts Committee. Secondly, it seeks to pass judgement on the former Liberal-National government. Finally, it seeks to commend the Minister for Health for taking charge of the project to ensure that the problems with the construction were dealt with promptly. Unlike the moderate contribution from the mover of the motion, the parliamentary secretary could not help but make the debate political. I note that the parliamentary secretary wants us to note the findings of the Langoulant report and the Legislative Assembly's Public Accounts Committee, so I ask: Will her government now commit to adhere to all those findings? As such, will her government immediately table business cases for every infrastructure project before it is commenced? When will the government table the business case, for example, of the Morley-ElLENbrook railway? Will the government table the business case for returning the management of the Wandoo reintegration facility to the public service? Will the government make public all tender information and contracts resulting from ripping up the Roe 8 contract and repurposing the funds? Will the government make public the contract and all other information associated with changing the contract for the stadium pedestrian bridge? If this house is being asked to note and celebrate the findings of Langoulant, we can start by calling on the McGowan government to start adhering to them. Otherwise, what is the point? Labor is in government now, and it is well and truly time for its standards to apply to its decisions. The government is well entitled to go over decisions of the former government and seek to learn lessons by doing so. However, I trust it will do likewise with the decisions from when Labor was last in government. After all, who could forget the fiasco that was the Perth Arena project?

I will make a brief comment about the report from the Public Accounts Committee from the other place. It is not readily apparent to me why this house would want to note a report from the other place. I note that the report contains some 52 findings. This highly time constrained debate during private members' business seems to me to be an inadequate mechanism to give due consideration to the 52 findings, in addition to noting the Langoulant report. This, of course, is before we even get to the second and third limbs of the motion. It might interest members to note that the drafting process for committee reports in the other place is significantly different from that adopted by committees of this house. I intend to have more to say about that on another occasion, particularly as it pertains to decisions made by this house when being asked to agree to messages seeking to establish joint select committees.

Meanwhile, this motion seeks to allege that there was poor project management by the former government. Members opposite have the right to assert such things. If members opposite want to make allegations based on project management, I will simply ask these questions of the government. Firstly, if the project management on Perth Children's Hospital was as bad as the government declared, who has the government terminated from government project management? Secondly, if the answer to the previous question is nil, what professional development has the government provided to government project managers over the past 12 months? Thirdly, if

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the answer to the previous question was nil, does the government realise how hollow its assertions are about this project? Meanwhile, in contrast to the complexity of a paediatric hospital, I once again remind members of the far simpler project that was Perth Arena. We remember the budget blowouts and delays that were overseen by the last Labor administration. Even today there are issues with that building. That was a Labor project.

Rather than looking at politicised reports such as that of Langoulant and the report of the committee of the other place, I prefer to look at the independent report by the independent Western Australian Auditor General on the Fiona Stanley Hospital project—report 5 from June 2010. I will just quote a couple of things about key findings for the attention of members. This is a report on the build of a significant piece of hospital infrastructure for Western Australia. Key findings from the independent Auditor General—sorry, Mr Acting President (Hon Martin Aldridge), I have momentarily forgotten who was in government between 2004 and 2007 —

Hon Peter Collier: It was Labor.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Thank you. The Leader of the Opposition is always so helpful in this house. The key findings read —

- Between 2004 and 2007, the capital budget for FSH grew from \$420 million to \$1.76 billion as project definition improved:
...
 - the original cost estimate for FSH was unrealistic because it was based on a minimal understanding of what services the hospital would deliver
- The \$1.76 billion capital budget covers the cost of construction and some fit-out, but not everything needed to open a working hospital.
...
- The opening date for the hospital is between three and a half and four years later than originally planned. Inadequacies in planning the project delayed the start of construction, and the increases in scope extended the construction timeframes.

I do not have time to go through all of that report, but I note that, on page 21, the independent Auditor General states —

An acceptable business case which was expected in December 2006 was not completed until the end of December 2007, and was not approved by government until June 2008. The procurement strategy was separately approved in late 2007, ahead of the business case approval. Normally, this would not occur until after the business case has been approved.

I prefer, when we are trying to assess the performance of governments on major infrastructure projects, to look at the independent reports of the Auditor General, not the highly politicised reports of Mr Langoulant and that committee from the other place.

Perth Children's Hospital is one of the most complex building projects ever undertaken in this state. The 298-bed hospital will have expanded clinical, research and educational facilities and greatly improved amenities for families and staff. This is the only tertiary paediatric hospital in Western Australia, and it will provide services to the sickest children across the state. Perth Children's Hospital will be Western Australia's premier paediatric facility and will provide first-class care for future generations of young Western Australians and their families. I note that we are quickly running out of time, but I want to note that Western Australians will enjoy one of the best paediatric hospitals in the world, thanks to the former Liberal–National government. Over coming decades, generations of Western Australian children will benefit from a world-class hospital, thanks to that government. That Liberal–National government was responsible for delivering all of those things.

It is unfortunate that there is no capacity to amend motions during private members' business; otherwise, the opposition would have moved amendments so that the motion would more properly read as follows —

That this house —

- (a) notes the findings of the Langoulant report and calls on the McGowan government to commence complying with those standards forthwith;
- (b) calls on the McGowan government to learn the lessons from all past government infrastructure projects, including but not limited to the Perth Arena project and the Fiona Stanley Hospital project; and

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- (c) thanks the former Liberal–National government, without whom there would be no new Perth Children’s Hospital.

HON PIERRE YANG (South Metropolitan) [12 noon]: I rise today to make a contribution in support of the motion before us. I thank Hon Matthew Swinbourn for moving this motion in the house. It is well known that the former Barnett government mismanaged the economy and the state’s finances, so that we have state debt of over \$40 billion. It is also well known that the former Barnett government mismanaged a number of projects, such as the footbridge to the new stadium, the royalties for regions program, the local government amalgamation process and the Perth Children’s Hospital. That was all under the disastrous reign of the former Barnett government. For the parents of sick children, nothing is more important to them and no other mismanaged project had a more profound adverse impact on them than the Perth Children’s Hospital. I am a parent of two little kids. Unfortunately, children get ill from time to time. I have been to hospitals with my children. I have been to Fiona Stanley Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. I can put my hand on my heart and declare that the staff—the nurses, doctors and all support staff—were fantastic. They were doing all they could to assist and help parents and sick children. However, there was a stark contrast between the two hospitals—one is flashy, new and modern; the other, unfortunately, is very tired and literally falling apart. The children of Western Australia deserve better, the families of Western Australia deserve better and the staff who work in those hospitals deserve better.

Western Australians have been waiting for a very long time for a new state-of-the-art tertiary specialist hospital for children. It is clear that the Perth Children’s Hospital project was plagued with issues during the construction phase. First it was the asbestos scare and then it was the lead contamination in the water. This state-of-the-art hospital has been built, but it could not be used. That is a fact. That was the fault of the former Barnett government; no-one can deny that. In a parliamentary democracy, the buck stops with those who are responsible—those who are in charge. The former Barnett Liberal government and its ministers were responsible for this. I could not believe that what was said in *Yes Minister* about an empty hospital could happen in the twenty-first century in Western Australia. We have not only an empty hospital, but also an empty car park. This empty hospital is costing the state \$6 million a month, while the empty car park is costing the state \$700 000 a month. After reading parts of the report of the Langoulant review and also the Public Accounts Committee review of Perth Children’s Hospital, I could not for the life of me understand why the former government was so scared to stand up for the interests of the people of Western Australia. It was scared to stand up to John Holland when the issues arose. Those problems were not put forward to John Holland. It is well documented that John Holland failed to respond to, and routinely ignored, the government’s requests for information. Why was the former government so scared to stand up for the people of Western Australia?

Hon Michael Mischin: What is your evidence that we were scared?

Hon PIERRE YANG: If the member looks at page 62 of the report, he will find that information.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Robin Chapple): Members! We have a speaker and I am intently listening to him. If we can move in that direction, that would be great.

Hon PIERRE YANG: Thank you, Mr Acting President. I was distracted by the interjections for a moment, but I will carry on with my contribution.

I am also baffled by the contract with Capella Parking. The terms were so favourable as to be just unbelievable. Why would anyone enter into a contract that would pay \$700 000 if the car park was underutilised? That is a sellout. What about the people of Western Australia? What about the people who are suffering? I will give an example. I live in Langford. I am pretty proud of the fact that we are a good bunch over there. There was a family centre over there. During the closing days of the last government, the centre had to be closed because of funding cuts. The centre was providing a lot of essential and good services to the people of Langford and surrounding suburbs, but it had to be closed. It was providing counselling services. It was giving parents of young children a chance to mingle with other parents; otherwise, they were unable to have contact with the wider community. I was told by the management that it had to be closed because of funding cuts. On the one hand, funding was cut from all the family day centres and they had to be closed, and, on the other hand, the government was handing \$700 000 to a private company to manage an empty car park. That is not on. That is just ridiculous.

The good news is that the Western Australian public is finally going to have a world-class, state-of-the-art children’s hospital that will service the people of Western Australia. But for the McGowan government’s decisive action at about this time last year to grant practical completion and take control of the situation and remedy the issues, God knows when we would have had the new hospital ready to service the people of Western Australia. The McGowan government and the health minister deserve the credit and our congratulations for that. Thank goodness we will finally have a hospital that will serve the families and children of Western Australia.

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HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [12.08 pm]: I am a little unsure how best to approach this debate, so I am going to simply comment on several levels. I listened to the words of the mover of the motion with some interest. He concentrated on giving an account of how his immediate family requires access to medical facilities for some complex and enduring problems related to his child. We all have a strong empathy with Hon Matthew Swinbourn in connection with that. I mean that genuinely; there is no-one in this house who is not touched by the difficulty of the situation confronting his family and one of its youngest members in particular. We wish Hon Matthew Swinbourn every blessing in dealing with that. We can all appreciate how difficult that is to work through and how frustrating it can be to try to work through questions, including access to expertise and access to facilities. I do not think there is any issue with that. It also makes it difficult to address motions such as this in a hothouse political environment while we all have sympathy and sensitivity about the story that we have just been told. We all want to keep those separate.

I make an observation from the perspective of someone who in past years had ministerial charge of a number of major construction agencies. Not one of the projects that I was involved with was Perth Children's Hospital, I am rather glad to say at this time. That was an Office of Strategic Projects, I think it was called, project. I had many other hundreds of projects under my charge from time to time, so I know a little about this. It is easy to be politic, as we have heard from a number of members—we will hear again and have heard before—about some perceived deficiency in some project or other. I am sure we will do that about future projects in the presence of governments of either persuasion; that is just the nature of politics. However, I wonder what the purpose is of rehashing this at this time and in these terms. I suggest, with the greatest respect to a number of members, that there is not a great deal of mileage to be gained from it. There are plenty of arguments and counterarguments with any large complex public project. If it gives members on the government benches any satisfaction in respect of Perth Children's Hospital, yes, a few things are quite unsatisfactory about that project and leave a nasty taste in the mouth. I am aghast by the parking issue, as any normal, reasonable person would be. I reckon that was a complete stuff-up. I am angry about it because I do not like to be associated, even indirectly, with a government's record that has to claim ownership of that stuff-up. I am not happy at all. But when governments get ahead and do things, occasionally these sorts of things crop up on their watch.

The situation is similar when governments are held responsible for things such as someone discovering that something is wrong with a contaminant in a building product that some contractor, subcontractor or sub-subcontractor is using. That might seem unfair to government members with charge of the project, but they have to wear it. Indeed, former ministers—I think most of whom have now gone—have worn it for this. I do not know why we have to rehash it. Our rejoinder could now be that given that the current government demanded to take over the project—that was a bit controversial, but I will not go there—why has it taken so long to fix the outstanding problems that needed to be fixed to get this hospital open? We could argue these sorts of things in a partisan way from now till doomsday, but I do not think it would achieve a lot.

We have to acknowledge that the former government built this children's hospital. I went and visited it yonks ago. There have been issues with the water and a few other matters, but there is always a shopping list of matters left over at the end of a project of this complexity as commission approaches. There will always be a list of things such as something being wrong with the door locks on level 3—all these sorts of things. We can keep going on and raking it over forever if members opposite want to, but I would like to concentrate on making sure that children, be they members of Hon Matthew Swinbourn's family or anybody else, get access to good facilities, whether in hospitals or in schools, whether they are safe to walk the streets or whether they have the best water to drink. I do not mean in just the hospital; I mean across the state. We need to concern ourselves with those sorts of things. Members opposite need to understand that they are now in government and they have to set some standards. Every time they open their mouths to criticise the former government, they set themselves a clearer standard by which they will in due course be judged—as long as they understand that that is part of the game of what goes around comes around.

In conclusion, we will discuss all these things in the future. I do not know whether there is much more to be said today. From what I can see, this is a blame and counter-blame game. I want to acknowledge firstly the human element raised by our colleague, but also the understanding that these are complex matters. I have plenty of counterarguments to the one raised in this motion that I can have resort to if members opposite keep bringing these matters up in the future, and they will not want to be reminded of them.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.17 pm]: I know the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk, so I will do my best to be brief.

I begin by sincerely thanking Hon Matthew Swinbourn for moving this motion today. Hon Simon O'Brien just said that we are in a very adversarial business. We play politics harder than anyone else and regularly look at issues with a political eye. But it is refreshing for all that to be stripped away and to look at this very important issue through the eyes of a family that sadly needs the very important services offered by Princess Margaret Hospital

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for Children and the future services of Perth Children's Hospital. I think that changes everything. We represent the public, and that is certainly how it looks at issues such as these. I am very proud to be a colleague of Hon Matthew Swinbourn; he has been a breath of fresh air in Parliament. I am proud of all my colleagues on the government benches. We make a very strong team, and we have the ability to look at issues such as this in the manner that the public expects us to. I wish Mitchell, the extended Swinbourn family, friends, colleagues and everyone who knows you all the best because members know that my family's life was also touched by a very sad event. When we go through these things it makes us realise that although politics and matters of the state are very important to us, we all have one thing in common—our families certainly come before all that.

I will deal with part (b) of the honourable member's motion first because time will beat us today. Hon Simon O'Brien said that we can get up and whack the previous government around the head until the cows come home—sometimes deservedly, sometimes not so—but I think in this instance there is certainly a case to do that. I also acknowledge my colleague the Minister for Health, Hon Roger Cook, for taking charge and taking decisive action on this project and turning it around. It took a year, but he turned it around to finally give the public some comfort that this much needed facility will be open soon. I do not know whether members opposite realise this, but the Minister for Health comes from a very, very strong medical background. The Minister for Health's father is a local doctor in Perth and the Minister for Health's grandfather was a life member of the Australian Medical Association—the doctor's union, if you like. The Minister for Health's family has a very strong medical history. I think that may be one of the reasons that this was such an important issue to get involved in to take practical completion of the hospital. Those members who took enough interest in this would realise that he was quite widely criticised for doing that by the media and other members of Parliament, but it proved to be right. It proved to be bold.

Hon Michael Mischin: What did he do exactly?

Hon DARREN WEST: I know the member does not have a great understanding of this, because I have an information pack in here about part (a) of the motion in which the member features quite prominently, but taking practical completion meant that he could get the Chief Health Officer into the hospital to find out what went wrong. That was something the previous government had not thought about doing. The government was able to identify the source of the lead in the water. We all know that the lead and the asbestos were the issues. I think the asbestos had been sorted.

Hon Aaron Stonehouse: The Chief Medical Officer?

Hon DARREN WEST: The Chief Health Officer. The source was identified as dezincification of brass fittings. We were able to get in there and find out what it was, replace the thermostatic mixing valves and undertake all the testing and all the things that could not have occurred had John Holland retained control of that site. That is significant. That means that on Monday, 14 May, the Perth Children's Hospital, two and a half years after it was predicted to open, will open its doors to its first patients. That is a direct result of the Minister for Health's interventions and action of taking practical completion of that site amid criticism. Elective surgery will begin on 28 May, which happens to be my mother-in-law's birthday so I will remember that date. The final transition to that hospital will happen on 10 June when the emergency department opens. The Minister for Health deserves some credit for that. The government also deserves some credit for that, because the minister clearly did not make that decision on his own. Everybody involved in that decision deserves credit where credit is due. It would not hurt for the opposition to stand up every now and then and say that the Minister for Health has it right this time. It would not hurt to give credit where credit is due.

Hon Michael Mischin: Are you going to acknowledge that we built the hospital?

Hon DARREN WEST: Of course.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon DARREN WEST: The former Premier was at the opening of the new Perth stadium and that was noticed. Members opposite would know that these projects take a long time in planning and preparation, even when there is no mismanagement in construction. It is often the case —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Robin Chapple): Members! Hon Darren West, I note that you have very little time left.

Hon DARREN WEST: Often the opposing party of the day when the decision is made, gets to open the hospital. It happens a lot. I will not go as far as members opposite want me to, but I acknowledge that the planning and

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scoping and the awarding of tenders and the construction was done by the previous government. However, I also acknowledge that some dreadful mistakes were made during the construction of that hospital. This boils right back down to the families such as the Swinbourns, who have had to use that old facility for much longer than was anticipated, and it has a personal cost. I thank the honourable member for bringing the motion forward. It is a terrific motion. I thank the member for personalising a very political issue and bringing it to a level that everybody understands.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.