

HEALTH SERVICES — FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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

Before I ask my question, on behalf of the member for Swan Hills, I would like to welcome the amazing student leaders from Bullsbrook College.

I refer to the strong financial management of the McGowan Labor government that has meant record funding for Western Australia's hospital system and the world-class health care it provides for Western Australians.

Can the minister update the house on how the government is working with doctors, nurses and staff to ensure more patients get the surgeries that they need sooner and well within the recommended time frames?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I would like to thank the member for her question. It is an important one. The work that we have done to fix the state's finances means that we can target the state's resources to where they are needed. I am very proud that within our budget, we have increased funding to our hospitals by over 2.8 per cent. A reason we have had the discipline needed to rein in the funding of our hospitals is that we want to target it properly. Although we have constrained growth in the health budget, we have targeted growth in the hospital budget. The great outcome of that is that we can focus funding where it is needed. Putting patients first is our priority. Although we have seen an increase in the number of people on the elective surgery waitlist, it is to be expected because we have an ageing and growing population in Western Australia. What I am proud of is that the time those people stay on the waitlist has actually reduced under the McGowan government. We now see that 95 per cent of all patients have their surgery within the clinically recommended time. This is the best result in over two years. This is despite the fact that we have had a nine per cent increase in activity because people are flocking to our public health system. There is a range of reasons for that, but we will not go into them now. There will be plenty of time during the matter of public interest motion to go through these facts. The MPI was to be moved by the member for Scarborough, as we saw earlier today, but now we see that the member for Churchlands will move the MPI.

The SPEAKER: Member, I have okayed that and I know the reasons why. So, just get on with it, please.

Mr R.H. COOK: The reason we are so proud of these outcomes is that it means that we now have the resources to make sure that more patients are operated on. We had 86 892 reportable elective surgery cases in the last 12 months. That is almost 1 000 more than in the previous 12 months. This means that across every category—category 1 is the most urgent, category 2 is semi-urgent, and category 3 is painful but needing to be operated on within 12 months—we have seen a reduction in the waiting times of these patients. This is an outstanding result for a system, which the member for Churchlands is attacking, while it is also dealing with the biggest flu season on record.

Earlier in the week, I was very pleased to be with the Premier at Perth Children's Hospital to celebrate the opening of that great hospital and its first year of operation. During that time, the hospital has seen almost 26 000 inpatient admissions; over 58 000 emergency department presentations, which is a 30 per cent increase in the last month alone—of course, the member for Churchlands would not be able to get his head around that—and almost 200 000 outpatient appointments. The statistic that I am most proud of is that the Perth Children's Hospital has seen a 9.7 per cent reduction—almost 10 per cent—in elective surgery waiting times across all categories. That is an outstanding result and we are proud of the doctors, nurses and allied health and support staff who have made this happen.