

FREMANTLE HOSPITAL — INTENSIVE CARE UNIT EXPANSION

592. Mr J.M. FRANCIS to the Minister for Health:

Recently, due to a very silly self-inflicted injury, I had to visit Fremantle Hospital and was pleased to find out — Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I formally call the member for Victoria Park to order for the first time today. It is wonderful that members are interested in the member for Jandakot's question. I am interested to hear it without any interjections.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: While I was there, I found out that the government has recently increased by one-third the number of intensive care unit beds at Fremantle Hospital. Can the minister inform the house —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I formally call the member for Cockburn to order for the first time today. I do not think anyone wants to be interrupted when they are trying to ask a question.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Can the minister please inform the house of the benefits to the community of the increase in the number of ICU beds at Fremantle Hospital?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

I thank the member for the question. Obviously, this issue is critical to his electorate and that of the member for Fremantle because this is something that has been promised for a long time. It always feels good to fulfil a promise that I made, but it has been very hard getting there. Today I was reminded by a cardiologist at Fremantle Hospital that I promised to do this in October 2008. It has taken me three years to get there. The good news is that Jim McGinty promised it twice and never got there. It has been difficult. A 2004 report showed that there was a critical lack of beds in the intensive care unit. Despite a further four years in government, the Labor Party was unable to increase the number of ICU beds by a single bed during that time. This government has significantly increased the number of ICU beds in several hospitals, including Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and Rockingham General Hospital. The increase in the number of ICU beds at Fremantle Hospital is particularly important. When I met that cardiologist at Fremantle Hospital in 2008 and made a commitment to get those extra ICU beds, it was pointed out to me that the shortage of beds was causing critical problems in Fremantle Hospital. There was a lack of ICU beds for the waitlist surgery patients, who usually required heart surgery, and emergency patients. Those critically ill patients were not getting treatment within the appropriate time frame. We have provided an additional seven ICU beds at Fremantle Hospital at a cost of \$2.1 million. Two of those beds will be open this week, two more will be open in a fortnight and a further three will be open in the few weeks after that. An additional seven beds increases the number of ICU beds at Fremantle Hospital from 12 to 19. When I opened the beds today, even though the room was small, it was absolutely packed with people from the hospital who were very pleased to have access to those additional beds. That complements the \$3.6 million that the government spent on coronary care beds. There has been a major expansion of bed capacity at that hospital.

It was interesting that Hon Simon O'Brien also attended in his capacity as an upper house member for that region. We were able to advise those present that there were two government ministers who had worked in Fremantle Hospital: I was a doctor and he was a patient care assistant, and we were both there at about the same time in the late seventies. It shows that wherever a person comes from they can get to be in government and to be a minister. Members opposite should have faith!

This is a really good announcement for not only Fremantle but also the whole area south of the river, which will have access to those additional beds. I suspect it will significantly improve our ability to cater for particularly the high risk end of surgery and emergency presentations.