

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — LEAD CONTAMINATION

585. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the minister's decision on 20 April to take practical completion of Perth Children's Hospital, and to the explosive testimony of John Hamilton in a public parliamentary hearing last week.

- (1) Can the minister advise whether the lead issue is resolved; and, if not, why not?
- (2) If the lead issue is resolved, what are the issues preventing the opening of the hospital, given the minister has been in charge now for seven months?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(2) I think the tenor of the member for Scarborough's question is, "Is it resolved, and are you just keeping the hospital closed because you want to?" That is the sort of conspiratorial theory that the other side conjures up from time to time. We have been no stranger to this. We know that the issues with regard to lead in the water at the children's hospital are not resolved. It is part of the dog's breakfast which was served up to us by the outgoing government and which we now have to resolve. We will continue to try to resolve those issues, and we are making good progress.

A significant component of that work is the polyphosphate treatment process. The fact of the matter remains that if we had not taken practical completion, we would not have been able to apply the polyphosphate treatment process, because the managing contractor at the time refused to allow that to happen. Why did they refuse to allow that to happen? If they were to say, "Yes, we will allow the treatment process to happen", that would undermine their claim that the contamination is coming from outside the hospital. Why are they maintaining that it is coming from outside the hospital? It is because their \$300 million claim against the WA taxpayer rides on that very contention. So the member for Scarborough, like the Leader of the Opposition, has to ask herself the question, "Will I continue to maintain this argument that we should not have taken practical completion, and side with this company, which has a \$300 million claim against us, or will I side with the people of Western Australia and the sick kids who will be using that hospital, to ensure that we have a safe hospital where they can get their treatment?" The fact of the matter remains that we took practical completion because we wanted to resolve the lead issues. We could not do that, because of the managing contractor. We know who the ally of the managing contractor is. It is that mob over there—those people who, like the managing contractor, are quietly hoping that the \$300 million claim against the people of Western Australia works!

Several members interjected.

Mr R.H. COOK: You should be ashamed of yourselves, you really should! You have abandoned the people of Western Australia, the WA taxpayers, and the sick kids who need care in that hospital, by your craven loyalty to that company.