

HEALTH PORTFOLIO — HON DARREN WEST'S COMMENTS

Statement

HON PAUL BROWN (Agricultural) [5.15 pm]: I did not get to make a contribution earlier today to the debate on Hon Darren West's motion about health, particularly given that, in his 20 minutes, he spoke for 17 minutes about Geraldton and Geraldton Hospital, for about two and a half minutes about York and Northam, and 30 seconds on the other parts of the motion that he put forward. That was rather enlightening.

I suggest firstly that, judging from the comments made by Hon Darren West about Geraldton Hospital, he has either taken leave of reality or is intent on misleading this Parliament, this house and the people of Geraldton. He keeps coming forth with comments while holding up toys and props. We can all go to Google and print out press releases from various people. In his speech, the member said —

I am holding up that front page, which shows the chap on the left, who is now the Leader of the National Party, and the fellow on the right, who is the Mayor of the City of Greater Geraldton. They made, as the headline states, a "Last-Minute \$120m Hospital Plan" and if elected, they would build a hospital in Geraldton. They were duly elected and we have not seen a new hospital built in Geraldton.

The member absolutely knows that those comments are misleading, given that the person standing to the right of the Leader of the National Party, Brendon Grylls, was a candidate for the federal seat of Durack at the time, not the mayor. He was running in a federal election and he was making a commitment to the people of Geraldton and the people of Durack to partner with the WA Nationals and the Leader of the National Party, Brendon Grylls, and go to Canberra, if he was elected to the seat of Durack, and forcefully argue the case for funding for Geraldton Hospital. He did not get elected. No matter what the member on the other side might say, he did not get elected. Melissa Price, the Liberal candidate, was elected as the federal member for Durack.

The reason the Nationals' candidate did not get elected was that the Labor Party chose to preference against him. Only two people, the Leader of the Nationals and Shane Van Styn, who was a candidate for Durack, made a commitment to the hospital. If health services and the expansion of the hospital in Geraldton were such a high priority, as the member continues to say all the time, why would the Labor Party not commit to the only person who made a commitment to the hospital during the federal election? At the end of the day, when he ran as a candidate for Durack in the 2013 federal election, the Labor Party preferenced against him. When the member stands up and says that he did not keep the commitment, it is misleading for him to suggest that at the time he was running as a candidate for mayor. He is now the mayor, but that was not the commitment that he made. He made the commitment as a candidate for Durack. He was not elected. That election commitment was not able to be kept because the Labor Party preferenced Melissa Price.

Hon Jim Chown interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: I am not having an argument with this side. Hon Darren West's comments are misleading.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! We do not want to end the week on a bad note, surely. Let us just have one member speaking at a time.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Now we will go to the hospital itself. In the 2001 election campaign, Geoff Gallop promised a hospital. What did the Labor government build? It built a hospital that was undersized and delivered late and over budget. The construction period blew out, the budget blew out, and services were reduced.

Hon Martin Aldridge: Where did they get the money from?

Hon PAUL BROWN: Interestingly enough, I will tell Hon Martin Aldridge where the former Labor government got the money from. It got the money with a budget blowout, which meant that the Moora Hospital did not get built at that time. It used \$6.3 million that was supposed to go to the Moora Hospital. The budget blew out so much because of union activism. The unions need to be fed and watered, and they need to have something to put back into the Labor coffers as another election commitment, because they got fed and watered. The Labor government chose not to build Moora Hospital. The people of Moora had over seven years saved \$360 000 of their own funds to contribute to the hospital, and the hospital was pulled out from under them. Moora Hospital was delayed by many years because those funds went to the over-budget, time blow-outs and service and size reductions delivered through the then new Geraldton Hospital. I quote an article that appeared in *Farm Weekly* at the time —

MOORA shire president Michael Bates has called on country people to stand up for their rights and be more vocal in seeking funding for vital community services, following last week's shock decision by the State Government not to fund the town's new \$6.3 million hospital.

Rather than Labor Party members standing up here and in public on many occasions, lauding themselves about funding a new hospital, they should be absolutely embarrassed. They should be embarrassed. The only reason the Geraldton Hospital was built was so that Geoff Gallop, a boy from Geraldton, was not run out of town; he could actually walk the streets of Geraldton safely without being run out of town. The former Labor government did so well in building that over-budget, over-time hospital with a reduction in specialist services that it was kicked out. It actually got kicked out. Everybody thought it did such a good job after it had completed the hospital that it lost that seat at the very next election.

Eleven years after that 2005 construction, we are having this conversation about the requirement for the expansion and redevelopment of the Geraldton Hospital. Thankfully, we have the St John of God Geraldton Hospital across the road. Fifty per cent of the services it provides is because of the overflow from the Geraldton Hospital. There was a reduction in ward space, a reduction in accident emergency space and a reduction in a whole heap of other services, particularly specialist services. The St John of God Geraldton Hospital across the road now has to deliver those services on behalf of the people of Geraldton because the hospital that the Labor Party built was over-budget, undersized and had a blowout in construction time. The former Labor government also made sure that Moora Hospital was not built so that it could take the \$6.3 million for that hospital and give it to the unions because of the budget blowout and because of the time blowout. That is what we are looking at; that is absolutely what we are looking at. Rather than Labor Party members standing up, patting themselves on the back, and pointing the finger at us, they should talk about stage 2 of Geraldton Hospital. It was never designed and never planned for. The Labor Party was in government for eight years. In the 2008 budget, there was not one penny in the forward estimates for stage 2—the magic pudding that Hon Darren West keeps talking about. There were no plans, no designs, no drawings and no funding. Over eight years in government and over the four years of the 2008 forward estimates for the former Labor government’s last budget, there was not one cent put towards stage 2. It was a magic pudding. Hon Darren West keeps talking about it; it is a figment of his imagination. As a result of the lack of specialist services, we now have two or three Royal Flying Doctor Service flights a day going backwards and forwards to Perth delivering patients for specialist care, and there is increased demand on the patient assisted travel scheme. The footprint for Geraldton Hospital extends over Carnarvon, Meekatharra, Mt Magnet and Wiluna in the north midlands area. Those services cannot be provided from Geraldton because Labor members did not build the hospital big enough, they went against the wishes of the people of Geraldton, and they blew out the budget. They are a disgrace and an embarrassment.

Point of Order

Hon SUE ELLERY: I understand that at the beginning of his comments, Hon Paul Brown said he was reading directly from *Hansard*. He needs to identify if he was, in fact, reading from the uncorrected *Hansard*. I did not hear him say that, so I just ask the member if that is what he was reading from.

The PRESIDENT: I will take that as a request for Hon Paul Brown to identify the document he had in his hand and was quoting from.

Hon PAUL BROWN: The Leader of the Opposition in this house is correct; I was reading from the uncorrected *Hansard*.

House adjourned at 5.25 pm
