

MATERNITY SERVICES

**37. Mr W.J. JOHNSTON to the Premier:**

I refer to the Cook Labor government's strengthening of our health system by investing in hospitals and increasing our health workforce, delivering the best health care for all Western Australians.

- (1) Can the Premier outline to the house how this government is improving birth and maternity services in Western Australia, including in my electorate of Cannington?
- (2) Can the Premier outline to the house how these investments offer greater choice for women and families expecting a child?
- (3) Can the Premier confirm that this is another demonstration that he will always do what is right for Western Australia?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I thank the member for Cannington for his question.

- (1)–(3) Thirty-two thousand Western Australians entered the world last year and roughly double that number entered the new world of parenthood and the challenges that come with it, as the member for Cannington well knows—oh, so many challenges! I was delighted to join the member for Cannington and the member for Victoria Park, along with our great Minister for Health just this morning to usher in construction of the new midwifery birth centre at Bentley Hospital. The centre will be the first of its kind in WA. It will be the first public health service in our state to offer a contemporary midwife-led maternity service. I would love to say that the last Minister for Health achieved this goal, but I am delighted that the current Minister for Health has actually got there. This has been a long-term challenge—that is, how we provide midwifery services to women in the public sector so they can have that continuity of care right through the journey of the birth and continue to make sure that they have that service as they go through their journey. We are delighted to see the endorsed midwife category is now in place to usher in this new era for maternity services. I was proud to stand alongside Carli Beange, the first publicly employed endorsed midwife in Western Australia. Specialists like Carli are highly skilled and they do incredible work supporting women through every step of their pregnancy. She will soon join eight other endorsed midwives and the midwifery management team in caring for women in the east metropolitan service area.

It is now well established that this model of care can enhance a woman's experience in child rearing. It is beneficial to mums and babies, both during pregnancy and postpartum. From a government perspective, this is about responding to feedback from the community. We have listened and responded to that feedback that women want more options when it comes to birthing.

This model of care responds to our overarching goal of enabling women-centred care and positive birth experiences. We want to provide choice and stability for women during this exciting stage of their lives.

The new birth centre at Bentley Hospital will include birthing pools, antenatal assessment rooms, a family room, birth suites and a midwives' hub with networking capability to share live birth data with other sites across the East Metropolitan Health Service area. The WA Labor government will spend \$2.6 million to design, build and fit-out the clinic, which will open around July this year. We are absolutely looking forward to that service opening.

This project is one of several projects right around Western Australia. Our goal is to make the WA health system one of the best in the world that continues to provide great health care for the women of Western Australia. In the pipeline we also have the new women's and babies' hospital at Murdoch, major upgrades to maternity facilities at Osborne Park Hospital, including a new family birthing centre, and upgrades to neonatal services at Perth Children's Hospital. We see this transformative rebuild of our maternity services in the health system. I make the observation that it seems just like yesterday, member for Cannington, that we were at that hospital when we were opposition members campaigning against the former Liberal–National government, which was trying to shut maternity services at Bentley Hospital. Under the WA Labor government, they are open, thriving and providing great choice for women in the east metropolitan area.