

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — AISHWARYA ASWATH — INDEPENDENT INQUIRY REPORT

731. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I refer to the Premier's contribution during yesterday's matter of public interest regarding the tragic death of Aishwarya Aswath, when he said —

... on the night in question, the hospital was not understaffed. The emergency department was not understaffed; it had its full complement.

Why did the Premier say that, but leave out the fact that the report concludes that the full complement of staff was not enough? Was it a deliberate attempt to downplay or deflect his government's lack of resourcing for Perth Children's Hospital?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

The reason I said that is that the reviewer of the terrible events that took place on the night that Aishwarya died said that the hospital was not understaffed on that night. Professor White, who examined those matters, was interviewed about it and he said in his commentary that on the night in question, the hospital was not understaffed. That is what the reviewer—the medical professor who chaired the review panel that took all the evidence—had to say. That is why I repeated what he had to say. In terms of the second point, as I said yesterday, though members may not have heard, the last budget for the Child and Adolescent Health Service, which funds the Perth Children's Hospital—in fact, the vast bulk of its money goes to the children's hospital—prior to the election of this government was \$590 632 000. Its budget allocation this year is \$839 857 000. In other words, it climbed from \$590 million to \$839 million. It is a very significant increase. In some years, the budget went up by 14 per cent over the term of this government. It is a massive increase in the budget. As Professor White said, on the night in question, it was fully staffed. The other point I made last night, and we have spoken to some of the doctors in Health about it, is that poor Aishwarya had a condition known as sepsis. Sepsis, I have been briefed, is lethal for about one in six people who acquire it. It is a very, very dangerous illness. The second part of sepsis is it is very difficult to diagnose, particularly in children, because it can look like a range of other illnesses that are nowhere near as serious. It is a very difficult and dangerous disease.

It is a terrible set of circumstances; we all understand that. But the good thing is, obviously, we conducted a review and the review has 30 recommendations that we are implementing. Just to close, once again, we express our deepest sympathies to the family of Aishwarya.