

MINISTER FOR HEALTH — PERFORMANCE

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

I refer to the crisis in our health system that the Premier and his health minister have presided over for four years, including record ambulance ramping levels, chronic staff shortages, toxic cultural workplace issues, and ever-increasing code yellows and code blacks in our hospitals. Will the Premier remove all non-health portfolios from the Minister for Health so that the people of WA can be confident the crisis has the full attention of government?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

At the last meeting of the national cabinet, it was raised that all health systems across the country are undergoing a significant amount of pressure. All the Premiers and chief ministers agreed that there has been a reaction to COVID, which is particularly exacerbated in the mental health area, that is causing issues across hospitals all over Australia. I think that is further exacerbated by the decline in the take-up of private health insurance, and the more complex needs that appear to be developing, particularly in mental health, in every emergency department in every health system across Australia. All the Premiers and chief ministers were saying exactly the same. If we go to Victoria or South Australia, we will find there have been some significant issues in their health systems; New South Wales is the same. This problem is not of our making, but it is something that we are dealing with as we speak. This will be something that is on the national cabinet agenda, and all the states and territories will meet to see what we can do jointly to try to address this pressure that is developing on our emergency departments.

In Western Australia, of course, we are undertaking a massive rebuild of hospitals all over the state, regional and city. There is barely a hospital across the state that we can go to that does not have important infrastructure to expand capacity, both in beds and emergency departments. At Osborne Park, Joondalup, Bunbury, Tom Price and Newman—you name it—all over Western Australia, this expansion in capacity is taking place.

On top of that, we are employing an extra 1 000 nurses in both this year and next year. Part of that is an increase on the normal intake of nurses across the system. On top of that, 500 beds will come on stream—additional—over the course of the next four years, including 117 in the short term, plus a whole range in emergency departments. All this is being done because we know that important pressures are building and they need to be dealt with.

In terms of the health minister, over the last four years we have dealt with the biggest health crisis that has confronted the world in 100 years. He is doing an outstanding job and he is a very capable person.

Government members: Hear, hear!