

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION —
DELIVERY OF AMBULANCE SERVICES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: CRITICAL CONDITION

326. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the *Delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia: Critical condition* report tabled today in the Legislative Council and a finding, which I quote, “increased ramping has contributed to St John Ambulance WA’s inability to comply with their target response times”.

- (1) Does the minister accept this finding and the fact that underinvestment in our hospitals under her government has led to a catastrophic increase in ambulance ramping that took nearly five ambulances off WA roads every day in 2020–21?
- (2) Does the minister agree with the United Workers Union national ambulance coordinator, Fiona Scalon, that St John’s ambulance has dropped the ball and that ambulance services should be run as an essential service by government?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

- (1)–(2) I accept that ambulance ramping has contributed to St John not being able to meet all of its response time. I have not had an opportunity to read the report from cover to cover because it was tabled four hours ago and we are dealing with a COVID response right now. In terms of a formal response, the government will give the committee due respect and consideration and will respond in the appropriate time frame. I will not make any formal response on any of the actual recommendations.

From some of the findings that I have seen, there are a range of findings around St John’s. You cannot take one piece of the report out of context. I do not in any way whatsoever accept the Leader of the Opposition’s assertion that we have underfunded the health system. That is simply wrong! Under this government, the budget for the health system has increased every single year. Since 2017, it has increased every single year. In the last budget, we saw a \$680 million uplift in business as usual, as well as \$251 million for the emergency access department as well as \$30 million for country paramedics, as well as significant investment in our mental health system. The figures do not lie, Leader of the Opposition. This is a record investment in our health system of \$3.6 billion in infrastructure alone. It is absolutely wrong that this government has underinvested in the system. Since we were elected, the budget has increased by 30 per cent.