

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

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

I have a supplementary question. So that I am clear, is the Premier refuting that the staffing was suboptimal, a conclusion that was made in the report that he is referring to?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I will be clear to the Leader of the Opposition again: Professor White, who conducted the review, was interviewed yesterday —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the Opposition is interrupting. Does she want to hear my answer? Yesterday she was laughing and interrupting whilst I was talking about the very sad facts around the death of Aishwarya. It would just be polite, I think, to allow me to speak about this. Professor White examined the matters in question. What he said yesterday when he was being interviewed about these matters is that on the night in question, the hospital was not understaffed. When Aishwarya arrived at the hospital, there were 41 patients, 19 doctors and, from memory, 15 nurses. It was not understaffed on the night in question. Sepsis is a very difficult illness to diagnose. All the medical professionals I have spoken to have advised me of that. It is particularly dangerous for children. It has a very, very high death rate. It is one of those illnesses that kills a lot of Australians each and every year, including in hospitals. It is one of those very, very sad situations.

The report itself obviously indicated that we need to change the configuration inside the emergency department, which is action that is going on now, because the seating arrangements and other nooks and crannies do not allow for a proper line of sight, and I think the report was definitely referring to that when it used some of its commentary. The second point is that it was referring to the fact that the staff in the hospital, more broadly speaking, were tired. It has been a difficult and long period and we have had trouble recruiting from overseas. That is a fact that we accept; that is why we have boosted the staff numbers in the hospital enormously over the course of the last six months, and that will continue. On the night in question, as Professor White said, the hospital was not understaffed.