

HEALTH — ASSISTANT-IN-NURSING STAFF

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

I refer to the escalating staffing crisis across the Western Australian health service.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the WA government is using assistant-in-nursing staff to give vaccinations in state government hubs?
- (2) Is it true that the government has plans to fill midwife vacancies at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women with assistant-in-nursing staff?
- (3) Are there plans to replace nurses or midwives in other public hospitals with assistant-in-nursing staff?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1) I thank the member for the question. It gives me an opportunity to put on record what is the situation. Yes, some assistants-in-nursing will be deployed to our vaccination clinics. Each time anyone with a clinical background goes into our vax clinics, they are given a course prior to that to make sure they understand the requirements with vaccinations. That is part of the program to try to boost the number of non-frontline nurses in our vaccination clinics. As I announced earlier this week, we are also utilising a number of school-based nurses and redeploying them to our vaccination clinics, which again allows us the opportunity to get more senior staff back into the hospitals working on the front line.
- (2) In relation to the second point, which is around the idea of using assistants-in-nursing as replacement midwives, no, that is not the case. I understand that claim was put out earlier this week but it is not accurate. Assistants-in-nursing have always been used in the context of assistants to midwives, but they do not replace midwives. That is obviously part and parcel of what we are doing at the moment in a significant recruitment campaign to get more midwives working in the system. I met with St John of God Health Care people recently who expressed their difficulty in attracting midwives into the service as well.
- (3) No, it is not the case. Assistants-in-nursing play a very important role in doing just that—assisting other nursing staff undertake activities or duties in a hospital—but we will not put them in a situation in which they are working beyond their scope.