

HEALTH SYSTEM — SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW

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

I refer to the minister's announcement yesterday that he was reviving Eric Ripper's razor gang to improve financial sustainability and focus on value in the public health system. Can the minister rule out closing regional health campuses, district hospitals and nursing posts in regional Western Australia as Roger's razor gang reviews our health service?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

Roger's razor gang—I like it!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.H. COOK: I thank the member for the question. The sustainable health review, which we released the details of yesterday, is an important contribution to the ongoing reform of our healthcare system. As the member was trying to allude to with references to Hon Eric Ripper, that Treasurer managed to leave this state with the finest set of public finances in its history, standing in stark contrast to the layers of mess that we now see before us. Under the Reid review the government set up a process —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party, you asked a question; you do not answer it.

Mr R.H. COOK: The government set about a process of putting the health system on a sustainable footing. That involved some rather controversial policies that were not wholly accepted. One of those was that we should create a new tertiary hospital south of the river. Hang on—the Liberal–National government was on that one! Another controversial issue was moving the children's hospital to Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre. The former government agreed with that as well. The Reid report was not an exercise in cost cutting. The Reid report was about setting the health system back on a sustainable footing. What the other mob never did was actually carry through with the other aspects of the sustainable health review, which was making sure that we have the health services in the bush that we need rather than putting the system under such financial stress that ultimately governments are led to doing a whole range of blanket cost cutting, as we saw towards the end of the time under that mob. The sustainable health review is about taking the learnings from the Reid review back in the early 2000s, updating them and making sure we have a health system going forward into the future. When the Liberal and National Parties came into government, health represented just 24 per cent of the total budget. Today it is around 30 per cent, and the trajectory of that cost increase is continuing. The fact of the matter is that that is unsustainable. As I have said on a number of occasions when I have been on my feet, a lot of the time we have to clean up that mob's mess. This is another example of that. We do not apologise for the sustainable health review. It will be a great opportunity to improve service in the bush rather than what the Leader of the National Party said, which is fallacious, that it is about cost cutting.