

AMBULANCE RAMPING

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

I refer to the ABC 7.30 report exposé regarding ambulance ramping, including insights from the Western Australian faculty chair for the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, Dr Peter Allely.

- (1) Is it not time that the minister acknowledged the health system in WA is in crisis, given the critique of industry leader Dr Allely that, and I quote, “most departments are running at almost disaster level”?
- (2) If ramping hours that exceed 5 000 hours do not constitute a crisis, what does?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. It is the same question that was asked just prior to the break, so it is good to see the material is updated!

Several members interjected.

Mr R.H. COOK: My answer —

Several members interjected.

Mr R.H. COOK: You will shush—the lot of you—and listen, because you clearly could not listen the last time! You clearly could not listen the last time, so I am going to tell you this time: we are in the blast zone of a global pandemic. As a result of that, our hospitals are under significant demand pressures. Our hospitals are under the same pressures as all hospitals around this country. We have had a significant increase in demand—14 per cent in emergency department presentations this year alone compared with last year. There is a significant increase in demand, so what is the way we respond to increased demand?

Mr V.A. Catania: Fund it properly!

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! Member for Swan Hills, I ask you not to interject.

Mr R.H. COOK: The way we respond to increased demand is increased supply. Sadly for the member for North West Central, that is exactly what is going on. Over 2 000 nurses will be recruited this year, which will include an extra 600 newly qualified nurses over two years. We already have 200 of these nurses on the wards. We will have 400 registered enrolled nurses and 200 mental health nurses come on board. Normally, we have 720 graduates, so there will be a significant increase of 300 nurses on the previous year.

We had 2 000 people a day attending metropolitan emergency departments, plus 1 000 a day in regional hospitals. We are increasing the number of ED beds and chairs by about 100. That is a significant increase in the capacity of EDs. We need to increase the number of beds available, which is exactly what we are doing.

Dr D.J. Honey: You have done nothing for four years —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale!

Mr R.H. COOK: For the benefit of members opposite, but particularly for the hapless member for Cottesloe, I repeat that we are increasing the number of beds by over 500. This will comprise 117 beds from existing capacity across the Perth metropolitan area and 100 new ED beds. We have committed to over 300 new inpatient beds as part of our infrastructure development at Joondalup, Geraldton, Peel and Bunbury. Of those 300 beds, 200 will be in the metro area and 100 beds will be in the mental health area. This is all part of our infrastructure expansion, which includes \$256.7 million at Joondalup Health Campus, \$152 million at Peel Health Campus and, of course, \$1.8 billion for a new women’s and newborns’ hospital. No government has had such an expansive and deliberate response to increased demand in our hospitals than this government. The reason why we can do this is that we got the finances back under control. It is through that clear leadership from the Premier and with strong stewardship of the state finances that we are now in a position to significantly invest in our hospital system.