

JOONDALUP HEALTH CAMPUS — PERTH POPULATION GROWTH

68. Mr A.P. O’GORMAN to the Minister for Health:

Before I ask my question, I beg the house’s indulgence to acknowledge that today is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Day supported by members on this side of the house by their wearing of a teal green ribbon and raising the awareness.

I refer to recent revelations that the Liberal–National government has significantly underestimated the Perth population explosion and Department of Health’s admission that it has used now outdated and inadequate low-growth predictions of the estimated residential population for the 2006 Australian census in the “WA Health Clinical Services Framework 2010–2020”.

- (1) Does the minister now accept that the “Clinical Services Framework 2010–2020” is now a woefully inadequate planning document that severely underestimates hospital demand projections?
- (2) Does the minister accept that the decision to delay the development of Joondalup Health Campus as a tertiary hospital will deny people, particularly those in the Joondalup and Wanneroo areas, adequate hospital treatment?
- (3) Will the minister now immediately commit to the development of Joondalup Health Campus as a tertiary hospital by 2015–16 in line with the original plans for the area as promised by the former Labor government?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

- (1)–(3) There are just so many inaccuracies in that question that it is hard to know where to begin, but I will start off with the population figures. Population figures and predictions of population growth have long been a bone of contention amongst government departments, particularly in the field of education, when we followed predictions made by other government departments as to what the future numbers of the state will be. I well recall as a backbencher having arguments about the number of schools we needed in our areas based on figures. The same applies down in Mandurah in particular, where we have been required to go on those population growth figures in developing planning for schools, police force or education—all of those things. In the recent paper, we have seen recognition by the government departments that do those assessments of population growth that there will be a significant expansion, almost an explosion, of population in this state. The member for Joondalup is right that it is critical that we get that into the clinical services framework. When he says that the current clinical services framework is woefully inadequate, it is not true. When we came to government, and were working on the figures that the member’s government had in place for particular predictions of future expansion of population, it was recognised that there was some difficulties with them. We went through our budget process and allocations of funds, but in our very robust discussions with the Treasurer, we recognised that those predictions were not accurate. Therefore, last year’s budget predictions on future growth were upgraded to what was called the middle level of expected population growth in the state. In our current budget, we have modelled that middle level. We will have to go back and look at that, but the clinical services framework is not a document fixed in stone, and neither is the budget from Treasury. This is a dynamic process. Each year we go through predictions of growth and numbers with Treasury. In fact, just yesterday, we talked to the Department of Health about some of those predictions and what they will do for future development, particularly, member for Mandurah, down in the Peel region.

The member for Joondalup keeps talking about the need for the tertiary hospital in Joondalup. The only difference between the hospital in Joondalup and a tertiary hospital is that a tertiary hospital is a state hospital, and a state hospital is not just required to look after the people around Joondalup and its surrounds; it is required to look after patients from the length and breadth of this state. Therefore, like Royal Perth Hospital, like Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and like Fremantle Hospital, that hospital would have to take patients from all over the state.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: It does it now.

Dr K.D. HAMES: No; it does not now. It gets some patients from the border area but, largely, almost inevitably, it gets patients from the region around Joondalup. Pushing this barrow of a tertiary hospital would disadvantage the constituents that the member for Joondalup represents.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: No, it wouldn’t. Don’t believe his rubbish.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It is true. That hospital provides almost every service that would be expected of a tertiary hospital to provide, without it having that requirement to take statewide patients.

We need to look at population growth, but we must remember that this government, although this was initiated by a report done by the previous government, has invested an unprecedented amount of money into building hospitals in this state—an unprecedented amount. We have brought forward hospitals that the opposition, when in government, had no money for.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The former government had plans. Where was the money for Midland hospital? It was non-existent. Where was the money for Kalgoorlie Hospital? The member for Kalgoorlie is not here. The former government would not provide the funding. The member for Albany is here. Ask the member for Albany what he thinks of the funding for hospitals by the previous government. It was non-existent. The amount of money that it had was nowhere near enough. It talked about doing Midland by 2015. It did not have a single dollar there. It talked about doing a replacement for the children's hospital by 2015. It had about \$200 million for a \$1.2 billion project. It had nowhere near enough money. This government is doing a massive investment. We are virtually rebuilding the health infrastructure of this state. It is a massive investment of money to cater for future health needs.

Mr R.H. Cook: That started under us.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The railway line was started under us. The opposition claims credit for it, does it not? It is quick to jump out there and claim credit. We started all the planning for it to change the first third and all the reserves. How many bricks did the opposition lay for Fiona Stanley Hospital?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am going to sit down and give a supplementary call to the member for Joondalup if he has a supplementary question.