

ROYAL PERTH HOSPITAL PROTECTION BILL 2013

Second Reading

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.01 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

In 2008, the WA Liberal Party promised the people of Western Australia that it would retain Royal Perth Hospital as an inner-city tertiary hospital by passing into law legislation under the Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill. That bill was introduced into Parliament on 11 November 2009.

The Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill sat in this place for 1 458 days before it was passed. On no less than three occasions it had to be reinstated to the notice paper, having lapsed for not being debated for a period of 12 months. On 8 November 2012, the bill was passed by the Legislative Assembly with opposition support. The bill was second read in the Legislative Council but never brought on for debate by the government. The Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill lapsed when Parliament was prorogued by the Premier in February 2013.

Royal Perth Hospital is an iconic health institution in Western Australia. It has operated in Western Australia for more than 150 years. As the Minister for Health observed in Parliament —

The previous government planned to scale back the health and hospital services offered on the site in favour of Fiona Stanley Hospital despite the fact that each year Royal Perth Hospital treats some 73 000 inpatients, receives about 225 000 outpatient attendants and has one of the busiest emergency departments in Australasia, with more than 60 000 presentations a year.

WA Labor accepts that the Western Australian public supported the retention of Royal Perth Hospital in the 2008 election. The electorate made its opinion clear and the minister has stated that he believes it contributed significantly to the Liberal Party's election victory that year. WA Labor also accepts that the public's opinion was driven, in part, by its concern about the uncertain future of the hospital and the jobs of those people who work at the hospital. WA Labor supports the retention of Royal Perth Hospital as an inner-city tertiary hospital, understanding both the views of the WA public and the requirement for the hospital because of the ongoing growth in demand for hospital services.

The WA public continues to hold those same concerns about the future of the hospital as it did in 2008. The government has not explained to the WA public how it intends to staff and run Fiona Stanley Hospital without a significant cut in resources to Royal Perth Hospital, nor has it declared which hospital services will be run from each of the hospitals. Further, the government has not set a date for its promised redevelopment of the hospital, promised at the 2008 election but now only referred to as a redevelopment that will occur after Fiona Stanley Hospital has opened.

It is clear that the government has little commitment to the Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill or the promise to the people of Western Australia to legislate for the protection of Royal Perth Hospital. In short, the Barnett government has allowed the Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill to gather dust—like the hospital itself. It is not surprising, therefore, that the WA public is now even more concerned that the government has stated that it does not intend to recommit to the passage of the Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill, and the future of the hospital is as uncertain as ever. If the government is not prepared to keep its promises to the electorate and provide this assurance about the future of Royal Perth Hospital, then WA Labor will provide that assurance and compel the government to keep its election promises.

This bill protects that part of Royal Perth Hospital that is located on properties that are bounded by Murray Street, Victoria Square, Lord Street and Moore Street and on land that is subject to the certificate of title volume 2726, folio 339. This bill is designed to protect the functions of the hospital on the central business district site. The Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill 2013 will require the approval of both houses of Parliament before the public hospital situated on that site can be closed. Such an action will put the fate of this major public hospital beyond the whim of bureaucrats, instead requiring a comprehensive debate in both houses before any closure can occur. Similarly, the approval of both houses of Parliament will be required to change the name of this historic public hospital that has served this state for so very much of its history.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman**.