

WOMEN'S AND BABIES' HOSPITAL — RELOCATION

**501. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to Infrastructure WA's assessment of the new women's and babies' hospital that will be built in the Fiona Stanley Hospital precinct.

- (1) Can the minister advise the house how irrefutable evidence provided by Infrastructure WA supports the government's decision not to build the hospital at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre precinct?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house whether she is aware of anyone who does not support Infrastructure WA the providing government with independent advice?

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(2) It is true that the business case for the new women's and newborns' hospital at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre site provided and outlined overwhelming and irrefutable evidence that hospital cannot proceed there and cannot be built safely. It highlighted 32 patient services that would have been impacted during construction. I quote —

There is a risk that ongoing services and operations at SCGH —

That is Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital —

will be materially and adversely disrupted by construction activities.

In the best-case scenario construction would take a decade, and this time line is unacceptable to the government. The business case also highlights risks to safe access to Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and Perth Children's Hospital emergency department, outpatient services, parking and transport considerations, and maintaining safe workplaces on an extremely constrained site for staff, including construction crews.

When I tabled the business case last week, it did not occur to me that I would also need to table an explanation for the opposition of what a business case actually is and what it is not. For the sake of the opposition—the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party—who are asking why the Fiona Stanley Hospital site is not in the business case for the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre site, it is because that is not the purpose of that business case. We know that members opposite did not like business cases when it was in government. They were quite scant. Never mind that there was a \$4 billion contract with Serco Australia. There was no business case because the opposition did not want to get advice it did not want to hear. For the purposes of the opposition, international best practice of a business case is —

The business case is a strategic tool for scoping, planning, and implementing projects, and an aid to effective decision-making.

...

... a tool to enable an approving body to decide whether or not to allow a project or programme to go forward;

...

an evidence-based audit trail to assist transparent decision-making.

That is what a business case is; it is not an options assessment. We did a business case for a particular project in a particular location. If it were possible to safely build an additional hospital on an already busy site, we would. In July, the Premier asked the independent Infrastructure WA to review the government's decision to relocate the hospital to Murdoch. Infrastructure WA considered all the planning documents, engaged with all the agencies involved in delivering the project and conducted site inspections to inform its own view. In its view, it confirmed unavoidable risks that cannot be reasonably mitigated. Other possible sites within the QEII precinct were investigated but all alternative options carried "extreme risks". Infrastructure WA also found that the consequential upgrades required at Charlies and Perth Children's Hospital would "increase overall construction time frames and cumulative impacts to service disruption at the site for 20 years or more.

The member also asked why Infrastructure WA is important. I want to take members through a brief history. WA Labor first committed to Infrastructure WA in 2015 when we saw a litany of projects developed by the former government with no business cases and no planning. We all remember Metro Area Express and the cancellation of the Ellenbrook rail line. It was clear that the former government had no clear, coherent infrastructure plan. In 2017, the Langouland inquiry again recommended that Infrastructure WA

be created. During her contribution in the debate on the Infrastructure Western Australia Bill in 2019, the member for Vasse said —

I would also like to contribute to debate on the Infrastructure Western Australia Bill 2019 and acknowledge that the opposition supports it ... It is my understanding that the legislation will establish IWA as a statutory authority that will provide independent advice to government on the state's infrastructure needs and priorities. Although it is only right, appropriate and just for a bureaucracy to provide such advice ... it is also essential that decisions are made by government.

That was the member for Vasse speaking in that debate.

The Leader of the Liberal Party absolutely showed her hypocrisy when she agreed in 2019 that IWA was independent, but in 2023, she is saying the opposite. On 6PR last Friday, the member for Vasse said that IWA's assessment of the new women's and babies' hospital was "political trickery". She went further and said that it basically manipulated the data to support its own decision.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** It's a disgrace.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** It is a disgrace.

Infrastructure WA's assessment made it clear that the QEII site was not appropriate for that kind of large complex infrastructure. I remind the chamber and the member for Vasse what happened two months ago in budget estimates when she asked for IWA to review the government's decision. She requested that IWA review that decision, and it did. Not only that, the member for Cottesloe suggested we sack the people who wrote the business case. The Leader of the Liberal Party also went on 6PR to claim that we should ignore the advice of the director general and the experts who put together the business case and sack the people who put together the business case because it did not like the answers. That is the kind of government that the Liberal and National Party would run.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** This director general has worked under both Liberal and Labor governments—both governments. He is a doctor who worked for the Royal Flying Doctor Service and in regional and rural WA. He has commissioned and opened two hospitals. He ran Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. The experts who delivered the business case to government provided us with frank and fearless advice. We are absolutely required to take that decision appropriately and understand that advice and not put the rest of the health system at risk.