

**QUEEN ELIZABETH II MEDICAL CENTRE AMENDMENT BILL 2013**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 9 May.

*Declaration as Urgent*

**DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Minister for Health)** [3.50 pm] — without notice: In accordance with standing order 168(2), I move —

That the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre Amendment Bill 2013 be considered an urgent bill.

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [3.50 pm]: I understand why the government has decided to make the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre Amendment Bill 2013 an urgent item. I understand that from time to time we finesse the English language to facilitate the operations of this place, but to label this bill an urgent item beggars belief. The only urgency around this item relates to the incompetence of the government's legislative program. The fact of the matter is that the government brought in this bill in its last term of government. If the matter was urgent, surely it demanded its attention for the good management of the bill at that time.

As we know, the legislative program of the government was left in disarray at the time of the last election and, as a result, this bill lapsed for lack of consideration. I do not mean that this bill was rudely interrupted mid-debate; I mean that this bill did not get debated at all. Clearly, it was not a matter of great urgency or high priority at that time. Further to that, the Minister for Health introduced this legislation about a week ago, yet Parliament was recalled some time earlier; it was recalled in April. If this matter was urgent—this bill is identical to the bill that the government brought into this chamber before the last election—surely the minister would have walked this bill into Parliament the very day Parliament resumed. The fact of the matter is that he did not. What the minister is really asking us to do is declare this bill urgent to facilitate the incompetence of the government in its management of legislation. That is basically because it recalled Parliament far too early and, as a result, we lack business to attend to in an orderly way, as would normally be expected in this place.

The government is asking us to declare this bill urgent, yet it is not urgent by any stretch of the imagination. To give members an idea of just how un-urgent this legislation is, it is based on a report —

**Dr K.D. Hames:** It is not un-urgent; it is non-urgent.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Non-urgent; thank you. To give members of Parliament an appreciation of how non-urgent this is, this legislation is based on a review of the act that the government is seeking to amend that took place in 2010. The minister has now brought forward this legislation and for some reason that he is yet to explain, he is saying that it is urgent. If it was urgent, surely it should have been considered significantly earlier than 2013, given that it is based upon a report from 2010.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Shame!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Yes. It is essentially an abuse of the processes in this place.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** You can blow it up for only so long, surely!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** No; I assure the minister that I could take it for at least two minutes and 10 seconds!

The question is not about the urgency of the bill, but about the competence of the government of the day. Once again, the government has brought legislation into this place and has sought for it to be declared urgent simply because it has not managed the parliamentary program. It was open for the minister to reintroduce this legislation on the very day that we came back to this place immediately following the election. As I have said, the legislation is entirely identical to that which he introduced late last year. In fact, if the second reading speeches are compared, they are spookily similar. It is not as though the minister is bringing new concepts to this place. It is not as though the minister did not know the contents of this bill and therefore had to re-familiarise himself before recommitting it to Parliament. He could have brought this back to Parliament the moment that Parliament was reconvened. I know when Parliament was reconvened because it was in the middle of my planned holiday—a point about which I am trying not to be bitter!

**Dr K.D. Hames:** That's what it's all about!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** The fact of the matter is that the government reconvened Parliament early. That was the opportunity for the minister to recommit this legislation. So the minister should not be saying to us at this point that the legislation is urgent, because it is not. It is not urgent because the legislation is based upon a review that took place in 2010. It is not urgent because the government could have dealt with this at the end of last year. We

know that the government seeks to declare this bill urgent not because of the nature of the legislation, but because of the nature of the government's incompetence in the management of legislation and business before this place.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah)** [3.57 pm]: This is quite a serious matter. I would hate to see what actually constitutes a really urgent bill. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition highlighted very clearly, the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre Amendment Bill 2013 is not an urgent bill; it is exactly what he said it is in his comments. The government brought back Parliament too early and then, of course, was found to be scrambling for legislation. I know what would have happened. The Leader of the House would have been told by the Premier, "Gee, things are looking a bit sparse in the agenda for the next few weeks. The cupboard is bare; we've got nothing to do. Quickly, dig out something." The member for Dawesville, the Minister for Health, dug out from the cupboard something that was covered in mould. It was proposed in 2010 through a review process, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition outlined, dusted off and then put up today to be declared urgent. The Minister for Health, the Leader of the House and, ultimately, the government have been found wanting, because they now have to go through the facade of convincing us and those on their side of the house that the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre Amendment Bill 2013 should be declared an urgent bill.

When a bill is declared urgent, the government needs a good reason to do that. It needs to demonstrate and explain in detail exactly why it is absolutely essential the bill be declared urgent. Usually, urgent bills have some urgency. A bill that is declared urgent is usually required to include provisions that are of some urgency to debate and, indeed, to actually pass. Usually, if a bill is declared urgent, there would be some compulsion to not only bring it on but also debate it and, indeed, pass it as soon as possible. I say to the Leader of the House and the Minister for Health that if that was the case, we should now be convening this Parliament to sit late tonight and, if necessary, through Thursday evening until this piece of legislation is passed because it is urgent.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.