

CHILD HEALTH CENTRES — SOUTHERN SUBURBS

535. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I refer to reports that the government plans to close community child health centres in the southern suburbs in favour of forcing new parents to visit the Murdoch health precinct for baby check-ups.

- (1) Is the minister closing these centres; if so, how many; which ones; and why?
- (2) What health experts and advocacy groups have been consulted on this decision?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

- (1)–(2) The recent media report that purported the government was closing 13 centres was completely wrong. The journalist was advised of that prior to publication. There are absolutely no plans to close 13 centres across the south metro. Members will be aware that a lot of those child health nurses and child development services are spread across a range of different sites. We announced some time ago, under the former health minister, that the best model of care, based on consultation with the non-government sector, which is very active in this, is the hub-and-spoke model for community health services. A range of jurisdictions work to a hub-and-spoke model. To explain that to the opposition, the hub is a big centre, and a spoke is a small centre in neighbourhoods. Small centres will remain across neighbourhoods because there are people who like to visit their child health nurse or services that are within walking distance. However, many children and an increasing number of children have complex needs and need a multidisciplinary approach. They need to see the Child Development Service, child health nurse and the child and adolescent mental health service. From the feedback we have had from families who have to access those services, going to a multitude of sites and services all the time is incredibly challenging and difficult when they have other children, jobs and lives they have to lead. Accessing the multitude of multidisciplinary services is currently really challenging. We are working towards providing a model that has a hub and spoke so we will have those multidisciplinary services and services out in the community. Some of the sites are incredibly old and absolutely dilapidated. They have no room to expand. We will not be renewing leases on sites that are not fit for purpose and do not have room to expand the staffing. They will get brand new facilities and the staff will be closer to colleagues as well. This has been in the pipeline for a number of years and has been well consulted on. We continue to consult with the parents who use the service and with our community and non-community organisations, which are very active in this state. Everyone agrees that a multidisciplinary approach is the best approach and gets the best outcomes for children with very complex needs. The best way to provide that is for all those disciplines to be together in one service.