

WOMEN'S AND BABIES' HOSPITAL — RELOCATION

484. Ms J.L. HANNS to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to delivering a new women's and babies' hospital.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the decision to construct the new hospital at the Fiona Stanley Hospital site compares with the unacceptable risks posed by constructing it at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre site?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house whether she is aware of anyone who is attempting to impede the construction of this new hospital?

Mr S.A. Millman: Great question!

The SPEAKER: Member for Mount Lawley, we are pleased with your enthusiasm, but not with your interjection.

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Collie–Preston for her question and the member for Mount Lawley for his enthusiasm. Unfortunately, there was simply no safe way to build the new maternity hospital on the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre precinct. Stubbornly pushing ahead with the QEII Medical Centre site would have resulted in up to 20 years of unacceptable disruptions for patients and staff at both Perth Children's Hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Current clinical services and operations at Charlies, which performs complex surgeries and care, would have been materially and adversely disrupted by the construction activities. That would have resulted in procedures being delayed or relocated, and many of those procedures require highly technical equipment that cannot be relocated. It would also impede access to two very important and busy emergency departments. There would be noise, vibrations and dust from demolition, all in close proximity to theatres, beds and highly sensitive medical equipment. They are significant risks that could not be reasonably mitigated. As a government, we have to consider the needs of all patients, including the many thousands of people who will need to access treatment at Perth Children's Hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner over the next two decades.

Then there is the issue of parking. Around 14 000 people access the site every single day, and expanding the QEII Medical Centre site parking, which is already necessary under the current visitor load, has been made extremely challenging thanks to the contract entered into by the former Liberal–National government. Staff parking would be impacted, with a shuttle bus from Graylands the only option. We are seriously at risk of losing valuable healthcare workers, who do not want to deal with that disruption and would go elsewhere.

I understand that some clinicians want the hospital to be built closer to Perth Children's Hospital. Of course I understand that. I have met with them and am listening to them, as has the director general. In a perfect world we would build the maternity hospital next to Perth Children's Hospital, but the government also did the appropriate due diligence that taxpayers of Western Australia expect a government to do on a project worth \$1.8 billion, and that due diligence found a range of significant risks that could not be mitigated. The reality is that that site comes with significant risk. We have to work with what we have got. The government must not be afraid to make difficult decisions when faced with new information.

Moving the new maternity hospital to the Fiona Stanley Hospital precinct is not just the right decision for Western Australia; it is the only decision that could be made in these circumstances. Fiona Stanley Hospital is the largest tertiary hospital in Western Australia and thousands of babies are delivered there every year. It is a greenfield site owned by the government, which means that the government has no need to negotiate or compromise with a third party. Tri-locating the new maternity hospital with Fiona Stanley Hospital will ensure direct access to an intensive care unit for women and a neonatal ICU for neonates. We will also be able to accommodate two additional multistorey car parks. The government is investing in doubling the maternity services at Osborne Park Hospital. There will be a new family birth centre, more maternity wards and more facilities for neonates, high-risk births and pregnancies to support our growing northern corridor, as well as a whole range of maternity, gynaecology and oncology options that will be closer to home for people than ever before. We must play with the cards that we have been dealt. We now know about the unacceptable risks of building a new hospital on the QEII site. We do not have a choice other than to move it to Murdoch.

I draw members' attention to comments made by the Leader of the Liberal Party in relation to her petition. She said —

“We are committed to a women's and baby hospital at the QEII site,” ...

“And until we see any other evidence to illustrate it should be anywhere else, that will not change.”

The Leader of the Liberal Party called for this project to be assessed by the independent Infrastructure WA. Does the Leader of the Liberal Party accept the finding that it could result in patient disruption for up to 20 years on that site? That was the finding of the independent IWA. The Leader of the Liberal Party now has access to all the evidence. Will she do the right thing and withdraw the petition? Will the leader apologise for her comment that without co-location of the two hospitals, there is likely to be an increase in death and lifelong disability among vulnerable babies?

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms A. SANDERSON: When the Leader of the Liberal Party says that she does not support the new women's and babies' hospital being relocated, what she is saying is that she does not support having more maternity services closer to people's homes—she does not support the southern corridor having its own maternity hospital, she does not support the northern corridor having its own maternity hospital and she does not support regional women having faster access to this hospital through the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members!

Ms A. SANDERSON: The Leader of the Liberal Party supports chaos and construction on the QEII site for two decades.