

CORONAVIRUS — LONG COVID CLINIC

776. Ms H.M. BEAZLEY to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's record investment in our health system and world-class response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Can the minister update the house on the support this government has provided to Western Australians experiencing COVID-19, including the new long COVID clinic?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I thank the member for Victoria Park for her question.

It has been a priority of the McGowan Labor government to support Western Australians through the challenges of the COVID pandemic and to put Health front and foremost in our response to that pandemic. Most notable is the WA COVID Care at Home program that was set up on 31 January 2022 to provide home monitoring care for COVID-positive people deemed at greater risk of serious illness due to medical and social risk factors and to mitigate against unnecessary hospital presentations of COVID-positive people. The program has successfully monitored over 17 000 eligible Western Australians, which has significantly minimised admissions to hospital, with less than four per cent of those patients requiring escalation to hospital. The program is finishing, given that it was developed with Delta in mind and WA now has stronger protection from serious infection from COVID-19. We have some of the highest vaccination levels in the world, there has been significant prior infection in the community, access to antivirals is much improved under the current federal government, and there is better medical and public understanding of how to manage COVID. This is reflected in the recent ending of WA's state-of-emergency powers. COVID-19 has transitioned to business-as-usual supports and care pathways. This is consistent with our transition to managing COVID through sustainable public health measures, vaccination and targeted testing processes.

I can also inform the house of a new trial for a long COVID clinic that was opened by the East Metropolitan Health Service on 30 October this year for people experiencing long COVID symptoms. The trial, which is being led by a senior physiotherapist, is located at Bentley Health Service and is available by GP referral to patients living within the East Metropolitan Health Service catchment who meet the referral criteria. The trial is for people over the age of 16 years who are at least 12 weeks post-COVID diagnosis and experiencing significant ongoing but non-urgent symptoms, and have objective physical findings that have failed to resolve with primary care and cannot be attributed to any other obvious cause. The clinic will offer patients further assessment and management of those symptoms. We will continue to monitor long COVID in the community. Other clinics may be established if there is a need and should the trial prove successful.