

QUEEN ELIZABETH II MEDICAL CENTRE — SATELLITE BIRTHING FACILITY

**804. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the minister's thought bubble over the weekend that the state government is considering a satellite birthing facility at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre campus for high-risk births.

- (1) Is this simply an admission that her decision to move the women's and babies' hospital to Murdoch is wrong and will put mothers and babies at risk?
- (2) How many beds will this facility remove from general use at either Perth Children's Hospital or Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital?

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

- (1)–(2) Again I am astounded by the lack of understanding and detail that is engaged in by the Leader of the Liberal Party when it comes to complex health issues. At no point have I or the government either promoted or announced an alternative maternity site at QEII. When faced with the business case for building the maternity hospital at QEII, we were provided with expert opinion on both infrastructure and clinical services planning that it could not be safely built there without serious disruption to existing services, staff and patients at both Perth Children's Hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. The expert advice was that it could not be delivered safely, even to the point at which experts outlined their concern about the capacity of putting a crane and equipment on site to build the hospital. A whole range of expert opinion led us to the view that it was unsafe and irresponsible to build another tertiary hospital on top of Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. We had to make the decision to locate it so that there was co-location of services, because co-location is an important principle when delivering safe care for mothers and newborns. The Murdoch site provides outstanding co-location for women, women with gynaecological cancers and women with serious health issues who are giving birth, who are already often flown to Fiona Stanley Hospital to give birth. There is outstanding co-location for paediatric and neonatal services as well. It is the sensible and responsible decision to build the hospital there.

I have said in my very open engagement with clinicians in addressing and mitigating their concerns, which we are very committed to, that we should look at all the options for the very small number of babies born who will be diagnosed in utero. Women give birth now at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women and are transferred. That is good faith engagement. That is good faith consultation—to be open minded. It is exactly what the Leader of the Liberal Party has asked me to do. She criticised me for apparently not consulting on this decision and now she is criticising me for consulting! Now I am getting criticised for consulting with clinicians. This was a difficult decision that the government had to make, but it was the right decision.

I ask myself always: did the Leader of the Liberal Party actually read the business case? It is astounding that she read the business case and still said, "We're going to barrel ahead with this", with no outline of what she is going to do with King Edward. What is she going to do with King Edward for the next 15 years? It is already past its use-by date, and the staff and mothers deserve brand new facilities sooner rather than later. What is she going to do about the parking contract that the former government entered the taxpayers into? What is she going to do about the cap on parking and the contract that the former government entered into? How will she make sure that people have better access? It is actually astounding not only that the Leader of the Liberal Party said that she would continue with this irresponsible plan based on a plan that is 20 years old and ignores the realities of the QEII site, but also that she has read and is aware of the risks and is still willing to recklessly barrel ahead with that plan.