

WOMEN'S AND BABIES' HOSPITAL — RELOCATION

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

I refer to the long-awaited repeal this week of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. Given the Cook Labor government has demonstrated its willingness to backflip on this disastrous decision, will the minister now listen to the chorus of experts —

The SPEAKER: Order! Sorry, members. This will be the longest question time ever if we are going to have questions interjected on. Please do not interject. Can we have the question, please.

Ms L. METTAM: Given the Cook Labor government has demonstrated its willingness to backflip on this disastrous decision, will the minister now listen to the chorus of experts and reverse her decision to relocate the women's and babies' hospital to Murdoch?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

When members are in government, they have to listen to all the points of views of experts. They are often varied and wide. That is the challenge of government and the challenge of decision-making. We have to balance up risk. Essentially, government is about managing risks, and delivering large infrastructure projects in a healthcare setting is about managing risks. When the former cabinet, me and the former Premier, and the current cabinet were faced with a business case that outlined un-mitigatable risks to access two significant major tertiary hospitals, and un-mitigatable risks to staff—mostly nursing staff—who were essentially assigned to a shuttle bus for 10 years to be able to access their workplace, that represented a serious attraction and retention risk for staff at Perth Children's Hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. It was also a serious risk to getting major equipment onto the site to build the hospital, a serious risk with relocating out-patient services, a serious risk to construction activity and very sensitive equipment and a serious risk to elective surgery because of the link with out-patient appointments. We could not ignore that risk; it would have been irresponsible to ignore that risk.

We made the only responsible decision, which was to locate the women's and newborns' hospital on a greenfield site where there would be no risk to those existing services and where we could build it quicker and within the allocated budget. On top of that, we could significantly expand the services in the northern suburbs to allow northern suburbs families better and quicker access to a wider range of maternity services. Those are the risks that we had to weigh up, and that is why we made the responsible decision to build the hospital at the Murdoch site.

The SPEAKER: That concludes question time.