

WOMEN'S AND BABIES' HOSPITAL — NEONATAL SURGICAL PROCEDURES

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

I refer to the minister's comment, when defending her decision to locate the new women's and babies' hospital at the Fiona Stanley Hospital site, some 20 kilometres away from Perth Children's Hospital, that around 40 to 45 babies a year may need surgery within the first hour of life. Joanne Beedie from Helping Little Hands, an advocacy group that supports parents of premature babies, said it was upsetting that these numbers were being used as justification, "as if those lives are less valuable than any other child's". Yesterday, the minister called this scaremongering. What does the minister say to Joanne Beedie and other mothers of premature babies who found her comments ignorant, ill-informed and disrespectful?

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

I find the member's commentary distasteful. Her comments are distasteful and personal and do no justice to this debate or discussion. I have been very clear that we are going to get the best possible outcomes for women and their babies with these decisions. The subtext of the member's comments is incredibly distasteful, but that is in keeping with her modus operandi, so no-one is surprised by that. The government has made a very difficult decision around how to deliver the best possible hospital for women across Western Australia, because regional women with acute needs will also need this hospital. We were provided with a 200-page document that outlined the insurmountable risks to other parts of the health system in delivering this project. No reasonable and responsible government would accept those risks on behalf of taxpayers. We are working with the very highly specialised, highly skilled clinicians who are involved in neonatal surgery around the safest and best way to do this, given the concerns around the extra 15 minutes of transport. These babies are currently transported through our world-class Newborn Emergency Transport Service, which has received a multimillion-dollar investment over the last few years. NETS safely transfers babies from Broome, Kalgoorlie and Esperance—all over the state—to tertiary hospitals in Western Australia. There is a concern about increasing the travel time by another 15 minutes as these babies are very fragile. We are working with clinicians around what we need to do to provide the safest environment for mothers and babies. I caution the member about the tone of her commentary and exactly what she is accusing me of; it is becoming distasteful and personal.