

HEALTH — INFRASTRUCTURE

755. Mr S.A. MILLMAN to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's record investment in health infrastructure across Western Australia. Can the minister advise the house how the significant investment is allowing for the delivery of more beds in our hospitals, and can the minister advise how this ongoing investment will ensure that Western Australians get the best access to hospital care when they need it?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I thank the member for Mount Lawley for his question.

It has to be said that we are often criticised in this place, particularly by the Leader of the Liberal Party, who herself has not put forward one single practical policy idea in the health portfolio for three years—not one idea for three years in the health portfolio. Recently released data for 2021–22 shows that Western Australia had the largest increase in the number of average available hospital beds of any state or territory in the nation. Even better, that was the second year in a row that we had the largest increase in the number of beds. This new data demonstrates that we are one of only three jurisdictions to increase the number of hospital beds per capita, even though Western Australia's populations continues to grow. We are still increasing the number of beds per capita and have had the largest increase in two years. That is because of our significant investment in health. In the past 12 months we put 530 beds into the health system. That is the equivalent of a tertiary hospital. Normally, it would take years to build a tertiary hospital. We have done that in the last 12 to 18 months. They are staffed and funded into the future. Also, we are not finished. The last budget demonstrated our commitment by adding a further 600 beds into the system, including mental health beds. In 2017–18, we inherited the lowest number of beds per capita and we have rectified that situation with our record investment so that we are leading the pack with the growth of beds in Western Australia.

Of course, the system is much more than just beds. Beds are important when people need a bed, but we are also investing in important community and virtual models of care to provide people with more options to receive care outside of going to hospital when appropriate. For example, older frail adults could see a specialist quickly, be treated and sent home rather than going into a hospital and spending days and days, sometimes weeks, inside a tertiary hospital. Of course, the Liberals will continue to criticise us because it will never be enough. It is actually incredible that within the constraint pipeline that we are experiencing at the moment, we have put on all those beds and will continue to make a commitment, and not focus on puerile attacks and criticism. We will continue to get on with the job of delivering for Western Australian patients.