

HEALTH — ELECTIVE SURGERY

919. Mr Y. MUBARAKAI to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's initiative to address elective surgery waiting times in Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on this government's reforms to the delivery of elective surgery and elective procedures in Western Australia?
- (2) Can the minister outline how these reforms will optimise the delivery of emergency care for all Western Australians?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Jandakot for the question and for highlighting to the chamber an issue that affects many Western Australians. I was very pleased to be with the Premier earlier this week at Osborne Park Hospital to outline the government's commitment to maintaining what we are seeing in elective surgery—that is, a sustained surge of activity. This year, in three particular months, we have performed a record number of elective surgeries across the health system. We have never done that many in those months ever before in the system. That is an outstanding result post-COVID. We know that there are now 8 600 fewer patients on the waiting list than in May last year. That is across both elective surgery and elective procedures. As I said, this is an absolutely unprecedented level of activity across our hospitals. It is what happens when we make smart and strategic investment decisions and work in a coordinated way across the health system. It is a result of increased FTE. It is a result of 571 new beds since the 2021–22 budget, which is the equivalent of a new tertiary hospital. We know that elective surgery patients have the same demands on resources as those waiting to come into the hospital through the emergency department. Whether patients are waiting to be seen or want to come in for surgery, we need beds and staff. That has also been in lock step with the ramping taskforce and the almost \$500 million worth of investment to make sure that we maximise the efficiency and work of the health system to see more people. Very creative things are being done through maintaining theatre use, weekend lists, twilight anaesthetics and managing appointments more efficiently. We are also ensuring that people are reassessed regularly so that they can be bumped up to category 2 or 1 if necessary and there is capacity to bring those forward.

I was incredibly disappointed to again hear the Leader of the Liberal Party undermining the health system and health workers, because this is a result of their work. She made some incredible claims. Apparently, the elective surgery waitlist has increased by 50 per cent during our time in office. I challenge her to show the data.

Ms L. Mettam: It's on your website.

Ms A. SANDERSON: No, that is not what it shows.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms A. SANDERSON: That is not at all what it shows. The Leader of the Liberal Party ignores the context of COVID and the incredible recovery that our health system has made. Over that period, there were small year-on-year increases, in keeping with every other jurisdiction in the world. No other jurisdiction is making inroads into elective surgery lists like we are in Western Australia. We are absolutely outperforming other states and territories. That is a huge testament to the leadership and staff on the ground. There is confusion about how it works. I sometimes wish that the Leader of the Liberal Party would pick up the phone to former colleagues who have been in this portfolio and ask what it means, what is reportable, what is non-reportable and how the lists are managed. If she asked the questions, she would get the information. She could then make a clear assessment of what is actually a fantastic outcome for Western Australians. We report exactly what is required through the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare nationally. It is exactly what was reported under previous Liberal governments and under every single health minister before me. Claims that there is some kind of hidden waitlist or that there has been a 50 per cent blowout are absolutely and completely wrong, and show that she does not know what she is talking about.