

CORONAVIRUS — ELECTIVE SURGERY

169. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the temporary reduction of non-urgent category 2 and 3 elective surgery cases in public hospitals from 14 March and private hospitals from 21 March.

- (1) Why has the government imposed this restriction in private hospitals while hospitalisation rates in public hospitals have not reached forecast levels?
- (2) What arrangements have been undertaken to ensure that private hospitals' surgeons, doctors and nursing staff will be fully utilised to assist the public sector during this state-imposed restriction in private hospitals?
- (3) What will the government do to assist in dealing with the backlog of important procedures that will be deferred during these closures?
- (4) When is it anticipated that we will see a return of the public sector elective surgery waitlists to 2017 levels?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The restrictions were implemented following consultation with, and support from, the private providers. The restrictions are subject to frequent review to ensure they remain fit for purpose and result in an appropriate balance between the management of COVID-19 now in the community, and the need to minimise disruption to regular patient care.
- (2) Staff employed within the few private hospitals impacted by restrictions to non-urgent elective surgery may be utilised to ensure that the WA health system can continue to provide services to all Western Australians through this current COVID-19 surge.
- (3) The impacts of restrictions to non-urgent elective surgeries on the elective surgery wait list will be reviewed at a suitable time, with any appropriate actions to be taken during the COVID-19 recovery phase.
- (4) The total number of elective procedures performed in the WA health system has grown annually since 2017. In 2020–21, there were almost 20 000 more elective procedures undertaken than in either 2016–17 or 2017–18. In the same period, WA had the highest rate of admissions per 1 000 population of any other Australian jurisdiction.