

MATERNITY SERVICES — CARNARVON

**815. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the temporary reduction of birthing services at Carnarvon hospital that commenced on 21 February 2022 and is ongoing. Can the minister confirm that the suspension of services is temporary and advise what the time line is for a return to normal operations so that mothers in the Gascoyne can safely deliver their babies in a local hospital?

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

I can confirm that it is a temporary suspension of those services. We are still providing antenatal services out of Carnarvon hospital so that women can attend their pre-birth and post-birth appointments locally. There is a great challenge with providing for onsite birthing services in some regional communities. One of the perverse outcomes of introducing a group midwifery practice is that it actually reduces the number of births that a general practitioner obstetrician is able to attend and, therefore, makes it harder to attract a GP obstetrician and vice versa. It is a very challenging act. We are working intensively with the WA Country Health Service to work through what a sustainable model looks like to allow women to birth locally. I am a huge advocate and supporter of women being able to birth in the manner that they choose, in a safe way and locally. We are certainly working to do that. It is a great inconvenience and a challenge for women to travel to Geraldton or Perth for their birth, and WACHS is certainly doing everything it can to make sure that they have all their expenses, above and beyond the patient assisted travel scheme payment, reimbursed. I reiterate again that this is a temporary scale down and we are working with WACHS to ensure that we can scale up again.