

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

129. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Health:

I refer to a report from the Australian Medical Association that was published in *The Australian* of 31 January that states that across Australia, seven out of 10 of the worst performing emergency departments for failing to treat patients within clinically recommended time frames are in Western Australia. Can the minister explain why Western Australia was the worst performing jurisdiction?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

The member's colleague sitting right next to him has already asked this exact question. I would remind the member for Cottesloe that the Leader of the Liberal Party has this year asked me the exact same question, although she did ask it incorrectly. She said seven out of 10, when the report says seven out of eight.

That report was developed using Australasian Triage Score 3 data. That is people who are unwell and need to see someone within 30 minutes or so. That was one dataset that was used and, frankly, weaponised for a particular purpose.

Overall, Western Australia is performing very well on the four-hour rule. That is the standard measurement that all emergency departments measure each other against. We are performing very well on that four-hour rule.

We are also performing well in our increase in FTEs—in improving the number of staff on the floor supporting our health system.

We have also delivered 523 beds to our system in 12 months—523 beds, which includes 40 mental health transition care beds. All those beds help to ease flow through our hospitals—through every single part of the hospital.

It is no secret that, certainly over the last 12 months, it has been very challenging in hospitals around the country because of very high levels of COVID in our hospitals. We had COVID for most of last year, including right up until the end of the year, which meant that we had a lot of leave and a lot of people not coming to work, and quite rightly, because they did not want to infect people. Every hospital system is challenged by this.

I take issue with the data and I take issue with the report. I have to say that following the release of that report, the president of the Australian Medical Association went on to do an interview that was factually wrong. He has since called me and apologised for getting it so wrong in the claims that he made. I am saying that they are using data to get a particular result. Overall, we are performing very well nationally; our emergency departments are absolutely performing very well. Our ramping figures for this February were significantly lower than last year when we also had COVID in the community. Our healthcare workers are working —

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! I am going to ask you to cease those repetitive interjections.

Ms A. SANDERSON: I will conclude by saying that I am looking forward to hearing some constructive ideas from the opposition on health. I am looking forward to hearing a policy. I look forward to hearing constructive ideas. Six years and not one policy!