

NURSES AND MIDWIVES — REGIONS

68. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Health:

I have a supplementary question. Why are the midwifery team and expectant mothers in Carnarvon still suffering with substandard services after two years?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

The member and I have had this discussion many times, and I am happy to have it with her again. I will explain the numbers. It is how maths works, and how competencies and skill levels work. Carnarvon has a level of birthing that is just over around 100 babies a year. If we could have more babies in Carnarvon, that would be great. To offer a genuine midwifery-led and GP obstetric service, the numbers are not high enough for those professionals to keep their competency.

Ms M. Beard: So it is not temporary.

Ms A. SANDERSON: It is absolutely temporary.

Ms M. Beard: For two years.

Ms A. SANDERSON: Those professionals need to keep their competency. Midwives need to be able to birth to keep their competency or they cannot be midwives anymore. That is just a fact.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Ms L. Dalton: I am from the regions. If you have got safe delivery, why not?

Ms A. SANDERSON: The most important thing to any delivering mother is safety. Number one is safety. There is no question that we are expanding birthing services and the choices for birthing services, but we know the Leader of the Liberal Party wants to shut down expansion of birthing services with her position on women and newborns. She wants to shut down the family birthing centre in Osborne Park. But back to the regions.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms A. SANDERSON: We are working hard to establish a model that will support the re-establishment of birthing services in Carnarvon. In the meantime, we are expanding the midwifery group practice across regional areas and working with our GP partners to do so. The reality is, when providing choice, we also need numbers. We are working through what a workforce model looks like for areas like Carnarvon, because we are not alone in this. This is not unique to Western Australia or regional Western Australia. We have seen entire maternity wings in large regional areas of Queensland close. We are talking about large regional towns, and significant towns the size of Bunbury. This is a workforce issue globally. We are a very attractive employer in regional WA and people want to come here, but they have the right to maintain their competencies. We are working with the sector on what a model looks like for Carnarvon. Meanwhile, we are absolutely committed to providing safe services.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, that concludes question time.