

Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill 2013

Second Reading Speech

Legislative Council

Mr President, in 2008 the WA Liberal Party promised the people of Western Australia that they would retain the Royal Perth Hospital (“RPH”) as an inner city tertiary hospital by passing into law, the Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill. That bill was introduced into Parliament on 11 November 2009.

That Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill 2009 sat in the other place for 1458 days before it was passed. On no less than three occasions it had to be re-instated to the Assembly Notice Paper having lapsed for not being debated for a period of twelve 12 months. On the 8 November 2012 the Bill was passed by the Legislative Assembly with Opposition support. That Bill was second read here in the Legislative Council but was never brought on for debate by the Government. The Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill 2009 then lapsed when Parliament was prorogued by the Premier in February 2013.

Royal Perth hospital is an iconic health institution in Western Australia. It has operated in Western Australia for over 150 years. As the then Minister for Health observed in Parliament, “The previous government planned to scale back the health and hospital services offered on the site in favour of Fiona Stanley Hospital despite the fact that each year Royal Perth Hospital treats some 73,000 inpatients, receives about 225,000 outpatient attendants and has one of the busiest emergency departments in Australasia, with more than 60,000 presentations a year.”

Mr President, WA Labor accepts that the Western Australian public supported the retention of Royal Perth Hospital in the 2008 election. The electorate made its opinion clear and the previous Minister has stated that he believes it contributed significantly to the Liberal Party’s election victory that year. WA Labor also accepts that the public’s opinion was driven, in part, by their concern about the uncertain future of the hospital and the jobs of those people who work at the hospital. WA Labor supports the retention of Royal Perth Hospital as an inner city tertiary hospital understanding both the views of the WA public and the requirement for the hospital because of the ongoing growth in demand for hospital services.

The WA public continue to hold those same concerns about the future of the hospital as it did in 2008. The government has abandoned the level of redevelopment it promised in 2008, that is to “transform RPH into a 400-bed trauma facility with a new emergency department and a new west wing”.

It is not surprising, therefore Mr President, that the WA public remain sceptical about this government’s commitment to the future of the hospital.

Mr President, WA Labor introduced this Bill, the 2013 version, in the same terms as the 2009 Bill, into the Assembly as a Private Members Bill and it passed in that place with the support of the Government on 26 June 2013.

I want to turn to the provisions of the Bill. It is a simple and a short Bill.

Clause 3 of The Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill 2013 protects that part of Royal Perth Hospital which is located on properties that are bounded by Murray Street, Victoria Square, Lord Street and Moore Street and on land that is subject to the certificate of title volume 2726 folio 339.

This bill is designed, through Clause 5 to protect the functions of the hospital on the central business district site. Clause 5 also requires the approval of both houses of Parliament before the public hospital situated on that site can be closed. Such an action will put the fate of this major public hospital beyond the whim of the bureaucrat, instead requiring a comprehensive debate in both houses before any closure can occur. Clause 6 of the Bill provides that the tertiary hospital level medical and support services maintained at the site will be those regulated under the Hospitals and Health Services Act 1927. Clause 8 of the Bill provides that the approval of both houses of Parliament will be required to change the name of this historic public hospital that has served this state for so much of its history.

Mr President since this Bill was first read into this chamber the people of Western Australia have been given reason to believe this government is still not actually committed to meeting the promise they made back in 2008. This Bill is necessary to protect the future of RPH, I look forward to the government's support in this place as in the Assembly.

I commend the bill to the house.