

John Castrilli MLA



Representing the people of Bunbury

This is a call to parents to help me, help your children.

Over the past few weeks I have received numerous worrying calls from parents reporting that their children have been let down by our deteriorating health services.

And it seems the number of let-downs multiply for children with disabilities.

Parents have told me that waiting lists for hearing tests in Bunbury are now up to 12 months in some cases.

In some instances, these delays result in worsening conditions and developmental delays that can have a lifetime of implications.

Waiting lists for other vital services such as speech therapy, dental services and assessments for disabilities are also spiralling out of control in regional WA.

As I highlighted earlier this year, infant hearing tests are not even offered to babies born in public hospitals in regional WA.

In Perth hospitals, hearing test conductors knock on the door of a new mother's room and offer the test free of charge and the same is offered to those in private hospitals. However for those in a private hospital, including St John of God Bunbury, there is a charge of \$66.

That in itself is an inequity but the fact mothers in regional public hospitals are not aware the test exists is sheer neglect.

Children's development and health is the consequence of all these failings, however they are not the only victims.

Our health workers are also suffering under extreme pressures. They are doing the best under the circumstances but basically there are not enough health workers to go around.

They are offered few incentives to put up with added pressure of practising in regional areas and, consequently, they continue to exit the system.

To make the State Government sit up and listen, I now seek parents' stories to help me get a true indication of the state our services are in.

The more real cases I have to bring to Parliament – the more power I have to lobby on your behalf.

In a modern, developed country such as Australia, parents rightly expect that their children would have the access to all the medical services needed for their development.

Port infrastructure, roads and rail are all important commitments but children's health services continue to be neglected – much of the damage done will not be reversible.

We must not underestimate the importance of early intervention when it comes to children's health. We must fight to make sure this is recognised and invested in.

No matter how much time it takes and how great the financial cost – ensuring our children are healthy, happy and safe is the best investment any government can make.

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