



# Obstetrics safe for now

Health care

**By KATE MURPHY**

The Bentley Hospital obstetric service would not close before Fiona Stanley Hospital opens in 2014 and would be considered for major upgrades if more than 1000 women per year attend, says Health Minister Kim Hames.

He committed to a 2014 review of the service following a tour with Federal Member for Swan Steve Irons.

Speaking in parliament on February 21, Dr Hames said under the previous Labor government a decision was made to potentially close the obstetric service once the Fiona Stanley Hospital opened in 2014, something which the then Liberal opposition agreed with.

He said the Government would now wait until early 2014 when the Fiona Stanley Hospital opened to reconsider the future of the service.

“There is no question that some degree of upgrade of that obstetric facility is needed, so we will be getting a report done and working out what needs to be done,” he said.

“What is clear is that there is confusion around

what is going to happen to that maternity service once Fiona Stanley Hospital opens so I will go through that again to make the intentions of this Government very clear.”

Dr Hames said a report by a prominent obstetrician listed about 1000 deliveries per year was an ideal size for an obstetric service, however Bentley Hospital was marginally under that number with about 890 deliveries per year.

“As we moved forward we talked a lot to the local community, particularly to Steve Irons, as the federal member and the mayor and there was strong support for continuing to retain that hospital in the future,” he said.

“I have said that if they continue to support the Bentley obstetric service and if the number is getting close to the 1000 that are needed, we will reconsider and re-invest whatever dollars are required to bring that up to a high-quality obstetric service.

“It is silly for us to go and spend millions of dollars there now, with only two years to that



decision. Bentley obstetric service will not definitely close when Fiona Stanley obstetric service opens.”

Dr Hames said some work would be done to freshen up the appearance of the unit.

In January an obstetrician shortage at the Bentley Hospital prompted the Australian Medical Association (AMA) to push the Health Department to bring in more staff.

Mr Irons said as a result of his community campaigns elective surgery services at Bentley Hospital were saved in 2010 and the review of the decision to close down the maternity unit in 2014 was secured. “Last month I commenced a maternity services survey in the community to help present the strongest case to the Minister before the review in 2014,” he said.

“Early results from St James have been very positive and have shown that the community highly values the service, many mothers recounting the positive stories they have had in delivering their babies at Bentley.”