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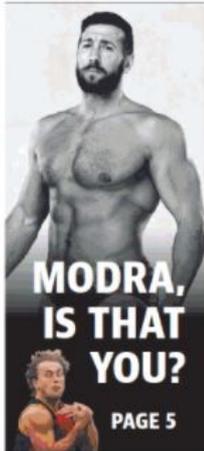
DANIEL WILLS, ANDREW HOUGH

PARLIAMENT is set to request the state's COVID-19 rule committee hand over minutes of its meetings, amid concerns about decision-making transparency and calls for a further easing of bans.

Yesterday, South Australia recorded three more cases of the virus in arriving travellers.

And Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews announced Melbourne hospitality and retail industries would reopen from tomorrow after nearly 16 weeks of lockdown.

REPORTS PAGE 4



Predator



TOO FEW BEDS FOR SICK KIDS

JILL PENGELLEY

CHILDREN with cancer are being cared for in an overflow ward at the Women's and Children's Hospital by nurses who lack specialist training, worried parents say.

Thirty-three parents have signed a letter to the Health Minister calling for action.

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Cancer patient Jazmyn, 11, and her mum, Chantelle Mitchell, who is worried there are not enough specialist nurses at the WCH. Picture: Tom Huntley

Full story next page ...

Kids with cancer in an 'overflow' ward

FROM PAGE 1

The parents' complaints have the support of the man who started oncology services at the WCH and whose name now hangs above the door of the cancer ward, Dr Michael Rice.

Amanda Lawless, of Happy Valley, penned the letter to Health Minister Stephen Wade and Premier Steven Marshall.

Ms Lawless said the nine-bed Michael Rice Centre (MRC) Ward had responsibility for 17 inpatients earlier this month, with eight needing to be cared for elsewhere in the hospital. Her son, Knox, 3, was among them.

He was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in April and has become a regular in the MRC Ward.

"Since Knox started treatment ... there has not been a time where the MRC Ward has not been over its capacity of inpatients," Ms Lawless's letter says.

"If funding is not available immediately, then I would like to know what the plan is to manage our children so they are not receiving cytotoxic drugs whilst under the supervision of nurses who do not have the specialist training for cytotoxic drug administration and management and on wards which are not the MRC Ward."

Ms Lawless said Knox often ended up in Cassia Ward, which had become the main overflow ward for paediatric oncology patients.

On October 9, when the MRC Ward was juggling 17 patients between wards, she was told Knox would need to be moved to Cassia early, before completing his infusion of high-dose methatrexate.

"He has been experiencing nasty side-effects of this specific drug and the consultant wanted him to be monitored by staff who know the drug well," she says in her letter.

"The training a nurse must undertake to administer and manage cytotoxic drugs takes



Renowned paediatric oncologist Dr Michael Rice with cancer patient Knox, 3. Picture: Tom Huntley

at least two years; there are no such nurses on the Cassia Ward."

Ultimately, Knox's transfer was delayed two hours and he completed the infusion, but Ms Lawless wants to ensure all children are treated by fully trained staff.

Chantelle Mitchell, of Mitchell Park, said she had an "eerie feeling something might happen" whenever daughter Jazmyn, 11, was in a general ward.

"When we get someone who doesn't know anything chemo-related, I've got to

walk out to one of our nurses to tell them what's happening," she said.

Dr Rice, who started paediatric oncology services in 1967 and finished in 2002, said the haematology/cancer service at the WCH needed "an immediate injection of resources". He said the MRC Ward was understaffed, compared with the national average for the same workload.

Dr Rice feared there would be inadequate provision for an increased workload at the planned new hospital, to be built next to the Royal Adel-

aide Hospital. Dr Ben Saxon, medical unit head for the Michael Rice Centre, said the overflow was variable, but he was confident there were enough nursing staff members with appropriate training.

"We've recently had an increase in the number of doctors, but we have plenty of nurses who are well trained in looking after children with haematology/oncology problems," he said.

"The last four or five months have been very, very busy."

He said the centre aver-

aged 65 new patients a year but had received a large percentage of those in less than six months.

Concerns about cancer care at the WCH follow claims last week that a lack of cardiac services was to blame for the deaths of four babies in the past month.

Obstetrician Prof John Svigos, convener of a clinicians and consumer group, told a South Australian Parliament select committee that Adelaide was the only mainland capital without cardiac services for children.

Salve to hospitals on eve of Budget

ANDREW HOUGH

A MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR health infrastructure package has been unveiled by the Government as the Opposition criticised a decline in spending.

The State Government yesterday announced the \$42.8m pre-budget package for a series of initiatives in Adelaide and regional hospitals.

But Labor claimed that declining investment in health infrastructure "coincided with increasing issues in the hospital sector", including record ambulance ramping.

Government officials announced a \$6m transition care unit for brain and spinal patients at the Repat precinct in Adelaide's south.



Speaking at the site yesterday, Premier Steven Marshall, pictured, and Health Minister Stephen Wade also announced a \$15m, fourfold Gawler Hospital emergency department expansion.

They also announced regional projects funding, including a \$4.3m Port Augusta ambulance station upgrade, \$4m for Strathalbyn Aged Care Lifestyle facilities, \$2m to complete the Kalimna Hostel redevelopment, near Nuriootpa, and \$10m to upgrade other country hospitals.

"This funding boost will kickstart a range of important health projects for local communities and create hundreds of jobs at a time when we need them most," Mr Marshall said. Mr Wade added: "These projects will improve the lives of many."

The government denied the spending was contained to only marginal seats.

Labor yesterday highlighted figures in the Auditor-General's recent annual report that showed total health infrastructure project spend had fallen from \$351m in 2017 to \$169m this year. It was \$103m in 2019, according to the report.

Opposition health spokesman Chris Picton criticised the "tanking" hospital spending.

"Boosting our hospital capacity to respond to future pandemics is a no-brainer," he said.

Mum 'so angry and numb' after baby death

REBECCA BAKER

AN Adelaide mum who lost her newborn to a congenital heart condition at the Women's and Children's Hospital when he was nine days old is seeking answers to his death.

But, for now, Alicia Tarasenko, 21, just wants to be allowed to lay her little boy, Azarel, born on October 7, to rest. He died soon after returning from The Children's Hospital at Westmead, in Sydney, where he was flown for special-

ist surgery shortly after he was born.

Ms Tarasenko is devastated she never got to take her baby, a little brother to Zacharius, 4, and Lillian, 1, home.

"I am angry, so, so angry at the world. I am numb," she said.

"I never got a chance to bring my baby home. My children only got to visit their little brother in the hospital paediatric intensive care unit but they didn't get to hold him. My son got to give him one

kiss and it will be a kiss goodbye forever."

Azarel was among four babies who died at the WCH with heart conditions in the past month, sparking an investigation into the hospital's systems.

"For now, I just want to put him to rest," Ms Tarasenko said.

"The last time I heard him cry, I just knew - a mother knows. But I was with my baby most of the way.

"I have every photo, every video on my phone.

"I am a young Aboriginal mother but with my kids I wanted to give them everything and it has been taken from me.

"I do want answers and justice for him but now I just want to put him at rest, it is distressing me."

SA Health deputy chief public health officer Dr Mike Cusack is investigating the deaths, which is expected to take about a month. Clinicians have referred the deaths to the Coroner.



Sick newborn Azarel Tarasenko. Picture: Alicia Tarasenko