

RPH revamp finally on the horizon

EXCLUSIVE JESSICA PAGE

Labor has set a date for its promised \$104 million revamp of Royal Perth Hospital, as the Premier resists mounting pressure to redirect more funding to health.

The West Australian can reveal that work on expanding the emergency department will not start until 2026, despite then health minister Amber-Jade Sanderson promising in February that Labor was ready to “take this to Budget and get it to tender”.

Roger Cook was grilled over the timeline for RPH and why only \$5m has been set aside for planning at The West Australian’s Leadership Matters event on Monday.

On Tuesday, he conceded that he was wrong when he said the business case was not finished.

“Can I just correct the record on that, I think yesterday I said there was not a business case,” Mr Cook said at a press conference in Rockingham.

“Minister (Amber-Jade) Sanderson was right, there is a business case.

“It’s the project definition plan which is being developed now and that project has been transferred to the office of major infrastructure development, which is about making sure that we can bring our health infrastructure developments online sooner.”

Pressed for a timeline, the Government signalled construction won’t start until 2026.

“The planning for the Royal Perth Hospital emergency department redevelopment is well under way and progressing,” Health Infrastructure Minister John Carey said.

“We expect to have planning complete and a contractor on board next year.”

Mr Cook again rejected Opposition calls to redirect \$217m allocated to the Burswood entertainment precinct to hospitals, insisting funding was not the cause of record ambulance ramping that exceeded 7000 hours in July and August.

“If it was as simple as writing a \$217 million cheque to resolve all the challenges which health confront we would have done that yesterday,” he said.