



\$118m to operate empty hospital

■ Daniel Emerson

WA taxpayers will pay Serco more than \$250,000 a day between next month and March 2015 to operate Fiona Stanley Hospital, which for most of that time will have few or no patients.

The Opposition yesterday mocked up a big novelty cheque to put the \$118.8 million to be paid to the services giant during the period into a daily context.

The figure is made up of \$52.7 million for the renegotiation of the massive services contract

because of delays — an amount revealed in last week's mid-year Budget review — and \$66.1 million to run the hospital during the delay and phase-in.

FSH was supposed to be fully operational within weeks of its scheduled opening in April next year, but it will instead open in four stages over six months from October because of information technology and recruitment problems.

The emergency department, expected to generate 80 per cent of FSH's patients, will not open until February 2015.

FSH commissioning chief ex-

ecutive David Russell-Weisz said there had always been money in the budget to manage the facility during its "transitional" period.

But Opposition Leader Mark McGowan said a lack of planning had led to a much longer phase-in period.

"This is exactly like the TV show Yes Minister," he said.

"A hospital with no patients because of government incompetence."

Dr Russell-Weisz said the decisions surrounding the phasing of FSH were "all about patient safety".



Late: Construction of the Fiona Stanley Hospital at Murdoch is running behind schedule. Picture: Nic Ellis

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