

Jennifer Leverington, left, Sue Martin and Professor John Newnham are thrilled the preterm birth prevention program is being expanded. Photo: Paul McGovern

# Stop early birth risk

By JEN REWELL

**A project that has prevented thousands of babies being born early has grown from a research study at King Edward Memorial Hospital in Subiaco to a successful nationwide program.**

Federal government funding of \$5.3million was announced recently to renew and expand the Every Week Counts preterm birth prevention program.

Professor John Newnham, chair of the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance, said the funding meant the program could improve pregnancy outcomes for more women across the country.

“It has been inspiring to see the amazing work being done by the hospital teams participating in the first phase of the national

program,” he said.

“These teams have generously shared ideas, know-how and data with each other on how to support more women to safely continue their pregnancy to 39 weeks.”

Women who are identified as being at risk of a preterm birth have an individualised management plan at the preterm birth clinic at KEMH and receive specialist care.

The strategies include prescribing vaginal progesterone to women with a shortened cervix or a history of spontaneous preterm birth, promoting the importance of continuity of carer and discouraging smoking while pregnant.

A successful research trial is looking at another clinical strategy which would screen women at 11 to 14 weeks of pregnancy to predict cases of pre-eclampsia that might

lead to early preterm birth.

The Every Week Counts program is in its second phase, having already been introduced to 59 maternity services across Australia from 2021 to 2024.

“Together the teams have already averted more than 4000 untimely early births, making a big impact on the lives of those children and their families,” Prof. Newnham said.

One in 12 babies in Australia – more than 26,000 babies – is born premature, with the rate almost double for Aboriginal babies.

Preterm birth is the leading cause of death and disability in children under the age of five and can lead to serious health and development implications including cerebral palsy, deafness, blindness, and learning and behavioural problems.

# Council rates ‘abuse’

By BEN DICKINSON

**Former Nedlands mayor Laurie Taylor says soaring council rates across WA amount to “financial abuse” of ratepayers.**

Speaking at a Westcoast Community Centre event at The Grove Library last month, Mr Taylor outlined how Nedlands council’s rates income had soared 411% between 1995 and 2020 – more than five times the rate of inflation.

The situation was similar across virtually every council in the state, he said.

“WA local government is probably the worst ongoing abuse of the community happening right now,” he said.

Nedlands’ population remained virtually static over the period, according to ABS data.

Productivity improvements should have seen full-time equivalent staffing levels drop around 41%, Mr Taylor said, but they had instead risen by 47%.

Mr Taylor has long argued there is a “perverse incentive” in the local government sector that rewards CEOs and other executives based on the size of

their budgets and the number of staff they manage, rather than the value they deliver residents.

He also blasted the state government for the demise of MyCouncil, a website through which residents could compare their council’s financial performance to others.

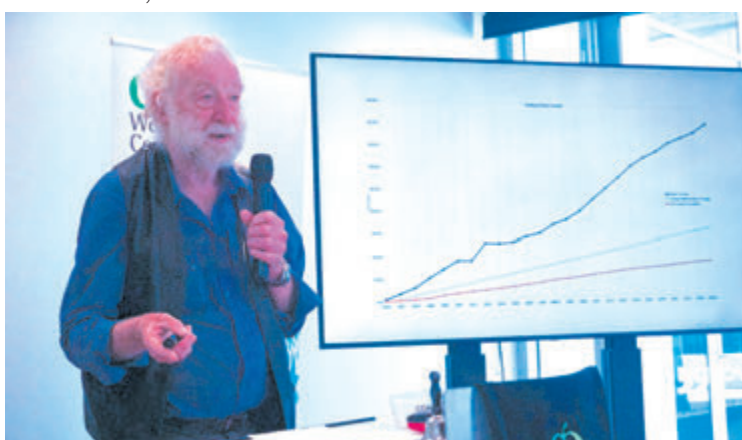
The site has not been updated since 2021.

Local Government Minister Hannah Beazley said the data vacuum was due to changes in reporting requirements.

“The MyCouncil website is being updated, including adding a new local government financial indicator which has been developed through sector engagement and feedback,” she said, promising the new site would be launched “soon”.

Ms Beazley said incoming reforms would require councils to set a “rates and revenue policy” with a forecast of future costs.

“Local governments should be prudent in setting rates ensuring that they are raising enough revenue to cover crucial community services and facilities, while ensuring that the money is spent efficiently and effectively,” she said.



Up she rises ... Laurie Taylor says soaring rates are “financial abuse”.

## ELECTION 2025

# What Happens Next is Up to Us



### People are losing faith in politics – and who can blame them?

Whether it’s housing, climate or the economy, the big challenges aren’t being tackled with courage or clarity.

Instead, we get scare campaigns, slogans and short-term thinking.

I’m not here to play that game. I’m here because this is my home and I believe we can do better.

For the past three years, I’ve been proud to represent Curtin as an independent. I vote on every issue based on the evidence - not party lines - and I spend more time listening to this community than speaking in slogans.

### What Matters to Us

I’ve pushed for action on affordable housing, helped create stronger climate and environment laws and supported small business, youth mental health and cleaning up politics. I’ve worked across Parliament to help build a future-ready economy. And I’ve hosted more than 70 community events to stay grounded in what matters to you.

Being independent means I can focus on good ideas, wherever they come from. Having more independents in Parliament has already made a positive difference: more transparency, more scrutiny and more of your voice in Canberra.

Of course, the major parties don’t like that. When communities have more say, parties have less control.

That’s why the Liberal Party is throwing everything at Curtin.

### But this isn’t just about one seat, it’s about the Australia we want to be.

When I ask people what kind of country they want, the answer is always the same: one that’s fair, compassionate, sustainable and forward-looking.

That’s the future I want to help shape - for our kids, and for theirs.

### This election, you get to decide whether we get a backbench MP doing what he’s told – or a strong independent who puts our community first.

Vote **1** **Kate CHANEY**  
Independent for Curtin

[katechaney.com.au](http://katechaney.com.au)

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