

CHILDREN'S COURT — LINKS PROGRAM

**716. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Mental Health:**

I refer to page 37 of the Mental Health Commission annual report, and to the Children's Court specialised mental health program Links.

- (1) Are all children appearing before the Children's Court assessed by the Links team?
- (2) If so, what form does the assessment take?
- (3) If no to (1), how are children selected for assessment?
- (4) Since the program started on 8 April 2013 —
  - (a) how many children have been assessed as suitable for inclusion in the Links program;
  - (b) how many children have been assessed as not suitable for inclusion in the Links program;
  - (c) how many children have had reports or assessments made to the court by the Links team; and
  - (d) how many children and/or their families and carers have had personal support plans developed by the Links team?

**Hon HELEN MORTON replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Links program. This program was funded as part of a \$6.7 million investment in mental health court diversion programs by the government. In his recent address at the Rural and Remote Mental Health Conference, the Chief Justice of Western Australia, Hon Wayne Martin, AC, commented that the Children's Court mental health team was a very significant initiative.

- (1) No, not all children appearing before the Children's Court are assessed by the Links team—only a young person whose mental health has been raised as a concern.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Referral information may come from any source, including family members, carers, friends, lawyers or the young person themselves. The process will include an interview with the client and, where possible, discussion with caregivers, referrers and, where appropriate, agencies, schools and other services. This will include an evaluation of psychiatric history presenting problems including social and legal; current functioning; developmental milestones; psychosocial issues, including housing, education and community support; drug and alcohol use; family history of mental illness and family network; mental state examination; risk assessment; social and emotional wellbeing; legal issues; physical health; and abuse and trauma.
- (4) From 8 April to 30 September 2013 —
  - (a) 20 young people have been found to be suitable;
  - (b) 29 young people were assessed as not suitable and three are currently pending. Examples of reasons for unsuitability include the young person choosing not to participate and the justice matter having been dealt with on the day;
  - (c) 47 reports have been made to the courts; and
  - (d) 20 young people have care plans.