

CHILDREN'S COURT — LINKS PROGRAM

1033. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to the minister's answer to question without notice 896 when she asked me to go back and check that the claim that between 50 and 75 per cent of young people in detention have a serious mental illness was not an inappropriate use of words. Having been back and checked my source, which confirms this estimate, I now ask the minister —

- (1) Given that the "2009 NSW Young People in Custody Health Survey: Full Report" found that 87 per cent had at least one psychological disorder and 72.7 per cent had two or more disorders, what estimated rate of serious mental illness amongst juvenile detainees is the government using to plan services for young people in the justice system?
- (2) What improvements to mental health services and treatment programs for juveniles in detention in WA have there been in 2013?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. I just found the answer to the question that earlier I did not have for Hon Stephen Dawson—it was sitting right behind this one; the member will get that one.

- (1) The "2009 NSW Young People in Custody Health Survey: Full Report" provides prevalence data of what it defines as psychological disorders and is a finding of that report. In that report, 87 per cent of young people were found to have at least one psychological disorder and 73 per cent were found to have two or more psychological disorders. The study does not differentiate between severe, moderate and mild mental illness and includes drug and alcohol and attention and behaviour disorders. The study does not identify a category of serious mental illness.

The estimated rate of serious mental illness for young people is informed by a range of evidence including the 2009 New South Wales survey. The state government is currently undertaking a detailed planning process based on the national mental health services planning framework. The planning entails extensive consultation with stakeholders within the criminal justice system, forensic mental health services and consumers, and families and carers to formulate a forensic mental health services plan that will address the needs of young people within the criminal justice system. This plan will be delivered by mid-2014.

- (2) The state government has focused on diverting young people from the criminal justice system, such as the Children's Court Links program. For the children's program, a small clinical team, including a forensic psychologist and 1.5 mental health nurses, has commenced. The team will have access to a consultant psychiatrist. The Links program supports the existing multidisciplinary, multi-agency response in the Perth Children's Court.

Links commenced services on 8 April and in the first two months of operation assessed 30 children. Links is the primary case manager for five children, with many of the other children assessed receiving mental health support from Links via their community youth justice case manager or by liaising with custody staff.

Additional information can be provided by the Department of Corrective Services; however, more time is required to collate this information. I therefore ask the honourable member to place this question on notice.