

COUNCIL OF OFFICIAL VISITORS ANNUAL REPORT

1051. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Mental Health:

This question is being asked on behalf of Hon Stephen Dawson, who is out of the chamber on urgent parliamentary business. I refer to the Council of Official Visitors annual report tabled last week.

- (1) What actions, if any, has the minister instigated to remedy the concerns raised in the council's annual report?
- (2) Will the minister commit to addressing all the council's concerns detailed in the annual report; and, if so, by what time?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for asking the question on behalf of Hon Stephen Dawson. On a broader level, a number of initiatives are in place to address the issues raised in the “Council of Official Visitors Annual Report 2012–13”. In particular, with specific reference to the alleged misconduct of staff members at a WA health mental health facility, I can advise that the matters raised have been investigated by management, and the staff members concerned are currently undergoing a process of formal counselling. The delay in the timely investigation of this matter has also been reviewed and actions have been undertaken to ensure that reviews such as this are conducted in a more timely manner in future.

The acting director general of the Department of Health and the chief executive of the South Metropolitan Health Service met with the head of the Council of Official Visitors and an official visitor on 3 December 2013 to discuss the matters raised by the Council of Official Visitors in its annual report. The acting director general and the chief executive of South Metropolitan Health Service have arranged to meet with the patient to discuss the patient's concerns and apologise for the less than satisfactory standard of care the patient received.

To increase the capacity of the mental health system to meet current demand, the government has committed an additional \$131.4 million over the next four years to meet the increased demand for public mental health services. The development of a 10-year mental health services plan for Western Australia was recommended in the “Review of the admission or referral to and the discharge and transfer practices of public mental health facilities/services in Western Australia” by Professor Bryant Stokes, AM, in 2012. This plan is a means of defining future service needs and requirements as well as ensuring that future investment is targeted to the areas of greatest need. It will be completed by mid-2014.

The progressive implementation of other recommendations of Professor Stokes' report will also help to make the mental health system more accountable and more responsive to patient, carer and family needs. I think when we had the debate on this matter, I was able to demonstrate how each of those recommendations is being addressed through the Department of Health or that broader group of people involved in the implementation.

The Mental Health Bill 2013, tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 23 October 2013, provides a clear and comprehensive complaints process; further safeguards around practices such as seclusion and restraint; promotion of recovery-oriented practice and service delivery, particularly in relation to care planning; and continued powers of inspection of mental health services, including private psychiatric hostels. These initiatives are part of a broad and ambitious reform agenda that aims to deliver the type of mental health system Western Australia deserves, and that the Council of Official Visitors works tirelessly to achieve.

- (2) Many of the concerns raised by the “Council of Official Visitors Annual Report 2012–13” are already being addressed through the initiatives I have described. In addition, the Department of Health, the Mental Health Commission and other agencies are reviewing the report to consider whether any further specific responses in addition to these would be appropriate. Individual incidents in this report that have significant impact on consumers are automatically formally reviewed by mental health services. Learnings and recommendations from these reviews are implemented within the services.