

DRUGS — FENTANYL

**914. Hon COLIN TINCKNELL to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:**

The latest Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission's report on drugs revealed that there is an increase in fentanyl use in Western Australia. I note that fentanyl is a legally prescribed schedule 8 drug used for pain relief.

- (1) Is there any research into the level of legally prescribed fentanyl versus the level of illegal use of this drug?
- (2) The latest Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission's report on drugs revealed that use of fentanyl, also known as popcorn heroin or china white, is on the increase in Western Australia and Australia. What is the government doing to specifically respond to this increase?
- (3) Are any regional rehabilitation services planned for 2018–19?

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I am advised of the following.

- (1) Yes. Both prescription use of fentanyl—an opioid—and illicit use of fentanyl have been associated with opioid overdose.
- (2) The Western Australian Department of Health issues authorisations to prescribe opioids, benzodiazepines and other schedule 8 medicines and it monitors the prescription of schedule 8 medicines from reports received from pharmacies. The Mental Health Commission convenes and chairs the Overdose Strategy Group. The OSG is an interagency collaboration of health, paramedic, alcohol and other drug service, law enforcement, pharmacy and user groups. It monitors and provides advice about opioid overdose and its prevention in Western Australia. The Mental Health Commission funds and delivers a range of overdose prevention initiatives. It also delivers and purchases services for people experiencing alcohol and other drug problems.
- (3) The Mental Health Commission is seeking to expand the number of beds in the south west of Western Australia by up to three low medical withdrawal/stabilisation beds and up to 30 residential alcohol and drug treatment beds. These beds will complement and build on the existing system of alcohol and other drug treatment and support services across the state. An open tender process has been utilised to procure these services, which is still being finalised, with the successful proponents expected to commence services between January and 30 June 2019.