

MENTALLY IMPAIRED PRISONERS — TREATMENT IN PRISON SYSTEM

**248. Hon ED DERMER to the minister representing the Minister for Corrective Services:**

I refer to people suffering with mental health issues who have been charged and sentenced under the mandatory sentencing laws. What treatment are these people receiving for their mental health issues while in the prison system?

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

All new receivals, including those sentenced under any mandatory sentencing laws, are screened for suicide risk and mental health by custodial staff upon entering prison. Additionally, all new receivals to prison are then screened by DCS health services nursing staff. Areas screened include suicide risk; mental health status; past or current mental health treatment; risk of withdrawal from drugs or alcohol; current or previous drugs or alcohol treatment; and blood-borne virus risk or status and general health screen. Where necessary, medical officers can be consulted for treatment advice and prescribing options. Any offender who is identified as “at risk” is then managed as part of the at-risk management system process. This is a multidisciplinary risk management process, which includes input from custodial, mental health, clinical psychologists and allied services. Options available as part of this process include placing the individual in a safe cell or, where available, the crisis care unit. While in that unit, offenders can be observed on a regular basis. These offenders can additionally be assessed by mental health or prison counselling service staff, as indicated. Based on the outcome of the above, recommendations on treatment and placement within the prisons are made. A comprehensive assessment, including a mental state examination, which assesses the presence and extent of a person’s mental impairment, can then be undertaken. The cognitive functions that are measured during the MSE include the person’s sense of time, place and personal identity; memory; speech; general intellectual level; mathematical ability; insight or judgement; and reasoning or problem-solving ability. Based on the outcome, offenders may be prescribed a range of medications and/or be referred for psychological support within the prison environment. On occasions, offenders are transferred from prison to the Frankland Centre should the severity of their mental health presentation require it. Offenders who are identified as requiring ongoing mental health and/or alcohol and drug treatment are case managed by DCS health service co-morbidity and medical staff and are referred to community-based health providers on discharge from prison.