

MENTALLY ILL PATIENTS — TRANSPORT

541. Hon HELEN BULLOCK to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to the escort and transport of involuntary mentally ill patients that is now done by police officers.

- (1) Has the Commissioner of Police approached the minister or her office requesting a third party provider to be written into the new Mental Health Act; and, if so, when?
- (2) Will a third party provider be written into the act; and, if so, will it be for the escort or transport function, or both?
- (3) Can the minister give an assurance that security guards will not be used in the escort or transport of involuntary mental health patients?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?
- (5) Given that we are approaching the third anniversary of the election of the Barnett government, why do we still not have a new Mental Health Act?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Good question.

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

It is; it is a brilliant question. It gives me great pleasure to talk about this.

- (1)–(5) The Liberal–National government is committed to introducing a new mental health bill prior to the next election, in line with our election commitment. We are right on target to introduce the final bill into Parliament in 2012. I must say that I had an incredibly interesting session of nearly a whole day when we went through the draft bill bit by bit to look at the areas we are still focused on and those we are happy with. That work is progressing fantastically well. The member can be comfortable that she will see the bill exactly when we promised it—that is, in this term of government. Do not forget that the previous government could not bring it about in a whole term of government.

Significant further work has been undertaken to ensure that the new bill reflects international best practice and is consistent with new governance arrangements for mental health in WA, notably, the appointment of a Minister for Mental Health and the establishment of the Mental Health Commission. As part of this further work, I have met the Commissioner of Police to discuss the escort and transport of involuntary mentally ill patients. When amended, the bill will include provision for a third party to be authorised to transport patients under a transport order. Any third party provider will need to meet strict quality requirements to ensure that patients are transported in a safe and appropriate way.