

HEALTH STAFF — ASSAULTS AGAINST

510. Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to protecting our frontline health workers and combating the rising levels of violence against our hospital staff. Can the minister update the house on how the outcomes of the Stop the Violence summit will help determine what further action needs to be taken to protect those working in our hospitals?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I would like to thank the member for the question about a very important issue that is impacting on our frontline workers in our hospitals. Last Friday, I brought together over 110 frontline hospital and senior healthcare staff, as well as security, unions, St John Ambulance, the WA Police Force and other key stakeholders. We will not tolerate any violence or acts of aggression on our frontline health workers. They work in a care industry and they do not come to work to experience aggression, antisocial behaviour or other unacceptable behaviour, yet statistics show there has been a 38 per cent increase in assaults on nurses between the second half of 2017 and the same period in 2018. Last Friday's summit was an important opportunity to sit down with healthcare staff and share accounts of experiences with aggressive and violent individuals. I have to say that some of these experiences were pretty harrowing, pretty disturbing and pretty distressing. That is why it is important that this sector and this government does everything it can to reduce the incidence of aggressive behaviour in our hospitals.

Insights gained from these discussions are being compiled and will form the basis of a summit report. I have asked the director general to personally oversee the work that is being done inside the Department of Health to put in place a range of activities that will reduce the amount of aggressive behaviour in our emergency departments in particular, and make sure we put in place strategies that anticipate that behaviour and make sure we get ahead of it. The people at the summit were interested in talking about the number of security staff on our wards and in the ED, the powers that they have, and particularly the relationship they have with the police force, and how they can anticipate particular patients coming into the hospital and how better to prepare for them and respond to the behaviours that they may exhibit.

It was a great activity on Friday. It speaks volumes for the resolve that the McGowan government has to make sure we reduce the amount of aggression in our healthcare system. It comes off the back of our election commitment to invest over \$2 million in equipment that will better equip our staff to make sure they can respond to aggressive behaviour. At the end of the day, it is all our responsibility. Members of the community have to take personal responsibility for their own behaviour. They have to understand that it is not acceptable to be aggressive or act in an antisocial manner against our nurses and doctors, because they do a great job in caring for some of the most vulnerable people in our community. I very much look forward to speedily putting in place the outcomes of that summit.