

PRISONS — MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

701. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to the “WA State Forensic Mental Health Service Review 2008”, which outlined the serious lack of mental health services available to prisoners in Western Australia, and the warning inserted in the report which states —

The price of ignoring mentally ill prisoners is born largely by the prisoner and the community when they are released from prison even more disturbed and lawless than when they entered.

In light of the unprecedented overcrowding in our prisons, I ask —

- (1) Will the minister be requesting immediate funding to create specialised mental health units within Hakea and Casuarina Prisons, which have the highest population of prisoners with mental health issues and which have been criticised by the review for currently having no specialised mental health facilities?
- (2) If so, in which budget year does the minister expect this project to be funded?
- (3) What budget allocation will the minister need to complete this project?

Dr G.G. JACOBS replied:

- (1)-(3) The report the member refers to made some comments about the care of people with mental illness in custody. The Attorney General and I are in discussion about how we can do better for people in custody with a mental illness. I say that very genuinely. The member for Warnbro may not know that we are conducting a WA mental health strategy 2010-2020. In fact that issue has created some contention in recent times. We have appointed an independent organisation to undertake the mental health strategy 2010-2020 for reform in Western Australia. One of the visions in that reform is to do better for those people in custody with mental illness. I say to members opposite: what did they do in the eight years that they were over here, because this problem has not just occurred on my watch? I say genuinely that the Forensicare report—which I tabled in this house and is available for members to read—addresses issues about people in custody with mental illnesses, such as how they are treated and what rehabilitation programs are required. These matters will all be taken care of in the WA mental health strategy 2010-2020 for reform in Western Australia.