

ABORIGINAL PRISONERS — HEARING IMPAIRMENT

5032. Hon Giz Watson to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Attorney General

I refer to page 38 of last year's annual report of the Telethon Speech and Hearing Centre which states that 45 per cent of 104 Aboriginal women at Bandyup Women's Prison did not pass a hearing screening process, and I ask —

- (1) Is the Attorney General aware of this statistic?
- (2) Has the Attorney General ascertained the proportion of Aboriginal people appearing in court who cannot adequately hear the court proceedings?
- (3) If yes to (2) —
 - (a) how was this assessed;
 - (b) according to that assessment, what proportion of Aboriginal people appearing in court are unlikely to be able to adequately hear the proceedings; and
 - (c) what steps have been taken to address this?
- (4) If no to (2), will the Attorney General take steps to obtain this information?
- (5) If yes to (4), when?
- (6) If no to (4), why not?
- (7) Does the Attorney General acknowledge that the inability to hear proceedings in court is likely to severely limit a person's ability to self-represent or to instruct their legal representative during the proceedings?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN replied:

- (1) Yes
- (2) This information is not collected in court case management systems.
- (3) (a)–(c) Not applicable
- (4) No. See part (6).
- (5) Not applicable
- (6) It is not possible to collect this information retrospectively. The recording of ethnicity and impairments relies on the voluntary disclosure of this information by the court participant. Court case management systems do not allow for the collection of impairment information.
- (7) The major courts and tribunals in Western Australia have hearing loops or hearing augmentation systems or portable hearing equipment to assist hearing impaired persons participate effectively in court. In addition, judicial officers check continually for signs that those appearing before them can participate effectively in the hearing, including hearing impaired persons, and particularly so in the case of self-represented persons.