

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — AISHWARYA ASWATH — PREMIER'S COMMENTS

842. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to the Premier's comments in May 2021 regarding staffing levels at Perth Children's Hospital the night Aishwarya Aswath died in which he said, and I quote, the "emergency department was fully staffed, in fact over compliment and staffing levels were not an issue".

- (1) Were these comments based on any advice provided to the Premier?
- (2) If yes to (1), who provided that advice and on what date?
- (3) If yes to (1), will the Premier table that advice; and, if not, why not?
- (4) Has the Premier been provided with different advice since he made those comments?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I answer on behalf of the Leader of the House. I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the Premier.

- (1)–(4) It appears that the quotes referred to by the member were made by Dr Mark Duncan-Smith in *The West Australian* on 28 August 2022, who was paraphrasing comments made by the Premier in May 2021.

Statements made by the Premier in May 2021, in Parliament and in the media relating to staffing at Perth Children's Hospital were made on advice provided by the Department of Health and findings within the severity assessment code 1 clinical incident investigation report. The Premier received in-person briefings on matters relating to PCH on 28 April 2021 from the director general, Department of Health; and on 12 May 2021 from the director general, Department of Health; chief executive, PCH. As stated in the SAC 1 report, there were 19 doctors in the emergency department from 5.00 to 6.00 pm on 3 April 2022, which was three doctors above the normal roster at the time, and 13 doctors from 6.00 to 8.00 pm, which was consistent with the roster at the time. As per the roster, there were 15 nursing staff in the emergency department on the afternoon, of which one went home sick at 5.45 pm.

The Premier is advised that the level of staff on 3 April 2021 was in accordance with the roster at the time. Advice regarding the staffing and roster on 3 April has not changed. Staffing regimes and rosters are subject to change, week to week, and are implemented by hospitals directly. Since April 2021, PCH has increased roster levels, and the staff allocation in the emergency department establishment has increased by 49 FTE nurses and 25 FTE doctors.

The Premier and the government's deepest sympathies are with Aishwarya's family. The incident has followed all the right processes of investigation. We will await the outcomes of the coronial inquiry, which the Premier and the Attorney General sought, and was the most appropriate thing to do.