



**Deputy Premier of Western Australia
Minister for Health; Training and Workforce Development**

Our Ref: 25-38891

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000



Dear Mr *Simon* O'Brien

Petition No 23 – Number of Mental Health Beds in the new Perth Children's Hospital.

Thank you for your letter of 12 March 2014 with reference to the above petition tabled by Hon Stephen Dawson MLC in the Legislative Council on 3 December 2013 and referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs (Committee).

While the number of children and young people requiring mental health support is increasing, the majority of the care should be provided in the community. Not all children will require specialist mental health interventions, with many being adequately supported by General Practitioners, School Psychologists and non-government organisations (such as YouthFocus and headspace). When young people have serious mental health problems, a brief admission to a mental health bed can be useful. However, in many such cases, ongoing and intensive mental health treatment in the community is usually required. Furthermore, interventions should be provided early in the progression of a mental health problem and involve the young person and their family. Good practice is for mental health inpatient care to be the last option, not the first or only option that children should be accessing.

Regarding the mental health bed capacity at the Perth Children's Hospital (PCH), the PCH Project Team worked in collaboration with the Department of Health and the Mental Health Commission in 2010 and the demand forecasts undertaken as a result of that collaboration estimated that 20 beds would meet future demand for the under 16 year population.

The new unit at PCH will have 20 authorised mental health beds, which include:

- The current eight beds transferring from Princess Margaret Hospital (Ward 4H for under 16 year olds);
- Six of the twelve beds currently at Bentley Adolescent Unit (for under 18 year olds) will transfer to PCH; and
- Six new beds will be purchased by the Mental Health Commission.

The new unit will have three distinct pods, which will allow for the delivery of age appropriate care to children and young people across different age groups and acuity. The new unit will therefore have significantly more capacity to better meet the needs of children under 16 years of age.

All of the beds at PCH will be authorised beds and will be secure. Two of these beds will be intensive care beds for those requiring intensive supervision and treatment with the capacity to increase this to four intensive beds when required. In addition Fiona Stanley Hospital will have mental health beds for 16 – 24 year olds further adding to the number of mental health beds across the system.

The PCH will also have eight beds assigned to eating disorders patients on the Adolescent ward. These beds will be primarily, but not exclusively, used by eating disorders patients.

Planning for inpatient beds for the 16+ year cohort is part of the *10 Year Mental Health Plan* and it is this cohort of young people aged 16 and 17 years of age, who account for the vast majority of the current waitlist at any given time.

The Government is committed to increasing mental health services for young people and consistent with good practice the focus will continue to be on providing more community based services, earlier in an illness, to prevent admissions to hospital whenever possible.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kim Hames MLA
DEPUTY PREMIER
MINISTER FOR HEALTH

31 MAR 2014