

ALBANY REGIONAL HOSPITAL — SERVICE QUALITY AND STAFFING ISSUES

1633. Mr P.B. Watson to the Minister for Health

Regarding Albany Regional Hospital can the Minister please advise:

- (1) Are there plans to use disposable theatre packs, and if so, what will happen to the equipment from the packs that are not used?
- (2) Why are support service staff now being called ‘back of house services’; and
 - (a) what research was done before making this decision; and
 - (b) does the Minister think it will affect the morale of the support service staff?
- (3) Will the laundry service in the new hospital be privatised or contracted out; and
 - (a) if yes, how many staff will be affected?
- (4) Will the workshop and maintenance services in the new hospital be privatised or contracted out; and
 - (a) if yes, how many staff will be affected?
- (5) Will the kitchen and catering services in the new hospital be privatised or contracted out; and
 - (a) if yes, how many staff will be affected?
- (6) Why does it take up to 5 weeks to replace a casual staff member?
- (7) How long does it take to fill an administration position?
- (8) Has the Minister been advised of reports that there is a purple circle between management and staff when it comes to staff promotions; and
 - (a) will the Minister investigate these claims?
- (9) Is the Minister aware that due to staff shortages, some staff have not been able to take meal breaks or accrued time off in lieu?
- (10) What security arrangements are in place and how many staff fill security positions; and
 - (a) of these, how many have accredited security training and what has that training been comprised of?
- (11) What is the staff-to-patient ratio for:
 - (a) dementia patients;
 - (b) aged care patients; and
 - (c) general admission patients?
- (12) What is the number of beds and at what capacity is the hospital running?
- (13) On a weekly basis, how many hours do the ‘fly in fly out’ general practitioners (GPs) work?
- (14) How many days have the ‘fly in fly out’ GPs been unable to work due to illness or other reasons since they started working?
- (15) What training has been provided in the last 12 months to the following staff:
 - (a) registered nurses;
 - (b) enrolled nurses;
 - (c) doctors;
 - (d) engineering staff;
 - (e) administration staff; and
 - (f) allied health professionals?
- (16) What training opportunities are available to the staff and how can it be accessed?
- (17) What are the total full time equivalent (FTE) staff numbers for each section of the hospital?
- (18) What is the total FTE staff number positions that are vacant or remain unfilled?
- (19) How many FTE staff positions have been acting in the past 12 months, and what are these positions?

- (20) How is medical waste from the hospital disposed of currently?
(21) How will medical waste be disposed of at the new hospital?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

- (1) Like most Western Australian hospitals, Albany Hospital will be moving to disposable theatre packs in the near future. The hospital is currently evaluating the impacts and costs of using customised packs that will include only the equipment that is required for the procedures for which they are used.
- (2) Within Albany Hospital, support service staff are referred to as support services or hotel services staff. In a couple of recent documents prepared by people outside of the hospital, they were referred to as "back of house services" as this is another name commonly used for non-core services within the health industry. Albany Hospital support services' staff have stated that they would prefer to be called support services or hotel services and the Minister and management has agreed to using these terms.
- (a) There was never any decision made to call support services staff 'back of house services'.
- (b) No. Staff have been consulted and are aware that they are now being referred to as support services or hotel services, which are the accepted terms that have always been used at Albany Hospital.
- (3)-(5) There has been no decision made regarding these services. There are various models of service delivery that need to be evaluated to determine what achieves the best value for money. The results of the initial expressions of interest will need to be reviewed before any assessment can be made as to whether it is more prudent to deliver these services in house or via the private sector.
- (a) This cannot be determined at this time.
- (6) Albany Hospital maintains a list of people interested in casual employment at the hospital. Casual staff members are employed on an as needs basis and do not have ongoing positions. Recruitment to the casual pool occurs on an ongoing basis. The process for employing a casual worker is administratively very efficient and can be completed in a timely fashion to suit operational priorities, often within hours.
- (7) There are well established and streamlined processes in place to fill vacant positions at Albany Hospital. The timeframe for this varies from a matter of hours for filling an administrative position on a casual basis to several weeks depending on the need to comply with normal public sector processes for advertising and recruiting to a position. In this regard, processes for filling administrative positions are no different to other positions at the hospital.
- (8) No. Albany Hospital follows public sector standards for recruitment and selection and if the Member is aware of specific instances where processes have not been followed he should bring these to the attention of the Regional Director.
- (a) If the Member can provide evidence of specific instances where recruitment and selection processes have not been followed, then these can be investigated.
- (9) The Minister is aware that where management have been advised of staff not taking meal breaks, these staff have been advised that it is a requirement for them to do so. There have been instances where greater than expected numbers of staff have been off work sick at the same time, creating some unavoidable shortages, however, staff are still expected to take their meal breaks. Again if the Member has specific instances where a staff member has been denied meal breaks or has been unable to take accrued time off within a reasonable timeframe, he should be directing these staff to refer their concerns to management for a response.
- (10) There are no dedicated security positions at Albany Hospital. The Orderlies and Maintenance staff are trained in handling security issues inside the hospital and police are called if they require any assistance.
- (a) Between January 2004 and March 2008, 9 Orderlies and 9 Maintenance staff received PRAXIS training. PRAXIS Aggression Response Management training, included identification, assessment, verbal and de-escalation techniques. PRAXIS was a registered training program with Australian Quality Training Framework.
- Since January 2009, 11 Orderlies and 21 Maintenance staff have received Certified Verbal and De-escalation Aggression Management training, (Michael Tunnicliffe Program) which is used across the WA Country Health Service.

- (11) (a)-(c) There is no 'staff to patient' ratio. As the Member has been previously advised all wards are staffed according to the Nursing Hours per Patient Day (NHpPD) standards as used throughout the State and agreed with the Australian Nursing Federation.
- The NHpPD model has been agreed with the relevant industrial bodies and the Department of Health. The various wards in the hospital have been assessed and a different level of nursing hours per patient have been allocated for each ward. Patients are allocated to the wards based on various clinical criteria rather than their age or whether they have dementia.
- (12) There are 30 same day and 83 multi-day active beds operating at 91.84% occupancy.
* NB Bed Occupancy is based on Multi-day Day Beds only.
- (13) There are no 'fly in fly out' GPs. The health service does engage the services of a number of locum medical practitioners and emergency medicine specialists to complement local GPs to provide 24/7 medical coverage of the Albany Hospital.
- (14) There are no fly in fly out GPs. On one occasion a local medical practitioner was not able to complete a rostered shift. On this occasion alternative arrangements were put in place to ensure the continuity of the medical roster.
- (15)-(16) Staff are provided with training in accordance with their job needs. Mandatory training is provided for staff in the areas outlined in the attached document [See paper 1587.]
- Staff have access to an application form for attendance at conferences, courses and seminars, that they can submit to their line manager if they wish to participate in additional training outside of what is standard for their job.
- (17) [See paper 1587.]
- (18) WA Health corporate systems do not capture the necessary information in the required format to answer this question. Work is currently in progress to enable reporting of this information on a monthly basis by the end of 2009/10 financial year.
- (19) [See paper 1587.]
- (20) Medical waste is buried under supervision, in accordance with the Environmental Protection (Controlled Waste) Regulations 2004. A site inspection and audit was carried out by the Department of Environment and Conservation in May 2009. The subsequent letter to Albany Hospital states "the audit identified no non-compliances with licence conditions or the Regulations."
- (21) Medical waste will continue to be disposed of in accordance with the abovementioned Regulations, however, there will be the potential for new technologies to be introduced.