

POLICE, DNA SAMPLES, TIME TAKEN TO ANALYSE

2718. Mrs C.L. Edwardes to the Minister for Health

I refer the Minister to the answer to question on notice No.2343 of 2003, to the Minister for Police, and ask -

- (a) what is the average time taken to analyse DNA samples, supplied by Police, at the PathCentre;
- (b) how many DNA samples, supplied by the Police, are currently backlogged and awaiting analysis; and
- (c) what action is intended to clear the backlog of DNA sampling?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

Answer for questions of 24 March

- a) Not all items submitted by WAPS to PathCentre contain retrievable DNA and are reported as such. Where DNA is able to be extracted from a crime item, it takes approximately 60 hours to obtain a profile that can be uploaded to the Forensic DNA database. After uploading, DNA profiles from crime scene are compared against other crime scene profiles and intelligence reference data on the WA DNA database. Only admissible links are reported directly to WAPS.
- b) The Western Australian Police Service submit both intelligence (collecting samples from people eg prisoners to enter in database) samples and crime scene items to PathCentre for analysis. Currently there are no intelligence samples backlogged. As at the 13 May, 2004 there were 800 major (murder, rape, etc) crime cases representing some 2880 items and 931 volume (burglary, theft) crime cases representing 2185 items awaiting analysis. All items are processed in accordance with priorities set by WAPS.
- c) PathCentre undertakes all DNA analysis on behalf of the WAPS and since the inception of the DNA Database legislation has been required to undergo a significant scientific staff recruitment program. The section has grown from 11 staff in June 2001, to 22 in June 2002, to its current establishment of 38. PathCentre is still actively recruiting additional scientists but there is an Australia wide shortage of experienced Forensic Scientists and PathCentre has had to embark on an intensive training program. The training program has had to be managed in such a way as to not hinder output. Furthermore, PathCentre has acquired additional genetic analysers and is in the process of purchasing automated DNA extraction robotic equipment and moving to a significantly larger premises.