

MENTAL HEALTH — DECLARED PLACE

328. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to the Minister for Mental Health's advice to this house in August 2012 that the government did not regard the establishment of a declared place for people with a severe and persistent mental illness as a priority.

- (1) How many people have been found unfit to plead on the basis of mental illness alone since 2009?
- (2) How many of these people remain in prison today?
- (3) What other placement options are available to people determined unfit to plead on the basis of mental illness alone?
- (4) Does the establishment of a declared place for people with a severe and persistent mental illness remain a low priority for the government?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)–(3) I advise the honourable member that these questions should be directed to the Attorney General.
- (4) The commitment to provide services for people with severe and persistent mental illness is a high priority of this government. As I stated in question on notice 5727 last year —

The Government's priority at this stage is to establish declared places for people with an intellectual or cognitive disability who have been accused, but not convicted, of a crime. This is prioritised because no alternatives to prison currently exist for this small group ...

This in no way means that a declared place for mentally ill people is a low priority.

The government's commitment to people with severe and persistent mental illness is demonstrated through the recent establishment, in March this year, of the mental health court diversion and support pilot program. This program includes a specialist court known as START Court—the Specialist Treatment and Referral Team—which offers mental health assessment and support as well as advice to the court.

A similar program known as Links is available for children with a mental illness. These programs clearly demonstrate a commitment to ensuring people with severe mental illness who come into contact with the justice system are provided early intervention and appropriate support to ensure they achieve the best outcome possible.