

PRISONERS, DNA TESTING

2343. Mrs C.L. Edwardes to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services

I refer the Minister to recent results for DNA testing of prisoners and ask -

- (a) what was the average time taken to compile and add each DNA sample to the forensic database;
- (b) what delays were caused to 'active' and 'on going' investigations by the police service due to the testing of prisoners;
- (c) how many 'active' and 'on going' cases are still awaiting DNA testing;
- (d) what is the estimated time of this delay; and
- (e) what action is intended to clear any backlog of DNA sampling?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

- (a) The Police Service advise that DNA samples collected from prisoners are sent to the PathCentre for recovery of a DNA profile and uploading to the DNA database. Between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003 it took an average of approximately 41 days from collection before a DNA sample was transferred to PathCentre for analysis. This delay was due to an initial inability for the PathCentre to accept and process the volume of samples being obtained. From 1 July 2003 to 30 November 2003, this average dropped to approximately 8 days.
- (b) The Police Service advise there were no delays caused to "active" and "ongoing" cases due to the testing of prisoners. A special taskforce was established to sample prisoners.
- (c) The Police Service advise there are currently approximately 8,700 samples from approximately 3,200 cases awaiting DNA analysis.
- (d) As the analysis of evidence is carried out by scientists at the PathCentre, the Police Service advise they are unable to provide the information requested. I refer the Member to the Minister for Health.
- (e) The Police Service advise they are aware that the PathCentre plans to recruit additional staff, purchase additional equipment and relocate the Forensic Biology Laboratory to bigger premises but is unable to provide specific details. Again I refer the Member to the Minister for Health.