

HOSPITALS, CHILD ABUSE COMPLAINTS

1677. Dr Constable to the Minister for Health

- (1) Were any complaints of child abuse received by public hospital authorities in Western Australia in -
  - (a) 1998;
  - (b) 1999;
  - (c) 2000; and
  - (d) 2001?
- (2) If yes to (1) how many complaints were received in each year?
- (3) If yes to (1) how many complaints resulted in charges being laid?
- (4) If yes to (1) how many complaints resulted in convictions?

Mr KUCERA replied:

- (1) (a)-(d) In accordance with the Reciprocal Child Protection Procedures, complaints of child abuse are received by the Department for Community Development (DCD) rather than public hospital services. DCD has the lead role and responsibility for responding to complaints of child abuse.  
  
The health system maintains a central specialist service, the Child Protection Unit (CPU) at Princess Margaret Hospital. The CPU responds to referrals suspecting child abuse from the Department for Community Development, Police Services including the Police Child Abuse Unit, medical referral from within Princess Margaret Hospital and from external medical practitioners, families and legal professionals.  
  
The CPU has approximately 750 case contacts per year, covering non accidental injury, child sexual abuse, neglect, burns, ingestions, emotional abuse and Munchausen syndrome by proxy.  
  
Where a child presents at any public Health Service within Western Australia and sexual abuse is suspected, a comprehensive protocol sets out the actions that must be taken by staff. These actions are set out in the Reciprocal Child Protection Procedures produced by the Department for Community Development.  
  
Where child abuse is obvious then action is taken immediately to ensure that a medical officer carries out an examination. All suspected cases are reported to Department for Community Development and the Police.  
  
Referrals are made to the Department for Community Development on the basis of concern by the Health Service staff, observed evidence of abuse or neglect or at the specific request of an individual or family
- (2)-(4) Not applicable