

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES - IMPROVEMENTS

4. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Health:

Will the minister advise the house of the resources this government is investing to improve mental health services?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

I thank the member for the question. I am very pleased that yesterday the new Ellis ward at Graylands hospital opened. It is a 14-bed secure ward that will do a lot both to reduce the pressure on our emergency departments presented by mental health patients as well as provide for far better mental health care for people who need support in our public hospital system. It will have nine patients as of tomorrow and it will evolve progressively, as was always intended from opening yesterday, to 14 beds being fully operational within the next month. The member for Cottesloe was present at the public open day two weeks ago to look at this facility. I think it is regarded as one of the best in Australia for what it does. It also includes in addition to the 14 secure inpatient beds a four-bed assessment area that will enable people suffering acute episodes of mental health to be assessed.

Hawthorn Hospital, which was converted with effect from December last year to a subacute facility for people with mental health concerns, and which was again designed to upgrade the level of mental health care for people who need it, now has nine patients, with three pending admissions. In addition, in the past 12 months emergency department mental health liaison nurses have been introduced throughout the Geraldton and metropolitan areas in six sites to improve the care of mental health patients who present in emergency departments. In addition, work has now well progressed on community-supported accommodation for people with mental illnesses. Construction is almost complete in Albany and Geraldton, is underway in Busselton, and is about to commence in Bunbury, Bentley, Armadale, Peel, Osborne Park, Kalamunda and Middle Swan, with a further facility in each of Bentley, Mt Claremont and Osborne Park. Of particular interest to me is the provision for mental health facilities for homeless people. This has been a controversial issue in my electorate of Fremantle. I was gravely disappointed that the Fremantle city council chose not to support this particular facility. I was very pleased that the Western Australia Planning Commission rejected completely the view of the Fremantle city council and gave approval for the facility for homeless youth to be built in Alma Street, Fremantle, which will be under way after tenders have been called in July this year.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr J.A. McGINTY: By contrast, the Perth city council approved the construction of a facility twice that size in central Perth for homeless people with mental health disabilities. I mention these initiatives to the house as they are very positive steps in caring for people with mental illnesses. For some years now Western Australia has had the highest per capita expenditure on mental health patients of any state or territory in Australia. With this new commitment for capital works and the associated staff, we will continue to be the largest contributing state caring for the mental health needs of its residents.