

MINISTER FOR HEALTH — PORTFOLIOS — STAFF LEAVE BALANCES

360. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the minister's answers to parliamentary questions on notice 1539 and 1931 concerning annual leave liability balances across the health services as at 30 June 2018 and 31 December 2018, respectively.

- (1) Why has the number of staff at the North Metropolitan Health Service who have accumulated annual leave balances of eight weeks and greater grown from 2 309 to 2 520, with a commensurate increase in total dollar value of that leave liability from \$46.8 million to \$56.5 million in a six-month period?
- (2) What risks to staff welfare and to standards of clinical care provided to the public are posed by the accumulation of such excessive leave levels by nearly one-quarter of the North Metropolitan Health Service?
- (3) What steps is the minister taking now to address excessive leave banking within the North Metropolitan Health Service?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I am advised the following.

- (1) The headcount of staff with up to six weeks' annual leave outstanding has decreased over the six-month period, with only a marginal increase in the associated total dollar value. This outlines good leave management practices for current annual leave allocations at North Metropolitan Health Service. The increase in accumulated leave liability above six weeks—that is, non-current leave—is reflective of FTE management strategies implemented by North Metropolitan Health Service. In implementing these FTE management strategies, North Metropolitan Health Service acknowledged that a resulting impact would be an increase in annual leave liability due to reduced opportunities to backfill staff and therefore the rate at which staff are able to take leave is reduced.
- (2) There is no risk to staff welfare and standards of clinical care provided to the public because North Metropolitan Health Service actively manages staffing welfare and clinical safety through a variety of strategies. To address this accumulated leave issue, it has developed a fatigue prevention and management policy.
- (3) The following strategies are in place at North Metropolitan Health Service to address accumulated annual leave. A revised excess leave management process was implemented in October 2018. North Metropolitan Health Service managers meet with staff to develop a leave management plan to manage leave, being an employee excess leave management plan. Weekly management reporting occurs with monthly excess leave reports provided to human resources to liaise with managers who have staff with excess leave. Quarterly workforce profiles are sent to executive directors advising them of the leave liability in their area and the number of staff with excess leave, including whether an excess leave management plan is in place.