

STATE CORONER — CASE BACKLOG — ABORTION

1267. Hon Nick Goiran to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:

I refer to the 2021/22 Annual Report from the Office of the State Coroner which states that the “backlog of cases increased from 810 as at 30 June 2021 to 1315 as at 30 June 2022”, and an answer to questions asked during the 2021/22 Budget Estimates hearings (3b) stating that 27 unnatural deaths of babies born alive after a failed abortion procedure were not included in the backlog of 810 cases, and I ask:

- (a) are all of the 27 cases on hold pending the finalisation of consideration of proposed amendments to the *Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1911*;
- (b) if no to (a), how many of the 27 cases are on hold and how many cases have been finalised;
- (c) given that the Annual Report states “The backlog cases are determined by reference to the date that a reportable death is reported to the coroner. When the date of that report is more than 12 months old, that case enters into backlog and becomes a priority”, how many of the 27 unnatural deaths are now a priority; and
- (d) what difference would the proposed amendments make to the investigation?

Hon Matthew Swinbourn replied:

- (a)–(c) It is the understanding of the Department of Justice that the 27 cases are on hold pending possible amendments to legislation.
- (d) As the legislation is still under development, it is too early to say what the effect of any amendment would be.