

SELF-HARM PATIENTS, SERVICES IN REGIONAL AREAS

610. Mr WALDRON to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the release yesterday of the Auditor General's report called "Life Matters: Management of Deliberate Self Harm in Young People", and the finding that there is a lack of specialist staff to provide services to deliberate self-harm patients in regional Western Australia.

- (1) Is the lack of physical resources and personnel in regional Western Australia, which are required by the deliberate self-harm treatment guidelines, a problem because of a lack of funding?
- (2) If not, why, in all regional areas other than in Kalgoorlie, is there a shortage of personnel and resources to provide access to after-hours emergency care to people?

Mr KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for Wagin for this question of which some notice has been given.

- (1)-(2) No, the report did not conclude that there was a lack of physical resources to manage deliberate cases of self-harm, particularly in regional areas. Rather, the problem is the need for improved coordination between hospital emergency treatment, specialist mental health assessment and follow-up procedures. Regional hospitals provide emergency care out of hours and in areas other than Kalgoorlie. The arrangements for the mental specialist health assessments and advice after hours are not formalised. The Department of Health will attend to this issue as it acts on the findings of the report.

This report must be taken in context. When compared with the rest of the States, Western Australia is doing pretty well in this area. The presentation of this issue is a matter of whether the cup is half empty or, in this case, three-quarters full. The report found that 75 per cent of all cases that were investigated were dealt with adequately and properly. However, it is of concern that 25 per cent of cases must be dealt with differently. The other day, I was very pleased to be at the school section of Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. I was disappointed that four of the patients there were young women who had attempted self-harm. I talked to the patients and the staff who were dealing with them and was told that the treatment that they were given was very appropriate and was being supported. I reiterate that this is not a matter of resources; it is a matter of coordination. As the reform process is implemented, these programs will improve.