

MENTAL HEALTH LAW CENTRE — MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION FUNDING

263. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Mental Health:

- (1) How much funding did the Mental Health Commission provide to the Mental Health Law Centre in 2011–12 and 2012–13?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that this funding is being cut from 31 December 2013, and by how much is the funding being cut?
- (3) Why is the funding being cut?
- (4) Is the minister aware of any other WA service specialising in providing legal assistance to involuntary patients and mentally impaired accused persons; and, if so, which services?
- (5) If no to (4), how does the minister expect the demand for these specialist services to be met after this funding is cut?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) In 2011–12 the Mental Health Commission provided the Mental Health Law Centre with a grant of \$250 000. This grant was repeated in 2012–13.
- (2)–(3) The funding by the Mental Health Commission to the Mental Health Law Centre is not being cut. The Mental Health Commission provided a one-off grant to the Mental Health Law Centre in October 2011. The grant was for the dual purposes of increasing the number of patients represented at the Mental Health Review Board hearings and assisting with some rental costs. This arrangement was repeated in 2012–13 on the agreed basis that it was not ongoing funding, but was a single grant for these purposes. The Mental Health Commission has commissioned an independent review of the issue of representation before the Mental Health Review Board. This review will make recommendations about representation before Mental Health Review Board. I might add that the Mental Health Law Centre is aware of the review. The Mental Health Commission has granted the Mental Health Law Centre interim additional funding of \$115 000 for the continuation of its services until 31 December while the review is being conducted. One of the issues that the review is looking at is that despite the additional \$250 000, there was not a discernible increase in the representation of people for whom the Mental Health Law Centre was required to provide representation.
- (4) No.
- (5) The Mental Health Law Centre receives most of its funding through the Department of the Attorney General. In 2012–13, state community legal services program funding to the Mental Health Law Centre totalled \$692 000 and in 2013–14 the funding will total \$772 466. This increase in funding to the Mental Health Law Centre from the government's Delivering Community Services in Partnership initiative will assist the centre to support its rental costs as well as other issues of organisational capability. I am advised that the state community legal services program funding is sufficient to continue to fund core legal services at the centre.