

MAGISTRATES COURT — SUPPORT STAFF

869. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:

I refer to the Law Society of Western Australia's letter addressed to the Attorney General, dated 30 June 2022, in which it expressed its concerns about support staff shortages in the Magistrates Court resulting in occasions when magistrates have been left sitting in their offices, with trials being vacated because a court room cannot be convened due to the absence of support staff.

- (1) Has the Attorney General received this letter?
- (2) If yes to (1), has the Attorney General read this letter?
- (3) If yes to (2), has the Attorney General responded to this letter?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?
- (5) If yes to (3), will the Attorney General table a copy of his response?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer is based on information provided to me by the Attorney General.

- (1)–(5) Upon receipt of the correspondence from the Law Society, the office of the Attorney General sought input from the Department of Justice. There have been resourcing issues associated with COVID-19 that have impacted on the normal operations of the court resulting from the statewide skills shortage. The Department of Justice is currently progressing several measures designed to increase the attraction and retention of staff, particularly those who provide support to the judiciary in and out of court. The implementation of these measures is expected to contribute positively towards maintaining service levels. With reference to the provision of contracted court security staff, the provider, G4S, has recently completed several staff recruitment processes that have enabled court security resourcing to return to required levels. I am advised that this current shortage of judicial support staff has not led to any cancellation of courts when matters have been listed.

The time frame for the response was longer than the typical turnaround for correspondence to the Attorney General, but was recently updated to inform the Law Society of the department's endeavours to attract and retain staff. The Attorney General would not presume that the Law Society would be comfortable with private correspondence addressed to it being tabled. However, he notes that the member was copied into the 30 June 2022 letter and may wish to seek a copy of the response from the recipient.