

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH SERVICE — CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

724. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the *Child and Adolescent Health Service: Annual report 2022–23*, which states —

Increasing demand for CDS services continues to impact on the timeliness of assessment and intervention services, with the number of referrals increasing 52 per cent over the last decade and no major increase in funding to match the increasing demand.

Given that demand for clinical psychology services has increased by 114 per cent and paediatrician appointments by 132 per cent, why has the minister failed to provide the required funding to ensure Western Australian children can get timely access to the treatments that they need?

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, that is out of order.

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

As the member opposite rightly pointed out, referrals have increased by 52 per cent. That exactly demonstrates the point I made, which is that we are experiencing a tsunami of referrals into the system. We are seeing a lot of the expertise retire or go to the private sector. Many of their clients then end up back on the books of the child development services. That is what we are seeing. We are working closely with the inquiry that we supported in the upper house around what we can do to improve the workforce flow. Many of the levers available around workforce in particular are not necessarily in the state's control. For many of those who support allied health qualifications or psychology qualifications, particularly postgraduate psychology qualifications, a very small number are accepted into those courses every year when the demand is enormous. We are working with those colleges and the inquiry is certainly interrogating those issues. There are a multitude of reasons why this is a very challenging area, and it is absolutely not because the government does not support it. The government supports it and works closely with our allies, Telethon Kids Institute and the private sector, but the reality is that many paediatricians choose to go to the private sector and many of them are retiring because they are overwhelmed. That leaves even more people on public waitlists. The services are incredible. They work day and night to support families. We are reforming the way those services operate as well with community hubs, much of which was essentially criticised by the member's colleagues a few weeks ago. Many of those services see incredibly complex children who need a multitude of disciplines—speech, occupational therapists, psychologists, clinical support and paediatric support. Parents take time off work to go to every given appointment. Based on consultation with those clients, we are supporting the hub model in which all those disciplines are together. That will improve the efficiency of the systems and those appointments, and also improve the experience for patients and their families.