

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — MENTAL HEALTH UNIT — ALLEGED SEXUAL ASSAULT

715. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to the safety of Western Australian children while in the care of our hospital system, and the 2022–23 Mental Health Advocacy Service annual report, which highlights four serious issues regarding sexual safety in the last financial year.

- (1) Is the minister aware of the circumstances surrounding each of these cases, and were they subject to a root-cause analysis and/or a Chief Psychiatrist review?
- (2) Following the alleged assault of Florence almost two years ago, did the family request any additions to the recommendations of the report; and, if so, have they been completed?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

First of all, I want to make a point about the Leader of the Opposition's previous question to the Premier. The premise of the question was completely wrong, because he referred to four cases of sexual assault. That was not what was reported in the Mental Health Advocacy Service report. It is very different. In its report, MHAS reported four cases of serious breach of the sexual safety policies.

I am aware of the four and I have spoken to the Mental Health Advocate, as well. They have not been subject to severity assessment code 1s because they were not deemed to be required to be subject to SAC 1s. I have to be very careful here around protecting the privacy of young people, but I can tell members that one incident was coded twice, and therefore it was one incident, so there were three. That was an error on the Mental Health Advocacy Service. Two incidents occurred at Perth Children's Hospital but were nowhere near the severity of the incident involving Florence.

A sexual safety policy breach can be a number of things, and it has been a number of things. It is not necessarily a sexual assault. It does not have to involve any physical touching. It can be someone saying something or showing someone something—all completely inappropriate, but not of the severity, as the Leader of the Opposition attempted to frame it, of the case of Florence. I have to stress that that was an isolated case. That was an isolated case and it is the only case that the Mental Health Advocate has ever raised with me personally as being a serious sexual assault.

The other incident occurred not at Perth Children's Hospital, and the consumer was 17 years old. Again, it was not a sexual assault; it was a breach of the sexual safety policy.