

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — SEXUAL SAFETY POLICY

860. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I refer to an alleged violent altercation in June this year between a patient and one or more security guards at Perth Children's Hospital ward 5A—the same ward where a young girl was raped two years ago. Two years after the alleged rape, two further confirmed breaches of PCH's sexual safety policy and now this incident, how can parents have any confidence that this facility is properly resourced and fit to care for their vulnerable children?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I refer to the Premier's response to the question asked earlier by the member for Vasse and the often inappropriate use of individual circumstances to deliver what she sees as a cheap headline or some kind of coverage.

Several members interjected.

Ms A. SANDERSON: Let us just unpack this. This is a ward with the state's most unwell children. They are the most unwell children in the state. There is a reason only one news outlet reported that. They are, essentially, untested allegations that have been raised in one news report, which was shopped around to various journalists and not followed up.

We are talking about a mental health ward that has the most vulnerable, youngest and most unwell kids in the state. From time to time, there are really difficult circumstances in that ward. It is very confronting for anyone who has had a child admitted to the ward; it is a challenging place. It is a challenging place for the staff. Does the Leader of the Liberal Party really believe that the staff watched and did nothing, as was reported? Does the member believe that? Is that what the opposition believes? I know that the staff are highly skilled. It is one of the most resourced youth mental health wards in the country. If members opposite compare the staffing profile of ward 5A with other similar units around the country with similar cohorts, for each patient, it is one of the best resourced in the country. It has a complex cohort, and the staff do an incredible job. It is a mix of young children with neurodiversity. It has adolescents with serious mental health issues. If a ward has a cohort of very unwell kids, it gets behaviours and incidents, and the staff are trained to manage them appropriately, and they did so in this instance. It was investigated, and it was found that the staff acted appropriately. The ward is resourced well. It has expert staff. It is a very challenging cohort. It is inappropriate to bring untested allegations into the public arena. For the purposes of natural justice—for everyone involved, including the staff—it is not appropriate.