

LONG BAY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY HOSPITAL LOCK-IN HOURS

April 1 2008

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I address my question to the Minister for Justice. Are patient lock-in hours being extended in the Long Bay correctional facility hospital?

Will the change result in patients being locked in from 3.30 p.m. each day, instead of at 9.00 p.m. as is currently the case?

Is it the intention to extend the lock-in hours indefinitely, at both Long Bay and the new forensic facility?

How will extended lock-in hours assist patients with mental illness in their rehabilitation?

Does the Minister share the view of the New South Wales Nurses Association that extended lock-in hours will exacerbate patients' illnesses, as well as lead to a decline in the quality of care?

The Hon. JOHN HATZISTERGOS: I am aware of public statements that have been placed on the website regarding the lock-down hours at the new Long Bay Prison Hospital. I am advised that the daily routine will change at Long Bay Hospital to a system that allows inmates to be out of cells between the hours of 8.45 a.m. and 12 noon, and 12.30 p.m. and 3.45 p.m. These inmates are patients, not able-bodied offenders. Some of the patients also suffer from mental illness. The department advises me that the reduction in out-of-cell hours will allow a team of correctional officers to be on duty after 4.00 p.m., readily and immediately available to Justice Health.

Currently in the existing Long Bay Prison Hospital both custodial and Justice Health staff are on static posts, meaning they are unable to move about the centre freely after 4.00 p.m. In the new Long Bay hospital this will not be the case. After 4.00 p.m. nine correctional officers and a senior correctional officer will be able to move freely across the correctional centre for both Justice Health and the running of the hospital.

This means that whatever event occurs within the hospital, staff will be able to respond to Justice Health, visiting doctors, and any other contingency that may arise.

It is important for honourable members to understand that the new model has been formulated in conjunction with Justice Health, which is the Government authority that provides health services to inmates and detainees within the New South Wales criminal justice system. In early March 2008, Assistant Commissioner Brian Kelly and General Managers Jeanine McGlenn and Karen Boyko met with Justice Health executives and their chief executive officer, Ms Babineau, to discuss custodial staffing of the new hospital.

The current staffing model is the result of successful negotiations with Justice Health. Following the meeting, Ms Babineau wrote to the commissioner on 19 March stating that the new staffing model would "reassure staff of the timely health interaction afforded to inmates". The claims by the Crikey website and Justice Action are not evidence-based. I am advised that in fact, the only available evidence relating to out-of-cell hours is favourable to the new system. In pods 19 and 20 at the Mental Health Screening Unit of the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre there has been a change from extended out-of-cell hours to an 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. operation. I am told that since the inception of these reduced hours there has been a marked reduction in serious incidents. In addition, the reduced out-of-cell hours frees up staff, providing more staff presence generally for greater supervision and care of inmates in conjunction with Justice Health.

The responses by Justice Action and the Crikey website ignore a very important point. There will be two new hospitals built on the Long Bay complex: a new 85-bed facility that will replace the existing Long Bay Hospital and will provide general medical care; and the Long Bay Forensic Hospital, scheduled to open in October 2008, which will provide 135 beds and specific care and state-of-the-art facilities to mental health patients. The new forensic hospital will cater to inmates currently housed in the old hospital who are deemed to be forensic patients, and will be managed by Justice Health. The two new hospitals will provide services to three distinct categories of inmates: aged and rehabilitation, medical-surgical and mental health.

In addition to the new facility, construction began in 2005 to build a 10-bed mental health screening unit and a 9-bed clinic for female inmates at the Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre. These

facilities have been completed. Construction of a new 40-bed mental health screening unit for male inmates at the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre at Silverwater has also been completed and is operating successfully. The department also operates acute crisis management units for offenders who are at risk of self-harm, and has stringent and intensive risk intervention procedures to ensure that any inmates who may be at risk of self-harm or suicide are managed appropriately and expeditiously. The Government will continue to provide innovative programs aimed at assisting offenders with mental health problems. Any suggestion that the Department of Corrective Services has deliberately set out to endanger mental health patients is unfounded. [Time expired.]

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I wish to ask a supplementary question. The bulk of my question was directed at the impact upon patients of the extended lock-in hours. They will only be out of their cells for seven hours per day. Has the Attorney General undertaken any studies into the impact on people of their being locked up? The Attorney General's answer dealt with the administrative ease but not the impact on prisoners with mental health conditions.

The Hon. Don Harwin: Point of order: The supplementary question contained argument and should be ruled out of order.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The supplementary question is out of order.

Here are the answers to the Questions on Notice Sylvia Hale of the Greens submitted.

1524—EXTENSION OF LOCK-IN HOURS FOR PATIENTS IN LONG BAY CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

HOSPITAL AND NEW FORENSIC FACILITY

Ms Hale to the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice—

1. Why are patient lock-in hours for the Long Bay Correctional Facility Hospital being extended from 2 April 2008?
2. Is it the intention to extend the lock-in hours indefinitely both at Long

- Bay Correctional Facility Hospital and in the new forensic facility?
3. Has the Minister received a petition from 41 patient inmates protesting against the extended lock-in hours?
 4. How will extended lock-in hours assist patients with a mental illness in their rehabilitation?
 5. Is it the view of the NSW Nurses Association that extended lock-in hours will exacerbate patient's illnesses as well as leading to a decline in the quality of care?

Answer—

I am advised:

Question on the new forensic hospital should be referred to the Minister for Health.

I am advised that a petition from inmates has been forwarded to numerous patients and agencies including myself.

Regarding the Long Bay Hospital I refer the Member to my answer to her Question without Notice on 1 April 2008 in the first instance.

I can also inform you of a series of subsequent developments.

On 22 April 2008, at my direction, Assistant Commissioner Brian Kelly of the Department of Corrective Services met with representatives of the NSW Nurses Association to discuss its concerns with the new operational routine. I understand that during that meeting it was agreed that joint inspections, involving the Department, Justice of Health and the NSW Nurses Association, would be conducted to monitor the new routine currently being trialled at the existing Long Bay Hospital.

I am advised that it was also agreed at the meeting that a review mechanism would be developed by the relevant parties to assess the routine and resolve any issues that may arise at the new Long Bay Hospital. I understand a consensus was reached that the format of that review would be discussed at a meeting to be arranged with the parties involved.

Secondly, I am advised that on 28 April 2008, Julie Babineau, the CEO of Justice Health, Department of Corrective Services Assistant Commissioner Brian Kelly, General Managers Jeanine McGlenn and Karen Boyko, and NSW Nurses Association delegate Ray Gregory, conducted an inspection of the existing Long Bay Hospital evening

operations.

Participants observed the operation and spoke to both Department of Corrective Services and Justice Health staff, who were on duty at the time.

I have been advised that an informal meeting was held following the inspection. I understand that it was generally agreed that the issues raised during the inspection could easily be addressed by changes in operational procedures and the implementation of improved communications strategies.

It was agreed that all parties would monitor the situation and any further inspections would be at the request of the NSW Nurses Association.

Question asked on 1 April 2008 (session 54-1) and printed in Questions & Answers Paper No. 42

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Answer printed in Questions & Answers Paper No. 48

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