

**Question on Notice
No. 813
Asked on 17 August 2004**

MR COPELAND asked the Minister for Health (MR NUTTALL)-

QUESTION:

What is the number of people in the care of the mental health system that have committed suicide each year for the past two years and for the year to date?

ANSWER:

Unexpected deaths are subject to coronial inquiry to determine the cause of death, and this may not occur until up to two years after the death. Nevertheless, I can advise that for the past two years the number of suicides or possible suicides of inpatients undergoing assessment or treatment for a mental health problem in a public mental health inpatient facility or at a public emergency department where a coronial inquiry has been completed is as follows:

2002 – 6; and
2003 – 4.

The term ‘inpatient’ includes people who, at the time of their death:

- were in a mental health ward or emergency department;
- were on leave from a mental health ward; or
- had left a mental health ward or emergency department prior to discharge.

For the reason stated above, I do not have complete information to be able to advise the number of mental health inpatient deaths due to suicide in 2004.

While clearly any suicide is a tragic event, to put these numbers into context, I can advise that the number of inpatient episodes of care in Queensland acute and psychiatric public hospitals, where the patient was treated in a designated psychiatric unit is as follows:

2001-02 22,359 inpatient episodes

2002-03 23,020 inpatient episodes

Source: Queensland Hospital Admitted Data Collection