

Question on Notice
No. 882
Asked on 17 September 2015

MR MCARDLE asked the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services (HON C R DICK)—

With reference to the Not Now Not Ever Report which states on page 197 ‘At the Royal Brisbane Women’s Hospital, screening for domestic violence occurs in the emergency department’—

Will the Minister advise for the financial years ended 30 June 2014 and 30 June 2015, and to the date of the answer of this question, the number of people both male and female with each group identified separately, who revealed they were the victim of domestic violence or were identified when questioned by staff, as a victim of domestic violence at the said emergency department?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Caloundra for his question.

Domestic and family violence is a serious and complex issue resulting in significant human and economic costs to Queensland.

Domestic and family violence has a significant impact on a person’s life including their physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing, and that of their children. Victims of domestic and family violence and their children access a range of public and private health services. These services can be an access point for support and referral.

In response to the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland report ‘Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland’, my department is leading the development of a range of professional development tools, in partnership with non-government stakeholders, to ensure an appropriate and consistent response to domestic and family violence in health settings. We will also undertake an evaluation of antenatal screening for domestic and family violence, and develop a specialist support and referral model for public and private maternity and emergency departments. These actions will build on the existing responses to domestic and family violence that are provided by health professionals.

The Department of Emergency Medicine (DEM) within the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital (RBWH), considers Domestic Violence, along with Child Protection and Sexual Assault, as a priority in terms of detection and response.

With a 24 hour / 7 day a week on-site social work service, presentations of Domestic Violence to the RBWH receive a co-ordinated response from nursing and medical staff in identifying the issue, and social workers follow through with a risk assessment and discharge plan with an emphasis on empowerment, control, safety and follow-up.

Any discharge planning is undertaken within a framework of client self-determination in the context of knowledge and if necessary, education around available support options.

The treating team along with all clinical staff in the area are aware that domestic violence is treated very seriously within the hospital. All patients with risk indicators for domestic violence are screened as part of the initial clinical assessment undertaken by nursing and medical staff within DEM. These staff are highly skilled at undertaking clinical assessment where any injuries or social presentations raise suspicion of domestic violence in patients or their partners. DEM nursing or medical staff undertake an appropriate referral to the DEM social worker. If discharge from DEM is not possible due to risks to the patient, there is without exception, support to provide an inpatient bed until there is a safe discharge plan in place.

DEM social workers work collaboratively with Queensland Police Service and DV Connect where possible to provide safe and quality care to patients experiencing or at risk of experiencing Domestic Violence.