

## Question on Notice

No. 1163

Asked on 26 October 2022

**MR M BERKMAN** ASKED THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES (HON Y D'ATH)—

### QUESTION

With reference to drug overdoses in Queensland—

Will the Minister advise for 2020-21 to 2022-23 financial years respectively (a) how many ambulance call-outs has the Queensland Ambulance Service made to respond to drug overdoses, (b) how many presentations have been made to Emergency Departments for assistance with drug overdoses and (c) what proportion of each of these figures related to (i) fentanyl, (ii) prescribed pharmaceutical opioids, (iii) heroin, (iv) methadone and (v) benzodiazepines?

### ANSWER

The Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) utilises an internationally recognised system called the Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS) to triage and prioritise calls received via the Triple Zero (000) system.

The AMPDS is a symptoms-based triage system, with information entered based on subjective information, as reported by callers, to the QAS emergency medical dispatcher. As such, there are numerous sub-categories that incidents may be categorised based on the patient's presenting symptoms. *For example, a narcotic overdose may be simply categorised as a cardiac arrest if the caller does not identify the usage of narcotics as a precipitating factor.*

I am advised that the AMPDS has one specific category that relates to 'overdose and poisoning' (Category 23). This contains 175 sub-determinates which include various methods and substances as being involved. The table below shows the number of incidents that the QAS responded to where the AMPDS determinant was recorded as a Category 23 - overdose and poisoning, by financial year.

It should be noted that the QAS does not undertake testing at the point of treatment, and as such, the identification of suspicion of specific substance being involved is subjective and is not reflected in the initial AMPDS categorisation.

Financial year	Number of Incidents
2020-21	20,805
2021-22	18,194
2022-23, as at 30 September 2022	4,184

With regard to the second part (b) of your question on the number of presentations to emergency departments for patients presenting for assistance with drug overdoses;

presentations could be classified by the principal or additional diagnosis assigned to the patient record.

Presentations like these to emergency departments are mainly treated and diagnosed symptomatically – for example, a patient may present to an emergency department with head injuries from a fall they sustained whilst under the influence of drugs. In this instance, the principal diagnosis on presentation may be trauma-specific, not drug-specific.

The patients' drug use may not be diagnosed in the emergency department, but instead identified from further investigations after the patient is admitted as an inpatient. In that case, drug use may not be recorded in the emergency department data.

<b>Financial year</b>	<b>Number of drug-related presentations</b>
2020-21	12,617
2021-22	9,928
2022-23, as at 30 September 2022	1,374

I am further advised that the Emergency Data Collection does not capture the type of drugs used (question C) or whether these cases were overdoses.