

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**  
**Question on notice**

11 SEP 2012

Tuesday, 14 August 2012

5797. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Health.

With regard to concerns for the hearing abilities and ear health of children at the Aboriginal communities of Punmu, Parnngurr, Kunawarritji and Jigalong, I ask --

- (1) Are regular hearing checks carried out on school age children in these Western Desert Aboriginal communities?
- (2) If yes to (1), were they carried out on all school age children?
- (3) If no to (1) and (2), how many children missed out and what was done to conduct the checks later?
- (4) What have been the results of the hearing checks that were carried out during the last --
  - (a) one;
  - (b) five;
  - (c) 10;
  - (d) 15 years, and
  - (e) will the Minister please table the results?
- (5) If no to (4)(e), why not?
- (6) How many hearing specialists visit each of the Western Desert communities listed above, and how often?
- (7) What were their findings and will the Minister please table these?
- (8) If no to (7), why not?
- (9) Will the Minister please provide details of government incentives and schemes to improve the hearing of school age children living in remote Aboriginal communities, such as 'hearing hats', with particular attention to the Western Desert communities listed above?
- (10) If not to (9), why not?



## **Answer**

(1) Yes.

(2 - 5) The Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service (PAMS), a Commonwealth and State funded service, offers hearing assessments to school age children as part of the Healthy Kids Check Initiative. In addition, the Remote Area Nurses employed through PAMS offer opportunistic ear health checks to children attending remote clinics. Children identified with hearing loss or ear health concerns are referred to a doctor employed by PAMS to Australian Hearing or to an Audiologist employed by Pilbara Health Network for further assessment or treatment. Further information relating to the number and outcomes of school aged children receiving hearing checks in the Western Desert communities should be directed to PAMS.

(6 - 8) PAMS coordinates all primary health service delivery in the Western Desert Aboriginal Communities. Further information relating to specialists visiting Western Desert communities should be directed to PAMS.

If a child needs Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) services they will be referred and transported to Hedland, Karratha or Perth with assistance through the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme.

(9 - 10) PAMS coordinates all primary health service delivery in the Western Desert Aboriginal Communities.

In addition, the Commonwealth provides funding via a Project Agreement to the State for the provision of services to improve ear health services for Indigenous Australian children. The Pilbara Health Network is contracted to engage an ear health coordinator for the provision of leadership across the Pilbara region to support primary health care services and to improve the care pathway from prevention to tertiary intervention. This Project Agreement also provides funding for increased ENT speciality services.