

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

C1526

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE (Of which some notice has been given)

Thursday, 3 December 2015

Hon Robin Chappie MLC to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the answer to part 4 of Question without notice 1433 asked in the Legislative Council Yesterday, and ask:

1. Why could this program's contract not be extended past December 2015?
2. Will there be a new contract tendered for the provision of this service to be continued?
3. If not, why does the Department of Health not consider this a program worth continuing, given there has been extensive research showing the benefits of good ear health for Aboriginal youth?

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Health.

(1) The original Service Agreements for the provision of ear health screening and audiometric assessment for Aboriginal children between Child and Adolescent Community Health and the Telethon Speech and Hearing Centre was from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2011. The Agreements were extended seven times beyond the original expiry date with a final expiry date of 31 December 2015. If the Service Agreements with the Telethon Speech and Hearing Centre were further extended beyond term, this would breach State Supply Commission Policy.

(2) A comprehensive review of the provision of the ear health program identified that the same services could be delivered internally more effectively and at a reduced cost via existing school health services and new dedicated ear health staff. As a result, there was no need to progress a request for tender for service delivery from a third-party organisation.

(3) The ear health program for Aboriginal children has not been cancelled and will continue. A new program starting from term one 2016 will use school health nurses recruited following the Government's election commitment to employ additional school health nurses. The nurses will deliver ear health services across the metropolitan area. The program will follow National Clinical Care Guidelines, both continuing and expanding the reach of ear health screening to Aboriginal children.

The program will:

- provide increased capacity to coordinate care with other services;
- facilitate ongoing assessment of children; and
- involve schools and families in care coordination and service delivery



WA Country Health Service is in discussion with Telethon Speech and Hearing Centre in relation to the country component of these services.