

NSW Government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic

Hearing – 17/09/2021

QUESTION 1 – Page 57

The CHAIR: Were vaccines redirected from prisons to the student HSC vaccination rollout in August?

Ms HOEY: We did not get any vaccines removed from us. We had our allocations. Nobody took any vaccines back from us. We probably did not have as much as we would like but nobody took vaccinations from us. No vaccinations went from us to somewhere else.

The CHAIR: No, but were your promised allocations reduced to provide vaccines to the HSC rollouts?

Ms HOEY: That would be a question you would have to put to our SHEOC. I do not oversee the allocation of vaccinations. That is not my role. So you would have to put that—I can take it on notice but I cannot answer that.

The CHAIR: Ms Hoey, the fact is notorious. Are you telling me you cannot give evidence about this today—about the redirection of vaccines from prisons to HSC students? This is a notorious fact. It has been reported in multiple outlets. Are you saying you cannot shed any light on that today?

Ms HOEY: I know that there was a priority to vaccinate the year 12 students in the western area. Whether that was a redirection of vaccination from the prison system, I think that is not for me to challenge. I work with SHEOC very closely to ask them and they supply me with the vaccinations. I could not answer what their thought processes were about whether I get vaccinations or somebody else.

The CHAIR: Were your promised allocations reduced at around about that time?

Ms HOEY: We had Pfizer second dose until 16 July. We got another batch on 21 July and we were getting [audio malfunction] a week at that point in time.

The CHAIR: I do not think that answers my question. Were your expected dose numbers reduced at or about that time?

Ms HOEY: That was what we had been supplied and that was what we had been guaranteed. It did not get reduced. That is what we were provided. It was not said, "You will get two trays this week", and then "No, Wendy, you're only getting one." I got what I was allocated. What they did in the background I do not know.

The CHAIR: I am sorry, Ms Hoey, I missed that. What did you say?

Ms HOEY: The decision-making in the background about the allocations—I was not a party to those discussions. You would have to take that up with the SHEOC and I can certainly take it on notice but it is not something I can answer.

ANSWER:

No vaccines were redirected from prisons to the student HSC vaccination roll-out in August 2021.

QUESTION 2 – Page 58

The CHAIR: Ms Hoey, so there is no ambiguity, the question I am asking you is this: Have any health staff from within Parklea—and that includes the St Vincent's privately run health facilities in Parklea—raised concerns with Justice Health about the level of care and/or the management of COVID in Parklea since this most recent outbreak? Have they raised concerns with Justice Health?

Ms HOEY: Not to me directly.

The CHAIR: I am not asking about you directly, Ms Hoey. I am asking about Justice Health.

Ms HOEY: I do not know of any concerns that have been raised.

The CHAIR: Will you take it on notice? Because I have got to tell you that I have had multiple people raise these concerns with me and say it has been reported to Justice Health and nothing has happened. So will you take it on notice?

Ms HOEY: Absolutely, yes.

ANSWER

There are no recorded incidents of Parklea Correctional Centre staff raising concerns with Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network about the level of care and/or the management of COVID-19 in the correctional centre.

QUESTION 3 – Page 59

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Ms Hoey, I have been advised, or I have heard, that a Youth Justice officer has in fact died as a result of COVID. Can you confirm that or can you give me some information or any further comment on that?

Ms HOEY: [Inaudible].

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I think you are on mute.

Ms HOEY: I would have to take that on notice for Youth Justice. Obviously they are not one of my officers. I do not have the staff so I would have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

This is a matter for Youth Justice NSW.

QUESTION 4 – Page 59

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: No. Honestly, Ms Hoey. When did this person pass away?

Ms HOEY: I do not know the dates and times. I spoke to the Executive Director of Justice Health on Tuesday night about nine o'clock at night and that is when he advised me that one of his officers had passed. I honestly have no other circumstances. I do not know the details.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: So on Tuesday night you were advised that a juvenile justice officer had died. I understand that it is a result of COVID. I understand that you might not necessarily have that confirmation but if you could take the details on notice. I do not want the name. I understand the privacy issues but this is of public interest.

Ms HOEY: I will absolutely take it on notice and I will get the information for you. It is just that I do not have the information to give you.

ANSWER

This is a matter for Youth Justice NSW.

QUESTION 5 – Page 63

The CHAIR: What protection measures are in place for the community and family members of people who are exiting prison, given that the prevalence of COVID in prisons is 10 times the rate that it is in the general public?

Ms HOEY: What we have to remember is that we know the prisons where there is a risk, so that currently is Bathurst, MRRC, Silverwater Women's and Cobham because we are bringing everybody down to that area. We have got really strong discharge-planning processes that there will be a COVID plan—either a COVID health plan or a COVID plan—in place before anyone leaves those centres, and rapid antigen screening before they leave. For those people who are in 14-day quarantine because of symptomatology or because of close contacts or in fact they are positive, we liaise very closely with the local public health units and we assess their housing conditions and their ability to quarantine or isolate if they need to.

We did have some real trouble with transport so we have now got ourselves a COVID-trained person to be able to transport people to appropriate accommodation and that may well be the Special Health Accommodation which is the health accommodation, it may well be home if they are able to do home or wherever they can safely quarantine. We are also working very closely with the magistrates and the lawyers around bail and how we can support that, because sometimes it happens and we have got to get our things organised really quickly. So we are working very, very closely with those fraternities to do what we can to make sure that when people are being released they are being released into a safe environment for themselves. The other thing is obviously there are people who are getting released from classification who have been imprisoned longer than COVID. We are taking a lot of time to ensure that they know how to protect themselves out into the COVID world with masks and—

The CHAIR: Ms Hoey, our time is limited. I was really after the policies and the protocols in place but perhaps you might give some actual detail on notice.

ANSWER

People exiting prison are provided with an appropriate health plan and pathway relevant to their clinical status and assessed risk of transmission into the community. Normal and routine release planning processes remain in place and are complemented by:

- Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network advised of release/court dates one week in advance.
- discharge planning questionnaire completed by the patient and health team
- assessment of home circumstances and willingness/ability to adhere to Public Health Orders.

Depending on risk category, a suitable plan will be developed which may include:

- COVID-19 safe transportation to accommodation
- referral to specific COVID-19 health accommodation or virtual hospital
- information and education about Public Health Orders (mask and hand sanitiser provided)

Section 62 of the *Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)* applies in isolated cases where a medical practitioner has assessed that the person is identified as a close contact and their behaviour is placing the public at risk.