

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Mr Secord, one of the events that we are starting—and you may not be aware but it is Women's Week next week.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, I am aware of that.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I beg your pardon. We are actually running a huge program of events for women and actually I can confirm that it will be the biggest women's awards that we have ever run in New South Wales before. That takes a lot of logistics and a lot of organising. Every single member of Parliament, regardless of their colour, nominates a woman for Woman of the Year awards and they bring them in and we discuss—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: "Regardless of their colour", what do you mean?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Different political parties.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Sorry, I thought you were talking about something else.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Mr Secord, you know what I was saying. Regardless of your political party, you can nominate a woman for the Woman of the Year awards. Those are really important things to be able to do and I look forward to seeing you at the awards.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, can you guarantee that all hospitals, MPSs and emergency departments outside of Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle have doctors on duty 24/7? This goes to evidence provided to the rural health inquiry where hospitals in New South Wales, emergency departments, did not have a doctor on duty. Can you guarantee that there were doctors on duty from 1 January 2020 to 2 March 2022?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: On duty, Mr Secord? Could you clarify what you mean by "on duty"?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: When I say "on duty", I mean physically in a hospital. I do not mean on a telephone.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So, Mr Secord, as you would know, I think, because of your experience being in Opposition in Health for quite a number of years—

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: And for a lot longer.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: —that you would know that in some of our hospitals doctors are not on duty actually onsite; they are working in their general practice and they are on call and they are called in. So there is still access to a doctor when that happens.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It is very straightforward. Can you take on notice if you are unable to answer—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: No, Mr Secord, it is not that I am unable to answer. What I have said to you is that—I know exactly what you are trying to do here.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Very clearly, I am trying to prove that there are hospitals without doctors.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: No, you are trying to be tricky, and that is disingenuous. We know that there are doctors that are available who do not actually sit at the hospital, but they run their private practices and they are on call and available to the hospital.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, in your dual capacity as Minister for Regional Health and Minister for Mental Health, you would be aware of the Premier's Priority called "Towards zero suicides" which has set a target to reduce the rate of suicides in New South Wales by 20 per cent in 2023 as a first step on the journey towards zero suicides. In 2017 it was 10.9 per 100,000 people. Is the rate of suicide attempts or deaths involving young people increasing or decreasing in New South Wales?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: In terms of young people, Mr Secord, as you may or may not be aware, we now have a suicide monitoring system in New South Wales, which gives us a very up-to-date data on a month-to-month basis. If I could pre-empt this, Mr Secord, by saying that any death by suicide is an absolute tragedy. We have seen numbers within that happen. Your specific question for me was if I had seen an increase in young people in suicide. We actually last year saw a decrease in young people who were suiciding, which is very good news indeed. We actually saw an 11 per cent decrease in young people suiciding.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How are we tracking on the Premier's Priority to reduce suicide deaths by 20 per cent by 2023? How are we tracking towards that?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: As I said, in young people we had a decrease this year and we had a decrease the year before. We are tracking in a very favourable position, Mr Secord, in terms of those numbers and

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that data. But I will say that I have concerns in terms of going forward and in terms of a delayed response in terms of the mental health stress and stressors that have been faced by our communities. I will also say that when we were at the start of the COVID pandemic, so almost relatively about two years ago, we had specialist people come out and say that they felt, they talked about a shadow pandemic and catastrophic rates of suicide in New South Wales. We have actually not seen that. That is not because I am the Minister for Mental Health, and it is not because of the Government; it is because we have the most amazing people working on the ground in terms of prevention and in terms of the programs that we are running.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you, Minister.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Also, as you referred to directly in your question to me about Towards zero suicides, we have been able to take on a lot of new initiatives and new models of care, so things like the Safe Haven. The anecdotal evidence coming out of that, particularly with the Safe Haven in western Sydney, is quite phenomenal in terms of decreasing presentation to emergency departments and also in terms of people saying that the actual moment of stepping into that Safe Haven has saved their life.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, earlier you said that the number of suicides in New South Wales was decreasing. A report on the NSW Health website under mental health resources and publications called *NSW Suicide Monitoring System – Report 15 – Data to November 2021* says that from 1 January to 30 November 2021 there were 833 confirmed suicides in New South Wales. That is actually an increase from 812 for the same period in the previous year.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I have to correct you there, Mr Secord. Your direct question to me was about young people suicide. My direct answer to you was that youth suicide had decreased. You did not ask me about the general number of suicides. I answered your question as you asked it.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay. I want to rephrase or re-ask the question. Suicides have tragically increased in New South Wales not decreased, based on your own data on your website.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I am very well aware of the numbers. When you look at this, you have to look at this over a period of time and you have to look at the trajectory—say, the last three years. If we look at 2019, 2020 and 2021 and where we have had our Towards Zero suicide strategy, yes, from 2020 to 2021 there was an increase, but if you look at that compared to 2019, those numbers are not as high as what they were in 2019. We have had this Towards Zero strategy in place with unprecedented challenges in terms of people's mental health and mental fitness.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are we on track to meet the Premier's target to reduce the rate by 20 per cent by the end of next year? Are we on target to do that?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I think that at the moment we are tracking well, but I am very cautious of trying to predict what is going to happen. We have put many programs in place, but we are struggling with unprecedented times in terms of the challenges. When I look at what is unfolding in northern New South Wales—to say that that did not concern me for people's mental health, would not be correct.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What about the funding of Towards Zero? This is budget estimates so I would like to know will the funding for the Towards Zero initiative be renewed when it expires this year?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Mr Secord, that will be part of the budget process and I will be putting that, and I would advise to watch this space.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, I now want to take you to another area that involves mental health but has an overlap with the health system, and that is the area of seclusion and restraint. Is the KPI target for the average duration of seclusion in New South Wales less than four hours?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: We would like to see no seclusion and restraint in an ideal world, but this is a situation that is used in terms of a clinical decision at the time. Obviously, the safety and wellbeing of patients and staff is absolutely paramount in this. Seclusion and restraint should only be used as a last resort. The latest BHI report shows that the vast majority of episodes of care in acute mental health units did not have a seclusion or restraint event in the October to December period. Those numbers do differ slightly with the BHI NSW Health because we have now incorporated Northern Beaches Hospital into that reporting as well. It will be included in that and they show a 96.6 per cent of acute mental health episodes of care occurring in specialised acute mental health inpatient units. From the quarter from October to December, NSW Health improved across all indicators for seclusion and restraint compared to the July to September 2021 quarter.