

CONSTITUENT QUESTION

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Cecily Rosol MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Bridget Archer MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

QUESTION:

A constituent has raised concerns with me about medical consultations being conducted in public waiting areas in the emergency department. They report that a family member was asked for personal health information while surrounded by other patients. Later, they overheard sensitive and traumatic details of another person's health issue as another assessment was undertaken in the waiting area. I have heard similar stories from many people and they all find the lack of privacy shocking and embarrassing. Why are patients being assessed in emergency department waiting areas that have no privacy? Is this practice reflective of hospital policy, a lack of available beds, or staffing pressures within our health system? What action will you take to ensure patients are afforded privacy during very personal health assessment?

ANSWER:

1. I am advised that Emergency Department staff prioritise patients through the triage process and assess patients as quickly as possible to ensure appropriate care can be delivered aligned to clinical urgency.
2. The Department of Health also advises that during periods of peak demand, Emergency Department waiting rooms may become crowded with access to private consulting rooms limited.
3. During these busy periods, staff may need to conduct initial assessments in the waiting room to support faster decision making and management of patient flow to appropriate treatment spaces based on patient need.

4. While it is always preferable for conversations of a medical nature to occur in private, the Department has advised that staff are competent in the acquisition and management of sensitive patient information and only seek the answers required for proper medical assessment and prioritisation.
5. I am further advised that patients may express their wish not to provide personal medical information, or to defer providing that information until a private space becomes available.



Hon Bridget Archer MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date:

02 DEC 2025