



STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party



MEDIA RELEASE

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Mental Health Patient Law Draining Police Resources

Stuart Grimley MP has questioned the Andrews Government on whether or not police resources are being used effectively with regards to accompanying mental health patients to hospital.

Section 351 of the Mental Health Act stipulates that police officers are required to wait in hospitals until patients have been assessed by a mental health professional. This can mean potentially hours of police resources being removed from the beat.

According to Mr Grimley - a police officer until his election in November 2018 - given the current pressures on our health system, "on average, police spend up to four hours with a patient".

Mr Grimley suggested that there may be an opportunity for Protective Service Officers (PSOs) to accompany mental health patients rather than frontline police officers and asked the Government if there was a similar "less resource intensive approach being explored".

A more efficient use of police resources would be particularly helpful in rural and regional Victoria where there might only be a handful of police officers on duty at any one time.

Under section 351 of the Mental Health Act, a person at risk of a serious mental health episode can be detained and transported to hospital by police, who can only leave the patient once he or she is signed over to a doctor.

Mr Grimley also publicly supports the expansion of the successful PACER program which sends a paramedic and police officer to a mental health incident to avoid sending a police van and ambulance unit, which are both subject to 'two up' laws.

Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"Our police officers do an amazing job, considering their limited resourcing.

There is an opportunity here for the State government to consider a less resource intensive process which may allow PSOs rather than police officers to wait with mental health patients in hospital until they are assessed.

I believe such changes would improve police efficiency in addition to improving public safety by freeing up frontline cops to remain on the beat.

We are not expecting a policy change overnight, but I think that the Police Minister and the Health Minister should consider the most effective ways in which their respective departments interact."

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