



Flood: Water gushes from a broken main after the car went through a wall at Rockingham General Hospital.

Hospital evacuated after car crashes through wall

RONAN O'CONNELL

Police have arrested an 18-year-old man who allegedly smashed a car into Rockingham General Hospital yesterday morning, forcing part of the facility to be evacuated.

Health Department executive director of Rockingham-Peel group Geraldine Carlton said the hospital had been forced to transfer two critically ill patients to another hospital and defer 20 elective surgeries after the car crashed through a wall and seriously damaged a water main, flooding parts of the building about 6am.

No one was injured in the crash but the car left a huge hole in a wall of the hospital's short-stay unit and caused flooding in the emergency department, paediatric unit and medical unit.

State Emergency Service volunteers spent hours clearing debris and attempting to ensure the safety of the damaged section of the building.

Mrs Carlton said they had moved the emergency department to near the hospital's main entrance and had been able to accept patients who were in need of immediate treatment.

Patients who did not require emergency care were asked to go to the Peel Health Campus.

The emergency department and



Under arrest: Police escort the driver.

short-stay unit will remain closed until at least tomorrow morning so that equipment can be checked and tested and supplies restocked.

"It's a significant disruption for the hospital but the team have done a tremendous job and it's been managed very calmly and effectively," Mrs Carlton said.

"Families and patients have been very supporting and understanding."

The arrested man was expected to be charged overnight.

Workers recruited to fight reptile trade

MICHELLE RIDLEY

Mine site workers in the North West are being recruited by environmental authorities to try to stop the trade in smuggled reptiles amid claims that many animals are being taken from the Pilbara and sold on the black market.

Unlike mammals, reptiles are simple to transport because they can be easily immobilised and are able to survive for days without food or water.

There is a lucrative domestic and international trade in Australian snakes and lizards with some fetching \$20,000 overseas. Even bobtail lizards can bring up to \$7500 on the Asian black market.

In the past two years, two fly-in, fly-out workers have been arrested for smuggling reptiles including a Pilbara mine site worker who was arrested at Perth Airport in September after carrying two Stimson's

WHAT THEY'RE WORTH

THE COST OF PILBARA REPTILES ON WA AND OVERSEAS WEBSITES

BLACKHEADED PYTHON
Scientific Name
Aspidites melanocephalus
Price in Perth
\$880 - \$1650
Price overseas
\$9910 - \$22 870

WOMA PYTHON
Scientific Name
Aspidites ramsayi
Price in Perth
\$1600 - \$1800
Price overseas
\$1910 - \$8890

RIDGE TAILED MONITOR
Scientific Name
Varanus acanthurus
Price in Perth
\$440
Price overseas
\$1240 - \$2350

pythons and a sand swimmer skink on a flight from Newman.

He was fined \$3700 with \$119 in court costs over the smuggled reptiles and a third Stimson's python and a pygmy python found at his house.

Department of Environment and Conservation wildlife officer Matt Swan said that 67 native animals had been seized by authorities this year with pygmy pythons, Pilbara olive pythons, banded knob tailed geckos and pygmy spiny tailed

skinks among the most heavily targeted species.

With illegal collecting taking place in remote locations, the DEC is turning to mine site workers to be the eyes and ears of the department.

"Wildlife officers raise the issue of illegal reptile collecting in discussions with mine site staff whenever they visit a site," Mr Swan said.

"DEC recently delivered a presentation to staff at the Perth headquarters of a mining company on smug-

gling and how to detect it. Smuggling can be a cruel practice depending on the way reptiles are handled and transported.

"High mortality is associated with overcrowding, lack of ventilation and the use of tape or other materials to restrict the movement of animals, causing severe stress."

Anyone with information about the removal of reptiles should call the DEC Wildcare hotline on 9474 9055 or the Customs hotline on 1800 061 800.

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