



# ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

## REPORT NO. 1 OF 2000

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The sessional orders adopted by the Legislative Assembly on 22 June 2000 established seven estimates committees to consider proposed expenditure under the *Appropriation Bill 2000* and the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2000*. Each committee was given the responsibility for scrutinising the estimates for particular ministerial portfolios.

The Legislative Assembly appointed Estimates Committee D to examine and report on the proposed expenditure for the organisational units within the portfolios of the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education.

The committee conducted a public hearing on Friday, 4 August 2000 to take evidence from the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education and their respective officers.

For the purposes of examining the proposed expenditure for the organisational units allocated to it, the committee considered:

- Evidence presented to the committee at its public hearing by the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education, and their respective advisers
- Budget Papers and Ministerial Portfolio Statements tabled by the Acting Treasurer on 18 July 2000;
- written responses provided by the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education to questions on notice submitted to the Ministers by the committee prior to the public hearing; and
- a written response provided by the Minister for Education to a question taken on notice at the public hearing.

Accompanying this report is a volume of "Additional Information" presented by the committee to the Legislative Assembly. The additional information includes the minutes of the committee's meetings and answers to questions on notice asked before and during the public hearing.

### 2. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

#### 2.1 Introduction

Queensland Health provides a wide range of health services. These include acute inpatient, non-inpatient, mental health, public health services and health maintenance services, such as aged care residential facilities and home and community care services. The three priority strategic directions for the next ten years to 2010 are:

- Balancing the investment in health through building healthy communities, enhancing a continuum of care, and developing a more balanced public health focus
- Improving Indigenous health through implementing culturally sensitive prevention and management strategies; and
- Addressing the burden of disease by implementing initiatives to prevent and manage chronic illness, and reduce social impacts of illness on individuals and the community.

The Department of Health will have a Total Controlled Operating Budget of \$3.813 billion in the financial year 2000-2001, representing an increase of \$127 million over the 1999-2000 Estimated Actual. Included in this Budget is a State budgetary appropriation of \$2.417 billion.

The Ministerial Portfolio Statement provides the following output summary.

<b>Output</b>	<b>Total Cost \$'000</b>
Treatment and Management – Acute Inpatient Services	1,903,971
Treatment and Management – Non Inpatient Service	898,517
Integrated Mental Health Services	363,570
Health Maintenance Services	454,653
Public Health Services	192,515

## 2.2 Key Initiatives

Key initiatives proposed by Queensland Health for the 2000-2001 year include:

- An extra \$15.9M to provide additional hospital services in Districts across the State
- An additional \$9.3M to enhance adult acute and community mental health services
- An extra \$4.5M in State funding for Home and Community Care services which will attract an extra \$8.2M in Commonwealth funding bringing the total amount of new money for these services to \$12.7M
- An additional \$3.2 M for a range of whole-of-government initiatives including early intervention for safe and healthy families (\$1.2M), Young People in Detention (\$1M), Drug Diversion (\$0.4M) and the implementation of the *Prostitution Act* (\$0.6M); and
- A further \$17.1M to meet the costs of providing public patient services at the new hospitals at Noosa and Robina.

## 2.3 Capital Outlays

The capital program for Queensland Health for 2000-2001 is estimated to be \$473 million. Capital works to be undertaken include:

- Redevelopment of several Torres Strait Primary Health Centres and the Brisbane North Community Health Centre
- Further redevelopment of Royal Brisbane, Princess Alexandra, Caloundra, Gold Coast, Cairns and Townsville hospitals
- Further capital developments to redistribute mental health services currently provided at Mossman Hall, Wolston Park and Baillie Henderson Hospitals

- Ongoing upgrading of residential aged-care facilities.

## 2.4 Public Hearing

During the public hearing held on 4 August 2000 the Minister for Health responded to queries from the committee in relation to a wide range of matters. The matters raised at the hearing include:

- Number of intensive care beds Statewide
- Level of private health insurance in Queensland
- Consequent impact of that on Commonwealth funding of Queensland health system
- Role of Queensland Health zonal managers
- Waiting lists for oncology services
- Impact of industrial action on surgery and specialist appointments
- Full-time equivalent staffing levels
- Siting of forensic mental health patients at Prince Charles and Townsville Hospitals
- Health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people
- School Nurse Program
- Waiting List Reduction Strategy for elective surgery
- Vaccination rates for children
- Intensive Care Unit at Caboolture Hospital
- Provision of in-home care in Queensland and associated priority ratings
- Home and community care in Caboolture area
- Services provided in emergency departments
- Programs for breast screening
- Accreditation of hospitals
- Closure of emergency mental health beds at Barrett Centre
- Number of completed courses of adult oral health care
- Alcohol and drug services in rural and regional areas
- Treatment of diabetes in Prince Charles Hospital district
- Cardiovascular health, and rehabilitation facilities for sufferers of strokes
- Waiting lists for dental services
- Director-General's bonus
- Radiation safety audits
- Budgetary position of Bundaberg Health Service District

- Provision of radiation therapy services at Nambour
- Palliative care and respite care funding Statewide
- Tobacco action plan
- Drug treatment facilities in Brisbane outer southern suburbs
- Nature of services provided at oral health centres
- Strategies to increase number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people in nursing
- Genetically modified foods
- Accreditation of State Government residential aged care facilities
- Upgrading of surgeries and accommodation for rural doctors and other staff.

The questions directed to the Minister in relation to these and other matters, and the Minister's responses, appear in full in the transcript of the public hearing. The transcript is available on the Internet at:

<http://www.parliament/qld.gov.au/Hansard>.

### 3. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

#### 3.1 Introduction

The relevant Ministerial Portfolio Statement states that the Department of Education provides a comprehensive, general education for all primary and secondary school children, an optional year of sessional attendance at preschool, and educational programs for students with special needs through special and distance education services. It also provides assistance to non-State schools and tertiary institutions.

The Department of Education will have a Total Controlled Operating Budget of \$3.365 billion in the financial year 2000-2001, representing an increase of \$26.9 million over the 1999-2000 Estimated Actual. Included in this Budget is a State budgetary appropriation of \$3.924 billion.

The Ministerial Portfolio Statement provides the following output summary:

Output	Total Cost \$'000
Preschool Education	104,621
Primary Education	1,804,806

Secondary Education	1,189,899
Students with Special Needs	261,104
Portfolio Services – Assistance to Non-State Education	561
Portfolio Services – Assistance to Tertiary Institutions	4,006

#### 3.2 Key Initiatives

Key initiatives proposed by the Department of Education for the 2000-2001 financial year include:

- Stage one of the *Secondary Schools Renewal* program, which will reinvigorate older secondary schools ((\$114 M over three years, starting with eight schools in 2000-2001)
- *Networked Learning Communities* – funding for computer infrastructure in schools, including the State-wide computer network and the roll-out of local area networks in schools (\$15M), and for information technology support in schools and professional development and training of teachers in teaching with computers (\$5M)
- the start of a four-year program to employ 800 additional teachers to reduce some class sizes and augment services for students with special needs and behaviour management
- more support for students with disabilities, with \$16.3M to provide teachers and teacher aides and 1.2M to enhance transport arrangements for students with disabilities
- the *Cooler Schools* program, for air-conditioning facilities in State schools (\$18.2M)

#### 3.3 Capital Outlays

The capital outlays program for the Department of Education is estimated to be \$186 million. Capital works to be undertaken include:

- Construction of four new schools and further staged work at nine new schools, an increase in the number of schools that teach students from preschool to Year 12 (P-12 schools), and more than 200 additional classrooms at existing schools in growth areas of the State
- Commencement of the *Secondary Schools Renewal* program, which will reinvigorate older secondary schools, starting with eight schools in 2000-2001
- Funding for *Cooler Schools* projects to air condition facilities at various State schools; and

- Funding for school maintenance and security at various locations.

### 3.4 Public Hearing

During the public hearing held on 4 August 2000 the Minister for Education responded to queries from the committee in relation to a wide range of matters. The matters raised at the hearing include:

- Teacher numbers
- Funding for additional teachers
- *Secondary Schools Renewal Program*
- Facilities for Wavell and Kedron State High Schools
- Health and physical education syllabus
- Drug education in schools
- Economies of scale
- Services for students with disabilities
- Ratio of students to teachers
- *Queensland State Education 2010 Program*
- *New Basics Program*, including relevant training of teachers
- *Community Access Schools Program*
- Proposed Calamvale P-12 School
- Alternative Schooling Centres
- Strategies to improve educational standards of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students
- Boys' educational outcomes
- Behaviour management funding
- Director-General's salary package
- Equity return
- Overrun in staff numbers
- Refurbishment of Education House
- Investigation of possible extra year of schooling
- Numeracy and literacy programs
- Overseas students and offshore programs
- Future of Mount Cotton State School
- Staffing and resources of Montrose Special School

- Buildings at Caboolture East and Morayfield East State Schools
- Repairs to Caboolture State High School
- Telecommunications equipment at Tullawong State School
- Information technology programs, infrastructure and equipment
- Learning and Development Foundation
- Effect of Goods and Services Tax
- Consultation with non-State schooling sector
- Maintenance expenditure in schools
- Expenditure on plant and equipment
- Professional development and training of teachers and teacher aides
- *Gateway Focus Schools Project*
- *Youth Action Program*
- Additional accommodation at Robina State High School

The questions directed to the Minister in relation to these and other matters, and the Minister's responses, appear in full in the transcript of the public hearing. The transcript is available on the Internet at:

<http://www.parliament/qld.gov.au/Hansard>.

### 4. RECOMMENDATION

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditures, as stated in the *Appropriation Bill 2000* for the organisational units within the portfolios referred to Estimates Committee D for examination, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

### 5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The committee thanks Ministers and their staff for their cooperation and assistance during the estimates process.

Karen Struthers MLA  
Chair

21 August 2000

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Ms Karen Struthers MLA (Chair)

Mr Bob Quinn MLA (Deputy Chair)

Mr Bill Feldman MLA

Mr Gary Fenlon MLA

Miss Fiona Simpson MLA

Mr Terry Sullivan MLA

# STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS - OPPOSITION MEMBERS

## 1. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

### Overview

As the Health portfolio is one of the most important areas of service delivery, affecting the quality of life of nearly every Queenslanders, it commands one of the largest budgets, of \$3.813 billion and oversees a workforce estimated to be around 60,000 full-time and part-time workers.

It is critical that Queenslanders have access through the parliamentary process to transparent and accountable information to demonstrate that the standard of service delivery meets their needs and that actual funding allocations are spent in areas of real priority.

As the Department of Health has an inherent conflict of interest between balancing and controlling financial issues with best patient care and clinical standards, there is an even greater need for accountability over its operations.

This conflict is heightened by the fact the workforce is bound by a code of conduct not to speak to the media or, in practice, to Opposition members, or otherwise risk severe disciplinary action which has proven to be a tool of intimidation used by this Government in managing information flow.

In this context, the existing onus on the responsible minister to be accountable and to be seen to be accountable for her statements and actions in respect of the Health services must be emphasised. In short, the onus is on the Minister to provide documented proof of actual spending and service delivery and this has not happened.

Not only was documented proof of statements absent in the Health Minister's response to the Estimates Process and in the Portfolio Statements, there were repeated examples where the Health Minister refused to answer basic questions on notice and without notice.

This is clearly a breach of her responsibility under the Labor Government's Charter of Social and Fiscal

Responsibility as well as being a contempt of the parliamentary process.

### **Lack of documentation and answer to questions – Full-time equivalent staff levels across the state**

The Health Minister was asked on notice to supply a breakdown of the full-time equivalent staffing positions by category in each of the health districts. She refused on the basis that this was too onerous despite providing that summarised information for the Redcliffe-Caboolture Health District to Member for Caboolture Bill Feldman and stating during last year's estimates process that such a question in relation to all the districts should be asked on notice. Last year, the Health Minister also provided an answer on full-time equivalent positions for the Gladstone Health District. To claim this year that the gathering of such information for all health districts is too onerous is a deliberate cover-up given that the department has collated this information for years.

If the Health Minister wants to be accountable for her claims that the corporate bureaucracy and administrative structures of the Queensland Health Department are not growing faster than operational staff, she must prove it.

### **Lack of documentation and answer to questions – Mental Health staffing levels**

The Minister was asked to provide a breakdown in the categories of staff employed under integrated mental health services to prove the Minister's claim that the reduction in full-time equivalent staffing levels in this area was because of the reduction in employment of staff such as gardeners.

As the Government not only failed to meet its own target from 12 months ago of 385 more full-time equivalent staff in integrated mental health, but actually went backwards by 358 full-time equivalent positions, it is imperative that the Minister substantiate her claim that there had been a change in the way these staffing positions are calculated. There is no explanatory note or detail to this effect in the portfolio statements. Furthermore, last year's FTE target was set by this government and it was set well after the start of the 10 Year Mental Health Plan's implementation.

The Minister also blamed the non-inclusion of Mater Hospital staffing figures for what is a substantial difference in mental health positions but she provided no substantiation of this claim.

The Minister also claimed that the outsourcing of services to non-government providers such as Robina Hospital distorts the FTEs but she provided no alternative measure of FTEs in outsourced services or alternative measure of service outputs.

#### **Lack of documentation and answer to questions – Alcohol and Drug staffing levels**

The Minister was asked to provide information about the full-time equivalent staffing levels employed by the Queensland Health Department in the area of Alcohol and Drugs services in the last financial year. She was also asked how many would be employed this financial year and how many were employed in corporate office?

The Minister said she would take this question on notice. Later during the estimates process she said it was difficult to answer the question because of the funding supplied to non-government organisations.

As this was not the question asked of the minister, the Opposition assumed she would still answer the question she took on notice and which was supplied to her in writing with regard the number of employees in alcohol and drug sub program employed by the Queensland Health Department and how many were in corporate office.

As the role of Government in tackling the problem of substance abuse in our community is a major issue, Government needs to be accountable for how these resources are used by providing more information in such sub-programs. However, the only performance indicator for the alcohol and drug program in the portfolio statements is the number of people in the methadone program. This is clearly inadequate, a fact which has previously been raised with this government.

#### **Lack of documentation and answer to questions – Palliative Care spending**

The Minister was asked to provide details of the actual spending in palliative care services (as opposed to last year's budgeted amount) for the last financial year and she did not answer the question.

The Minister was also asked why she allowed for one-fifth of the palliative care budget to be put out for tender in March 2000 with only five working days to respond with organisations being able to spend money on items such as cars and office furniture which can be sourced from other non-health programs. This did not directly enhance the care of the terminally ill and was contrary to what palliative care organisations were asking for which was recurrent funding.

#### **Closure of emergency acute mental health beds**

The Opposition views with grave concern the lack of extended hours mental health services and lack of acute mental health beds. In light of these facts, the Minister's explanation for the closure of the emergency acute beds at the Barrett Centre is not acceptable.

#### **Loss of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds and downgrade of hospital services**

The Minister denied there was a net-loss of Intensive Care Unit beds in Queensland but refused to provide a breakdown of the respirator capable ICU beds to substantiate her claim.

The Opposition asked her to explain how the funded and staffed beds had been reduced at Royal Brisbane Hospital from 22 to 14, Prince Charles Hospital from 10 to 7 and Princess Alexandra Hospital from 20 to 14, and Redcliffe was operating with funded and staffed beds of 3 instead of its alleged capacity of 5.

The Opposition also raised that Toowoomba Hospital's ICU had also lost capacity and was closed at weekends.

The Minister denied that patient care had been compromised and said that ICU beds were available if necessary despite claims of health workers that patients were being refused access to ICU beds, particularly in Brisbane where most of the cuts have taken place.

The Opposition stands by the claim during the estimates that one patient who suffered an out-of-hospital cardiac attack did die at Royal Brisbane Hospital in the emergency department and was not admitted to ICU because of the lack of respirator capable ICU beds. In regard to the second patient referred to during estimates who was unable initially to be admitted to Redcliffe Hospital's ICU because it was full and who was also not able to be admitted to Royal Brisbane Hospital's ICU, this was due to another critical problem. At the time, Royal Brisbane Hospital had a power "brown out" and a failure of the back-up power system. Staff had to hand-ventilate some patients and therefore could not accept the patient from Redcliffe. I understand that the ambulance carrying the patient had to turn back to Redcliffe Hospital where an ICU bed was eventually made available.

#### **State failing to fund health budget**

The Opposition is concerned that the real overall increase in Health funding is only about 3.4 per cent after a 3.7 per cent increase last year; the two lowest increases in health spending in this state in a decade.

Capital spending has fallen 25 per cent.

Furthermore, in the Budget papers, only about \$15.9 million extra is allocated for extra hospital services which across 100 hospitals is clearly insufficient and does not indicate the State is meeting its responsibility to provide its fair share of public hospital funding.

#### **Dental Services – wrong information in Estimates papers**

The number of completed adult dental cases, according to the budget papers was 22,600 fewer than 12 months ago.

However, on questioning this reduction in service, the Health Department claimed that there had been an increase in services and that the "estimated actual" printed in the budget paper was about 40,000 procedures lower than the "actual" actual as at the June 30 2000.

As this is a fairly major error, the Opposition views with concern the accuracy of the figures supplied for Oral Health Services and, for that matter, other "estimated actuals".

#### **Secret contract with Director General**

The Opposition views with great concern the secrecy surrounding the Director General's pay packet and bonus arrangements given the potential conflicts within the health system between fiscal responsibility and patient care.

#### **Lack of documentation and answer to questions on notice**

The Health Minister also refused to answer a question on notice asking for the total actual spending for each Queensland Health District compared to budget, nor did she identify the public hospitals which overspent their respective budgets. The Opposition does not accept her explanation that this information from June 30 2000 was still being finalised despite the fact that the estimates process was held in early August 2000.

#### **Conclusion**

The critical analysis of the Health Budget must increasingly focus on the actuals rather than primarily on forward estimates of expenditure as the actuals should provide a measure of prior performance rather than wide-ranging statements of intent.

However, as has been outlined earlier in regard to questioning on Oral Health Services, even some of the "actuals" reported in the portfolio statements are by the Health Department's own admission in error.

There is simply not enough information supplied in the budget papers to provide a detailed account for the majority of sub-programs, such as alcohol and drugs or acute care services such as funded intensive care beds.

In lieu of that information being provided in budget papers, the Health Minister should be prepared to provide documentation and detailed answers in the estimates process.

This is why this is so disappointing that minister would not answer questions.

Fiona Simpson MLA  
Member for Maroochydore

## **2. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The budget for the Department of Education continues to support the general policy direction of the past few years.

The Coalition supports the budget subject to some reservations.

### **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

The Minister was asked by the Committee to provide answers to all Questions on Notice by c.o.b. Monday 31/7/2000. He failed to do so. He was required to provide them under Estimates Sessional Orders by 8.30am Thursday 3/8/2000. He failed to provide the required answers to two questions by that time.

They were eventually provided shortly before midday on Thursday, less than 24 hours before the Estimates hearing commenced.

While the Minister's statement during the hearing offered a reason for his tardiness, no regret or apology for this deliberate breach of Estimate Sessional Orders was expressed.

This action contravenes the accepted standard expected of all Members of Parliament.

### **STAFFING**

Last year's budget forecast total operating expenses of \$3245 million. The Estimated Actual at June 2000 was \$3338 million, an increase of \$93 million of which \$38 million was additional expenditure on employee expenses, i.e. salaries.

This is reflected in the unanticipated staffing increase of some 814 personnel at June 2000 which was attributed to an overrun in teacher numbers.

Since an escalation in staffing numbers to that extent has not occurred before, laying the blame at administrative systems is only trying to draw attention away from the obvious lack of fiscal responsibility being exerted within the department.

Paradoxically it was also stated that the budgeted increase in teacher numbers of 288 in 1999-2000 was not achieved (Est. Act. 145 at June 2000), due to the additional student enrolments not meeting departmental forecasts.

Such discrepancies in teacher numbers and the reasons advanced on each occasion are clear evidence of confusion and an inability to accurately report on the administration of the department.

The Minister has informed the Committee that this year's budget contains some \$19.5 million for the first portion of 800 teachers to be employed over the next 4 years. However no mention is made of this additional staffing increase in the relevant staffing data. Such a significant omission brings into question the accuracy of the MPS.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The Coalition expresses its appreciation for the efforts of departmental staff, Hansard and Committee secretarial staff.

Yours sincerely,

**BOB QUINN**

Deputy Chairman, Estimates Committee D  
Shadow Minister For Education  
Deputy Leader – Liberal party  
Member for Merrimac

17 August 2000