



Speech by

Hon. Stephen Robertson

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

Hansard Thursday, 24 May 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Hospital Waiting Lists

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.04 am): Cutting our elective surgery waiting lists continues to be one of our government's top priorities. Today I announce that I have approved the expenditure of \$10 million for approximately 2,000 additional public patients to undergo their operations. This one-off injection will benefit patients from the Gold Coast to Townsville and will target those waiting longer than nationally recommended for surgery. This is in addition to the tender announced earlier this year for the private sector to provide surgery to public patients. But both initiatives are designed to achieve the same objective—to cut the number of long waits on our waiting lists.

Queensland Health will spend an additional \$10 million within existing budgets for public hospitals that have indicated an ability to carry out more surgical sessions or have identified spare capacity at local private facilities. At this stage, \$6.4 million has been provided to treat more than 1,400 patients at 10 public hospitals—Bundaberg, Ipswich, Logan, Toowoomba, Townsville, Fraser Coast, Nambour, Rockhampton, Mackay and the Princess Alexandra Hospital. Most of these operations will be performed by our valued visiting medical officers and will be over and above existing surgery levels at these hospitals. They will focus on low-cost, high-volume type procedures such as cataracts and colonoscopies and target category two and category three 'long wait' patients.

Planning is also underway to allocate the remaining \$3.6 million, after which I expect a total of around 2,000 additional patients to be treated and removed from the waiting list. Our public health system is treating record numbers of patients, but there is unprecedented demand for surgery from a growing and ageing population. That is why we are always exploring ways to cut our waiting lists.

Identifying spare capacity in the system is one way, and in April we put public operations out to private tender through the \$8.5 million Surgery Connect initiative. I expect the successful tenderer to start performing public elective surgery in July this year.