

Question on Notice
No. 1676
Asked on 2 September 2010

MR KNUTH asked the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health (MR LUCAS)-

QUESTION:

With reference to Queensland Health payroll—

- (1) How is the Minister's Office handling recurring pay inaccuracies for Queensland Health employees who have earned penalty rates?
- (2) What is the Minister doing to provide assistance to Queensland Health employees who are not able to understand the extreme complexity of their payslips?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Dalrymple for his question.

Significant progress has been made toward stabilising the new payroll/rostering system and the number of incorrect pays continues to decrease with each pay run.

To ensure employee's pays are correct, including penalty rates, priority has been given to reducing the backlog of outstanding salary adjustments and to ensuring forms required to process penalty rates are completed in a timely manner. Additional temporary payroll staff have been employed in payroll hubs to process the backlog of salary adjustments which are continuing to fall and are nearing business as usual levels.

Queensland Health has implemented measures to assist staff who have received incorrect pays, including:

- providing emergency assistance to staff where non-payment of wages has resulted in financial hardship. Each District has established a local process to ensure that staff have access to cash or cheque payments or can receive an ad hoc overnight adjustment. Nominated staff are available in facilities and in districts to provide advice and urgent assistance through kiosks, local hotlines or mobile centres;
- establishing a Statewide hotline and local contact points for staff to report issues; and
- reimbursing staff fees or charges incurred as a direct result of disruption to their pay due to the new system.

Upgrades to the speed and usability of the system have been implemented and a program of further system improvements is being implemented.

A high number of adjustments is a reality of hospital payroll. It occurred in the previous system, and continues to occur in the new system.

Queensland Health staff work in a range of professional occupations on a 24 hour seven days a week basis. As a result of this complex working environment, more than half of Queensland Health's employees require complicated payroll adjustments on a regular basis.

Queensland Health has the complexity of 13 awards and multiple industrial agreements which provide for over 200 different allowances and in excess of 24,000 different combinations of calculation groups and rules for Queensland Health employees.

The old payroll system provided Queensland Health staff only general information on their payslips. Feedback from staff prior to the implementation was that they wanted more detail. The new payroll system provides detail of every salary adjustment and allowance paid, but as the backlog of adjustments has been processed, this has meant that many staff have received very detailed payslips, particularly in relation to retrospective payments.

Queensland Health appreciates that this level of detail has made understanding payslips more difficult. Materials have been developed to assist staff to understand their payslips, including a DVD, brochure and an electronic, searchable glossary of terms. All of these can be found on Queensland Health's intranet and website.

In addition, staff have the opportunity to have their enquiries answered personally. In every Queensland Health Service District and Division employees can make appointments with payroll staff to discuss payroll/payslip enquiries.

In August, all Queensland Health staff received a personalised Time and Wages Report which showed what the payroll system had recorded as their working hours, wages, penalties and allowances for the eight pay periods between 8 March 2010 and 27 June 2010.

The Report also included:

- any outstanding pay adjustments that were processed between 27 June 2010 and 25 July 2010 that are relevant to the eight pay periods in the employees' reports, and
- any lump sum payments for work performed prior to 8 March 2010 (under the old payroll system) that have been processed in the new system.

The Time and Wages Report has helped staff to compare the payroll system records of hours worked against their own records and confirm the accuracy of pays.

I am also pleased to report that work has commenced on simplifying the format of the payslip so that staff will be able to better understand what is on their payslip. This will involve wide consultation with unions and staff focus groups over the next few months, with plans to introduce the new format early in the New Year.