

Question on Notice
No. 1083
Asked on 28 September 2004

MR FOLEY asked the Minister for Health (MR NUTTALL)—

QUESTION:

As there is an arduous process of referrals to Occupational Therapists before disability modifications can be fitted to houses and as people have to go to their doctor to get a referral before they can access the Occupational Therapists before the work can be carried out, will he take steps to streamline this process in concert with other relevant ministers to provide a better outcome for the citizens of Maryborough?

ANSWER:

Referrals for home modifications to the Occupational Therapist at the Community Health Service in Maryborough do not need to be obtained from a general practitioner. Referrals can be received from the clients themselves, carers or family member with the client's consent. Referrals also come directly from Home Assist, a joint Home and Community Care Program (HACC)/Department of Housing funded non government organisation, as clients sometimes contacted that organisation first and Home Assist guidelines require an assessment by an Occupational Therapist prior to any home modification being undertaken.

Similar to all Queensland Health services, referrals to Community Health Occupational Therapy services are prioritised according to clinical need. If urgent or for a palliative client, they are seen as soon as possible. If non urgent, they are attended to in chronological order. There is a waiting time for services.

The Community Health Occupational Therapist position was vacant recently for approximately three months and this may have necessitated some Maryborough clients, being referred by their general practitioner to the Wide Bay Division of General Practice's Occupational Therapist who provides a similar service. I am advised that it is the policy of that Division that their Occupational Therapist must receive a direct referral from the client's general practitioner. I am also advised that any Department of Veteran's Affairs gold card holder, who wishes to have the cost of home modification work met by that Department, must seek a referral from a general practitioner to an Occupational Therapist, who is contracted by the Department of Veteran's Affairs. The requirements of the Wide Bay Division of General Practice and the Department of Veteran's Affairs are outside the Queensland Government's area of responsibility.

The vacant Occupational Therapist position with the Community Health Services was filled in July 2004 and as such the simplified system is available to Maryborough residents.