Question on Notice
No. 193
Asked on 28 April 2004

Dr FLEGG asked the Minister for Health (MR NUTTALL)-

QUESTION:

Will he provide the average bed occupancy rate and average number of beds available for each ward type for each public hospital for 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04 (year to date)?

ANSWER:

Queensland Health do not routinely collect the requested data centrally, so collation and provision of the figures would divert Queensland Health staff from their duties providing and supporting health services for Queenslanders.

Changes in medical technology and work practices, such as minimally invasive surgery, improvements in anaesthetic techniques, new pharmaceutical agents and improved ambulatory care have all contributed to reductions in the need for hospital beds. Queensland Health has embraced appropriate new technology and treatment methods and has demonstrated increased use of day surgery and outpatient treatment options. In doing so, Queensland Health is aligned with international best practice.

The major re-developments that have been undertaken within Queensland public hospitals in recent years also mean that physical facilities such as wards are not a constant item that can be reported against.

These changes in medical technology, work practices, workforce and hospital facilities therefore make comparisons of bed numbers and bed occupancy data irrelevant and it would be inappropriate to expend resources on meeting the Member for Moggill's request. However, the Member is directed to the Queensland Health Annual Reports for years 2000-2001 and 2002-2003. These reports contain information which includes average daily occupied beds in Queensland Health Service Districts. The Annual Reports also clearly demonstrate the increases in funding that the Government has provided to Queensland Health and the increases in services that these funds have delivered.

In particular, the Member for Moggil is directed to the information on the inside front cover of the 2002-2003 Annual Report. The 2002-2003 Annual Report shows that in addition to the 6,970 people cared for every day in Queensland public hospitals, there are 24,512 people receiving outpatient services, 953 adults receiving free dental treatment, 904 school aged children completing dental treatment, 6,456 meals delivered to people at home, 3,206 vaccines distributed, and 10,745 hours of respite care provide. These data reinforce the message that Queensland's public health services are not just about beds and bed occupancy.