

Question on Notice
No. 530
Asked on 19 May 2004

MR LAWLOR asked the Minister for Health (MR NUTTALL)-

QUESTION:

Will he advise the impact that the recent Federal Budget will have on the health service in the Gold Coast region?

ANSWER:

The Australian Government 2004-05 Budget was brought down on Tuesday 11 May 2004. While the additional funds provided for aged care in the 2004-05 Australian Government budget are welcome, it is disappointing that this budget fails to provide an adequate investment in the public health system, and fails to address the rising impact of inadequate primary health care across Queensland and in the Gold Coast region.

In 2004-05, Queensland will receive \$1.503 billion under the Australian Health Care Agreement – funding which unfortunately fails to keep pace with the fast growing demand on our public hospital system. In comparison, the Queensland Government has committed to provide \$1.783 billion, over \$200 million more funding to public hospitals than the Australian Government in 2004-05. This funding goes directly to Queensland's public hospital system, including the public hospital facilities in the Gold Coast region. With a budget surplus of over \$2 billion, it is disappointing that the Australian Government has failed to use this budget to invest more strongly in funding for public hospitals in Queensland.

The 2004-05 budget also included the Australian Government's \$2.85 billion MedicarePlus package, which offers few solutions to public hospital emergency departments struggling to cope with increased demand associated with falling rates of bulk billing and an inadequate primary health care system. In the Gold Coast region, bulk billing rates had dropped to 70.2% at the end of 2003, from 76.1% in 2002. Bulk billing rates for 2004 have not been released by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. It is unlikely that the MedicarePlus package will boost these bulk billing rates to an acceptable level.

The Australian Government 2004-05 budget also included a new transition care program to help older people move from hospital to aged care services, both residential and in the community. The cost of this program will be shared by the Queensland Government.