

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 760**

**Asked on 18 June 2004**

MS STONE asked the Minister for Health (MR NUTTALL)-

### **QUESTION:**

What is the State Government doing to reduce elective surgery waiting lists throughout the state?

### **ANSWER:**

The Beattie Government has committed a massive \$110 million over the next three and a half years to treat approximately 18,000 extra elective patients within the times recommended by specialist medical officers.

\$20 million of this funding was immediately made available to address elective surgery backlogs by 1 July 2004, working in partnership with the private sector to reduce waiting times.

Private sector facilities were asked to partner Queensland Health in the reduction of elective surgery waiting lists thus enabling us to deliver more non-urgent operations such as cataract surgery and joint replacements, as well as maintaining and improving our urgent and semi-urgent performance.

As at 22 June 2004, more than 2,500 patients have received treatment in Queensland under the special five-month program to date, with the majority of funding remaining in the public sector.

Other initiatives in the \$110 million strategy are:

- \$7.5 million for an extra 3,000 cataract operations shared with the private sector, and two additional ophthalmology specialist training positions.
- \$47 million for public patients across the state, based on the demand for surgery.
- \$15 million for an extra 900 joint replacement procedures across the State, including hip replacements and knee reconstructions.
- \$3 million for additional orthopaedic surgery, especially joints, on the Sunshine Coast at Noosa Hospital.

- \$6 million to commission a second operating theatre at Caloundra Hospital and 10 extra beds. This will mean greater numbers of Sunshine Coast residents getting their surgery on time.
- \$3 million to address the problem of some patients not being fit for surgery causing postponements. Strategies will include weight loss programs, improved cardio vascular fitness, assistance to stop smoking.
- Introduce an independent audit of the State's public hospital waiting lists.
- \$2.5 million to employ a specialist ENT surgeon and tackle long wait Ear, Nose and Throat elective procedures at Cairns Hospital.
- \$1.5 million to employ six new nurses and open an extra critical care bed at Cairns taking the number to 16. This will relieve pressure on the emergency department and improve waiting times for elective surgery.
- \$4.5 million to establish a full specialist vascular surgery service at Nambour Hospital which will include staff specialists and visiting surgeons, and two dedicated nursing support staff. This will improve waiting times and allow major vein and artery surgery on the Sunshine Coast

This massive commitment will allow us to further improve on what is already recognised as the best public hospital system in the country with the shortest waiting times.

The 2004 independent Productivity Commission report confirmed in January that Queensland's public hospitals have the best waiting times in Australia and are the most efficient.

It reported:

- Looking at the time it took for the nation's hospitals to admit half of all patients on waiting lists, Queensland patients were admitted four days earlier than the national average;
- Looking at the time it took for the nation's hospitals to admit 90 per cent of all patients on waiting lists, Queensland patients were admitted 71 days earlier than the national average;
- 3.6% of Queensland patients had to wait longer than a year for an operation in Queensland compared with 4.5% in every 100 nationally.