

Question on Notice
No. 689
Asked on 12 May 2005

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

QUESTION:

What benefits will the Federal Budget bring to people of the Mackay Whitsunday region in public health services?

ANSWER:

While the additional funds provided for dementia and respite care services in the 2005-06 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 Mackay/Whitsunday region.

In 2005-06, Queensland will receive \$1.622 billion under the Australian Health Care Agreement – funding which unfortunately fails to keep pace with the fast growing demand on our public hospital system. This funding goes directly to Queensland's public hospital system, including the public hospital facilities in the Mackay Whitsunday region. With a budget surplus of almost \$9 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.

Queensland particularly welcomes all initiatives aimed at reducing the demand for GP type services in our public hospital emergency departments. This includes funding for after-hours GP services in the Round the Clock Medicare program and ongoing support for the After Hours Primary Medical Care Program.

The Australian Government's decision in the federal budget to raise the Medicare Safety Net is disappointing and may reduce access to primary health care and potentially lead to an increase in chronic disease.

Queensland welcomes the federal budget commitment to establish a national bowel cancer screening program. The Australian Government has allocated \$189.4 million for the Strengthening Cancer Care initiative over five years to 2008-09. As part of this initiative, Queensland welcomes the Australian Government's decision to re-invite people in the Mackay area who took part in an initial Bowel Cancer Screening Pilot to participate in this new program.