

Question on Notice
No. 1380
Asked on 1 November 2006

MR FOLEY asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON)-

QUESTION:

With reference to a constituent who is concerned regarding the Aged Care Assessments that must be undertaken by Queensland Health before anyone is allowed to enter an Aged Care facility and as they have been told the waiting period is between 20-24 weeks before an assessment can be done—

Is there any intention to provide more staff to our Wide Bay region so these time delays do not get out of hand?

ANSWER:

Firstly, I would reiterate that the Aged Care Assessment Program is a Commonwealth Government program that provides funds to State and Territory Governments to operate Aged Care Assessment Teams. Aged Care Assessment Teams undertake multidisciplinary assessment of the medical, psychological and social care needs of older people (people aged 70 and over) to help them access services which best meet their particular needs.

Anyone who wants to enter a Commonwealth-funded residential care services, or to receive Community Aged Care Packages or Extended Aged Care in the Home packages has to have an Aged Care Assessment Team assessment and referral.

I understand that the Wide Bay Burnett Aged Care Assessment Service already uses a priority screening for referrals because they have such large numbers. Their policy is to assess the “Frailest First”, this means that each referral is assigned a rating of urgency (Urgent, Moderate and Non-urgent).

I am advised that the response time for non-urgent referrals for Fraser Coast Health Service District is 20 – 24 weeks. A non-urgent ranking usually relates to:

- people who are planning for the future, whose health is stable at the time of referral and who currently have family and service supports in place;
- large numbers of non-urgent referrals are for people that have to be reviewed annually, as there is a perception in some areas of the aged care community that “having your name down” for residential care years ahead of actual need is a requirement. However, this is not the case and Aged Care Assessment Teams try to encourage people to defer their decision to enter the referral process until there is an actual health need for assessment; and
- people who have a current approval from the Aged Care Assessment Service do not necessarily receive an offer from an aged care facility. The decision to make an offer to an applicant is the decision of the facility manager and based on many factors other than simply having an approval from an Aged Care Assessment Team.

The Commonwealth has targeted waiting times for assessment as a priority issue. In 2006/07 the enhancement to recurrent funds will allow the recruitment of one additional fulltime employee to this team. This will assist in alleviating waiting times.