

Question on Notice
No. 1521
Asked on 29 November 2006

MRS MENKENS asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the recent closure of the high security mental unit at the Townsville Hospital due to budget and staffing problems within the health service district—

- (1) What consultation occurred with staff, patients and the community prior to the closure?
- (2) What measures are being taken to provide sufficient funding and staffing resources to allow the re-opening of the high security mental health unit?
- (3) What arrangements are being made for patients who would normally receive accommodation and treatment in the unit?
- (4) When will the high security mental health unit be re-opened?

ANSWER:

- (1) Although it has been necessary to temporarily close the high security mental health unit, the medium security mental health unit at Townsville continues to be operational. A number of consultation sessions were conducted with staff on the plan for movement of patients. Patients and their families, and consumer and carer groups were also consulted.
- (2) The services are currently funded, however there is an inability to recruit to the vacant positions, and that is affecting the safe operation and reopening of the Unit. Recruitment efforts are continuing throughout Australia and internationally and when the Townsville Health Service District is able to offer safe staffing numbers the Unit will be re-opened.
- (3) Patients requiring high security mental health care are referred to an appropriate Brisbane unit. Some patients, if clinically appropriate, are moved to the medium security mental health unit or to other suitable mental health units in Townsville.
- (4) The Unit will be re-opened when the Townsville Health Service District is able to offer safe staffing numbers.