

**Question on Notice  
No. 204  
Asked on 1 March 2006**

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

**QUESTION:**

With reference to the announcement that 150 mental health nurses will be trained as “preceptors” to act as clinical role models and provide on-the-job expertise to new nursing staff—

- (1) What are the funding sources, and what is the amount of funding, which has been allocated for the training of these 150 mental health nurses?
- (2) What amount of funding has been allocated by the various universities to Queensland Health, or directly to mental health units, for education and training of mental health staff and are any of these university funds directly accessible or available to the preceptors?
- (3) Are the preceptors provided with any incentives, recognition, or extra time for taking on this additional role in conjunction with their respective daily responsibilities?

**ANSWER:**

In promoting a culture of life long learning, Queensland Health actively supports the professional development of its staff - not only through formal education and training programs, but through the provision of appropriate support and teaching within the everyday workplace.

Preceptors are an essential element in the training of our nurses. These experienced and competent nurses serve as clinical role models and resource people for newly appointed employees and students, facilitating a smooth transition into the workplace, and better patient care.

Through this organised and structured approach, Queensland Health can assist nursing staff to reach desired levels of competence and confidence in a timeframe that suits the individual and their health service.

- (1) In the Queensland Government *Action Plan: Building a better health service for Queensland*, specific additional resources of over \$8.8 million were identified to support the development of our nursing workforce. This included the training of an additional 1,000 nurses as preceptors – of which 150 will be in the mental health field. Total funding of more than \$400,000 will meet the costs of backfilling staff attendance at training, ensuring that services are not compromised or disrupted.
- (2) No funding is provided to Queensland Health by Universities for education and training of mental health staff.

(3) New preceptors participate in a two day face to face training program, with existing preceptors encouraged to complete a refresher course every 12 to 18 months to keep them up to date with contemporary changes in nursing practice.

Training as a preceptor is an exciting opportunity, which provides recognition of a nurse's competence and skill, and provides him or her with additional professional development in education and training. At the organisational level, preceptors receive recognition through a certificate of completion, and badge identification. Local services support the role of their preceptors through appropriate workload management and rostering arrangements that would enable them to appropriately support new staff.

The additional training of preceptors in mental health is just one of a number of complementary initiatives which will enhance the capacity of our mental health workforce to deliver quality recovery oriented services.

Additionally, as I announced on 20 February 2006, Queensland Health is appointing a Mental Health Nursing Advisor to provide strategic direction for the development of our current and future mental health nursing workforce.

A comprehensive Transition to Practice in Mental Health Program is being developed, building on current resources, and will be made available to all new staff. It is anticipated that this program will give staff credit toward further studies at tertiary level.

Fifteen new mental health nurse educators will support the implementation of the program as well as target the local needs of our District Mental Health Services.

We also continue to provide 60 scholarships each year to nurses and other clinicians to support them to complete specialist studies in mental health.