

**Question on Notice  
No. 429  
Asked on 29 March 2006**

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

**QUESTION:**

With reference to the question without notice of Tuesday 28 March 2006 when I asked “*With the likelihood of Q-Vax being unavailable after May 2006 due to a shortage of funding and the closure of the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, how will the Minister guarantee all new employees requiring vaccination against Q Fever will be vaccinated when to expose them to a known health hazard constitutes a breach of workplace health and safety obligations, which require employers to provide a safe workplace?*”—

- (1) Will he answer the above question?
- (2) How long has Queensland Health known there would be a shortage and why weren't industries advised earlier than 13 March 2006 so that predicted Q-Vax requirements for the period CSL was to be out of production could be stockpiled to meet industry need?
- (3) What action has Queensland Health taken to ensure the security of employees and business viability is not jeopardised during the period Q-Vax is unavailable?
- (4) Will he compensate businesses who suffer economic loss because of any future unavailability of Q-Vax due to lack of foresight and planning by Queensland Health?

**ANSWER:**

- (1) The Commonwealth Serum Laboratories (CSL) is upgrading the manufacturing facility for the Q fever vaccine, Q-Vax, and will not be able to recommence supply until approximately March 2007.

Given that CSL are the sole manufacturer of this vaccine, this will result in an interruption to supply.

CSL's remaining stock of vaccine is being distributed to jurisdictions on the basis of past usage. Queensland Health will be determining access to the vaccine in Queensland to ensure that priority is given to individuals engaged in high risk activities.

- (2) Queensland Health was not formally advised by CSL of the vaccine shortage. However, it became aware of the shortage in late January 2006. Since that time, Queensland Health has been working with CSL and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing to determine how best to manage the limited vaccine supply.

Given the shortage of vaccine and the number of at risk groups requiring vaccine, Queensland Health would not have been supportive of supplying quantities of vaccine beyond that required to meet the most immediate need. Stockpiling of vaccine by industry during a period of shortage would disadvantage many individuals at high risk of contracting Q fever.

- (3) CSL will provide vaccine to individuals who are engaged in high risk activities in the abattoir industry and Queensland Health will supply its remaining stock of vaccine to other individuals at high risk.

Queensland Health will be developing guidelines with industry groups and the Department of Industrial Relations to assist industry put in place appropriate measures to ensure the safety of workers and others potentially at risk.

- (4) Queensland Health is not responsible for decisions by CSL concerning the production of the vaccine.

Queensland Health is endeavoring to ensure that those at greatest risk of disease have access to vaccine, and is providing assistance to industry to adopt measures to mitigate risks in the absence of vaccine.