

**Question on Notice
No. 708
Asked on 10 May 2006**

MR SPRINGBORG asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the 13 HEALTH triage call centre—

Does Queensland Health collect data on (a) the average response time for a caller to be answered by a call centre operator who is not a nurse, (b) the average response time for a caller to receive telephone contact and advice provided by a registered nurse, (c) the number of calls which drop out due to the call not being answered and (d) the number of calls diverted from a public hospital emergency department to the 13 HEALTH call centre; if so, will he provide details and the data collected (reported separately) on queries (a) to (d)?

ANSWER:

- (a) Calls to 13 HEALTH are initially answered by a customer service agent (CSA) who determines whether the caller is seeking triage or health information. Callers requiring emergency care can be referred to the QAS (Triple 0). Should the caller require triage, the call is transferred to a registered nurse; if requiring health information, the call is completed by the CSA. In the period from 24 April to 7 May 2006, on average calls were answered by a CSA in 13 seconds.
- (b) During the same period calls transferred to a registered nurse were answered in 5 minutes and 13 seconds on average. The average call handling time was 9 minutes and 57 seconds. The call handling time includes the time spent talking with a nurse, any waiting time during the call and the time associated with additional data entry that occurs after the caller has hung up.
- (c) Calls to 13 HEALTH do not “drop out” due to not being answered. Calls to household and business numbers tend to drop out if not answered after a certain number of rings. This limitation does not apply to 13 HEALTH. Where calls drop out this is associated with technical issues such as a loss of mobile signal or problems when transferring calls. Customers may choose to abandon their call for a variety of reasons at any stage. This may include:
 - deciding their need is more urgent and call 000;
 - deciding their inquiry is not important and choose not to wait and call back later;
 - competing demands ie receiving another call to their phone etc.
- (d) During the initial two weeks of operation only calls diverted from emergency departments were taken by 13 HEALTH. During this period 2,511 calls were received, an average of 179 per day. Since the service went live to the public it has not been possible to identify centrally the number of calls diverted from emergency departments. To track these calls would require the matching of incoming call details to all the possible hospital phone numbers across the state. This task is made more difficult when the caller ID is masked. Queensland Health is investigating options to more effectively evaluate the impact of the service on hospital switchboards.