

Question on Notice
No. 808
Asked on 23 May 2006

MISS SIMPSON asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON)-

QUESTION:

With reference to his response to Question on Notice No. 434 in which he claimed that no specialist outpatient waiting list data was collected during 2005 and as the Report of the Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry at paragraph 6.521 refers to evidence given at the Inquiry that collection of specialist outpatient waiting list data was devolved to Zonal Management Units within Queensland Health in January 2005—

If his response to Question No. 434 is accurate, will he explain why Zonal Management Units stopped collecting this information during 2005 despite being given that responsibility and funded for that responsibility, particularly at a time when this matter was the subject of intense scrutiny by a Commission of Inquiry?

ANSWER:

I am very aware of the importance of publishing waiting times for specialist outpatient appointments and am committed to providing this information publicly on a regular basis.

In July 2004 a manual collection of specialist outpatient department waiting time information was conducted by the Department specifically for the purpose of supporting the development and statewide implementation of the *Policy Framework for Specialist Outpatient Services*. This collection was carried out to establish a baseline for measuring future improvements in relation to waiting times for specialist outpatient services.

Throughout 2005 my Department continued the statewide roll-out of the *Policy Framework for Specialist Outpatient Services* to assist in improving the consistency of work practices across the State and to enable a more robust and reliable data collection.

In November 2005 the *Health Services Amendment Act* was passed, mandating Queensland Health to publish surgical outpatient waiting list and throughput information.

To comply with these legislative requirements in a timely manner, another manual survey of Queensland public hospitals was undertaken to determine the number of patients waiting for a specialist outpatient appointment as at 1 March 2006. Results from this survey were published on the Queensland Health Internet site in May 2006.

I must emphasise that in the absence of sophisticated electronic reporting systems within Queensland Hospital outpatient departments, the provision of waiting time information is reliant on a resource intensive data collection process whereby individual sites are required to interrogate their systems manually to extract the relevant data items.