

**Question on Notice
No. 527
Asked on 15 March 2007**

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

QUESTION:

With reference to health technology items disposed (738 items), donated (226 items) and sold (722 items) by Queensland Health since 2003—

- (1) What were the items that were sold, donated and disposed?
- (2) Who deemed the items to have reached the end of their life and what was their qualification to do so?
- (3) What was the original purchase price per unit of the items sold?
- (4) How were the items disposed?
- (5) What equipment is still waiting to be disposed of in the three manners described?
- (6) How much has it cost Queensland Health to store and dispose these technology items?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Health Technology Disposal Program (HTDP) commenced in February 2003 with the aim of improving the efficiency of processes for disposal of obsolete equipment and extracting the greatest possible residual value for Queensland Health. The Disposal Program is a continuing part of Queensland Health's overall asset management strategy and manages a wide range of aged, obsolete or redundant health technology equipment through disposal, donation or sale strategies.

Before any item is disposed of, it is assessed for suitability for transfer to other areas of Queensland Health or for use for spare parts. Reassessment of archived disposal data for the Health Technology Equipment Replacement Program for the period February 2003 to August 2006 has shown that 76 items were reused within other Queensland Health facilities and a further 38 items were used for spare parts. In total, 759 items were disposed of (through controlled waste, scrap or destroyed), 764 items were sold and 203 items were donated. These items range from infusion pumps, defibrillators, image intensifiers, ultra sound probes, vital signs monitors, X ray equipment to CT scanners. A record of this information is retained within Queensland Health for asset accounting purposes.

- (2) Queensland Health specialist personnel are involved in the determination of health technology equipment which has reached the end of its useful life. Biomedical Technology Services (BTS) is a statewide Queensland Health service of 204 staff that employs professionally qualified and experienced biomedical engineers and technicians who specialise in maintaining and servicing departmental health technology equipment.

Before any item is decommissioned, BTS engineers/technicians, in liaison with staff who manage the HTDP, seek to reuse serviceable items in other health service facilities, or to utilise components for spare parts. In some instances, there can be non-technical equipment such as sterilizers and autoclaves that need to be assessed for replacement by Health Service District Building and Engineering Maintenance personnel.

- (3) Items that have been disposed of ranged in purchase price from \$5,000 to \$1,900,000. Equipment below the asset valuation threshold of \$5,000 have not been included in this response, as they are expensed at their time of purchase (in accordance with current accounting rules) and managed at a local level and not through the Health Technology Equipment Replacement Program.
- (4) After due consideration for reuse/spare parts use, equipment is channelled for sale, donation or disposal through the Queensland Health Equipment Disposal process. An open tender process managed by Queensland Health is used for all sales. As an enhancement to the sale process, commencing March 2007, the sale or donation of the available equipment is being undertaken using the Internet. The use of the Queensland Health Website broadens accessibility to the Queensland Health Technology Disposal Program and provides a window to a wide marketplace trading in used health technology equipment.
- (5) There is no backlog of equipment from the Health Technology Equipment Replacement program awaiting disposal. The disposal process is managed on an ongoing basis, not reliant on centralised storage and periodic disposal action. Disposal action occurs once replacement items have been commissioned and the items for disposal have been decommissioned. The former process of storing equipment for disposal in a central location was discontinued in September 2005. Equipment for disposal now remains at its existing geographical location until the tender/sale process referred to above occurs.
- (6) When reconciled in August 2006, the HTDP had generated approximately \$400,000 for Queensland Health. Because the current 2006–07 Health Technology Equipment Replacement program is only in mid-cycle of its current activity, figures for the current year will not become available until a complete reconciliation occurs later in 2007.