

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 54**  
**Asked on 7 February 2007**

MRS PRATT asked the Minister for Emergency Services (MR PURCELL) -

**QUESTION:**

With reference to sick ambulance officers being called to work while on sick leave—

- (1) What are the legalities of the Government forcing sick people to work because of staff shortages?
- (2) Where does liability lay if an error of judgement is made by an officer being required to return whilst on sick leave?
- (3) Does the Government have the legal authority to sack an ambulance officer who might refuse to work while he is on sick leave?
- (4) Has it cost the Government more to get officers on sick leave to work than employing extra staff; if so, how much?
- (5) What is being done to address what appears to be a chronic shortage of ambulance officers?
- (6) How many officers on sick leave have been called to duty, how many hours and at what cost per month in the past 12 months?

**ANSWER:**

- (1) A Queensland Ambulance Service employee who applies for and is granted access to sick leave is not required or expected to make themselves available for work during their period of notified absence.

The Queensland Ambulance Service does not support the practice of officers being contacted whilst on sick leave.

- (2) Section 39(1) of the *Ambulance Service Act 1991* requires the State to indemnify ambulance officers against all actions, proceedings and claims arising from an act or omission by the officer during the course of performing his or her duties. This protection from civil liability would operate in circumstances where an officer made an error of judgement, which resulted in harm or damage. The physical health of the officer would not alter the situation.
- (3) The Queensland Ambulance Service would not take disciplinary action against its employees for refusing to work whilst on approved sick leave.
- (4) An officer would be entitled to payment as per relevant industrial instruments.

- (5) To date, the Queensland Government has funded 503 additional ambulance officers since the introduction of the Community Ambulance Cover on 1 July 2003. This includes 447 additional paramedics, 48 additional communications officers and 8 additional patient transport officers.

As at 31 January 2007, the number of ambulance vehicles on the road has increased by 128 vehicles since the Community Ambulance Cover was introduced.

The Queensland Ambulance Service has also purchased 385 defibrillators since the introduction of the Community Ambulance Cover.

- (6) There is only one known case where an officer on return from sick leave reported for duty 90 minutes before his normal shift commenced and was paid as per relevant industrial agreements.