Question on Notice
No. 1769
Asked on 13 November 2008

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the number of patients waiting for radiation therapy services—

Will he supply details for the last six months (reported separately for each of the four hospitals and each priority category) on the (a) number waiting, (b) number waiting in excess of the maximum acceptable waiting time, (c) average waiting time for each category and (d) maximum waiting time for each category?

ANSWER:

Radiation therapy is delivered by a highly specialised workforce. As such, the Queensland Health radiation therapy services are centered in particular locations; the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Princess Alexandra Hospital, the Mater Hospital campus and at Townsville Hospital.

Queensland Health does not have a centrally managed data collection that identifies the number and waiting time for specialist radiation therapy treatment by service and/or by 'priority' categorization of patients.

Consequently it is not possible to supply radiation therapy waiting times for cancer treatment in Queensland Hospitals.

No jurisdiction in Australia collects and publishes this type of data. There are complexities in collecting meaningful prospective data on radiation treatment waiting times including local clinical priorities, uncertainty around the numbers of medically urgent cases presenting, the casemix of patients (including types of cancer and clinical presentation), referral patterns, treatment complexities and treatment regimens that are mixed mode (eg. requiring chemotherapy or hormonal treatments to precede radiation therapy). These factors all influence when individual patients will receive radiation therapy treatment and are difficult to predict.

There is no Commonwealth National Minimum Dataset reporting requirement or definitions established for recording of this data. Agreed definitions and data standards are necessary to ensure data collections are consistent, accurate and reliable.