

Question on Notice
No. 434
Asked on 13 March 2008

MR KNUTH asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON)-

QUESTION:

Will the Minister explain (a) why residents in Forsayth and other rural areas, who used to have prescriptions dispensed at local hospitals and clinics, now have to fax their prescriptions to chemists hundreds of kilometres away and await the arrival of the medication (in this case, the dispensing chemist is in Atherton) and (b) if this policy is a cost-shifting exercise from the State to the Commonwealth?

ANSWER:

- (a) In the absence of a pharmacist or medical officer, registered nurses are the profession that is legally allowed to supply medications against written orders in public hospitals. Registered nurses are not allowed to dispense a prescription that has been written in a private medical practice. The legislation contained in the *Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996* has not changed in relation to this.

Supply of medications to patients presenting prescriptions from private practitioners at public hospitals should not occur. Locations and specific instances where this has been occurring is an oversight and steps have now been put in place to address the issue.

Queensland Health has a longstanding principle of supporting continued access to treatment for patients in emergency situations. This includes hospitals facilitating access to medications to ensure continuity of care where appropriate.

- (b) There is no cost-shifting exercise involved. Care of chronic disease in patients is best managed by community practitioners, with the dispensing of medications carried out by a community pharmacy. Regulation 24 of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) allows for multiple supply of medications to be dispensed at one time for patients living in remote areas, where the PBS allows repeats.