Question on Notice
No. 515
Asked on 16 April 2008

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the new bed strategy plan introduced in the Wide Bay Health District which has resulted in patients being relocated from Bundaberg Base Hospital to smaller hospitals—

(1) How many patients have been relocated from Bundaberg to smaller hospitals in the outer areas of the district since the plan was introduced?

(2) What is being done to remedy the need to transfer patients away from Bundaberg?

(3) What has been done to help friends and family meet the extra cost associated with visiting patients who have been relocated?

ANSWER:

(1) Since the introduction of the new bed strategy plan in the Wide Bay Health Service District in late 2007 there have been 21 transfers from the Bundaberg Hospital to the smaller rural hospitals, 19 of which were returning to their home town. Relocating patients in facilities closer to their home is appropriate.

(2) There has been a broad range of strategies implemented to increase Bundaberg Hospital's bed capacity since 2005-06 that include:

- $41.1 million for the capital cost of a 20 bed medical ward, six new observation bays and four rehabilitation beds;
- the establishment of a 'Home Ward' for administering day antibiotic or anti-coagulant therapy which operates seven days a week and is effectively reducing admissions and reducing length of stay;
- the *Community Hospital Interface Program* which is effective in preventing admissions of the elderly client and improving discharge planning;
- the *Acute Care in the Nursing Home Program* established in July 2006 and working well in assisting early discharge and/or preventing admission;
- a six chair Discharge Lounge opened in July 2006 to expedite ward discharges;
- the use of the Mater Hospital to provide public services using the same policy framework for transferring to rural areas;
- a 23 hour Unit established in March 2007;
- four additional surgical beds which were opened in June 2007; and
- the commitment of a patient flow project which commenced in September 2007.

(3) There have been no requests for transport support as there has been very limited use of the rural facilities as Bundaberg Hospital aims to select patients that live in close proximity to the rural facility. Transport issues will be managed on a case by case basis; however the wide Bay Health Service District endeavour to ensure appropriate patients are selected in consultation with the family.