

Question on Notice
No. 1255
Asked on 16 September 2009

MR MESSENGER asked the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health (MR LUCAS)-

QUESTION:

With reference to budget and staffing levels at the Bundaberg Base Hospital, for the last three years—

Will the Minister, in the interest of accountability and transparency, make available figures for (a) staffing levels (broken down into the number of doctors, nurses, specialists, administration and support staff), (b) the number of beds (broken down into beds per ward) and (c) occupancy rates of different wards?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for giving me an opportunity to comment on transparency and accountability in the health system.

Under the Bligh Government, more information is disclosed more often and more transparently than at any other point in Queensland's history, in relation to public hospital performance.

Under the Bligh Government, Queensland Health's Quarterly Public Hospital Performance Reports are the most transparent and meaningful hospital performance reporting mechanism in Australia.

That is recognised by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal in New South Wales, which recommended our reports as a model for other States and Territories to follow.

By stark contrast, the Liberals and Nationals have never shown any interest in transparency or accountability when in government.

During the last term of Liberal and National government, there were no Quarterly Performance Reports. No such data was proactively released on a quarterly basis as it is under this Government.

So the Member's sudden expression of interest in these matters is disingenuous.

That said, the Member's request for detailed data, broken down for him and presented in a format that is not collated or reported elsewhere, and categorised especially according to his desire, is not reasonable.

Queensland Health operates over 150 different hospitals, health services and other similar facilities.

To collate and report the data requested, for each of 3 years, in a format and categorisation customised to suit the Member, for each of those 150 facilities, in relation to multiple wards at each facility and tens of thousands of staff, would be a very poor use of public resources. I do not propose to divert Queensland Health staff away from their duties providing health services to Queenslanders, in order to undertake this clerical task for the member.

However, I am pleased to advise in relation to Bundaberg Base Hospital, in the period between June 2007 and June 2009, an additional 20 specialists and medical officers were employed and 52 nurses, whilst bed numbers increased by 13 over the same period. The opening of the six observation beds in the Emergency Department has supported the growing demand on services at Bundaberg Hospital. The observation beds were the first stage of the Bundaberg Hospital Expansion Project due for completion in late 2011.