

Question on Notice
No. 1846
Asked on 24 November 2009

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the Toowoomba Base Hospital which plays such an important role in the treatment of cancer patients from Toowoomba and Darling Downs, South West Queensland, South Burnett and Lockyer—

Will Queensland Health make an application for one of the 10 regional cancer centres, to be funded under the Commonwealth Health and Hospitals Fund, to be based at Toowoomba Hospital?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Toowoomba South for his question.

The Director General has advised that Queensland Health is looking at all options, before a Queensland submission is made to the Federal Government in line with the Queensland Statewide Cancer treatment Services Plan 2008-17.

The Bligh Government is committed to improving access to cancer treatment for Toowoomba residents, including investment in:

- a physician with special interest, one appointed haematologist and one commencing in 2010, two Cancer Care Coordinators, and specialist nursing and allied health staff to support the three additional cancer inpatient beds, day care and ambulatory care activity;
- developing Toowoomba Hospital's medical oncology service with support from the weekly outreach clinics provided by visiting Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) staff. This improved outreach support from PAH to Toowoomba means that 50 ambulatory patients per week in this region can now safely undergo some oncology treatment at Toowoomba Hospital rather than travelling to Brisbane. Overnight inpatients are reviewed and consulted on as needed basis;
- providing subsidised high cost cancer drugs under the Queensland Health's Limited Indication Medication Scheme to eligible patients receiving treatment at Toowoomba Hospital; and
- three full time equivalent Cancer Care Coordinators to support patients receiving care in Toowoomba Hospital.

In addition, some cancer patients in the Toowoomba region can now access radiation therapy in Toowoomba due to arrangements Queensland Health has in place with a local radiation therapy provider.

Although a significant degree of investment has been made to improve and enhance access to cancer services for patients in the Toowoomba region thereby resulting in selected patients

receiving treatments closer to home, there will still be a need for some patients with complex cancers to travel to Brisbane to receive specialised treatment.

In 2008/2009 the Darling Downs-West Moreton Health Service District spent \$2.4million on Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme.

In addition to this expenditure, the Government has committed \$15 million in grant funding to non-government organisations over three years (2009/2010, 2010/2011 and 2011/2012) to build or enhance accommodation for patients travelling to receive treatment for cancer, heart disease and other illnesses. Toowoomba was one of the areas identified as a region of priority in the State. Cancer Council Queensland was one of the successful offerers who will be provided seed funding to develop plans for accommodation in Toowoomba.