

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 1914**  
**Asked on 25 November 2009**

MR FOLEY asked the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health (MR LUCAS)—

QUESTION:

As a constituent has advised me that he has been granted an emergency dental appointment in eight weeks time, what measures are being undertaken to ensure that Fraser Coast Dental Services is reducing its lengthy waiting lists?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Maryborough for his question.

I am advised that the Fraser Coast Oral Health Service's Maryborough Dental Clinic is currently suffering from a shortage of clinical staff. However, recruitment processes are now underway in relation to these and other vacancies in the District, and the Fraser Coast Oral Health Service has recruited three dentists to commence in February 2010.

As an interim measure, locum dentists have been sought, however these attempts to fill the positions on a temporary basis have been unsuccessful.

Notwithstanding the staffing shortages, I am advised that patients requiring "emergency treatment" are being treated much faster than the Member suggests. Generally, "emergency patients" are seen within 24 to 48 hours and are not placed on a waiting list as described by the Member.

The Fraser Coast Oral Health Service utilises a call centre to assess and prioritise patients seeking priority dental care. The call centre uses a triaging process designed by clinicians to determine the priority allocated to each patient. Patients are provided with appointments based on this assessment.

Patients who believe their condition is such that they will have difficulty in waiting until their allocated appointment are placed on a short-term waiting list and appointed to any cancellations.

Again, it is not clear whether that has happened in respect of the Member's constituent.

On that basis, I would invite the Member to contact my office with the details of the patient concerned so the matter can be investigated, and arrangements made with the District for any emergency treatment that may be appropriate.

The Bligh Government provides the most comprehensive public oral health service in Australia with over 1.9 million people (45.3% of the total Queensland population) eligible for dental care at no cost.

No other State matches the level of service Queensland Health provides.

The Queensland Government's oral health services would have been significantly bolstered by the Rudd Government's Commonwealth Dental Health Program, which has unfortunately been stalled in the Senate by non-government Senators.

The Scheme would have increased funding to Queensland oral health services ten-fold and delivered an additional one million dental consultations Australia-wide.

Under the Rudd Government's Commonwealth Dental Health Program, Queensland would have received \$52.8 million over 3 years – that is more than 187,000 additional dental consultations in Queensland alone.

Unfortunately, Liberal and National Party Senators have stalled the Scheme, resulting in fewer services for Queenslanders.

I encourage you to join with me in urging Queensland LNP Senators to support Labor's plan to deliver more dental services for Queenslanders.