

Question on Notice
No. 1969
Asked on 6 October 2010

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the pay offer to allied health practitioners in Queensland hospitals of two and a half per cent -

- (1) Will this result in an effective reduction in income in relation to CPI?
- (2) Will this offer result in further difficulties in recruiting or retaining allied health staff in rural and regional Queensland?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Gladstone for her question.

The pay increase for this year offered to allied health professionals by the Government is equal to the increase Members of Parliament will receive for this year.

The Government has rejected a decision by the federal Remuneration Tribunal to grant Members of Parliament a larger increase. That decision, announced by the Premier, keeps State Members of Parliament' pay increases in line with the State Government's wages policy.

Over the past three years, in addition to a 15.5% wage increase under the last health practitioners' enterprise bargaining agreement, the Government also agreed to a reclassification process which has resulted in very significant pay rises for many of our allied health professionals.

As a result, over half of these workers earn packages of more than \$100,000 a year. In many cases, our staff are paid tens of thousands more than their interstate counterparts. For example, at the maximum pay point (HP8), Queensland staff are paid over \$160,000 per annum, over \$50,000 more than equivalent workers in Victoria and \$30,000 more than equivalent workers in New South Wales.

Our allied health professionals are the best paid in the nation, and they deserve it.

The pay offer for Queensland Health's health practitioners is consistent with wages increases currently being offered to other government employees.

The Bligh Government is committed to delivering a fair result to allied health workers and also takes seriously its responsibility to ensure the state's finances are effectively managed on behalf of Queensland taxpayers.

Since the introduction of the first health practitioner agreement Queensland Health has increased its health practitioner workforce by 26%. This growth is supported by data from districts that indicate a reduction in vacancy rates and an increase in applications for

advertised health practitioner positions. This is attributable to the wage increases and improved conditions health practitioners have received in the past few years.

The growth in wages and other benefits for the health practitioner workforce has eased previous recruitment difficulties throughout Queensland. Further, Queensland Health will continue to offer additional allowances for staff working in lower population areas where there is demand for more health professionals.

The current wages offer will consolidate Queensland Health's health practitioners as the nation's best paid health practitioner workforce.