

**Question on Notice  
No. 461  
Asked on 7 June 2013**

MR KATTER asked the Minister for Health (MR SPRINGBORG)-

**QUESTION:**

With reference to waiting lists of 12 to 18 months for dental care being commonplace in rural and remote Queensland, including in much of my electorate, and as 80 percent of dental practitioners live in major cities -

- (1) Will the Minister explain why one of the only two dental vans attached to the North West Health and Hospital Service is currently off the road?
- (2) What steps is the Minister taking to ensure there is a driver available to service remote and rural communities with dental care?

**ANSWER:**

I thank the Honourable Member for Mount Isa for his question.

The North West Hospital and Health Service (HHS) has one dental van, a caravan type arrangement which is situated at Sunset School in Mount Isa to service all the school population and a Dental Drover, which is a self drive vehicle.

I am advised that the former Mount Isa Health Service District, now the North West Hospital and Health Service (HHS), was provided with a Dental Drover approximately 18 months ago, however during that time the Drover has seen minimal use due to an inability to source a suitably licensed driver for extended periods of time. In addition, advice has been provided that an early service run to Burketown identified a design fault with the air conditioning unit falling off while the Drover was being driven on unsealed roads. For these reasons, and following a recent request from the Chief Dental Officer, the North West HHS has agreed to the loan of the vehicle to the Murri Dental Group. Should the North West HHS require a Dental Drover in the interim, one is able to be sourced from the Cape York HHS.

The Dental Drover was only intended to be used in those facilities without a fixed dental room, being Camooweal, Dajarra, Burketown and Karumba.

You will also be aware that the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) has recently commenced the provision of mobile dental services in Queensland. The role of the RFDS has allowed the North West HHS to negotiate with the RFDS to potentially provide services where it previously had, thereby decreasing duplication of services and higher costs.

Under the Dental NPA, more money is available for dental services. The North West HHS is currently reviewing allocation of resources with planning for next 12 months and every effort will be made to meet allocated targets.

Although Dental vouchers are available for payment for services, their acceptance by dentists in Mount Isa is limited, however further investigation into this will be undertaken.