

Question on Notice
No. 502
Asked on 5 June 2014

DR FLEGG asked the Minister for Health (MR SPRINGBORG)-

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise the number of referrals to the Drugs of Dependence Unit for each of the past five years?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Moggill for his question.

The Drugs of Dependence Unit has a regulatory function rather than a clinical function, and as such individual patients are not referred to the Unit. These regulatory functions have been incorporated into a new unit that now has broader regulatory responsibility called Medicines Regulation and Quality.

As part of that regulatory function, Medicines Regulation and Quality monitors the prescribing and dispensing of controlled drugs for Queensland and supports doctors to comply with their regulatory obligations under the *Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulations 1996*.

Under the *Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulations* treatment approvals are issued to doctors who wish to prescribe to individual drug dependent patients with medical conditions requiring controlled drugs or for the treatment of adult patients with psychostimulant drugs such as methylphenidate or dexamphetamine.

For those patients requiring treatment of their opioid dependence, approval is also given to appropriately trained doctors to provide pharmacotherapy to those patients who are on the Queensland Opioid Treatment Program.

In the past five years, on average, approximately over 4,000 treatment approvals have been granted each year by Medicines Regulation and Quality to on average about 1,700 doctors each year, for the treatment of individual patients. These numbers have remained relatively stable over the last five years. The numbers of patients receiving opioid pharmacotherapy (methadone and buprenorphine) for their opioid dependence has been steadily increasing each year from 5,688 registrations on 30 June 2010 to 6,100 patients registered as of May 2014.

Year	Number of approvals issued (number of doctors)	Number of patients on Queensland Opioid Treatment Program
2014	2,149 (972)	6,100
2013	4,311 (1,547)	6,093
2012	3,607 (1,253)	5,819
2011	4,286 (1,779)	5,702
2010	4,099 (1,750)	5,688