

Question on Notice
No. 57
Asked on 13 February 2014

MRS SCOTT asked the Minister for Health (MR SPRINGBORG)-

QUESTION:

With reference to neonate intensive care beds in Queensland—

- (1) How many neonate intensive care beds are currently available in Queensland?
- (2) Is the State still 20 neonate intensive care beds short of what clinical experts have determined necessary for Queensland?
- (3) Are there sufficient staff for the current number of NICU beds?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Woodridge for her question.

A report developed and endorsed in 2009 by the former Government made a number of recommendations, based on projected birth numbers at that time, including the increase of NICU cots to 93 by 2016.

As at April 2014, Queensland babies will be able to access to up to 91 publicly-funded Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) as follows:

- as at January 2014, there were 73 NICU cots in operation across the state;
- the new Gold Coast University Hospital (GCUH) has six new NICU cots which they plan to commence opening in April 2014; and
- the Mater Mothers' Hospital has the capacity to swing 12 of their Special Care Nursery cots to be used as NICU cots.

Hospital and Health Services and the Department of Health continue to plan services, including the need for NICU cots, into the future. In that context:

- the Gold Coast University Hospital has the capacity for eight additional NICU cots in the future; and
- the Townsville Hospital has potential capacity for nine additional NICU cots in the future.

That will mean a total of up to 108 NICU cots will be accessible across the State.

I am advised there is sufficient staff available for the current number of NICU cots. A core level of staff has been established in NICU's based on an assessment of units' needs. The core level of staff is augmented by short term staffing adjustments to match patient need at times of high service demand.

I understand a targeted recruitment process is currently in place for appropriately qualified nursing staff for the six new NICU cots which are scheduled to open soon at the GCUH.

Our staff work hard to ensure every baby in Queensland who needs specialist neonatal care can access these services.