

Question on Notice

No. 1366

Asked on 16 October 2018

MR J MCDONALD asked the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services (HON DR S MILES) –

QUESTION

Will the Minister advise whether he is aware that able patients of Queensland Health are being required to wait 12 to 18 months for Orthopaedic Spinal surgery at Princess Alexandra Hospital in order to return to work, despite having their own medical practitioners diagnosis that their condition is serious and in urgent need for surgery in order to return to work?

ANSWER

The assessment on whether a patient requires back surgery is made by an Orthopaedic surgeon during a specialist outpatient appointment based on their expert clinical assessment of the patient's condition.

Timely access to specialist outpatient appointments is critical to supporting patients on their journey to receive surgery. Improving access for Queenslanders to specialist outpatient services such as orthopaedics is a major priority of the Palaszczuk Government. When we came to office, there were more than 104,000 Queenslanders waiting longer than clinically recommend for a specialist outpatient appointment. In the 2015-16 budget the Palaszczuk Government provided funding of \$361.2 million over four years for the Specialist Outpatient Strategy. In 2018-19 the Government is investing an additional \$154 million over two years to extend the strategy.

The strategy and the significant investments in additional services have resulted in significant reductions in the number of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for outpatient appointments, despite continued growth in demand for those appointments. The length of time patients wait for their specialist appointment has also reduced.

One of the key strategies to keep waiting lists down is to ensure patients are seen in the right setting by the right clinician. To support patients accessing services faster, we have invested in alternative models of care such as the "Back Assessment Clinic" at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. This clinic has enabled patients to access the services they need in a more timely manner.

A proportion of patients who are reviewed by an orthopaedic surgeon will then require follow up surgery. I am advised that following assessment through the Orthopaedic Spinal Clinic, the current wait time for orthopaedic spinal surgery for category 1 patients is less than 30 days, category 2 patients are treated within three months and category three patients are treated within six months.