

## Question on Notice

No. 425

Asked on 1 May 2018

**MR S ANDREW** asked the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services (HON DR S MILES)—

### QUESTION

With reference to health care services in the Mirani Electorate, including (a) the lack of bulk billing, (b) cuts to after-hours health care services at the Mater Private Hospital Mackay and (c) the rising cost of insurance premiums—

Will the Minister advise the procedures, plans or funding of the Queensland Government to alleviate the pressure on the public health system from the changes in the private health system?

### ANSWER

The Medicare system, and policy and funding for primary health care is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. Inadequate primary health care services put increased pressure on the public hospital system through people presenting to the emergency department or deferring necessary treatment because they cannot access appropriate primary health care services.

The Queensland Government is committed to investing in the health of residents in the Mirani electorate and Mackay region. The budget allocation for the Mackay HHS in 2017-18 is \$410.7 million, an increase in investment of \$10.6 million from its budget allocation in 2016-17 and an overall budget increase of 29 per cent over the last four years.

Changes in private health insurance arrangements in recent years are also leading to increased pressure on the public system. Across the State, private health insurance coverage has fallen from 45.6 per cent in September 2014 to the most recent figure of 42.8 per cent in December 2017. Moreover, exclusions under policies and out of pocket expenses have increased significantly. Even for many people who have private health insurance, being treated in a private hospital may not be a viable option.

For residents in the Mackay Hospital and Health Service (HHS) region, for instance, in 2013-14 62 per cent of hospital admissions were to public hospitals while 38 per cent were to private hospitals. By 2016-17, these figures had changed to 67 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. Clearly, declines in private health insurance coverage and changes in the private hospital sector are impacting significantly on the public system.