

Question on Notice

No. 130

Asked on 25 February 2021

MR S KNUTH ASKED THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES (HON Y D'ATH) –

QUESTION

With reference to those living in regional and remote Queensland facing massive wait times to get appointments and to receive specialised dental services such as dentures, crowns and false teeth—

Will the Minister outline any initiatives or actions being undertaken to improve wait times for residents in regional and remote centres?

ANSWER

Oral health teams across the state work extremely hard to ensure patients receive treatment within the recommended waiting times. Public dental care in Queensland is free for eligible patients.

While there is variation between and within Hospital and Health Services, I am advised that public dental waiting list data as at 31 January 2021 indicates that waiting times for eligible patients in regional, rural and remote areas are, on average, comparable to Southeast Queensland for general dental care and better for specialised dental procedures, such as dentures.

Each financial year, Queensland Health allocates a proportion of the \$21.7 million of Commonwealth funding available to Queensland under the National Partnership Agreement for Public Dental Services for Adults to regional, rural and remote public oral health services. Public dental clinics locally determine the most appropriate use of this funding, including additional oral health staff or, where services are at capacity, partnering with private dental providers.

The current dental National Partnership Agreement is 30 per cent, \$8.7 million less than previous agreements and expires on 30 June 2021, with no funding committed by the Commonwealth beyond this financial year. This lack of certainty makes it very difficult for Hospital and Health Services to undertake long term planning, such as infrastructure, partnerships with private and non-government providers, or permanent recruitment of additional oral health staff. It is crucial that the Commonwealth provides a long-term funding commitment to maintain timely access to public dental care and to ensure a sustainable system.