

Question on Notice

No. 512

Asked on 24 May 2022

MR N DAMETTO ASKED THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES (HON Y D'ATH)—

QUESTION

With reference to the General Practitioner Doctor shortage in regional Queensland— Will the Minister (a) advise whether this shortage is caused in part by the failure of the rural bonding scheme and the locum doctor labour hire scheme and (b) outline what plans the State Government has to address these short falls?

ANSWER

PART A - Rural Bonding Scheme and Locum Doctor Labour Hire Scheme

The Commonwealth funded, Queensland Health delivered, Rural Bonded Medical Scheme involved 235 scholarships with Griffith University awarded from 2006 - 2013, with general practice being a recognised area of priority practice. Approximately 68 scholarship recipients trained and returned service obligations in general practice. Further funding for the Rural Bonded Medical Scheme is a matter for the Commonwealth Government.

The Commonwealth Bonded Medical Program supports specialist training, which has a return of service obligation in Modified Monash Model 2 to 7 classification areas. Queensland Health has no detailed information on the success of this scheme in relations to general practice.

Queensland Health does not have a project called the Locum Doctor Labour Hire Scheme.

In 2017, Queensland Health established a Standing Offer Arrangement (SOA) to engage locum medical officers or recruit medical officers through recruitment agencies. This allows Queensland Health facilities to access locum medical officers to fill vacancies when Hospital and Health Service (HHS) employees are not available due to leave, to fill vacant positions, or require additional staff support during peak times. The SOA also includes recruitment services for doctors to become Queensland Health employees.

PART B - Current initiatives to address medical workforce shortages in the regions

Primary care, which includes the training, provision and funding of General Practitioner doctors, is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. Currently there is a national shortage of GPs.

With the demand for GPs expected to grow by 38.5 per cent by 2032, more needs to be done to improve the viability of these critical primary care businesses and increase the number of medical graduates and junior doctors who want to pursue a career as a GP or rural GP. This has been identified in the report *“Inquiry into the provision of primary, allied and private health care, aged care and NDIS care services and its impact on the Queensland Public health system”*.

The Queensland Government continues to work at a national level with jurisdictions working together to address workforce issues, particularly the shortage of specialist GPs in rural and regional areas. The National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021-2031, published in January this year by the Commonwealth Department of Health, has been developed to guide long-term medical workforce planning across Australia and identify achievable, practical actions to build a sustainable and highly trained medical workforce.