

Question on Notice

No. 627

Asked on 21 June 2022

MR S KNUTH asked the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services (HON Y D'ATH)—

QUESTION

With reference to specialist appointments and surgeries booked at Cairns Base hospital being cancelled at an alarming rate, often only 24 hours before the scheduled procedure or appointment—

Will the Minister (a) provide the number of pre-scheduled surgeries and appointments that have been postponed or rescheduled in the last 12 months at the Cairns Base Hospital and (b) commit to fixing this issue and provide detail on what action is being taken to improve the delivery of pre-scheduled surgeries and appointments?

ANSWER

The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service is being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 51 staff furloughed as at 19 July 2022.

I have been advised by Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service:

Elective Surgery

From 1 July 2021 until 22 June 2022, 14,078** patient surgeries were performed. During the same period, 4,441* elective surgeries were rescheduled.

Most rescheduling was in relation to the COVID–19 response, which required the pausing of non-urgent elective surgery from December 2021 to March 2022 to ensure there was appropriate beds and staff to care for COVID-19 inpatients.

Elective surgery booking staff reschedule surgery, in co-operation with surgical teams and patients, considering likely theatre time and bed availability.

Specialist appointments

From 1 July 2021 to 22 June 2022, 305,053**** patient occasions of service (appointments) were provided. During the same period, the Cairns Hospital rescheduled a total of 11,310*** new clinic appointments.

During that same period, 27,195**** patients failed to attend their scheduled appointment.

By providing innovative models of care that prevent unnecessary patient admissions such as expanding successful virtual models, the Cairns HHS is increasing the accessibility of inpatient beds for elective surgery.

As part of the Palaszczuk Government's *Queensland Health and Hospitals Plan*, the Cairns HHS is being provided with a record amount of funding for an unprecedented expansion of bed capacity.

In the short term, an additional 45 sub-acute beds will be made available through a commercial lease arrangement, freeing up additional capacity at the Cairns Hospital.

In addition to this, an investment of \$250 million will be made to deliver a further 96 overnight beds to the Cairns HHS by 2026. Of these additional overnight beds, 32 will be delivered at the Cairns South Surgical Centre. These beds will be specifically allocated to providing greater access to elective surgery for members of the public. The expanded Cairns South Surgical Centre will also provide greater access to outpatient appointments.

* (data source – HBCIS EAM via QHERS. Elective procedures in all Cairns Hospital theatres)

** (data source – Surginet via CHAI. Procedures performed in all Cairns Hospital theatres)

*** (data source – ESM. new appointments at Cairns Hospital. Excludes patient initiated cancellation/reschedule)

**** (data source – ESM via CHAI. Includes all new and review appointments at Cairns Hospital)