

Question on Notice

No. 1122

Asked on 14 September 2023

MS A LEAHY ASKED MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN (HON S FENTIMAN)—

QUESTION

Will the Minister advise how many days the Multipurpose Health Services, General Practices, and Community Clinics in the South West Hospital and Health Service have been without a doctor or a locum doctor since 24 March 2023 (reported separately by facility)?

ANSWER

High quality and safe care continue to be a priority of the South West Hospital and Health Service (SWHHS).

In the instance where a hospital is without a Doctor or Locum Doctor, patient care is provided by way of outreach Medical Officers and Nurse Practitioners, Telehealth, Retrieval Services Queensland, and Telehealth Emergency Medical Support Unit Services. In addition to this, virtual General Practitioner models have also been implemented across health facilities.

I am advised that the below shows the number of days a Doctor or Locum Doctor has not been on site at one of eight Multipurpose Health Services in the SWHHS.

Facility	Days
Augathella	17
Cunnamulla	2
Dirranbandi	5
Injune	1
Mitchell	4
Mungindi	10
Quilpie	5
Surat	16

These numbers demonstrate a significant reduction compared to a similar period from 18 August 2022 to 31 January 2023, during which there was a total of 340 days without a Doctor or Locum doctor across MPSHs in the SWHHS, as previously reported.

All MPHSSs have 24/7 Nursing staff on shift and are within 1-2 hours driving distance to the nearest hospital within the 'hubs' of Charleville, Roma and St George.

SWHHS advises that vacancies at these services have mostly been filled by scheduled Locums working two (2) weeks on, two (2) weeks off on a rotational basis where these can be secured.

To address the workforce challenges to attract health workers to regional and rural Queensland, the Queensland Government has established the workforce attraction incentive scheme. This provides a financial incentive of up to \$70,000 to eligible medical practitioners to relocate to regional parts of the state. SWHHS is working with Queensland Health to place appropriate applicants within the HHS.

Queensland Health is also advocating for Commonwealth Supported Places and proactively investing in two new regional medical pathways including one in the Darling Downs/South West regions with an initial cohort of 30 students which is due to commence next year.