

Question on Notice

No. 78

Asked on 22 February 2023

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

QUESTION

With reference to the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood blood buses (vans) that once played an integral part in collecting blood donations across Regional Queensland but have ceased post covid—

Will the Minister advise (a) as to how Queensland Health can support Lifeblood to reinstate this service; and (b) whether a re-established regional service could also be used as an access point for cheek swab sampling to enrol on the bone marrow register?

ANSWER

(a) Blood donations

Queensland Health recognises and appreciates the generosity of Queenslanders that altruistically donate blood, or register on the Australian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR), knowing they may be called on one day to become stem cell donors. These precious gifts are always needed, and everyone is encouraged to call the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood on 13 14 95 to book to donate blood, or to discuss how you can register to become a stem cell donor today.

I am advised that Lifeblood positions its blood donor collection centres and mobile donor vans strategically to best suit Australia's population diversity and density. Logistics is a key factor in considering placement, particularly in relation to moving donated blood around the country, to processing centres within the timeframes required to achieve the best outcomes from the donated blood.

I am further advised that Lifeblood has no immediate plans to establish an additional donor centre or mobile operations in regional Queensland, but that Lifeblood is constantly reviewing its donor network and opportunities to increase donations. Given the vastness of our country, it is not possible or necessary to collect blood everywhere, and Lifeblood continues to work tirelessly to ensure it maintains a network of donor centres and mobile vans with sufficient capacity to collect the blood that Australia needs.

(b) Stem cell donations

Led by the Commonwealth Government, Queensland Health continues to work closely with all state and territory governments to achieve the goals of the National Haemopoietic Progenitor Cell Framework, to improve Australia's self-sustainability and domestic supply of stem cells. Under this critical reform work, recruitment via buccal,

or cheek swab, is currently being addressed with the aim of improving access to clinically ideal stem cell donors.

The Commonwealth Government has established a Clinical Advisory Group (CAG) to resolve outstanding regulatory and implementation issues, so that buccal swabs can be introduced as part of a multi-pronged improvement strategy. Governments are poised to act on CAG's clinical and regulatory recommendations, to enable implementation of buccal swab recruitment as soon as possible, and have cost-shared funds available for implementation activities.

The Health Ministers' Meeting (HMM) Communique, dated 24 February 2023, advised that HMM had approved immediate release of \$1 million from the Cord Blood Export Revenue Fund to increase stem cell donor recruitment, through both blood testing and cheek swabbing. Proposals for scaling recruitment nationally are currently being considered, and HMM provisional approval has been provided for the release of further funds with details to be finalised following clinical advice, due in April 2023.