

Question on Notice

No. 1198

Asked on 11 December 2024

MR S MILES ASKED MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES (HON T NICHOLLS)—

QUESTION

Will the Minister advise the number of long stay patients that have been relocated from Queensland hospitals between 31 October 2020 and 28 October 2024 (in a table and reported separately by calendar year)?

ANSWER

Queensland Health conducts a statewide long-stay patient census on a quarterly basis as a point-in-time snapshot. This census is a point-in time measure of long-stay patient numbers in Queensland Health facilities. It captures the location of long-stay patients as at the census date but is not cumulative and does not capture the number of patients transferred or relocated during the relevant quarter.

Long-stay patients are patients who no longer require in-hospital care but are awaiting appropriate supports to transition to the community. These patients are clinically fit for discharge, however, typically require access to appropriate aged care or disability supports that are primarily a Commonwealth Government responsibility. Regrettably, since 2022, the Commonwealth has failed to adequately address this need and numbers have risen significantly as a result.

The number of long-stay patients as at the long-stay patient census dates across the four years is provided below:-

Year	Date	Number of Long-Stay Patients
2020	25-Nov-20	442
2021	24-Feb-21	575
	26-May-21	549
	25-Aug-21	563
	24-Nov-21	507
	23-Feb-22	512
2022	25-May-22	553
	31-Aug-22	630
	30-Nov-22	706
	22-Feb-23	741
2023	31-May-23	780
	30-Aug-23	877
	29-Nov-23	863
	28-Feb-24	964
2024	27-May-24	1,013
	26-Aug-24	1,076

Notably since May 2022 the number of long-stay patients has almost doubled.

I am advised that as per the most recent long-stay patient census, held on 26 August 2024, there were 1,076 long-stay patients in Queensland public hospitals, reported by the hospital and health services (HHSs), costing the system approximately \$2.2 million per day. This comprised of:

- 321 long-stay younger patients; and
- 755 long-stay older patients.

Overall, the number of long-stay patients in hospitals has increased significantly between May 2022 (553) and August 2024 (1,076).

For younger patients, this is primarily due to discharge barriers related to the Commonwealth administered National Disability Insurance Scheme, where health services are experiencing delays in access, approvals and implementation of disability supports.

For older patients, this is primarily due to insufficient operational residential aged care beds, particularly in regional and remote areas, and for patients with complex care needs and challenging behaviours. General Practitioner access and aged care workforce challenges can also limit bed availability, particularly in regional and rural Queensland.

Despite Queensland's contribution to national disability and aged care reforms, Queensland Health acts as a provider of last resort for long-stay patients. This occurs when the Commonwealth Government aged care and disability supports are not immediately available for people with ongoing care needs seeking to return to community settings. More programs that support people in their home or facilitate a transition to home from hospital are needed.

From 2024, the long-stay patient census has captured the number of patients Queensland Health has been forced to fund as at the census date, as provided in the table below:

Year	Date	Number of Long-Stay Patients in Interim Care
2024	28-Feb-24	159
	27-May-24	204
	26-Aug-24	284