

Question on Notice

No. 508

Asked on 20 May 2025

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

QUESTION

With reference to a lack of funding for an additional paediatric cardiologist based in Cairns despite specialists being available, and long wait times of 12 months or more for new families and repeated delays experienced by existing patients—

Will the Minister (a) provide immediate state funding for an additional paediatric cardiologist to supplement the existing single specialist and (b) ensure outreach services are maintained and strengthened to rural communities, particularly given that these services are provided in areas with some of the highest rates of rheumatic heart disease in the world?

ANSWER

I acknowledge that after a decade under the former government, there is a current shortage of paediatric cardiologists, particularly in regional and rural areas.

The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service (CHHHS) currently has one paediatric cardiologist, whose work is supported by the Queensland Children's Hospital.

I am advised CHHHS undertakes regular service planning to ensure that services are developed in a sustainable way and prioritised according to health need, to warrant the effective use of current and future resources.

I am advised that options are being explored for a strengthened networked service approach to paediatric cardiology service delivery.

Rheumatic heart disease and congenital heart disease are the major contributors to patient demand for paediatric cardiology within the CHHHS. This particularly impacts First Nations populations.

CHHHS will continue its outreach services as well as partnerships with Gurriny Yealamucka Aboriginal Corporation (Yarrabah), Mulungu Health Service (Mareeba), Wuchopperen Health Service (Cairns), and Apunipima Cape York Health Council (Mossman Gorge) on the delivery of community-based initiatives that focus on the prevention, diagnosis, education, surveillance and treatment of rheumatic heart disease.