



ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D - 2002

REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

The sessional orders adopted by the Legislative Assembly on 18 April 2002 established seven estimates committees to consider proposed expenditure under the *Appropriation Bill 2002* and the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2002*. Each committee was given the responsibility for scrutinising the estimates for particular ministerial portfolios.

The Legislative Assembly appointed Estimates Committee D to examine and report on the proposed expenditure for the organisational units within the portfolios of the:

- Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy; and
- Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services.

The committee conducted a public hearing on Friday, 12 July 2002 to take evidence from these ministers and their respective officers.

For the purposes of examining the proposed expenditure for the organisational units allocated to it, the committee considered information obtained at the public hearing in conjunction with:

- Budget Papers and Ministerial Portfolio Statements (MPS);

- Ministers' written responses to the committee's questions on notice prior to the public hearing; and
- Written responses provided by the Minister for Families and the Minister for Health on questions taken on notice at the public hearing.

During the inquiry the committee examined a wide range of issues, which are listed in this report. For details on these issues the committee directs readers to:

- the volume of 'additional information' (tabled in the House) that contains the committee's questions on notice, the Ministers' answers, and minutes of the committee's meetings; and
- the transcript of the committee's public hearing, which is available on the Hansard web-page at:

<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au>

2. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Queensland Health delivers an extensive range of health services through a network of 182 public hospitals and outpatient centres, 21 residential aged care facilities, and approximately 480 primary and community health care facilities. The Department also ensures access to other appropriate health services through collaboration and development of cooperative partnerships with general practitioners and non-Government service providers.

The total appropriation for the Department of Health in 2002-2003 is \$2.491 billion. The MPS provides the following output summary.

Output	Total Cost \$'000
Treatment and Management – Acute Inpatient Services	2,148,526
Treatment and Management – Non-Inpatient Services	1,053,949
Integrated Mental Health Services	401,905
Health Maintenance Services	496,219
Public Health Services	230,004
Total	4,330,603

2.1 Budget highlights

Budget highlights for the 2002-2003 financial year include:

- An additional \$50 million over four years for information and communication and health technology projects
- An extra \$10.6 million to enhance a range of acute inpatient and community mental health services
- Up to \$7.3 million additional funding for Home and Community Care (HACC) Program services
- An additional \$4.8 million toward Blood Transfusion Services provided by the Australian Red Cross Blood Service (Qld)
- An extra \$2 million in ongoing funding to employ additional medical officers and nurses in Emergency Departments.

2.2 Issues considered by the committee

During the course of its inquiry the committee examined a range of issues including:

- Funding of enterprise bargaining agreements
- Expenditure on private agency nursing staff
- Director-General's performance bonus

- Indemnity cover provided by Queensland Health to public hospital doctors
- Nurse recruitment, retraining and retention
- Nurse practitioner models
- Indemnity cover provided by Queensland Health to rural GPs undertaking private procedural work in public hospitals
- Rebuilding of state aged care facilities
- Involvement of GPs in managing people with chronic diseases
- Implementation of a computerised patient information and recall system to improve indigenous health
- Commonwealth health funding
- Negligence claims arising from treatment provided in public hospitals
- Minister's involvement in enterprise bargaining negotiations
- Liability of the Department and individual health service districts to the Queensland Government Insurance Fund
- Cancellation of surgical operations in Queensland Health facilities
- Commonwealth funding for the treatment of PNG nationals
- Effect of Commonwealth private health insurance reforms on public hospitals
- Home and Community Care (HACC) funding and programs
- Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme
- Modernisation of the coronial system
- Number of patients undergoing elective surgery
- Use of tandem mass spectrometers
- Drug court pilot program
- Adult rehabilitation services
- Increase in demand for emergency department services

- Increase in funding for Redland and Nambour Hospitals
- Targets for adult courses of care for general dental treatment
- Public oral health program
- Mental health funding
- Forensic mental health policy
- Protocol to deal with forensic patients absconding from care
- Drug and alcohol initiatives
- Clean needle telephone help line
- Nursing home beds in the South Burnett Health Service District
- Future of the Maryborough birthing unit
- Strategies to prevent underage smoking
- Programs targeting indigenous health
- Vacancies for dentists in the public system
- Acquisition of St Vincents Robina
- Review of the accident and emergency section of Nambour Hospital
- Immunisation rates for children
- Meningococcal awareness campaign
- Family care nurse home visiting program and access to positive parenting programs
- Health technology
- Redevelopment of Gympie Hospital
- Staff accommodation in rural areas
- Residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities
- Nursing vacancies
- Security of facilities holding radioactive material
- Breast screening
- Cervical cancer screening
- Eat Well Queensland: Smart Eating for a Healthier State initiative.

3. DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES

The purpose of the Department of Families is to support vulnerable children and families, supervise and assist young people on court orders and build strong communities. A range of services are provided throughout the State, both directly through the Department's staff and through non-government service providers.

The total appropriation for the Department of Families in 2002-2003 is \$470.952 million. The MPS provides the following output summary.

Output	Total Cost \$'000
Services for Children and Young People	227,590
Families and Community Support	90,965
Services for Youth Justice	68,076
Total	386,631

3.1 Budget highlights

The 2002-2003 State budget provides the Department of Families with new funding of \$148 million over four years. The first instalment of \$42 million in 2002-2003 will be broadly focussed and will include a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention strategies, increased investment in supporting and enhancing the alternative care sector, and encouraging innovation in the provision of services.

The MPS states that the Premier and Minister for Families will shortly launch a major policy statement outlining the Government's vision for the Department. The statement will outline new strategic directions for the Department and provide detail on a range of new initiatives. A Departmental paper, *Queensland Families: Future Directions*, launched by the Premier and the Minister for Families on 20 June 2002, contains further detail of how the funding is to be invested.

3.2 Issues considered by the committee

During the course of its inquiry the committee examined a range of issues including:

- Departmental record keeping
- Departmental use of commercial accommodation to house young people
- Recruitment of, and funding for, foster carers
- Performance measurement for the initial assessment of child protection notifications
- Child protection assessments awaiting finalisation
- Community conferencing for juvenile offenders
- Initiatives for seniors
- Ipswich Youth Justice Service
- Strategies to reduce the overrepresentation of indigenous young people in detention
- Resources and strategies to improve child protection
- New technology to reduce the time field officers spend on paperwork
- ICARE
- Increases in child protection notifications
- Staff allocation within the Department
- The Ombudsman's report into the handling of the case of Brooke Brennan
- Alternative out-of-home care
- Youth detention facilities
- Travel concessions for self-funded retirees
- Queensland Seniors Card benefits
- Assistance to the non-government sector
- Income from the Forde Foundation
- Forde Inquiry funding recommendations.

4. DEPARTMENT OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POLICY

The corporate vision of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy is to provide outstanding leadership within Government on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. This is embodied in the Government's long term planning framework, the objectives of which are to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders through improved coordination, improved accountability and performance monitoring, and new structural arrangements at local, regional and central levels.

The total appropriation for the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy in 2002-2003 is \$87.389 million. The MPS provides the following output summary.

Output	Total Cost \$'000
Strategic Policy	10,618
Community Development	69,401
Community Governance	28,074
Total	108,093

4.1 Budget highlights

Budget highlights for the 2002-2003 financial year include:

- funding to address issues raised in the Cape York Justice Study and implementation of the Government's response
- \$1.4 million to replace the Council Chambers in Doomadgee
- \$0.3 million provided recurrently for the Diversion from Custody Program
- \$9 million to continue to address water, sewerage and health-related infrastructure
- \$4 million to finalise the upgrade of the Island Board of Industries retail stores.

4.2 Issues considered by the committee

During the course of its inquiry the committee examined a range of issues including:

- Cape York Justice Strategy
- Liquor licensing officers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care agencies
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic development
- Drug and alcohol issues in indigenous communities
- Local justice groups
- Community and personal histories program
- Ten Year Partnership
- Diversionary centres
- Environmental health workers
- Island Board of Industries and the upgrade of retail stores
- Resource guide targeted at new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land-holders
- Proposed cultural heritage legislation
- Development of a green paper on the future direction of governance arrangements for DOGIT communities
- Financial accountability improvement program
- Accounting standards for Aboriginal and Island councils
- Transfer of the Cape York Partnership Unit from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Transfer of retail stores to indigenous control.

5. DISABILITY SERVICES QUEENSLAND

Disability Services Queensland provides a wide range of programs and services for people with a

disability, their carers and families and the community.

The MPS states that the Departmental budget relies in part on funding from the Commonwealth, which at the time the budget was prepared was subject to the finalisation of negotiations.

The total appropriation for Disability Services Queensland in 2002-2003 is \$234.257 million. The MPS provides the following output summary.

Output	Total Cost \$'000
Support for Adults	199,069
Support for Children and Families	107,166
Community and Infrastructure Support	24,725
Total	330,960

5.1 Budget highlights

Budget highlights for the 2002-2003 financial year include:

- \$10 million to meet the Government's election commitments, including respite and other support options, and progressing the continued relocation of individuals from government and non-government institutions into more appropriate community living arrangements
- \$5 million provided recurrently to support the existing needs for direct service delivery by the Endeavour Foundation
- \$1.2 million to implement a Targeted Response Model for Resident Support Services
- \$5.4 million to address service and demand pressures experienced by some areas of the disability sector including extra assistance to non-government organisations such as Cerebral Palsy League

- \$6 million to capital projects, including respite and family support facilities, innovative housing, and upgrading accommodation facilities.

5.2 Issues considered by the committee

During the course of its inquiry the committee examined a range of issues including:

- Relocation of Basil Stafford clients
- Housing for people with challenging and dangerous behaviours
- Investigations into an allegation that Departmental files had been purged
- Adult lifestyle support packages
- Commonwealth-State/Territory Disability Agreement negotiations
- Targeted response model for resident support services
- Support and housing for people with challenging and complex support needs
- Respite and family support services
- Local area coordination services
- Young people with a disability housed in nursing homes
- Institutional reform initiatives
- Carer to client ratio
- Funding of non-government organisations including the Endeavour Foundation and the Cerebral Palsy League
- Employment conditions for residential care officers
- Post-school support services
- Children with Disabilities in Care funding program
- Project 300
- Legislative reform project.

6. RECOMMENDATION

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditures, as stated in the *Appropriation Bill 2002* for the organisational units within the portfolios referred to Estimates Committee D for examination, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The committee thanks Ministers and their staff for their cooperation and assistance during the estimates process.

Barbara Stone MP
Chair

29 July 2002

MEMBERS

- Ms Barbara Stone MP (Chair)
- Ms Bonny Barry MP
- Ms Rachel Nolan MP
- Mrs Desley Scott MP
- Miss Fiona Simpson MP
- Mr Stuart Copeland MP
- Mrs Dolly Pratt MP

STAFF

- Mr Chris Garvey, Research Director
- Ms Joanna Fear, Research Officer
- Ms Carolyn Heffernan, Executive Assistant

STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS – HEALTH ESTIMATES

1. REFUSAL TO RELEASE CANCELLED SURGERY DATA

The Health Minister refused repeatedly to provide details about the cancelled surgery rates in Queensland Health facilities over the last 12 months.

This demonstrates a lack of accountability to the parliamentary hearings process as well as an unwillingness to provide information critical to improving Queensland Health.

Under Freedom Of Information, the State Opposition has previously received documentation showing there were nearly 30,000 cancelled or postponed surgeries in Queensland Health Facilities between July 2000 to October 2001 and will now have to rely upon FOI processes again to receive this information.

2. NURSING VACANCIES AND AGENCY NURSING COSTS

There has been a significant 40% hike in expenses for employing agency nursing staff in the Queensland Health system in the last year, costing the department a total of \$15.5 million. On the figures supplied by Health Minister Edmond, this means the extra 31.09 full-time equivalent nursing positions come at an extra average cost of \$142,626. The answers provided by the Health Minister and the Director General for Health failed to adequately explain why there had been such a significant one-year jump in private agency costs other than the expense of getting nurses into rural and remote areas. Once again, this does not explain the significant variance on last year's figures and demands further explanation from the State Government.

In regard to nursing vacancies, I note with concern that Queensland Health could only produce five-month-old vacancy data for nurses in the various health districts (February

17, 2002). The Minister in answering a question taken on notice at the hearing said there were 756.93 full-time equivalent nursing vacancies. She also stated that "many positions" were covered by temporary appointments and were as a result of permanent staff taking their leave entitlements such as long service leave, maternity leave and sick leave". The Minister did not provide a breakdown of how many of these vacancies fell into these categories and how many did not which is essential to understanding the real picture of nursing retention and recruitment across the state.

The Minister has failed to provide up to date and rigorous proof to support her claim that the nursing recruitment and retention programs are working.

For example, Mt Isa District is listed as having an alarming 66.69 nursing vacancies which is nearly on par with a hospital the size of Royal Brisbane. This level of vacancy in Mount Isa displays that it would be a serious case of maladministration and gross misjudgement to remove any incentive payments to nurses in rural and remote areas which is what Queensland Health are currently trying to do under EBV negotiations.

Staff are budgeted to increase in acute inpatient services across Queensland Health by 0.37 % which is totally inadequate. This matches a similar paltry increase in last year's budget (0.3%) which is exacerbating the workload and poor conditions in the State's acute hospitals and impacting upon patient care.

3. INDUSTRIAL ACTION AND ENTERPRISE BARGAINING

The Minister's obvious ignorance on the health crisis was exposed at the Parliamentary Estimates hearing and she failed to try to

justify this. She claimed no Health Minister was previously involved in pay negotiations for nurses. Former Health Minister Mike Horan was. She claimed that it must have been an occasion when there wasn't an Industrial Relations Minister, despite the fact that Santo Santoro was IR Minister at the time. As the money for nurses comes out of her portfolio, it is concerning that Mrs Edmond was wrong on all occasions and has not been more involved in this issue.

Under questioning the Health Minister stated the enterprise bargaining agreement negotiated under the coalition government required \$30 million of savings to be found. It appears the Health Minister has confused enterprise bargaining agreements. It was the Queensland Regional Health Authorities Certified Agreement 1994 and the Queensland Department of Health Central Office Certified Agreement 1995 struck under the Goss Labor Government, which was to achieve \$38 million in savings through productivity gains in order to fund the final 4% pay increase.

4. LIABILITY

The current Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) crisis proves the Health Minister is either ignorant of the facts or she has tried to mislead the Parliament and the Opposition about the medical indemnity insurance offered by Queensland Health. She claims the department's indemnity cover is better than what is offered by private medical defence funds but health professionals who clearly disagree are exiting from the public sector. Even the Premier admits a review of the term due diligence, which is part of the department's test for discretionary cover, is required. The Health Minister, however, is still ignorant as to why doctors would not want to work in an environment where they are vulnerable to litigation, but not be fully covered. They are not seeking protection from blatant criminal negligence, but are wanting a less discretionary indemnity cover to provide greater certainty for them and their patients.

5. ORAL HEALTH

School children's oral health is being badly let down by the State Government in this budget. Last year, the number of oral health treatments for school aged children was below the target of 360,000 at 341,000. The targeted number for 2002/2003 is between 330,000 and 335,000. There is no satisfactory explanation from the Health Minister about the lowered standards of access for children.

In addition, while the Budget papers say that adult oral health service will focus more on preventative work, the figures show it is shifting dramatically away from preventative care to emergency work.

I believe there need to be more performance measures printed in the portfolio statements for transparency such as last year's budget for oral health (school children and adults) and the actual amount spent (as budgets are not quarantined to only dental spending) and the wait time for patients. This latter point is important as wait times around the state can be several years.

6. ST VINCENTS/ROBINA

It is noted with great concern the secrecy surrounding the State Government's buyout of St Vincents at Robina which had been contracted to provide public beds for its 20 year contract before the facility reverted to the State at no cost. The State Government will not reveal how much it paid for the facility after negotiations failed between the two parties in regard to ongoing recurrent costs and the contract. Given that the Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, so publicly opposed St Vincents (run by the Sisters of Charity who run numerous others hospitals around Australia) providing the services under contract to the public system, this lack of transparency is unacceptable.

It is also not acceptable that for such a major decision, there is no detail in the budget papers concerning the St Vincents buyout or

the estimated repayment amount to Treasury, although it is noted that officers of the department in briefings prior to the Estimates process advised that the amount of repayment to Treasury had still to be negotiated.

7. LICENSING OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL AND SECURITY CONCERNS

The State Opposition asked the Health Minister as the responsible minister for licensing radioactive materials whether there was any review of the security requirements for licensing following September 11 terrorism concerns.

Minister Edmond's flippant reply about getting the police to chase people with smoke detectors clearly demonstrated she was totally unaware of the issues.

I note, however, that Dr John Scott from the Department subsequently confirmed that the department had been involved in security meetings with police and at the national level with ARPANZA.

8. MENTAL HEALTH

This year's portfolio statement shows a 40% fall in the actual State contribution to mental health funding over the last 12 months.

While the State's budgeted contribution to recurrent mental health funding rises \$14.6 million for 2002/2003, it is still \$130,716,000 less than the State budgeted for in 2001/2002.

Integrated Mental Health Services

	2000/2001 Actual	2001/2002 Target / Estimate	2001/2002 Actual	2002/2003 Target / Estimate
State Contribution (\$'000)	357,743	365,593	220,280	234,877
Other Revenue (includes Commonwealth)	19,910	19,922	161,841	168,233

The State Opposition asked why there had been such a fall off the pace in actual State funding for mental health in the last year.

9. ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

I note with some scepticism the Minister's claim that there are between 77 and 81 detoxification beds available for people under the age of 18. Although this is at least closer to the mark than the previous claim of 88 beds. It was revealed in *The Courier-Mail* on 11 June, 2002, that there were only 21 publicly funded detoxification beds for people under the age of 18 in Queensland. Out of the 88 previously claimed by the Health Minister, it was found that 11 did not exist, five were in a non-government funded clinic and 54 were in a private hospital that charged \$400 a night.

10. NAMBOUR HOSPITAL ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY

The State Opposition asked about the review of the accident and emergency section at Nambour Hospital and whether the recommendations (which included extra staff positions) had been met. The Health Minister did not answer this question other than to say that it was a "local operational report" and that new funded positions in accident and emergency sections in the state had not yet been allocated. Given that the lack of staffing in the accident and emergency section had been a significant issue at this hospital, the State Opposition will continue to seek to have this report and its recommendations released and for appropriate staffing to be allocated.

Fiona Simpson MP
Member for Maroochydore
Shadow Minister for Health.