

Question on Notice
No. 1323
Asked on 7 October 2004

MR COPELAND asked the Minister for Health (MR NUTTALL)—

QUESTION:

- (1) Will he provide the name and location of all public hospitals and health facilities in Queensland that have been identified as containing asbestos material (reported separately)?
- (2) For each of the last two financial years and for the year to date, will he provide details of all public hospitals and health facilities that have undergone an asbestos removal process, the party engaged to undertake the work, the total cost of that process and details of the final outcome (reported separately)?

ANSWER:

- (1) In approximately 1998, a detailed audit was conducted by the Department of Public Works, Q-Build Division of all Queensland Health hospital and health care facilities. Asbestos in various forms is prevalent in any buildings built prior to 1989. Queensland Health has removed and will continue to remove any asbestos material and/or product that is identified as a health risk. There are a number of procedures in place which involve the management and removal of an asbestos product which includes an Asbestos Removal Program managed through Q-Build on behalf of Queensland Health, an extensive capital works redevelopment and refurbishment program plus day to day maintenance performed by individual Health Service Districts.

The Department of Public Works administers a Whole of Government Asbestos Management Program and a list of health facilities containing any form of asbestos could be obtained through the Building Division, Department of Public Works.

- (2) Queensland Health facilities, through Health Service Districts, maintain an individual “Building Management Plan” as the register of asbestos materials and/or products for the buildings. Managers of all Queensland Health facilities are kept up to date on any asbestos management issue and are required through the annual maintenance program with Q-Build to utilise that agency or external contractors to remove asbestos products over a period of time. The majority of Queensland Health asbestos removal is carried out as part of the ongoing capital works program on its facilities.

Queensland Health follows strict guidelines that have been established by the Department of Public Works (updated February 2004) and are required to regularly reassess all asbestos materials and/or products at least once per year, and earlier, if the nature or location of work in the vicinity of asbestos material changes.

As an indication of work undertaken, Block 7 at the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital is currently being refurbished. This includes the removal of a substance called vermiculite

which was used to provide fire protection for building framework during its construction during the 1970s. The vermiculite contained between 4% and 10% asbestos. The demolition and removal of this product was monitored by an independent environmental consultant and has been successfully completed by the contractor. Another example relates to Rosemount Hospital at Windsor, where the scope of work involved the removal and disposal of asbestos material from two boiler units, pipe penetrations through a brick wall and shelving in the boiler house.

Strict guidelines are followed in the removal of any asbestos product or material and all Queensland Health facilities are regularly asked to reassess and inspect to ensure that the condition does not deteriorate to a point where it may pose a health risk

Separate cost details are not maintained for asbestos removal as these costs are incorporated into works phases that contain other significant cost components as part of an overall refurbishment program at a health facility.