

Question on Notice
No. 2097
Asked on 26 October 2010

MR CRANDON asked the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health (MR LUCAS) –

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise the number of mobile dental vans/clinics used to service aged care facilities in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 to date for health service districts for (a) Cairns and Hinterland, (b) Cape York, (c) Central Queensland, (d) Central West, (e) Darling Downs, (f) West Moreton, (g) Gold Coast, (h) Mackay, (i) Metro North, (j) Metro South, (k) Mt Isa, (l) Sunshine Coast, (m) Wide Bay (Northern Cluster), (n) Sunshine Coast Wide Bay (Southern Cluster), (o) Torres Strait – Northern Peninsula and (p) Townsville (reported separately in table format for each year)?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

The Queensland Government is committed to addressing dental health issues of all Queenslanders through both prevention and treatment.

The Bligh Government has introduced the most significant preventative health measure in Queensland history – the introduction of fluoride into the drinking water supply. Unfortunately, Queenslanders have had the highest level of tooth decay in the country and the introduction of fluoride is a crucial step toward correcting this problem.

Queensland Health also provides the most comprehensive oral health service in Australia with over 1.9 million people eligible for dental care at no cost. Public oral health services provided a total of 929,973 occasions of service in 2009/10, with a budget expenditure of approximately \$166 million. No other State matches the level of service Queensland Health provides.

The Queensland Government's oral health services would be significantly bolstered by the Gillard Government's Commonwealth Dental Health Program, which has unfortunately been stalled in the Senate by LNP Senators.

The Scheme would increase funding to Queensland oral health services by \$52.8 million over four years and deliver an additional one million dental consultations Australia-wide. These additional consultations are currently unavailable due to the failure of the LNP to support the package.

If the Member is genuinely interested in improving dental health services on behalf of elderly Queenslanders he should take immediate steps to call on his Federal LNP colleagues to pass the Commonwealth Dental Scheme legislation.

Mobile dental clinics are inappropriate for many aged care facility residents, due to the difficulty accommodating elderly patients with physical disability or cognitive impairment in such a physically confined space, many of which do not have wheelchair access. As such, Queensland Health Service Districts employ a number of strategies to facilitate delivery of oral health services to residents in aged care facilities. These include:

- the delivery of examination, assessment and preventative services to patients in their own bed at the aged care facility;
- provision of examination, preventative and basic treatment in mobile dental clinics; or
- transporting patients to Queensland Health community oral health clinics.

As an example of the use of mobile dental vans, I am advised that in the Gold Coast Health District a mobile dental clinic has been utilised to provide services to residential aged care facilities 75% of the time between 2005 and 2010, in conjunction with other dental health access strategies.