



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 2

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2009-2010**

### **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2**

Health

Monday 14 September 2009

Answers to be lodged by: Thursday 8 October 2009

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Hearing date	Portfolio	Answer to be lodged by
14 September 2009	Health	8 October 2009 [21 days]
14 September 2009	Central Coast	8 October 2009 [21 days]
14 September 2009	Ageing, Disability Services	8 October 2009 [21 days]
14 September 2009	Aboriginal Affairs	8 October 2009 [21 days]
16 September 2009	Education and Training	12 October 2009 [21 days]
16 September 2009	Women	12 October 2009 [21 days]
16 September 2009	Community Services	12 October 2009 [21 days]

**Questions relating to the portfolios of Health and the Central Coast**

**14 September 2009, 9.15 am – 1.00 pm**

**Questions from Miss Gardiner**

1. With respect to the Transport for Health Program:
  - a. What is the Budget for 2009-2010 for the Transport for Health program for New South Wales?
  - b. What was the Budget for the same program in 2008-2009?
  - c. What was the actual expenditure on the program in 2008-2009?
  - d. How many FTE staff are employed in the Transport for Health program?
  - e. Where are the offices of the Transport for Health program currently located?
  - f. How many staff are located in each office?
  - g. What is the 2009-2010 Budget for the Transport for Health program for Hunter New England Area Health Service?
  - h. What was the expenditure on the same program for HNAHS in 2008-2009?
  - i. Is the Minister aware that the program, as it applies to communities like Harrington on the Mid-North Coast, requires for a patient to give 48 hours' notice to gain access to transport to a hospital but that patients going to a hospital for day surgery at, say, Manning Hospital, only get 24 hours' notice of their appointment? (Note: The Health Transport Unit of HNEAHS leaflet on the Program advises patients: "48 hours needed to coordinate your transfer needs")
  - j. Is the Minister also aware that some patients from places like Harrington who are waiting for more serious surgery may also receive less than 24 hours notice that they can access the surgery?
  - k. Is the Minister aware that, in the case of Manning Valley communities like Harrington, the Manning Valley Community Transport scheme - now superseded by the Transport for Health service - provided a service with no need for patients to give 48 hours notice?
  - l. Will the Minister review the bureaucratic need for patients to give 48 hours notice of requiring transport in localities like Harrington and consider providing a service that is more flexible and relevant to patients who receive short notice of their appointments for surgery?
  - m. If the Transport for Health program remains inflexible and cannot cater for patients such as those mentioned above, will the Minister consider allowing a community transport group (or groups) to offer a flexible service?
2. With respect to the Bathurst Hospital remediation:
  - a. What has the cost been to date of the remediation of works at the new Bathurst Hospital?
  - b. What is the estimated total cost of the remediation works?
  - c. Have all the remediation works been completed? If not, what is the estimated completion date?
3. Which NSW hospitals utilise Telehealth services?
  - a. Please list them.
4. University of New England Rural Medical School - What plans does the NSW Government have in order to meet its commitments with respect to its role in supporting the continuing

operations and development of the University of New England's Rural Medical School at Armidale and Tamworth and, in particular:

- a. What priority does the Government give to redeveloping Armidale and District Hospital?
  - b. What is the estimated completion date of the redevelopment of Tamworth Hospital?
  - c. How many registrar and intern places is the NSW Government funding for graduates at hospitals in the Hunter New England Area Health Service?
5. What is the current annual budget and actual expenditure (2008-09) for the Health Councils (or equivalent body or bodies) for each Area Health Service?
6. Patient Flow - With respect to the "Nurses Managing Our Hospitals Better" program:
  - a. Has NSW Health piloted, or does it have any plan to pilot, the "Nurses Managing Our Hospitals Better" program developed by Flow Health Systems?
  - b. Has NSW Health had any discussions with the NSW Nurses' Association with a view to jointly conducting a pilot study of the system? If so, what was the outcome of those discussions?
  - c. Is NSW Health undertaking any pilot studies of any other system aimed at improving patient flow in NSW hospitals? If so, what are those pilot programs?
7. With respect to the Coffs Harbour Health Campus, what is the NCAHS doing to reduce waiting times for patients in ambulances at the Coffs Harbour Hospital emergency department?
8. With respect to Electronic Medical Records:
  - a. What is the cost to date of the development and implementation of the Electronic Medical Records system being rolled out in NCAHS hospitals?
  - b. Has the system been evaluated?
  - c. If so, who did the evaluation?
  - d. What was the result of the evaluation? What is the name of the evaluation document?
9. Mileage allowance for Health Service Volunteers and Staff
  - a. In June 2008, the reimbursement rate for mileage incurred by Health Service Volunteers and Staff was \$0.33 per kilometre and had been so for the past two years. Is this still the current rate?
  - b. If this is still the current rate, does NSW Health have any plans to revise these rates, considering the rise in petrol prices over the last three years?
10. With respect to Gulgong Hospital:
  - a. When is the GWAHS review of Gulgong Hospital expected to be finalised?
  - b. Will the Minister guarantee that Gulgong Hospital will not be closed?
11. With respect to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS):
  - a. When will the NSW Government apply recommendation 14 of the Garling Report by "Abolishing the personal contribution and administration charge for all qualifying IPTAAS claims"?

12. With respect to Visiting Medical Officers (VMOs):

- a. What are the NSW Health initiatives in place to address the shortage of VMOs in regional areas?
- b. Please list these initiatives.
- c. Are there specific initiatives where video conferencing between hospitals is used in order to assist health professionals in regional areas prescribe and provide treatment remotely where there is no VMO available? If so, please list the sites at which video conferencing for this purpose is operational.

13. Royal Flying Doctor Service - Given that the Federal Minister for Rural and Regional Health, Warren Snowdon, has said that the Federal Government:

“will monitor any impacts upon the RFDS from any changes in contracts with state or territory governments”

And will;

“Undertake discussions and negotiations with the Royal Flying Doctor Service... towards finalising a new contract”,

- if the Royal Flying Doctor Service does not win the Air Ambulance contract, does the NSW Government have any contingency plans to assist the Royal Flying Doctor Service in ameliorating any adverse impact the loss of such contract may have upon its core functions? If so, what are those contingency plans?

14. Royal Flying Doctors Service cross-subsidy - What is the amount of the cross-subsidy that is, in effect, provided to the Royal Flying Doctor Service via its current contract to provide certain services for the NSW Ambulance Service?

15. In June 2009 it was revealed that 263 Health staff were on an “unattached list”, 250 of which were from the Area Health Services:

- a. How many NSW Health staff are currently on an “unattached list” as of 16 September 2009?
- b. What is the breakdown of these staff by Area Health Service?

16. According to the Garling Report, Chapter 28, page 987, the “average annual cost of an occupied rehabilitation bed is estimated to be approximately \$256,000, 62% of which is made up of salaries and wages” and “the average annual cost of an occupied intensive care bed... is estimated to be approximately \$1.53 million, 46% of which is made up of medical and nursing salaries”.

- a. What is the annual average cost of both an occupied rehabilitation bed and an occupied intensive care bed for each of the eight Area Health Services?

17. With respect to the Resource Distribution Formula (RDF):

- a. In the case of each Area Health Service, by how much did the actual expenditure in 2008-09 vary from the RDF for each Area Health Service?

18. Wagga Wagga Base Hospital:

- a. What priority does the NSW Government give to redeveloping Wagga Wagga Base Hospital?
- b. What is the current estimate for when this project will be:
  - i. Started?
  - ii. Completed?

19. Murwillumbah Hospital Obstetrics - What is the current status of, and plans for, the provision of obstetric services at Murwillumbah Hospital?

**Questions from Ms Parker**

20. In regards to recent cases of misdiagnosis at the Dubbo Base Hospital:

- a. Can you explain why an 18 year old girl, who was recently at the RPA hospital with fluid on her brain and a spinal drip in her back, was turned away from the Dubbo Base Hospital three times after being told she had a mental health problem?
  - i. Can you provide an update on the investigation into this matter?
  - ii. Can you explain how this case of misdiagnosis occurred?
  - iii. What steps have you put in place since the incident to make sure this type of situation doesn't happen again?
- b. Given this was the third case of misdiagnosis at the Dubbo Base Hospital in six weeks, what reassurance can you provide the Dubbo community that this type of incident will not happen again?

21. Previous Minister for Health John Della Bosca whilst in the New England area in August honoured the commitment of the Government that the construction of the Tamworth Hospital Redevelopment would begin before the next State Election. Mr Della Bosca also advised The Leader that he hoped to visit Tamworth in the next six weeks.

- a. Will the Government confirm their position that the Tamworth Hospital Redevelopment will commence construction before the next State Election.
- b. Will the new Minister for Health confirm whether they will honour the previous Ministers intention to visit the Tamworth area and discuss the Tamworth Hospital Redevelopment with them.
- c. Will the Minister confirm that they will adopt the recommendations as listed in the Tamworth Services Plan namely:
  - i. that the redevelopment of Tamworth Hospital will include the provision of Radiotherapy services? And
  - ii. that the redevelopment of the hospital includes an upgrade to a 397-bed facility from the present 350-day beds, and if not, why not
  - iii. that the maternity section of the Hospital will be increased to a Level 5 Maternity Services Facility
- d. Will the Minister confirm that she is aware that the Tamworth Services Plan recommendation of a Radiation Oncology Services would be in support of a 'Best Practice Regional Cancer Centre' and that to gain such a service would be reliant on a successful bid to the Australian Government?
- e. Would the Minister assist the Hunter New England Area Health for such a bid to gain a "Best Practice Regional Cancer Centre"?

22. Emergency Medical Service Protection Association (EMSPA) BANS

- a. Why has the NSW Ambulance Service (ASNSW) refused to deal EMSPA in its representative and support capacity for employees of ASNSW?
- b. Is it being suggested that employees of ASNSW who do not wish to be a member of a union, may not appoint EMSPA as their representative or support association in workplace matters?
- c. Is ASNSW management and the government supporting and enforcing compulsory unionism by refusing to deal with EMSPA?
- d. Have instructions been given to ASNSW managers to remove all EMSPA material from ambulance stations?
- e. Have bans been placed on EMSPA members contacting the association by email from ASNSW computers?

23. Cuts to school health screening programs:

- a. Are school students still given vision, hearing and general health checks?
- b. If not when were they last provided?
- c. Was this at all schools across the state?
- d. If not at what schools?
- e. If dropped why?
- f. How much funding was allocated to this program?

24. Delayed Autopsy Reports

- a. Are you aware of the long recognised and important role of information learned from autopsy examinations in the continuing education and quality assurance of doctors?
- b. What are you doing to address the inordinate delays in the provision of autopsy information, up to two years in many cases, from the coroner's office to hospital doctors in NSW?

25. Cerner FirstNet – Emergency Department IT Program - Cerner FirstNet implementation at Westmead Hospital

- a. Is diagnosis data from the Emergency Department Collection useful for monitoring public health and health activity trends?
- b. Did the previous EDIS (Emergency Department Information System) System (now being replaced by Cerner) only offer sensible diagnosis codes from an international classification of disease?
- c. Has the implementation of Cerner Emergency Department System at Westmead resulted in a drop in the quality of diagnosis data?
- d. Does the Cerner system when entering appropriate key words frequently offer silly diagnosis suggestions?
- e. Have clinical staff frustrated with the new Emergency Department System left inappropriate diagnosis information in the new Emergency Department System?
- f. Have staff been threatened with dismissal for this? Is a formal investigation now in progress on this issue?
- g. Has the investigation examined the types of silly non health diagnosis information that is offered by the new system?
- h. Have the senior DOH managers responsible for implementing a system in one of the busiest emergency departments with these issues been threatened with dismissal?

26. Departmental Questions

- a. What are the total number of Media and or Communications staff/Advisers for NSW Department of Health and any other associated agencies?
- b. What is the total entertainment budget and actual expenditure in entertainment for NSW Department of Health and other associated agencies?

27. Cooma Hospital

- a. When will the 4.43 registered nursing position be cut from the Cooma Hospital?
- b. Given the region is home to an ageing population, how do you plan to deal with the increasing demand for community healthcare when you have planned to cut jobs and resources from Physiotherapy, Palliative Care, Physiotherapy, Aged Care, Women's Health and Counselling.
- c. When will the cuts to Community nursing go ahead and why were nurse not adequately consulted?

28. Cooma State Plan Consultation

- a. How much did it cost for community consultation process to take place?
- b. How many staff members attended?

29. Queanbeyan Hospital

- a. Steve Whan responded to reports from the Southern General Practice Network that Queanbeyan Hospital is without a CT scanner, diagnostic imaging equipment or qualified ultrasound staff, by saying that the facility had not been 'officially opened'. When will the Queanbeyan hospital be officially opened and will this equipment then be made available?
- b. How do you explain the lack of this critical life saving equipment when your Government spent more almost \$100,000 in taxpayer money on charter flights and advertising for a Cabinet meeting in Queanbeyan?
- c. Given that for the last 10 months the Queanbeyan Hospital Computed Tomography Scanner room has remained empty due to the absence of the critical equipment;
  - i. What is the reason for this significant delay?
  - ii. What is the reason for the Canberra Imaging Group being rejected as a tender to provide the service 12-18 months ago?
  - iii. Given that the tender expressions of interest have now opened, can you provide a commitment that the service will be provided by the end of the year?

30. Pathology Company

- a. How many companies expressed interest during the tender process for the Pathology system service used at Cooma and Queanbeyan Hospital?
- b. How much did the Government pay ICPMR (Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research) for their services in 2008-2009?

31. Complaint system

- a. How many complaints have been lodged with the hospitals IMMs (Incident Management System) for the past five years at;
  - i. Cooma Hospital and;
  - ii. Queanbeyan Hospital.



32. Jindabyne HealthOne

- a. Have you got plans to build a Jindabyne HealthOne facility in Jindabyne given that you in March 2007, Mr Hatzistergos and the Member for Monaro visited Jindabyne to announce that they would support the HealthOne state initiative and given that concerned locals for over 18 months have dedicated their time to trying to work with the GSAHS on the plans for the HealthOne?

33. Health Restructuring Cuts – General

- a. When will phase 2 begin of the Greater Southern Areas Health Service organisational restructuring?
- b. When will phase 3 begin of the Greater Southern Areas Health Service organisational restructuring?
- c. How many more FTE cuts are proposed to be made at each stage?

34. Health Reporting

- a. Why were there no hospital performance results provided in the NSW Quarterly Health Performance Report? Does the Government have something to hide in the performance reports for Cooma and Queanbeyan Hospital?

35. Port Macquarie Base Hospital

- a. Given that a Department of Health briefing document received through a freedom of information request on the Port Macquarie Base Hospital expansion refers to a "potential commencement date of 2014-15", will the Minister confirm that this is still the current timeline of hospital expansion? If not, what is the timeframe for the Labor Government plans to begin construction?
- b. Under the North Coast Area Health Service restructuring plans, does the Government have any plans to employ casual staff when a full timer is on sick leave? If so, will this equate to the staff member only working a six hour shift, rather than eight hour shift?
- c. When will the proposed amalgamation of Directors of Nursing positions at the 15 North Coast Hospitals including Grafton, Lismore, Ballina, Maclean, Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Wauchope, Tweed Heads, Murwillumbah, Kyogle, Nimbin, Urbenville, Casino, Coraki and Bonalbo take place? And how many Director of Nursing positions will be cut as a result of the amalgamation?
- d. What is the current status of the Palliative Care Co-ordinator position? Is the position still in existence and vacant or has the position been cut?
- e. Given that in the Premier's announcement of the \$1.3 million upgrade on the 1st of November 2009 of the Emergency Department included '11 treatment bays and 2 resuscitation bays', why has the Premier gone back on his promise and is now only planning to install XX bays?
- f. When will the third round of FTE reductions be approved and applied to the North Coast Area Health Service?