

Question No: 145

Question: Department of Health and Community Services Dental Positions

Date: 11/08/92

Member: Mr BAILEY

To: MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. How many dentists are employed by the Department of Health and Community Services.
2. Where are the positions referred to in question 1 based.
3. What arrangements are in place for dentists to travel through bush communities.
4. Are arrangements in place between the Department of Health and Community Services and private sector dentists to cover dental health in areas not serviced by the Northern Territory government; if so, what are these arrangements.
5. Are any Department of Health and Community Services dentist positions vacant; if so, which ones are they and for how long have the positions been vacant.
6. What is the usual waiting time for a general appointment with a Department of Health and Community Services dentist.
7. What is the usual waiting time for an appointment with a Department of Health and Community Services dentist for elective work, for example, dentures.
8. Does the Department of Health and Community Services employ dental technicians; if so, how many positions are there and where are they based; if not, what arrangements exist with private practitioners.

ANSWER

1. There are 21 dentist positions within the department.
2. 1 dentist in Central Office;
10 dentists in Darwin;
5 dentists in Alice Springs;
2 dentists in Katherine;
1 dentist in Nhulunbuy;
1 dentist in Groote Eylandt; and
1 dentist in Tennant Creek.
3. Rural services are provided in all areas, often with designated officers. For example, Darwin has 3 rural dentist and Alice Springs 2. They travel by road or air to all major communities within their area.
4. There are arrangements where private sector dentists provide cover for government patients. The dentists in Groote Eylandt and Tennant Creek work in both private and government practice. Private practitioners in Jabiru and Katherine do sessional work for the government.

5. There are vacancies in dental positions -

1 in Alice Springs - recently vacant;
2 in Katherine - 1 vacant for 8 months
1 new position; and
1 in Nhulunbuy - recently resigned.

6. The usual waiting time for routine appointments varies from area to area. In Nhulunbuy there is no waiting list. In Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine the waiting time is 2 to 3 months. Emergency appointments are however, available every day.

7. The waiting time for dentures is also 2 to 3 months in most areas.

8. The department employs dental technicians -

3 in Darwin;
1 in Alice Springs; and
1 in Nhulunbuy.

Work is also sent to private laboratories when required.