Name: *Queensland Past and Present: 100 Years of Statistics, 1896–1996*

**Section name**: Chapter 8, Health, Section 2

**Pages**: 242–246

**Printing notes (Adobe Acrobat)**: For best results “Page Scaling” should be set to “Fit to Printable Area”. “Auto Rotate and Center” should also be checked.

**Licence for use**: This document is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/au](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/au).

You are free to copy, communicate and adapt the work, as long as you attribute the authors.

In 1996 the provision of health services in Queensland was shared between Commonwealth, State and local governments. At the State level, services are administered by a minister through the Department of Health, headed by a Director-General. Health and education each represent about 25% of Queensland Government expenditure.

PUBLIC HOSPITALS

Early public hospitals

Queensland's hospitals for the physically ill have changed significantly since 1896. In the nineteenth century, hospitals were managed by committees elected by subscribers, and legislation dealing with hospitals largely addressed how the committees would manage the hospitals. Patients were supposed to pay for their treatment. Hospitals were not regarded as desirable places to be when sick. Most people, except the poor, the very ill and those with highly contagious diseases, were treated at home.13

In the 1890s public hospitals serving Brisbane included Brisbane General Hospital (254 beds), Hospital for Sick Children (84 beds), Lady Lamington Hospital for women's diseases (9 beds) and Lock Hospital for prostitutes with venereal disease.14 Patients with contagious diseases

Royal Children's Hospital, Brisbane c. 1899.
Table 8.1 Life expectancy at birth by sex, Queensland and Australia, 1891–1900 to 1993–95

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period (a)</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891–1900</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901–1910</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920–1922</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932–1934</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946–1948</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953–1955</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960–1962</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>74.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965–1967</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970–1972</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993–95</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Up to 1972 figures from Office of the Commonwealth Actuary; 1982, 1990 and 1994 figures from ABS.

Source: Office of the Commonwealth Actuary, unpublished data; GSO, Queensland Year Book, various years; ABS, Queensland Year Book, various years; ABS, Year Book Australia, various years; ABS, Demography, Queensland, 1995, Cat. no. 3311.3.

HEALTH

Orphanage building was converted to house additional patients. However, all beds were soon filled by chronic cases from Dunwich Benevolent Asylum.

Hospital boards

The Hospitals Act 1923 (Qld) established hospital districts and boards. State and local governments guaranteed board funding. Local governments were levied for financial contributions; for example, in 1925 a levy of a halfpenny in the pound (about 0.2 cents in the dollar) was placed on Nerang Shire to fund the board and a new shire health inspector.17

In 1930 a royal commission was conducted into the hospital system in Queensland. Its recommendations were taken into consideration in framing the Hospitals Act 1936 (Qld) which grouped hospitals in a district under the authority of a board. By 1936, 37 hospital boards had been established and these provided for representation of local authorities and subscribers. There were 112 public hospitals, of which 51 were administered by the boards and three others received government subsidies.18 Government endowments were £3 for each £2 raised and a subsidy of £10 a year for each bed occupied. Profits from the Golden Casket were used for making the £10 grants and formed about 50% of the payments from Consolidated Revenue.19

The Hospitals Amendment Act 1944 (Qld) brought all public hospitals under government control except Mater Misericordiae Public Hospital. This Act also made the State responsible for the total cost of administration and maintenance of hospitals, relieving local authorities of any responsibility for hospital funding. In 1953–54 there were 54 district hospital boards administering 127 public hospitals, three tuberculosis sanatoriums, ten ambulance brigades and 114 public maternity hospitals or sections.20
QUEENSLAND PAST AND PRESENT

In July 1991 Queensland’s 59 hospital boards were abolished and replaced by 13 regional health authorities with responsibility for all public health services. Regionalisation of the State’s public health system enabled local residents with the benefit of local knowledge to make decisions about local services. The policy and planning functions were retained within the centralised administrative structure. In 1996 the regional structure was abolished and replaced with a new structure based on 39 districts.

Childbirth facilities

Lady Bowen Hospital which opened in 1864 provided 51 beds for maternity cases by the 1890s, although most women still gave birth at home. Concern was raised by the medical profession about midwives as they had little training. It was also claimed that they were responsible for the spread of childbed fever. Nurse training in midwifery began at Lady Bowen Hospital in 1889, and the Nurses Board approved four hospitals for nurse training in 1914.

The Maternity Act 1922 provided government finance for the establishment of maternity hospitals, and antenatal and baby clinics, the latter being a foundation for child welfare services. By 1928, 64 antenatal and baby clinics had opened in country areas in Queensland and included an infant welfare railway car. The Notification of Births Act 1932 (Qld) concerning the registration of children after birth enabled child welfare nurses to contact mothers concerning infant feeding. A Maternal and Child Welfare Home opened at Sandgate for children whose mothers were in hospital for confinement or with an illness. The 300-bed Brisbane Women’s Hospital opened in 1938 replacing Lady Bowen Hospital.

Emergency evacuation by the Royal Flying Doctor Service at Camooweal, 1931.
Lady Bowen Hospital, c. 1912. Situated in Wickham Terrace between Gregory Terrace and Leichhardt Street, Brisbane, the Lady Bowen Hospital was originally established in Ann Street. The building in the photograph was erected in 1889 and operated until 1938.

The high postwar birth rate increased the demand for maternity beds. This situation was relieved when the 140-bed Mater Mothers' Hospital opened in 1960. In 1947–48 there were 187 maternal and child welfare centres and subcentres in the State, increasing to 242 in 1958–59.  

**Free hospital system**

In 1936 Home Secretary Hanlon's stated objective for the hospital service was 'to give the general public the best possible service at the least possible cost'. Hanlon's hospital service was not officially free, although little coercion was used to make patients in public hospitals pay. An amendment to the *Hospitals Act* in 1944 provided for free hospital treatment. This action was taken by the Queensland Government in anticipation of the *Hospitals Benefits Act 1945* (Cwlth) which provided six shillings a patient a day from the National Welfare Fund. In consideration of the Commonwealth subsidy, the State Government undertook not to make any charge for patients in public sections of public hospitals.

The Menzies federal Coalition Government ended the subsidy scheme. However, the State Labor Government decided to continue the free hospital scheme, funding it through state resources, including funds derived from the Golden Casket. This system remained in place until the Federal Government's Medibank scheme provided free public hospital treatment throughout Australia from 1975.

In 1996 eight hospital foundations operated under the *Hospital Foundation Act 1982* (Qld). Their object was to acquire, manage and apply property and any associated income to continuing projects within or associated with their respective hospitals. Hospital foundations also supported a range of research projects.
Postwar growth and development

The demands placed on hospital services led the State Government to develop a significant building program for hospitals. In Brisbane, for example, Princess Alexandra Hospital was built in 1956 to relieve the pressure on Royal Brisbane Hospital. Changing needs and medical developments led to specialised hospital facilities such as Chermside Chest Hospital and Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital becoming general hospitals. As Brisbane metropolitan area expanded, new hospital facilities such as Queen Elizabeth II and Logan City hospitals were constructed. In 1994–95 there were 146 public acute hospitals in Queensland with 9,700 beds, and 30 separate public out-patient clinics. Of the 28,064 full-time staff, 45.6% were nursing staff and 7.5% medical officers. Labour related costs were 74.9% of the $1,577m budgeted for these hospitals. As well as out-patient centres, non-residential health facilities included day centres, domiciliary nursing services and ambulance services.

When the health subdepartment was founded, only 3% of the maintenance vote of the Home Secretary's Department was spent on health, which in 1902 was $266,000. From 1932 onwards the budget expanded, and in 1956–57 it was nearly 12% of the department's total expenditure. Hospitals absorbed 60% of the 1956–57 health budget. In 1994–95 health expenditure by State and local governments in Queensland was $2,067m, 15% of their total outlays. In 1995–96, of the estimated $31,504m in current expenditure on health by governments in Australia, the Commonwealth Government spent $18,570m or 58.9% of the total. While 14.2% of government budgets was spent on health, more than half (or 7.5% of the total) was spent on hospital and other institutional services.

The number of public hospitals and nursing homes increased from 59 in 1895 to 204 in 1994–95 (table 8.2). Over the same period, the number of beds increased by sixfold from 1,918 to 12,321 and in-patients treated by 42-fold from 14,675 to 618,613, reflecting shorter stays and a higher number of in-patients per bed per year (figure 8.1). More than 30,000 staff were employed in 1994–95. Psychiatric admissions have risen in recent decades but the number of patients at year end has declined, also reflecting shorter stays. State and local government expenditure on public hospitals and nursing homes has increased steadily since World War II.

OTHER HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SERVICES

Private hospitals

In many centres private hospitals had been established by church organisations and by doctors and nurses. One of the largest private hospitals in Queensland, Mater Misericordiae Hospital, opened at North Quay in 1906. There was no State control over private hospitals until the Health Act 1911 provided for licensing by local authorities. Control passed to the Department of Health and Home Affairs in 1937, from which time records are available. In that year there were 178 private hospitals, including 52 in Brisbane. Public hospitals began to provide intermediate accommodation where patients could be attended by their personal doctors. As a result many private hospitals ceased operating and by 1960 over 40 hospitals operating in 1937 had closed.

Data for private hospitals prior to 1991–92 was collected from these hospitals on a voluntary basis and coverage was therefore incomplete. The number of private hospitals in Queensland