

MI144099
MO: H/07/01407

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 22 February 2007, regarding petition No. 782-07 received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The provision of a Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) is one of the core services offered by Queensland Health. This service is offered as one of a range of standard Queensland Health services provided from Queensland Health owned premises. An extension of the range of services provided from Queensland Health owned properties would not usually involve community consultation.

Mr Robert Kemp, Manager, Queensland Needle and Syringe Program, advises that there is a limited range of options for placement of NSP facilities on the Gold Coast. The recommendation to place an NSP in the Community Health Centre was made in the 2002 review of Needle and Syringe Program services on the Gold Coast by the Queensland NSP. This option was taken up by the Gold Coast Health Service District, with funding provided to employ a full-time equivalent harm-reduction worker who will provide the necessary education, counselling and referral for treatment.

The NSP proposed for the Palm Beach Community Health Centre will be a dedicated service which will only be provided during the business hours that the Community Health Centre currently operates.

Palm Beach Community Health Centre is a Queensland Health owned and operated multi-purpose health centre, similar to other community health centres, i.e. Inala, West Moreton, Beenleigh, which have long provided NSPs as part of mainstream health delivery, consistent with normal Queensland Health policy.

Data indicates there has been significant growth in the Gold Coast population, from 366,618 in 2001, to 434,049 in 2006. This growth in population is projected to reach 478,030 by 2011. To provide effective and efficient health services for this dynamic population growth, it is essential that services such as the Queensland Needle and Syringe Program maintain its support role and focus.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Mr Robert Kemp, Manager, Queensland Needle and Syringe Program, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 3896 3848.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP