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MO: H/07/03698

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 24 May 2007, regarding the petition received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly No. 799-07.

I would like to furnish you with the following response:

There is a limited range of options for placement of Needle and Syringe Programs on the Gold Coast. The recommendation to place one such program in the Community Health Centre was made in the 2002 review of Needle and Syringe Program services on the Gold Coast.

The provision of a Needle and Syringe Program is one of the core services offered by Queensland Health. The service is to be offered as one of a range of standard Queensland Health services provided from Queensland Health owned premises.

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

Funding has been provided to the Gold Coast Health Service District to employ a full-time harm reduction worker to provide education, counselling and referral to treatment.

There has been a significant growth in the Gold Coast population from 366,618 in 2001 to 434,049 in 2006. This is projected to reach 478,030 by 2011. It is essential that services such as the Queensland Needle and Syringe Program maintain pace with such rapid population growth.

In anticipation of further Council of Australian Governments funding it has been determined that an external independent review of the Queensland Needle and Syringe Program would be beneficial in identifying future priority issues and service gaps. Given levels of concern expressed by some members of the community regarding the opening of new outlets, the external review will seek community comment and input. Notwithstanding the specific recommendations of the external review, the Queensland Needle and Syringe Program will continue to strengthen and enhance its State-wide network. The program will continue to expand its focus to take greater account of the range of non-viral infections and injuries associated with injecting drug use.

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**