



Hon Yvette D'Ath MP
Minister for Health and Ambulance Services
Leader of the House

1 William Street Brisbane Qld 4000
GPO Box 48 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3035 6100

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

Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter regarding petition number 3840-22, tabled in Parliament on 21 February 2023, in relation to Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service (WBHHS).

WBHHS is responsible for the delivery of public hospital and health services including medical, surgical emergency, critical care, acute inpatient, outpatient, mental health, oral health and a range of specialist community and outreach services.

Demand for health services continues to grow across Queensland. The WBHHS Local Area Needs Assessment has been completed in consultation with local stakeholders, clinicians, consumers and health organisations and supports the development of the health services priorities, strategic directions and health service plan.

WBHHS Emergency Departments (ED) provide 24 hour per day, seven day per week services and continues to deliver high quality patient care to the community. Wide Bay, and other HHSs, have seen an increase in the complexity of patients presenting for care at EDs, this includes an increase in clinical acuity. Petitioners can be reassured that WBHHS will not refuse care to anyone who presents at the ED. However, the sickest patients will always be seen first. Where higher than usual emergency presentations are experienced, escalation actions are implemented to allow hospitals to redistribute resources accordingly and support people to have timely access to care.

I take this opportunity to advise that during December 2022 quarter, the WBHHS EDs saw all category one patients within the clinically recommended waiting time of 2 minutes. Further, investment in initiatives to support patient flow include the implementation of transit care hubs and short stay treatment areas.

WBHHS has a strong clinical governance framework and is committed to ensuring the provision of safe, high-quality care to the community. The framework is aligned to the National Model Clinical Governance Framework that is based on the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards. Clinical indicators, such as the Variable Life Adjusted Display (VLAD), Hospital Standardised Mortality Ratio, and Hospital Acquired Complications are monitored at both the Executive and Board Level to ensure any deviation from expected ranges are reviewed and actioned. WBHHS has been identified as an exemplar site for VLAD reviews, with the quality of the reviews undertaken now being shared as a template for other sites to use. To further support strong governance, the WBHHS Board actively engage in external review and evaluation processes of their functioning. This process is to assure effective and positive performance as a governing body.

The WBHHS Clinical Council meets regularly and provides advice to the Health Service Executive and Board on delivering healthcare which is evidence based, patient focused and clinician driven.

They take an active role in strategic planning of future clinical services and the improvement of current services by providing expert clinician knowledge.

The WBHHS Clinical Council has recently held its first meeting for the year agreeing for the 2023 focus to be attracting and retaining specialised staff with a focus on staff wellbeing and workforce culture. To inform future initiatives the Council have planned a number of multi-modal staff and key stakeholder engagement initiatives including meet and greet barbeques and morning teas and staff forums with Council members and staff at all sites during March and April 2023.

Healthcare is provided by teams of clinicians working in partnership with patients, families and carers. In relation to preventable adverse events, WBHHS has an approach in place for incident management and investigation to ensure clinical incidents are identified and managed appropriately, and action is taken to improve safety and quality. WBHHS is committed to open, transparent and thorough review of any concerns raised, and have recently been assessed externally by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards as having these mechanisms in place.

Queensland Health takes any allegation of inappropriate clinical practice seriously and is confident in how it responds to any incident. For example, a Clinical Review and Health Service Investigation were commissioned by the Director-General in July 2022 to investigate complaints and concerns raised regarding the use of S8 and S4 medications within a ward in Bundaberg Hospital. The Clinical Review and Health Service Investigation have been completed and an action plan was developed to implement the recommendations. WBHHS is progressing these actions, with oversight from the WBHHS Executive, WBHHS Board and Clinical Excellence Queensland, Department of Health.

WBHHS has a consumer-focused complaints management process which has been designed with consumer input and to align with Queensland Health and Australian Standards. Should any patient or community member have any concerns or complaints about the care received, I encourage them to contact the WBHHS Clinical Governance Support Unit on telephone (07) 4184 1824.

The Wide Bay community will continue to receive safe and quality healthcare after the \$771.93 million investment as part of the record 2022-23 health budget. This year's WBHHS budget is a 6.5 per cent increase on the previous year with 7.9 per cent growth in weighted activity units. The community will receive benefits from this investment through the provision and expansion of programs such as:

- the Hospital in The Home program;
- establishment of the rapid access cardiac clinics;
- funding to support local programs including better access to trauma and illness services;
- support planned care recovery;
- public dental services for adults;
- Aged Care Assessment Program to support elderly people;
- Crisis Support Spaces; and
- Seven bed Short Stay Unit at Maryborough Hospital.

Under section 275 of the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011* (the Act), the Governor in Council may at any time, on my recommendation, dismiss all the members of a board. However, before making a recommendation, I must be satisfied it is in the public interest to do so. The Act also enables the Governor in Council to then appoint an administrator to the relevant Hospital and Health Service to administer that Service on my recommendation (section 276). An administrator is taken to constitute the board instead of the members (section 277(4)).

Finally, I would like to recognise the significant efforts of staff who continue to deliver high-quality and clinically appropriate care across the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service community, I continue to have confidence in the professionalism and skills of our staff and can assure the community quality and safe patient care continues to be a priority.

I trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Yvette D'ATH". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "Y".

YVETTE D'ATH MP
Minister for Health and Ambulance Services
Leader of the House