

MI109348
2010-0181-001

Mr N Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE Q 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 28 February 2003, enclosing a petition from residents of the Tablelands regarding the Atherton Hospital and health services on the Atherton Tablelands.

I would advise that following the discovery of flaking lead-based paint in the 70 year-old maternity ward, maternity services were temporarily located on the surgical floor in the interests of patient and staff safety. While temporary conditions in both areas were less spacious, they enabled both maternity and surgical services to continue without cancellations or reduction in admissions.

On 29 January 2003, I directed that work begin immediately on a \$1 million upgrade of the Atherton Hospital. The upgrade will include the purchase of prefabricated accommodation to house the dialysis and other ambulatory services along with a visitor's area, office space and storage. There will be refurbishment of the surgical and women's in-patient accommodation with an appropriate mix of shared and single accommodation. Improved amenities for women in labour and their babies will be provided in the refurbishment. Some painting will be carried out in the old maternity unit to allow it to be used temporarily, while building and refurbishment work is completed in the other sections.

The painting will commence in late March while the entire project will be completed by the end of this calendar year. I am advised by the District Manager, Tablelands Health Service District, that the planning phase of the upgrade has commenced, with regular consultations and constructive input from staff, general practitioners and the Mayor of Atherton Shire.

As a result, I am confident that the final product will be a facility that meets the needs of patients and staff alike and will ensure that the Atherton Hospital continues to have the capacity to meet the needs of its community into the future.

The petition requests that services and funding are restored to the Tablelands. I advise the House that there has been no reduction in services to the Tablelands in recent years, other than when the District has been unable to recruit specialist clinical staff, such as dentists. Funding to the District has in fact increased by \$1.2 million in the last two financial years. A number of recent service enhancements at the Atherton Hospital have included the establishment of a Child and Youth Mental Health Service, with an upgraded Mental Health floor in the primary health building and the formation of a complex care team to assist those people in the community with multiple health needs.

Please be assured that there is no plan to close or downgrade the Atherton Hospital. The Tablelands Health Service District is committed to maintaining a wide range of services across the District, with acute in-patient services, including maternity, at the Atherton Hospital. The Tablelands Health Service District is actively encouraging community members to come forward and work constructively with them in planning health services for the future.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention and I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Edmond MP
Minister for Health and
Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy