



**11 8 MAR 2011**

Office of the **Minister for Health**

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

Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter regarding petition numbers 1527-11 and 1618-11, tabled in Parliament on 16 February 2011. As these petitions are identical in nature, I have taken the liberty of responding to both petitions in this letter. I therefore ask that this response be noted against each petition.

The petitions request, with regard to Sudden and Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP) that:

- dedicated Epilepsy Clinical Nurses and Clinical Nurse Consultants be employed in each major regional and metropolitan public hospitals in Queensland; and
- seizure alarms (bed monitors) be placed on the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS).

Clinical Nurses and Clinical Nurse Consultants who are specialised in caring for patients with epilepsy serve a pivotal role in any plans for the optimal care of epilepsy patients, and in particular in the context of a Comprehensive Epilepsy Program for Queensland.

All epilepsy patients deserve to have accurate and comprehensive information about all aspects of their condition. Links between epilepsy patient support groups and health professionals are very important in the optimum management of epilepsy. These support groups provide valuable information in maximising the management of epilepsy.

I also note the availability of a post registration professional development neurological care program for nurses and midwives, delivered by Clinical Education and Training Queensland (ClinEdQ). This program includes a component on epilepsy management.

Queensland Health, private health facilities and General Practitioners offer a range of services aimed at primary and secondary level care, including maintenance management and drug therapy. Tertiary level paediatric services which include diagnostic (for example, electroencephalogram) and treatment options (for example, ketogenic diets and epilepsy surgery) are available. Vagal Nerve Stimulation (VNS) is offered at one tertiary facility.

Within Queensland Health a dedicated clinically managed Queensland Paediatric Epilepsy Network (QPEN) was established in October 2009, with a Steering Committee from across the state, consisting of Paediatric Epileptologists, Neurologists, General Paediatricians (from rural and urban Queensland), General Practitioners, Adult Neurologists, Child Psychiatrists, Neuropsychologists, Epilepsy Support Organizations and Nursing. QPEN is a Sub-Network of the Statewide Child and Youth Clinical Network (SCYCN) which focuses on improving service delivery to meet the needs of children with epilepsy.

I am further advised that a comprehensive evaluation of all information currently available to patients is being undertaken by this network with plans for similar evaluation by the Queensland Adult Epilepsy Network.

In relation to the request for the placement of seizure alarms (bed monitors) on the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme, seizure alarms are currently not employed within hospitals in Queensland but are used widely by individuals with epilepsy or parents of young children with epilepsy.

To ensure validity of including this equipment into the MASS schedule, evidence and cost benefit of these mats needs to be explored and considered by the SCYCN and QPEN in the context of service delivery and models of care.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Terry Lack, Principal Project Officer, Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Service, Centre for Healthcare Improvement, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 3636 9786.

I trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely



**Geoff Wilson MP**  
**Minister for Health**