

Our Ref: (DES/02/0237-1331)
Min Ref: (E/03/01343)

02 May 2003

Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
TableOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 27 March 2003 to which you attached a petition from Mr S Klein of Atherton concerning the introduction of the Queensland Government's Community Ambulance Cover.

At the outset, I would like to assure the people who have signed the petition that this Government is committed to providing the best possible ambulance service to the people of Queensland.

The Community Ambulance Cover will come into effect from 1 July 2003 and will be charged at a rate of \$22 per quarter – or 24 cents a day. It is a broad-based charge, as opposed to a user-pays system, to ensure the majority of people likely to use ambulance services contribute to the cost of operating that service.

Had the current Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) Subscription Scheme been maintained, the Government would have been forced to increase the annual rates to provide the required funding for Queensland's ambulance service. Family rates would have risen to \$130 per annum and the Single subscription rate would have risen to \$82 per annum.

The levy is not based on electricity usage, as indicated in the position. The State Government is simply using electricity accounts as a collection mechanism, which will keep administration costs to a minimum and deliver maximum funds for frontline ambulance services.

Under the general principle, the levy will be applied to both residential and business accounts. If the levy was restricted to residential accounts or principal places of residence, it would significantly reduce the base from which funds are drawn and the levy would have to be much higher.

Community Ambulance Cover on business electricity accounts may qualify for a tax deduction, and I encourage business owners to speak to their tax advisor or the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) regarding eligibility in this regard. The ATO can be contacted on telephone number 13 2866.

As the legislation is developed, the issue of multiple accounts is being examined and updates regarding this matter will be provided at www.ambulance.qld.gov.au as they become available.

The State Government is currently working to minimise any anomalies and develop the fairest system possible. Final details of the funding and payment arrangements will not be available until this process is completed.

After 1 July 2003, all Queensland residents will be covered for ambulance services anywhere in Australia regardless of their circumstances. The QAS will be provided with an adequate and predictable funding base through the introduction of Community Ambulance Cover.

A copy of the Premier's latest Media Release is available on the QAS website www.ambulance.qld.gov.au. This website will be progressively updated as further details are announced.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. However, should further information be required, please contact Mr Bob Hammill, Director, Corporate Initiatives and Communications, Department of Emergency Services on telephone number (07) 3247 8789.

Yours sincerely

HON MIKE REYNOLDS AM MP
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland