



Hon Lawrence Springborg MP
Minister for Health

12 SEP 2013

Mr Neil Laurie
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Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter regarding petition number 2111-13, tabled in Parliament on 20 August 2013, with the subject title 'improve palliative care rather than legalise euthanasia'.

I will deal with the issues of euthanasia and palliative care separately.

While there are some in the community who advocate for legalising euthanasia and physician assisted suicide I can assure the petitioners that this Government has no plans to change the existing law in relation to this matter.

It is very important to me and to the Queensland Government that Queenslanders are supported to live well at the end of their lives; this includes ensuring appropriate access to palliative care services to meet the individual needs of the patient and their family.

In relation to palliative care, in 2012, the Legislative Assembly requested that the Health and Community Services Committee conduct an inquiry into palliative and home and community care services in Queensland. The Committee's report, Report No. 22 *Palliative and community care in Queensland: toward person-centred care*, was released on 17 May 2013. This report helped to identify the many benefits of palliative care as well as some of the very real and ongoing challenges associated with the delivery of palliative care services in Queensland. The Government's response, which was tabled on 17 August 2013, not only reinforces our commitment to the delivery of effective, efficient and accessible palliative care services but also identifies how we will move forward to address the challenges. The response is available at <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/tableOffice/TabledPapers/2013/5413T3213.pdf>.

In 2013 - 2014, the Queensland Government will spend around \$120 million purchasing a range of palliative care services from Hospital and Health Services and non-government service providers. This is an increase in investment in palliative care services of approximately 11 per cent over that purchased in the 2012-2013 financial year. The Queensland Government is also making a major investment of \$5.5 million over seven years to the establishment and operation of Hummingbird House, a paediatric hospice, which will help meet the palliative care needs of Queensland's children who have life-limiting diseases or conditions.

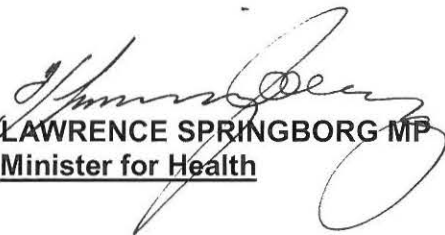
In terms of training, medical, nursing and allied health staff employed in Hospital and Health Services have access to paid development leave and are provided with an allowance each year that goes towards the cost of their professional development. Other study leave can be arranged as negotiated with their Hospital and Health Service. In addition, the Queensland Government supports the Centre for Palliative Care Research and Education (CPCRE) to continue its promotion of palliative care as an important part of the education of health professionals.

The Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (PEPA) is a proven cost effective means of providing health professionals with enhanced skills in end of life and palliative care, and the ability to provide a palliative approach in their care. The CPCRE employs a Queensland PEPA Manager who monitors the barriers and enablers to PEPA education or placement uptake. Staff working in palliative care services can access the PEPA training and resources to enable them to become aware of, and provide, culturally appropriate palliative care and end of life support.

The Queensland Government continues to examine ways to ensure that people are assisted to make informed choices about the care and treatment options and to ensure that their choices are respected wherever possible. This is important for all Queenslanders as there may be circumstances, due to illness or an accident, where a person may lose the capacity to understand their options and the capacity to make decisions about their care and treatment. This is all part of making sure that people at the end of life are able to live and die with dignity, with people they love and in their place of preference as much as is possible.

I trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely



LAWRENCE SPRINGBORG MP
Minister for Health