

Our Ref: (DES/03/0796-2351)  
Min Ref: (E/03/03260)

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
Corner of Alice and George Streets  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 11 September 2003 concerning petitions received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly in relation to ambulance response times to the areas situated west of Mackay along the Peak Downs Highway and the Pioneer Valley.

Firstly, I would like to assure the petitioners that this Government is committed to providing the best possible ambulance service to the people of Queensland.

Advice was sought from the Commissioner, Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) on the issues raised.

Queensland is one of Australia's most decentralised states, with high population densities and growth rates along the Coast and in the South East of the State. Geographically isolated communities, an ageing population and a large mobile population all create service delivery challenges. Managing and maintaining appropriate levels of resources to provide services that reflect demographic and demand profiles within communities, will continue to be a key priority of the Beattie Government.

The petitioners' concerns relate to the timely response of the ambulance service to the townships of Walkerston, Marian and Eton, and for areas along the Peak Downs Highway and the Pioneer Valley.

The Mackay Ambulance Station is the primary response station for all cases in the Walkerston, Marian and Eton areas. To provide improved response times to these areas the QAS is relocating its Mackay City Station to South Mackay. This will be part of a \$5.5M investment in the Mackay-Whitsunday area.

Nebo Ambulance Station and Finch Hatton Ambulance Station service the Peak Downs Highway and the Pioneer Valley. These stations primarily respond to cases past the Eton range as well as the townships of Mirani, Finch Hatton and Eungella. A secondary response is provided from Mackay and the community based helicopter.

Ambulance officers are health professionals trained to commence definitive medical care at the scene and stabilise the patient prior to transportation to a medical facility. The QAS discourages people from transporting patients to hospital before an ambulance arrives. To do so may compromise the patient's condition or result in panic or confusion in the driver increasing the potential for the driver to become involved in an accident.

The ambulance will usually be dispatched while the caller is still on the telephone providing information to the Communications Centre and a Communications Officer can provide expert first aid advice to bystanders. It is much easier to provide appropriate first aid at the scene rather than in a moving vehicle. Meeting halfway is particularly problematic as it involves all the problems of untrained movement of a casualty together with the risk of the ambulance and patient passing each other on the road.

I trust this information is of assistance. However, should further information be required, please contact Mr Russell Bowles, Assistant Commissioner, QAS Central Region on telephone number (07) 4938 4896.

Yours sincerely



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