



Hon Yvette D'Ath MP
Minister for Health and Ambulance Services
Leader of the House

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

1 OCT 2021

Dear Mr Laurie *Neil*

I write in response to your letter regarding petition number 3559-21, tabled in Parliament on 1 September 2021, requesting that hospital patients' parking fees are waived or cancelled and that patient waiting times are much closer to appointment times as long waits for appointments result in increased parking fees.

I acknowledge that the cost and availability of car parking at public hospitals is a real concern for many patients, carers and their families. The Palaszczuk Government is committed to delivering more car parks at our hospitals and improving access to parking for people who need it.

I understand many people would like to park for free and this continues to be possible at most of our public hospitals. However, paying a modest amount to use modern and safe multi-storey parking amenities ensures that Queensland Health can continue to prioritise its budget on the delivery of critical frontline services.

Where paid parking has been established, it is now known that most visitors typically stay for less than two hours. With sustained demand for hospital parking, particularly during a weekday, hospitals have no incentive to make patients wait longer for their appointments to increase parking revenue. In fact, a high turnover of patient parking supports effective administration of clinics with fewer people arriving late for appointments.

Specialist outpatient services have patients and carers as the primary focus and support patients to be seen as close to their home as possible, by the most appropriate clinician for the level of care required. Appointment scheduling is a complex process of ensuring our clinicians, patients and resources are appropriately aligned to provide a safe and efficient service. Every effort should be taken by facilities to ensure appointments for a patient take place at, or as close as possible to the scheduled appointment time. To minimise on the day waiting times, our clinics are encouraged to book patients into staggered appointment times with the process of block booking appointments for multiple patients discouraged.

Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) ensure that the best interests of the patient take precedence over the interests of the hospital. This includes not booking a patient's appointments over a number of days when scheduling for more than one speciality and by coordinating multiple appointments so they are on the same day whenever possible.

At several of our major hospitals, commercial paid parking arrangements have been in place for many years, often under long standing contractual arrangements, with car parking revenue charged and retained by the private operator.

To provide further support for patients under these parking arrangements, in 2017 Queensland Health implemented the Hospital Car Parking Concession Scheme. Since then, over 1.6 million patients and carers have seen their car parking charges reduced by over 50 per cent.

Under the Scheme, HHSs can respond to concerns on parking charges for eligible patients and their carers and provide free or discounted parking, including to those who:

- are experiencing financial hardship (which may include government concession card holders);
- need to attend hospital for an extended period of time;
- are required to attend hospital frequently; or
- have special needs or require assistance.

Information on concessions is available on local hospital websites or on the Queensland Health Concessional Car Parking website: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/health-system/services/concessional-car-parking>.

Moreover, since 2017, the Palaszczuk Government's preferred approach for the development of new hospital car parks is that they are self-sustaining and government owned, with HHSs managing car park revenue. Car park tariffs pay for the construction, operations and maintenance at the new car parks, with the focus for tariffs on cost recovery, not profit making.

New car parks with fair and affordable tariffs have been delivered at Redcliffe and Rockhampton Hospitals and new car parks are also in progress at Caboolture, Logan, Redland and The Prince Charles Hospitals. The typical cost for visitor parking at Rockhampton Hospital is now \$3.00 and is \$7.00 at Redcliffe Hospital.

In addition, Queensland Health will continue to provide access to a range of affordable journey options for our staff, patients and their visitors including multiple drop off points, active transport and cycling amenities and ensuring urban locations are well serviced by public transport.

I am confident that these parking arrangements improve on the long-standing practices where parking was often outsourced to private providers. The new arrangements deliver appropriate economic and social outcomes while supporting access to health services for our patients, their visitors and families and our staff.

I thank the petitioners for raising these issues and trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



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