



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
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11 NOV 2021

Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter regarding petition number 3578-21, tabled in Parliament on 12 October 2021, in relation to the recruitment of Queensland's Chief Health Officer.

I certainly appreciate the public's interest in this matter. We have been so fortunate in Queensland to have had Dr Jeannette Young, the longest serving Chief Health Officer in Australia, leading our state safely through the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the pandemic began, not only has Dr Young led Queensland's public health response but has also been the face of the pandemic for many Queenslanders.

The position of Chief Health Officer is responsible for leading Queensland's preventive health, public health and public health information agendas. It also leads the disaster coordination, emergency response and emergency preparedness activities for Queensland at a system-wide level, and is responsible for overseeing retrieval and counter-disaster activities and maintaining the state's capacity to identify and respond to communicable diseases and other health threats.

In recruiting for the next Chief Health Officer, it is imperative that the Director-General, Queensland Health ensures that the successful candidate has the experience and skills required to both lead Queensland's response to the next stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue the other important responsibilities entailed of the position. This means that the role must be advertised broadly, to ensure a wide pool of appropriate candidates.

The selection criteria for the role requires the successful candidate to be a senior medical professional with demonstrated experience in the following:

- administering statutory obligations and leading regulator activities;
- managing and responding to emergent and significant health threats including health pandemics, such as COVID-19;
- navigating highly sensitive issues with government focussed on achieving effective policy outcomes; and
- communicating complex issues with clarity to a wide audience.

Dr John Wakefield, Director-General Queensland Health, continues the recruitment process to identify the next Chief Health Officer for Queensland. I have every confidence that this process will identify the most experienced and appropriate candidate to lead Queenslanders through the next stage of the pandemic response.

Until this recruitment process is complete, Dr Peter Aitken has been appointed as Interim Chief Health Officer. Dr Aitken has been providing expert leadership and advice as the Deputy State Health Coordinator for Queensland's COVID-19 response since the pandemic was declared a public health emergency in January 2020, and in September 2021 was appointed as one of three Deputy Chief Health Officers. Given the breadth of Dr Aitken's skills and experience I am extremely confident that Queensland will continue to have a first-class pandemic response under his guidance and leadership.

I trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely



YVETTE D'ATH MP
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