



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

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11 November 2022

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

Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to petition number 3758-22, tabled in Parliament on 12 October 2022, regarding Bundaberg Hospital, within the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service (WBHHS).

Bundaberg Hospital provides a 24 hour per day, seven day per week service and the delivery of high quality patient care for the Bundaberg community is the priority of the Bundaberg Hospital and the WBHHS.

The WBHHS Bundaberg Hospital Emergency Department (ED) has experienced strong demand and pressures due to COVID-19 pandemic, similar to the health system across the State, which has resulted in an increase in patients presenting for care. This is in addition to more higher acuity patients presenting at Bundaberg Hospital and across the Wide Bay region, with more complex and chronic conditions than ever before.

I wish to reassure the petitioners, Bundaberg Hospital will not refuse anyone who presents at the ED. However, triaging according to clinical urgency is global best practice, and therefore ED staff will always attend to the sickest patients first. Nevertheless, any patient brought to the ED, by the Queensland Ambulance Service who is on a stretcher, continues to receive appropriate clinical support from the hospital and Queensland Ambulance Services (QAS) staff whilst awaiting a bed. The most recent quarterly performance data indicates that 100% of category 1 ED patients are seen within the clinically recommended time.

Noting nation-wide challenges with workforce, WBHHS has active workforce plans in place for all clinical and non-clinical areas, in order to maintain short term and longer term sustainability in staffing.

This year's WBHHS budget is a 6.49 per cent increase on the previous year, resulting in a total budget of \$790 million. The Bundaberg community will also receive benefits from this investment through the provision and expansion of programs such as:

- the Hospital in The Home program;
- establishment of the rapid access cardiac clinics;
- funding to support local programs including better access to trauma and illness services;
- support planned care recovery and specialist outpatient cost recovery;
- public dental services for adults;
- Aged Care Assessment Program to support elderly people; and
- Crisis Support Spaces.

In addition to this WBHHS continues to invest in services for the Bundaberg Community, including:

- \$1.2 billion for the new Bundaberg Hospital project commencing with \$20 million for early works and is expected to be delivered by 2027-28 and will provide opportunities to deliver new services to patients and ample space for future expansion as the healthcare needs of the community evolve. This project will deliver:
 - a new hospital on a new site;
 - an additional 121 overnight beds; and
 - create 3,960 construction jobs.
- expansion of inpatient capacity to assist in easing pressure on the EDs and working collaboratively with QAS to manage waiting times;
- implementation of a new role of Triage Initiative Nurse in the Bundaberg ED to assess and provide care to patients who are brought in via QAS. This position enables the QAS to return to the community while patients may be waiting for an emergency bed; and
- implementation of several new models of care in the community such as the Rapid Interdisciplinary Seniors Engagement, Specialist Palliative Care In-reach Service and Residential Aged Support Service.

I urge anyone that has concerns regarding the quality of care afforded to them, or their loved one, contact the WBHHS Clinical Governance Support Unit on telephone (07) 4184 1824.

I trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yvette D'ATH', written in a cursive style.

YVETTE D'ATH MP
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