

MI125439

Mr N Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 24 November 2004, on behalf of Mr Craig Wallace MP, Member for Thuringowa, regarding a petition protesting the relocation of the residential alcohol and drug treatment service provided by Ozcare to Hammond Way in Kelso, Thuringowa.

In recent years there has been a considerable level of public interest in responses to address the problems associated with substance abuse. At the same time, there is continuing demand for access to a greater range of treatment options within the community.

Queensland Health appreciates the need for more services and recognises that a comprehensive approach is needed to address alcohol and drug abuse in the community. For this reason, Queensland Health provides significant funding assistance for a variety of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation initiatives in both the government and non-government sector.

More recently, Queensland Health provided significant funds to expand the availability of alcohol and drug treatment services in North Queensland with the addition of twenty new residential drug treatment beds each in Cairns and Townsville to help those people who are actively working through the difficult issues that led to substance abuse. Funding for the new residential drug treatment service was awarded to Ozcare following an advertised Expression of Interest process.

I would like to allay the concerns expressed regarding the level of services offered by Ozcare. Ozcare has a long history of providing a wide range of support services to the Queensland community including aged care, disability services, women's refuges and community nursing, with the community benefiting from the professionalism, dedication and expertise of staff providing these services.

Ozcare offer a professional residential alcohol and drug treatment program and as these programs are abstinence-based, alcohol and/or drugs are not allowed to be consumed or even permitted on the premises. The program also has strict house rules which clients agree to abide by while on the program. The program is staffed 24-hours, 7 days per week for increased supervision, to ensure services operate in a quiet and orderly manner, as well ensure someone is available to assist clients as they come to terms with their personal issues at crucial times.

Ozcare met with representatives of the Thuringowa and Townsville City Councils to discuss the proposal of purchasing a suitable property for a residential alcohol and drug treatment service, to investigate any local issues and concerns and to ensure an appropriately zoned property could be sourced. Ozcare advise that while the Kelso property was already zoned as appropriate for providing a residential alcohol and drug treatment service, they actively consulted local residents regarding the proposed service location, to explain the philosophy of the program and address any issues or concerns.

There have been concerns raised about the residential treatment facility being subject to flooding and inadequate waste management systems. Ozcare advises that property searches record that the property does not pose a high risk for flooding. Ozcare will also be upgrading the current septic system to manage the increased service utilisation.

There are numerous residential alcohol and drug treatment services that have been operating harmoniously within residential areas for many decades without any negative impact on neighbouring residents, property values, escalation of crime or degradation of quality of life. Indeed, some of these services are located in long-established Brisbane suburbs such as Red Hill, Coorparoo and Taringa, where property prices have substantially increased over the years.

Yours sincerely

**GORDON NUTTALL MP**  
**Minister for Health**  
**Member for Sandgate**