

MI128587

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 25 May 2005, enclosing a copy of petition number 475-05 regarding dental services in western towns and communities.

The national shortage of dentists is having a significant impact on Queensland Health's ability to attract dentists to regional and rural areas. In order to increase its ability to recruit dentists Queensland Health currently offers the highest starting salary for dentists of any public dental service in Australia. This salary is further supplemented by a remote area allowance which provides an additional \$20,000 per year for dentists in Hughenden and Richmond.

Queensland Health will shortly be commencing a recruitment drive in other states and in New Zealand which aims to attract both new graduates and experienced dentists. The Rural Scholarship Scheme, which provides financial support during studies in exchange for a set period of service in rural areas, will also be promoted during this exercise. The Scholarship Scheme is currently being reviewed to identify opportunities to make the program more attractive.

Queensland Health will begin a new round of Enterprise Bargaining shortly and I anticipate that remuneration for staff and incentive packages will be considered as part of this process.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Ms Julie Dahl, Senior Policy Advisor will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 323 41191.

Yours sincerely

GORDON NUTTALL MP
Minister for Health
Member for Sandgate