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MO: H/06/04521

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
Corner Alice and George Streets  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 25 May 2006, enclosing petition number 655-06, requesting an independent inquiry into the resourcing, funding and staffing of the Cairns Base Hospital's Mental Health Unit.

Queensland Health recognises the value of external reviews across the range of health services, as demonstrated in the State-wide Forster Review 2005. At a local level, the Cairns Acting District Manager, Mr Brett Grosser, advises that an independent review of the Cairns Integrated Mental Health Service was conducted in September 2004. I understand that an action plan has been developed, with specific timeframes, to implement recommendations contained in the ensuing Seymour Report.

I also understand that the Service, along with other Cairns Health Service District facilities, is currently preparing for accreditation, an external review by the Australian Council of Health Care Standards (ACHS). Policies and procedures relating to the Service's low dependency and high dependency units have been updated, and where indicated, new policies have been developed. The hospital's Mental Health Unit has recently increased its bed capacity from 28 to 32 beds.

Queensland Health is committed to improving mental health services and I am pleased to advise that \$201 million has been allocated over a five year period, to enhance services across the State. In addition, the Cairns Health Service District has been allocated \$4.8 million for a 20 bed rehabilitation and recovery service, to be based in the community. Community based services will also benefit from an increase in staffing of the Crisis, Assessment and Treatment Team (CATT), to extend the hours for acute care services across the District.

Funding of \$1.5 million will enable the development of a Homeless Health Outreach Team and recruitment is currently under way for eight full time equivalent (FTE) positions. Recruitment is also occurring for a Child Therapeutic Support Service, which will involve seven FTE positions.

I am aware that in May 2006 a Patient Safety Officer commenced at the hospital's Mental Health Unit, to address the National Safety Priorities 2006, as part of the National Mental Health Strategy. The Cairns Base Hospital is one of three Queensland public hospitals to participate in a six month trial of this position.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Ms Cynthia Kennedy, Senior Policy Advisor, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 3234 1191.

Yours sincerely

**STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP**