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MO: H/06/08495

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 17 October 2006, enclosing a copy of a petition received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly No. 713-06, regarding the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme.

The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme is designed to assist patients to access essential specialist medical services, which are not available in their local area, by subsidising transport and accommodation costs. The intent of the Scheme is not to cover the entire costs associated with accessing this medical care but rather to offer a subsidy towards these costs.

The Scheme eligibility and subsidy entitlement criteria are designed to extend equity of access for all Queenslanders and compares with similar Schemes in other States and Territories. To ensure that isolated patients continue to have access to these specialist medical services within the finite resources available, eligibility rules and limits on subsidy entitlements are necessary.

I acknowledge that many rural and remote patients have concerns about the current eligibility criteria for the Scheme, such as the rates of payment for mileage and accommodation. Whilst subsidies paid have remained constant, the Queensland administered Scheme compares with similar Schemes in other States and Territories. Some eligibility requirements for assistance under the Scheme have been relaxed, for example, the 200 kilometre minimum distance criterion was reduced to 50 kilometres, making it the lowest minimum distance in Australia and the accommodation subsidy is in line with payments made by other jurisdictions.

Please be assured that these and other policy reforms around program eligibility and levels of assistance will be considered by my Queensland Health.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Ms Amanda Webber, Senior Policy Officer, Policy and Legislation Branch, Queensland Health, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 3234 0053.

Yours sincerely

**STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP**