

MI141858
MO: H/06/09080

9 January 2007

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
TableOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 3 November 2006, regarding the Petition received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly No.735-06.

In response to the issues raised in the petition presented to Parliament I am happy to provide the following information.

Queensland currently commits more funding to public oral health services than any other state or territory in Australia. A major limiting factor in the ability to meet demand, is the availability of suitably qualified staff. There is a major shortage of dentists, oral health therapists and dental therapists throughout Australia in both the private and public sector. The Premier and I have continually lobbied the Howard Government to increase funding to universities to support the training of more health professionals. To attract and retain staff, Queensland Health has made significant improvements to staff entitlements. Of significance to the Roma Health Service District, dentists in the District will be entitled to a rural allowance of 30% of their base salary.

The *Health Legislation Amendment Act 2006* will allow the introduction of the Public Sector Dental Workforce Scheme in Queensland. It is anticipated that the Scheme will commence early in 2007.

I am pleased to advise that two dentists have been recruited to the Roma Health Service District. One commenced in mid October and the second will commence in early February 2007. It is anticipated that the recruitment of these staff, together with other local initiatives will ensure the ongoing provision of dental services in St George and surrounding locations.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Ms Penny Slater, Acting Director, Oral Health Unit, Queensland Health, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 3131 6981.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP