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MO: H/07/06192

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your correspondence to the Honourable Stephen Robertson MP, Minister for Health, dated 13 August 2007, regarding Petition No. 863-07, which draws attention to the Gold Coast Hospital cancer services. The Minister has asked me to respond on his behalf.

Due to a staff shortage, a referral process between the Gold Coast Hospital and the Princess Alexandra Hospital was created to ensure that cancer patients would have access to the specialist services of a Medical Oncologist.

Queensland Health has now recruited two full time medical oncologists for the Gold Coast. The first staff specialist will commence work in November 2007, while the commencement of the second Oncologist is expected in January 2008. By early 2008, the Gold Coast Hospital hopes to resume full services. Whilst awaiting the commencement of full time staff specialists, the visiting oncologists from the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane have increased their Gold Coast service so that the vast majority of Gold Coast cancer patients are now receiving their specialist appointments and chemotherapy locally at Gold Coast Hospital.

Significant improvements have also been made to Gold Coast public Oncology services over the last two years despite an ongoing international shortage of specialist cancer doctors and nurses. Recent initiatives have included cancer care coordinators to increase patient support, multidisciplinary tumour meetings designed to individualise treatment plans, and recruitment of cancer nursing staff and dedicated allied health cancer specialists.

Improving access to cancer treatments locally on the Gold Coast will help families cope with what is a most difficult time in their life. I can assure you that improving cancer services is a priority for the Gold Coast Health Service District and is a major focus of current service development and planning.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Dr Jeremy Wellwood, Director, Haematology and Oncology, Gold Coast Health Service District, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 5519 8211.

Yours sincerely

**KAREN STRUTHERS MP**

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health