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MO: H/07/08261

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

Email: TableOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 14 November 2007, regarding Petition Number 943-07 in relation to an oncology unit at Gold Coast Hospital. I apologise for the delay in responding.

In 2005, due to workforce shortages, 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. However, despite a worldwide shortage of oncology specialist doctors and nurses I am pleased to advise that the Gold Coast Health Service has been successful in recruiting two full time medical oncologists.

The first staff specialist commenced work in November 2007. The oncology unit has since increased its outpatient capacity and now accepts all new oncology patients requiring chemotherapy. The commencement of the second oncologist in 2008 will enable Gold Coast Hospital to provide a sustainable oncology service into the future. The visiting oncologists from the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane will continue to support the Gold Coast oncology service with weekly clinics until at least 2009.

Other 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 John Gerrard, Executive Director Medicine, Gold Coast Health Service District, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 5519 8844.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP