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MO: H/07/01318

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 22 February 2007, regarding a petition received by the Queensland Assembly No. 781-07.

Queensland continues to have high expenditure per capita on public oral health services compared to other states and territories, with per capita dental expenditure in Queensland nearly twice that in New South Wales. Queensland Health has commenced a Statewide review of oral health services which will examine, among other issues, the appropriateness of service delivery models including management of the heavy demand for dental services, recruitment in rural areas and waiting lists.

Within the oral health services provided by Queensland Health, there have been no changes to eligibility criteria nor have any limits on the number of patients that public dentists can treat been imposed.

In an initiative to address a shortage of dentists in the public sector, amendments to the *Dental Practitioners Registration Act 2001* were proclaimed on 15 December 2006, to give effect to the Public Sector Dental Workforce Scheme. This initiative grants fully qualified dental graduates of selected overseas dental schools an exemption from the first stage of the Australian Dental Council examination. Eligible candidates recruited under this scheme are able to practice in the public sector under supervision for up to three years before completing the final Australian Dental Council examination. There has been significant interest from appropriately qualified overseas dentists wishing to participate. Whilst these recent amendments will enable commencement of the scheme in Queensland in the near future, the scheme is already underway in several other Australian states.

In St George, private dental services and outsourced public dental services are presently being provided by a private dental practitioner who is working at and using the facilities in the Public Dental Clinic in St George.

A contract is being finalised to enable the resident private dental practitioner in St George to use the surgeries at the Dirranbandi and Mungindi Hospitals for outsourced public patients and their own private patients.

In the face of international dentist shortages, South West Health Service District has successfully recruited a new Principal Dentist to Roma who commenced work in January 2007. Recruitment processes are underway for a Senior Dentist for the health service district.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Mr David Strain, Acting Director, Oral Health Branch, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on 3131 6981.

Yours sincerely

**STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP**