



**Hon Stephen Robertson MP**  
Member for Stretton



Minister for Health

MI157474 / MI157475  
MO: H/08/07563 / H/08/07564

07 NOV 2008

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letters dated 27 and 29 August 2008, regarding Petitions received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly Nos. 1095-08 and 1105-08 concerning:

- Queensland Health's review of the Flying Specialist Services, which includes a review of the Flying Obstetrician and Gynaecologist (FOG) based in Roma; and
- that four of the six options being considered by the review will result in service reductions for women across Southern Queensland.

Feedback from members of the community is always welcomed as it provides valuable information to improve our services.

The Bligh Government is committed to providing the best possible support to rural maternity services and the current work occurring around the Flying Specialist Services based in Roma is not intended to reduce obstetric and gynaecological services to Western Queensland. However, the Flying Obstetrician and Gynaecology Service and the Flying Surgical Service have faced several challenges in the past 10 years. At times, these services have not been operational, leaving rural Queenslanders without the care they need.

As such, my Department took the responsible decision to review the services. Although I have recently received the final report from an independent expert, I have asked my Department to undertake further work on how services can be better aligned with other organisations providing much needed support in rural and remote areas, such as the Royal Flying Doctors Service. Aligning services wherever possible will ensure that maximum benefit can be obtained from valuable resources, such as specialists.

The Roma Flying Obstetrician and Gynaecology Service has, and will, continue to support local birthing services wherever safe. However, health services in the bush depend on the local workforce and my Department has been working closely with local services to develop more robust services. For example, in Roma we are focusing on further developing the capability of local

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medical staff, hospital and general practitioners to better meet the needs of the community. Developing local medical staff in rural areas, as has been done in Longreach, Charleville, St George and many other rural communities, has proved the most successful way of ensuring the sustainability of birthing services in these communities.

Although I recognise change can be unsettling for communities, it is important to remember the focus needs to be on increasing the safety and sustainability of services. As I have consistently stated in Parliament and the media, the Government will not make any decisions regarding the future of the Flying Specialist Services until further advice is received and proper consultation with rural and regional stakeholders is undertaken.

I would like to assure you the Flying Specialist Services will continue to operate as usual throughout this process.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Mrs Suzanne Little, Manager, Office of Rural Health, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 07 4624 1810.

Yours sincerely



**STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP**