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MO: H/06/09079

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Corner Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 3 November 2006, regarding the Broadwater Electorate's petition to have Runaway Bay identified as a District of Workforce Shortage (DWS). I appreciate your bringing this to my attention.

I share the concerns of Runaway Bay residents and indeed, all Queenslanders about the growing demand on general practitioner services in some of our communities and the negative impact this has on local residents. Medical workforce shortage is an area of shared concern amongst all levels of government. However, the Runaway Bay residents have correctly identified that the specific issue of general practitioner workforce shortage is the responsibility of the Federal Government.

On behalf of Runaway Bay residents, I have sought further advice on the issue of an area being deemed a DWS. While an *area* may not be granted a blanket status of DWS, the Federal Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) may give consideration to individual *Medical Practices* that have unsuccessfully tried to recruit an Australian-trained doctor. Medical Practices should provide evidence of this, along with details of the negative impacts on their community if they are not granted the status of DWS. Further details specific to the Medical Practice involved, for example, whether or not it provides bulk-billing services; whether or not this has had an impact on the recruitment process; and other information such as the closure of neighbouring clinics should also be provided to support their case for DWS status.

As Minister for Health, I support the Runaway Bay residents' attempt to raise their concerns directly with DOHA. I have thus taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of their petition to the Honourable Tony Abbott MP, Minister for Health and Ageing, for his consideration and direct reply. I have also asked for specific advice on other initiatives undertaken by DOHA to address the issue of general practitioner workforce shortage.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Ms Susanne Le Boutillier, Acting Director, Medical Workforce Advice and Coordination Unit, Queensland Health, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 3234 1572.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP