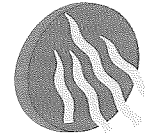




Hon Neil Roberts MP
Member for Nudgee



**Queensland
Government**

**Minister for Police, Corrective Services
and Emergency Services**

Ref No: (01664-2010)
File No: (DES/02/0310/P11)

29 MAR 2010

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 February 2010, regarding a petition received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly No. 1325-09 in relation to the essential services provided by the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and in particular communications and patient transport service staff.

The Queensland Government shares the views expressed in the petition in relation to supporting and resourcing the ambulance service. Accordingly, this Government has once again provided a record budget for the QAS in the 2009-2010 financial year. The budget of \$494.6 million has increased by \$38.9 million or 8.5 percent over the previous year.

In the 2007-2008 State Budget, the Queensland Government announced that \$76.1 million would be allocated for the construction of the Queensland Emergency Operations Centre (QEOC), to be a world class fire, ambulance, state emergency service and disaster operations centre in Brisbane.

This building will house the functions currently carried out by:

- State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) and State Operations Coordination Centre (SOCC);
- The combined ambulance and fire services communications facility currently based at Spring Hill;
- Queensland Emergency Medical System Coordination Centre including the Aero-medical desk; and
- Geographic Information Services.

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The Queensland Government has invested \$15 million for the new Emergency Services Computer Aided Dispatch (ESCAD) system for the QAS and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

The ESCAD system replaces three outdated systems, providing one fully integrated communications system. This means that information about incidents can be shared in real time, improving response to community calls for service in critical situations. The successful state-wide implementation of ESCAD provides our communications officers and Emergency Medical Dispatchers with better business continuity options than ever before. The system provides the ability for staff in one communication centre to have visibility and control of resources from another region in times of high demand.

As part of this year's record ambulance budget, QAS operational staffing numbers have increased by 50 full time operational staff which includes seven communications staff. This increase is in addition to the 250 additional positions provided in the previous year which included 19 communications staff.

Of particular note is the provision in this year's budget of \$20.9 million for 150 new ambulance vehicles which includes 16 patient transport vehicles. These vehicles are in addition to the 145 new vehicles commissioned in the previous year which included three new specialised bariatric patient transport service vehicles.

In the 2009-2010 financial year, as part of the Queensland Government's ongoing commitment to providing appropriate equipment for ambulance services, the QAS has installed GPS navigation devices in all emergency ambulance vehicles. This rollout was completed in late December 2009. The GPS navigation devices will ensure our frontline paramedics have access to the most appropriate technology and equipment needed to respond effectively to all emergency situations and life-threatening cases.

In addition to the enhancements outlined above, the Queensland Government continues to support our emergency services personnel by recognition of their contribution to the community of Queensland through the various state and commonwealth based honours and awards programs. A letter was recently sent to the Prime Minister requesting that he consider changes to the Chief Officer's Manual to change the current policy which will allow communications staff to be eligible for National Service Medals in line with their paramedic colleagues through such honours and awards schemes.

This letter to the Prime Minister points out the Queensland Government's strongly held view that as the 'primary function' of the QAS is to provide pre-hospital emergency care, communications staff are an integral and vital link in the service delivery chain which results in emergency ambulance services being delivered in a timely and professional manner.

I trust this information has been of assistance in addressing your concerns. Should you require further information, please contact Ms Corinne Mulholland, Senior Policy Advisor, on telephone number (07) 3239 0199.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Roberts', with a stylized, flowing script.

Neil Roberts MP
**Minister for Police, Corrective Services
and Emergency Services**