

Dear Shadow Minister, I write to you as a frustrated Queensland hospitalist medical professional dealing with the increasing administrative burden that draws resources from our core role - good patient care. Over the years, the administrative body and its processes in healthcare grew significantly. In an insightful article on the 29th of April 2016, the journalist Adam Creighton noted that Queensland has 3 bureaucrats per hospital bed. At their leanest point in 2012, bureaucrats were trimmed to 1.2 per hospital bed in Queensland. During this time, mortality rates and waiting lists were still stable or improving. Health bureaucracy is now again growing faster than the national employment rate. While the salary cost of administrative staff grows, some Queensland hospitals have entire wards and operating theatres that are closed due to a lack of allocated resources. Cutting edge tools remain unused for the same reason. There have been instances where doctors and nurses have experienced difficulty in finding even the simplest tools in hospitals. Under Queensland Health's bureaucracy, we have experienced a payroll failure of unprecedented proportions. There are unverified reports of employees losing their homes as a result of delays in wages. Sporadic payroll issues remain. Queensland Health is still attempting to recover overpaid salaries. As described by QC Richard Chesterman, "it may be the worst" public administration failure in the history of this nation. We have seen the employment of doctors with dubious credentials. However, there are reports of highly qualified local doctors who are required to overcome significant hurdles to obtain employment in Queensland. There is little incentive to attract and retain talent. The swelling administrative body often sternly discourages junior doctors from claiming overtime payments. While there is little local data on this topic, junior doctors anecdotally report spending a large amount of time on increasing administrative tasks imposed by the bureaucracy. Such unnecessary tasks and protocols in clinical practice are sometimes deployed by staff with no medical background. They often add little value to good patient outcomes. Supervised by their senior colleagues, junior doctors and medical students are the frontline research workforce. Unfortunately, the significant administrative process involved in even non-clinical research is significant and often not worth the effort required. The associated paperwork is, for the lack of a better word, comical. The approval process alone can take weeks to

months. Research units are however, often richly staffed with administrative officers to handle these projects. We have the skills and technology to develop cures for diseases and world-class health care. Yet, billions of dollars in Queensland's research resources remain under-utilised. As a "smart state" in a nation looking for new economies, this is a travesty. While our international counterparts utilise cost-effective safety-promoting technology such as tablet computing to deliver efficient healthcare, we use multiple outdated information systems with paper records. Paper records are not only costly and tedious but are prone to interpretation errors with handwriting. Good integrated information systems allow health professionals to access critical patient data quickly across the state while communicating clearly with colleagues. These systems do not need to be developed. They are already in use across the world. For some reason, Queensland's bureaucracy has been attempting to develop archaic systems for millions of dollars. Most Australians would prefer to spend their tax dollars on front-line health staff, as evidenced by a 2016 Per Capita tax survey. Doctors like Dr. Gino Pecorano, the past president of the Australian Medical Society of Queensland, have highlighted the possibility of significant taxpayer savings by cutting the unnecessary bureaucratic load. As Dr. Pecorano described it, Queensland Health is indeed a behemoth. There are many arguments to justify bureaucracy. Still, I urge Queenslanders, journalists, politicians and other stakeholders to consider this situation logically. We are even afforded freedom of information to find the real facts. Many Queensland doctors, nurses and frontline staff remain fearful to voice their experience due to potential repercussions from their employer. Our representative bodies are paralysed by politics. This is the reason this letter comes to you anonymously. I write it because it pains me to see these things happening to our health system. You have a valuable asset in a highly trained frontline healthcare workforce. The bureaucracy act as gatekeepers between patients and health care providers. We need to cut the red tape to do what we train well over a decade to do - look after you. Anonymous.