



Hon Yvette D'Ath MP  
Minister for Health and Ambulance Services  
Leader of the House

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Dr Maria Boulton  
President  
AMA Queensland

29 AUG 2022

Dr Brett Dale  
Chief Executive Officer  
AMA Queensland

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Dear Dr Boulton and Dr Dale

Thank you for your letter dated 28 July 2022, in relation to obstetric services at Gladstone Hospital.

I appreciate you taking the time to share your concerns with me and understand this is a worrying time for pregnant mothers and their families. The Obstetric Service at Gladstone Hospital is being impacted by unscheduled medical leave and vacancies in junior medical staffing positions.

I am advised that Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service has undertaken extensive medical recruitment strategies to fill the emergent medical leave, including the use of agency recruiters. The health service has also explored opportunities to deploy medical staff from other facilities within Central Queensland and reached out to other health services seeking support.

The demand for obstetric specialists and the shortages in our medical workforce has impacted the ability to recruit to vacant positions, including those at Gladstone Hospital. This is a challenge that is being experienced across Queensland and Australia.

Gladstone Hospital staff are communicating with all expectant mothers to ensure they are aware of the current situation. Expectant mothers are encouraged to present to Gladstone Hospital, where an assessment will be undertaken by experienced midwives and an appropriate and safe birthing plan will be put in place, in consultation with the obstetric and maternity team at Rockhampton Hospital. Highly educated and skilled midwives will continue to support women and their families antenatally and postnatally and during their transition to early parenting.

The provision of safe obstetric services as close as possible to home for mothers and babies is a priority for the health service, and Gladstone Hospital's birthing service will reopen when it is appropriately staffed to provide a safe and sustainable service.

Securing qualified staff to deliver safe and sustainable obstetric and maternity services has become increasingly difficult, especially in regional and rural areas and Queensland Health partners with key stakeholders where possible to maximise the availability of health services in the community. You would be aware the Queensland Government acquired the Gladstone Mater Hospital in October 2020, after Mercy Health and Aged Care indicated in 2019 that it would close the facility.

Thank you again for writing to me. Should you require any further information in relation to this matter, I have arranged for [REDACTED] Health Service [REDACTED] Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service, on telephone [REDACTED] to be available to assist you.

Yours sincerely



**YVETTE D'ATH MP**  
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