



Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance  
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Dear Dr Dale *Brett*

Thank you for your letter dated 20 February 2024, in relation to AMA Queensland's 2024-25 pre-budget submission and for the opportunity to meet with you on 26 March 2024.

I appreciate the time and effort taken to identify the 14 key priority areas of policy reform for Queensland's health system.

The 2024-25 State Budget has provided a record \$28.877 billion to Queensland Health, including a \$26.710 billion operating budget and capital investment of \$2.167 billion. Further information relating to the Queensland Health budget is available at [www.budget.qld.gov.au](http://www.budget.qld.gov.au).

Queensland Health is investing \$1.14 billion in 2024-25 to further enhance the *Putting Patients First* plan. This builds on the \$764 million investment made in 2023-24, to improve the flow of patients through hospitals and create additional bed capacity.

As part of this year's budget, the Queensland Government is addressing the growing demand and cost pressures, as well as, investing in hospital infrastructure and service enhancements to improve healthcare delivery. This includes targeted investment in initiatives that align with the priority areas that AMA Queensland has identified.

#### Priority 1 - Workforce

The Queensland Government is investing \$1.7 billion to retain the current workforce, build and attract new talent pipelines, and innovate new ways to deliver healthcare. \$1.059 billion is being dedicated to growing Queensland Health's frontline workforce, with a growth of more than 700 extra doctors, more than 2,600 nurses and midwives, and more than 1,000 allied health staff. The remaining budget will be spent on workforce initiatives under the new *Health Workforce Strategy for Queensland to 2032*.

As part of this year's budget, the government is investing \$24 million to bolster Queensland's primary care service by incentivising trainees to undertake general practitioner (GP) training to support the attraction and retention of GPs across the state.

The 2024-25 State Budget will also invest \$64 million over four years to implement a new electronic workforce rostering system to enable best practice in rostering frontline staff to deliver safe, affordable, sustainable, and high-quality care to Queenslanders.

Queensland Health is continuing to progress a range of new initiatives to address medical workforce challenges, particularly in regional, rural, and remote communities. The Department of Health's (the Department's) Medical Advisory and Prevocational Accreditation Unit is currently undertaking a 'mapping the medical workforce' project to collate and integrate data on the full continuum of the medical workforce across Queensland, including clinical placements, interns, resident medical officers, principal house officers, registrars, and consultants by speciality.

At the national level, Queensland Health is influencing medical workforce planning through the Medical Workforce Advisory Collaboration and supporting initiatives such as the John Flynn Prevocational Doctor Program and the Single Employer Model Pilot for GP trainees.

### Priority 2 - Training pathways

I recognise that increasing accredited training pathways is essential for growing the medical workforce, alongside supporting satisfaction and wellbeing amongst medical graduates.

The Queensland Government is investing \$5.25 million on creating additional GP training positions to support rural generalist GP trainees to undertake advanced diploma training in anaesthetics, commencing January 2025.

The Department has developed and implemented the Student in Medicine role as a workforce enhancement model. The Student in Medicine role provides an alternate model of care to support the clinical workforce by supplementing and facilitating additional capacity for medical practitioners.

Implementation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiative for the Intern Recruitment Campaign is providing final year medical students the opportunity to undertake their internship at a hospital close to country.

An evaluation of the pilot of the Townsville Hospital and Health Service (HHS) Indigenous Interns Pathway Program is underway, and a Junior Medical Officer Employment team will review implementation of long-term contracts for resident medical officers and standardise orientation and on-boarding.

### Priority 3 - Leadership

There are a number of existing mechanisms across Queensland Health where medical officers are included in high level decision-making, influencing policy and investment, and leadership. This includes the 24 Queensland Clinical Networks and the Queensland Clinical Senate, of which medical officers are appointed to formal membership and chair roles, as well as the Executive Directors of Medical Services Forum, with representatives from each of the 16 HHSs.

Additionally, the Centre for Leadership Excellence within the Workforce Strategy Branch, Clinical Planning and Service Strategy Division, designs and delivers a range of statewide development programs to enhance the management and leadership capabilities of Queensland Health staff at all stages of their career. These programs target a range of leadership levels and offer formalised training opportunities and career pathways. Consultation with the HHSs is currently underway to review and strengthen capability development for managers and leaders at all levels, including senior and executive leaders.

In March and April 2024, the Office of the Chief Medical Officer sponsored two Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association cultural safety workshops for clinical leaders across the system and intends to sponsor more of these workshops.

#### Priority 4 - Wellbeing

In March 2024, I announced an independent review of Sexual Assault Policies and Procedures in Queensland Health to ensure all staff are safe at work. The review will be led by former Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Elizabeth Broderick AO. This review will further protect frontline health workers and will complement a range of other work underway to ensure the safety and wellbeing of employees.

Queensland Health's Medical Workforce Wellbeing Reference Group has been established to promote a positive workplace culture that prioritises the health and wellbeing of medical practitioners and medical students. The Mind(re)set Program, developed in partnership with Mater Education Limited, supports an online wellbeing training program for junior doctors.

Improving support mechanisms for the International Medical Graduate (IMG) workforce cohort is a priority on both the Queensland and national agendas. Current IMG support mechanisms within Queensland Health include increased number of HHSs accredited by the Australian Medical Council to provide workplace-based assessment for IMGs following the standard pathway to general registration, development of a North Queensland IMG Preparation Program at the Townsville HHS, and development of an IMG Orientation Program in collaboration with the Centre for Leadership Excellence. Queensland Health continues to collaborate nationally to support recommendations from the Kruk Review, including the review of Specialist IMG pathways.

A Queensland Health IMG Working Group is also being established to ensure priority actions within Queensland Health are informed by expert advisors, including IMGs. The purpose of the working group will be to inform and guide the priority implementation of support mechanisms for IMGs either seeking to work or currently employed with Queensland Health. Recognising the alignment with the AMA Queensland's priorities for reform and investment, the Department will formally write to the AMA Queensland to request a nominated representative to join the working group.

Other initiatives include the introduction of legislative obligation on HHS Boards to promote a culture and implement measures to support the health, safety and wellbeing of staff of public health service facilities, and release of the Queensland Health Workforce Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework in October 2023, to provide the infrastructure to support Queensland Health workplaces in aligning, developing, and implementing relevant workplace mental health and wellbeing strategies and initiatives.

#### Priority 5 - Primary-tertiary integration

I acknowledge the importance of whole-of-health system integration, including improving coordination between general practice and our public hospitals.

The 2024-25 State Budget allocates additional funding of \$20 million over four years to enhance patient flow through hospital discharge initiatives, including expansion of the Long Stay Rapid Response Program and the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Bedside Hearing Program. This will enable people who are medically ready for discharge to transition to more appropriate accommodation for ongoing care needs.

Formal and informal collaboration mechanisms that currently exist between Queensland Health and general practice will continue to be supported. This includes the Queensland General Practitioner Liaison Network, Rural Medical Advisor role within Office of Rural and Remote Health, Primary Care Queensland Forum, Statewide Business Practice Improvement Officers Advisory Group, and Post-Operative Discharge Support Service.

In addition, Queensland Health will continue to work with AMA Queensland to implement the Patient Care Facilitators initiative to support care coordination post hospital discharge, support community-based health management, and reduce emergency department presentations.



## Priority 6 - Prevention

I agree that high-quality primary care, particularly for First Nations Queenslanders, requires priority investment, as well as ongoing advocacy to address social determinants of health, including poverty, housing, food security, family violence and unemployment. The social determinants of health are prioritised in Queensland Health's *First Nations First Strategy 2032* to improve the health and wellbeing with First Nations peoples in line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Queensland Health is committed to strengthening public health, including disease prevention. The 2024-25 State Budget provides \$135.9 million for the rollout of free vaccinations through the Meningococcal B Vaccination Program and Paediatric Respiratory Syncytial Virus Prevention Program to protect vulnerable cohorts against immunisation preventable diseases and to help reduce hospitalisations. This funding will also support continuation of the free influenza vaccination for all Queenslanders.

The Queensland Government recognises that investing in prevention and early supports for children is the greatest opportunity to contribute to their future wellbeing and success. This year's budget is dedicating \$502 million for the *Putting Queensland Kids First* strategy, which includes a comprehensive package of measures across education, health, and communities to help children and their families. As part of this package, Queensland Health is investing \$247.4 million to ensure a healthy start to life for Queensland children. This funding package includes enhanced child health and development checks, increased access to child development services, access to a range of material supports, scale of the Pepi-pod Program, increased access to hearing screening and diagnostic audiology services for children, enhanced perinatal mental health support, rollout of healthier pregnancy initiatives, expansion of Connecting2U and statewide rollout of Sustained Health Home Visiting.

In 2024-25, Health and Wellbeing Queensland will implement *Making Healthy Happen 2032*, a strategy to prevent, reduce and treat obesity across the system. Health and Wellbeing Queensland will also implement the *Gather + Grow Queensland Remote Food Security Strategy 2023-2032*, to priority address remote food security by prioritising local food production, logistics and supply chains, health housing and healthy communities.

## Priority 7 - Collaborative, evidence-based practice

Initiatives under the \$1.14 billion *Putting Patients First* plan reflect collaborative, evidence-based practice to improve patient flow and create additional bed capacity in response to the rise in acute hospital presentations. The patient flow enhancement initiative includes additional funding for senior doctors and nurse care in emergency departments, patient care facilitators, rapid access services, a surgical rapid assessment unit, extended hours of medical imaging, and timely patient transitions to support patients to return home safely and quickly.

Other key initiatives under the plan include expanded new crisis support spaces for people experiencing mental health crisis and suicidality, increased paramedics and specialist staff for the Queensland Ambulance service, operation of all Satellite Hospitals, a digital platform for the Queensland Virtual Hospital's Virtual Emergency Care Service and expanded rural and remote birthing services.

Queensland Health will continue to develop innovative models of care, including through clinical redesign and identifying opportunities for team-based care, to improve patient outcomes and relieve pressure on the public hospitals.

## Priority 8 - Digital integration

Queensland Health implements a continuous improvement program of digital integration, including increasing the number of documents available in The Viewer from Queensland Health facilities that are available for GPs to access. Queensland Health is also actively engaging with the Commonwealth Government regarding modernising the My Health Record and streamlining electronic exchange of clinical and health service information across a variety of healthcare settings and systems nationally.

To ensure security capabilities and technologies keep pace with digitising healthcare security needs, the 2024-25 State Budget commits additional funding of \$13.6 million over four years. This will ensure critical infrastructure and services are safe, secure, reliable, highly available and fit for purpose.

## Priority 9 - First Nations health

Additional funding of \$324.7 million over four years from 2024-25 will target health equity for First Nations Queenslanders, focusing on strengthening the Queensland public health system and, most importantly, the Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Sector to co-design and expand upon already successful programs that address health inequity and enable local decision-making in First Nations communities. This budget delivers the largest investment in First Nations health in Queensland's history and highlights the Miles Government's commitment to prioritise the health and wellbeing of First Nations peoples in Queensland.

To achieve this, Queensland Health will uphold a key priority in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap by strengthening and empowering the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Health Sector, in particular the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, including the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health to invest in First Nations health and wellbeing hubs. The commitment will deliver on the *First Nations First Strategy 2032*, with significant investments across four priority areas: eliminating racism, reshaping the system, transforming care and strengthening our workforce.

Increasing the representation of First Nations People in our health workforce is seen as crucial to addressing health equity with First Nations Queenslanders. Queensland Health will continue to build pathways from school to higher education for First Nations students, build training infrastructure for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, and grow the First Nations leadership to embed First Nations perspectives and strengthen First Nations voices across our health system.

Queensland Health is also continuing to support initiatives to help address First Nations workforce challenges, including through supporting community retention and attraction strategies, such as the 'Going Home Project' taking 25 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors to Thursday Island.

Queensland Health has also implemented the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Program, which supports the employment of a First Nations Environmental Health workforce in 16 local government areas, covering 34 discrete First Nations communities. This program supports on-country, community-specific environmental health services, such as safe drinking and recreational water, improving sanitation facilities, promoting safe and healthy food practices, improving housing conditions, enhancing public health infrastructure, and animal management services. The program's effectiveness is enhanced through the integration of other Queensland Health initiatives, such as the Safe and Healthy Drinking Water Program and the Healthy Housing Pilot Program. By coordinating efforts and resources across these initiatives the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Program aims to improve the health and well-being of First Nations discrete communities in Queensland.

## Priority 10 - Women's health

As a commitment under the *Queensland Women's Strategy 2022-27*, Queensland Health has developed the *Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy 2032* and *Investment Plan* to respond to the health needs of women and girls and improve health equity. This includes initiatives under six priority health action areas: healthy lifestyles and bodies, sexual and reproductive health, mental health and wellbeing, health response to sexual violence and domestic and family violence, maternal health, and chronic health conditions and cancer.

Under the *Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy 2032*, Queensland Health is investing \$247.9 million in new funds to drive women's health reform. With this new injection of funds, and combined with funding for existing services, the Queensland Government will spend over \$1 billion over the next five years to provide activities and services across Government that focus on women's health and wellbeing. The investment under the *Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy 2032* includes \$41.8 million to support implementation of the *Termination of Pregnancy Action Plan 2028*, so that Queensland women and pregnant women can access information and termination of pregnancy care that meets their needs.

Investment of \$56.0 million over four years from 2024-25 will help establish a new statewide forensic examination model of care, as a component of a new sexual assault response service, for both adults and children. As part of the *Putting Queensland Kids First* package, funding of \$18.4 million over four years from 2024-25 has been allocated for the Supporting Healthier Pregnancies Program, which focuses on smoking cessation and at-risk screening.

Queensland Health is also investing \$42 million over four years to bring maternity services closer to home for remote, rural and regional women under the rural and regional birthing services budget measure.

Collectively, these initiatives will make a measurable difference towards improving the health and wellbeing of Queensland women and girls across their life course, ensuring women and girls can fully participate in their social, cultural, and economic lives.

## Priority 11 - Climate and sustainability

Queensland Health is continuing to progress initiatives to support the sustainability of the Queensland health system and respond to global challenges of climate change. This includes increasing virtual health services, such as telehealth and remote patient monitoring programs, to deliver care closer to home and reduce travel related carbon dioxide emissions. The Queensland Clinical Senate is also considering the impact of a changing climate on the delivery of healthcare, and the impact of healthcare delivery on climate change. The Senate's recommendations will inform our ongoing efforts.

The Office of Hospital Sustainability (OHS) is working actively with HHSs to guide and support mitigation and reporting of carbon emissions generated from HHS operations, through targeted investment programs. The OHS is also supporting HHSs to develop climate resilience and risk plans to prepare for the impact of a changing climate on our health services. The OHS continues to work closely with the Queensland Clinical Senate, AMA Queensland and other stakeholders to progress the sustainability agenda across Queensland Health

## Priority 12 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA+), Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities

Funding of \$6.8 million is being allocated towards gender affirming care that is tailored and more accessible for our LGBTQIA+, Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities as part of the \$247.9 million in new investment through the *Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy 2032*. Delivered through a combination of face-to-face, online, and telehealth, this statewide model of affirming care will provide targeted support for LGBTQIA+ people, Sistergirls and Brotherboys experiencing physical and mental ill health and any associated reduction in psychosocial functioning.



### Priority 13 - Aged and end-of-life care

Queensland Health has undertaken significant improvements to improve access to high quality palliative and end-of-life care. This includes increasing the palliative care eligibility access period for all services from three months to 12 months, improving access to the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme, and increasing support for community-based workforce to reduce demand on public hospital specialist palliative care services.

Included in the 2024-25 State Budget is investment of \$12.8 million over four years to continue Specialist Palliative Care in Aged Care (SPACE) and improve palliative and end-of-life care for people living in residential aged care facilities across Queensland. Additional funding of \$4.25 million is being met by the Commonwealth Government over two years, bringing total funding for SPACE to \$17 million.

The Queensland Government is also providing additional funding of \$18 million over four years to meet additional demand of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Program, including an additional senior medical officer for the QVAD-Access Service, which supports equitable access to voluntary assisted dying for people living in regional, rural, and remote areas of Queensland.

### Priority 14 - Substance related harm

The Queensland Government continues to prioritise investment and initiatives, that contribute to reducing supply, demand and harms from alcohol and other drug use. Funding of \$1.645 billion has been committed over five years from 2022-23 to improve mental health, alcohol and other drug services and for a range of initiatives to support suicide prevention. As part of this investment, an additional \$211.8 million over five years is being made across HHSs and non-government organisations to uplift alcohol and other drug service capacity and capability. Almost \$1 million has been invested to support the introduction of drug checking services and an evaluation to inform ongoing models and resourcing.

Queensland Health continues to work closely with the Queensland Police Service and key stakeholders, including people with lived and living experience to implement the expanded Police Drug Diversion Program. Health responses to diversion can be met within existing resources and through services delivered by HHSs, funded non-government organisations and Queensland Health's statewide Adis (24 hour, seven days a week alcohol and drug support) telephone service. Voluntary referral into the service system is supported for people who wish to engage in further treatment and care.

Thank you again for writing to me. AMA Queensland is a valued partner and I look forward to our continued collaboration to progress reform of our health system.

Should you require further information in relation to this matter, I have arranged for [REDACTED], Senior Director, Funding Strategy and Intergovernmental Policy Branch, Department of Health, on telephone [REDACTED], to be available to assist you.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

**Shannon Fentiman MP**

Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services

Minister for Women

Member for Waterford