

Executive Support Unit
MINISTERIAL CORRESPONDENCE – ACTION SHEET

Recfind Doc Type: MIN
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RCVD IN ESU: MINAD
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Reg No: MI 193574

DUE EXECUTIVE SUPPORT:
4 / 12 / 13

13 / 11 / 13

ACTION OFFICER: MD09

COPIED TO: _____

Response required: Yes No Action Direct / Board to respond

Response signatory: Minister for Health Assistant Minister Chief of Staff

Closing contact details: Departmental N/A

Response Template*: A **B** C G

Standard Letter: _____

ESU Option Letter Number: _____

Redirect to: _____

Briefing note required: YES **NO**

Briefing note template*: A B C

* Templates can be found on QHEPS by clicking on Corporate Templates under *I am looking for* or from the tool bar click on Business Support, and under Administration click on Templates. Alternatively, in Word, File / New and then click on Qld Health Templates (in the task panel on the right hand side of the page). It is important that you access the templates from the website *every time* (and not use a previous template) as the templates are updated regularly.

COMMENTS: please advise if standard response is appropriate.
Refers MI 193424 -

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

- Acknowledgement Letter
- Acknowledgement Email
- Acknowledgement Not Required
- Thank you & Noted Letter

Department Ref #: _____

Policy Advisor: Mark Anthony

Re-Issue: Robert Ellis

RESPONSE:

- Minister
 - Dept Contact required
- Assistant Minister
 - Dept Contact required
- Chief of Staff
 - Dept Contact required
- Hospital and Health Service
- Refer to Department for Direct Reply (**Action Direct**)
- No Response Required (**Note and File**)
- BRIEFING NOTE REQUIRED
- BRIEFING NOTE NOT REQUIRED

concerns about closure of Barrett Centre

Previous Dept Ref #: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:

Reviewed by: _____

Date: 12.11.13

Sent to ESU by: _____

Date: 12 NOV 2013

RECEIVED
4 NOV 2013

Mr. Lawrence Springborg MP
Minister for Health
GPO Box 48
Brisbane, QLD 4001

1 November, 2013

Dear Mr. Springborg

I am writing to you today to address a very sombre issue that I have been witness to firsthand over the past few months. I strongly believe that it has the potential to destroy a number of young lives – both present and future – yet it is a preventable situation. I am referring to the recent decision of the Queensland Government to close the Barrett Adolescent Centre, located at The Park Mental Health Facility at Wacol. I will first make the point of stating that I have no clinical qualification, and that all opinions addressed in this letter are my own, and that all reasoning is based on personal observation and understanding. The reason that I am writing this letter is because I hold a personal concern for the students of the centre, should it be closed with current transition plans in place, and feel a personal responsibility to express this concern.

The Barrett Centre is currently the only inpatient facility in Queensland that facilitates adolescents who have a history of severe mental health, whilst allowing for a normal education to take place. In addition to inpatients, the centre also has a number of outpatients who attend school on a regular basis and benefit greatly from this attendance. The school allows educational programs to be individually tailored to each student, with enough support staff to ensure that they achieve their goals; both ones set for them, and that they have set for themselves. It is a fantastic integration of both education and healthcare, allowing for a facilitated recovery for the patients to occur, whilst giving them the best opportunities to exit the centre with a higher level of education than what they entered with.

Despite huge levels of success attained by this model, with proven results dating back decades, a decision has been made by the Queensland Government to close the centre in early 2014. The primary reasons given for this closure is that nearby adult facilities are to be extended, therefore giving rise to the possibility that the environment may no longer be safe for both students and staff. While this is an initiative spearheaded by the previous government, the current decision lacks one key component that the previous plan did: that there is now nowhere for the current (and future) students of the Barrett Centre to go.

Unfortunately, I believe that this situation presents as one where politics has come before the wellbeing of the students. I am aware that there may not be much that can be done, however the only goal that I have in writing this letter is to spread awareness of the issue, in hopes that it is seen as what it is: a plea for help, on behalf of some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Queensland is in desperate need of more mental health facilities, and it is a well known fact that the prevalence of mental illness in young people is increasing. It is for this reason that any justification for going without a specialist facility, that helps to treat adolescents, is beyond my scope of reason. I do not want to speculate on what the devastating potential outcomes could be for adolescents – who are losing this safe place with no equivalent alternative in sight – however I will say that I am personally distressed by these thoughts and carry grave personal concerns about the wellbeing of the students, should the centre close.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this letter, as I believe this issue to be of the highest importance.

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Yours Sincerely

A rectangular grey box redacting the signature of Robert Ellis.

Robert Ellis