



Queensland Health

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File Ref: C-ECTF-19/14601
5033478:592302/1

Mr John Robertson
Chair
Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council
GPO Box 2360
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Robertson

Thank you for your letter dated 6 December 2019 addressed to Dr John Wakefield, Director-General, Queensland Health, regarding the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council's inquiry into penalties for assaults on police and other frontline emergency service workers, corrective service officers and other public officers. I have been asked to respond on Dr Wakefield's behalf.

Queensland Health welcomes the inquiry and the opportunity to provide the following preliminary advice.

Queensland Health treats the issue of occupational violence against staff seriously and is implementing a range of violence prevention measures. The 2016 Occupational Violence Prevention in Queensland Health's Hospital and Health Services Taskforce Report (<https://clinicalexcellence.qld.gov.au/improvement-exchange/occupational-violence>) sets out 20 recommendations to reduce occupational violence against health staff. These recommendations were accepted by Government and their implementation is now being driven by the Queensland Occupational Violence Strategy Unit (QOVSU).

The QOVSU was established to drive sustainable and meaningful initiatives to address occupational violence within Queensland Health. QOVSU works with key stakeholders in each of Queensland's 16 Hospital and Health Service (HHS). Each of QOVSU's initiatives fall within the pillars of:

- awareness
- prevention
- incident interaction; or
- post incident support.

On 14 November 2019, the Director-General announced that Queensland Health has committed ongoing funding to the QOVSU, making Queensland the first state or territory to establish a permanent, consistent, state-wide approach to addressing occupational violence against health staff.

Queensland Health recognises the complexity of social and medical factors associated with occupational violence. A priority for the organisation is reinforcing personal responsibility for unacceptable behaviours by perpetrators of violence. In 2018-19, there were 9,457 reported incidents across Queensland Health. These incidents are defined as “physical aggression-actual, physical aggression-threatened and verbal aggression” as reported in the Queensland Health incident reporting system, RiskMan. These figures do not include incidents involving Queensland Ambulance Service officers. The Queensland Ambulance Service will provide a separate response.

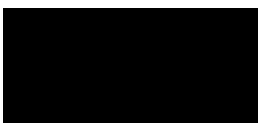
While the number of reported incidents has increased on previous years Queensland Health recognises that under-reporting remains a significant issue. The QOVSU has advised that Queensland Health staff have reported significant barriers to reporting incidents to the Queensland Police Service. Notable barriers include disparity in receiving support to make a complaint; significant delay in time of incident to attending court hearings and sentencing which causes stress for staff and their families; and concern about disparity between sentences for similar incidents.

Healthcare is delivered in a board range of settings throughout Queensland by people employed by public agencies such as Queensland Health, private providers, or as individuals. Incidents of violence have been reported by Queensland Health staff across a range of settings throughout Queensland. Queensland Health believes that the safety of all persons in all healthcare settings is of equal importance whether that person be in a hospital, a clinic, an aged care facility, a prison, or in the community. As such, it is recommended that one of the principles of review be that the health and safety of all workers in all healthcare settings be treated with equal importance in any sentencing regime.

Regarding the request for nominations for Queensland Health representatives for the inquiry, I understand advice has been provided to Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council that the following officers are available to provide further input into the review: Ms Lita Olsson, QOVSU Clinical Lead via email [REDACTED]; and Ms Kate Petrie, Manager, Office for Prisoner Health and Wellbeing via email [REDACTED]

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input. Queensland Health looks forward to participating in this important inquiry.

Yours sincerely



PROFESSOR KEITH McNEIL
A/Deputy Director-General
Clinical Excellence Queensland
06/01/2020