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Queensland Health

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Ask CHO to progress  
to final other  
meet - CHO - SEDUS please

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13/05/05

# MEMORANDUM

**To:** Dr Steve Buckland, Director-General

**Copies to:**

**From:** Dr Gerry FitzGerald  
Chief Health Officer

**Contact No:** (07) 323 41137  
**Fax No:** (07) 322 17535

**Subject:** AOA Orthopaedic Review of Hervey Bay

**File Ref:**

Thank you for seeking my advice on the above document. I would concur that the document contains frank information about individuals which should not be placed in the public arena as that action would further the impact of any potential defamation.

The investigators have used an interview and focus group approach to identify the issues of concern to staff in the hospital. They have not sought or been in a position to validate any of the concerns and ordinarily such concerns would require a more formalised investigation at which evidence is collected and responded to.

The principal issues of concern raised by the Inspectors relate to the management and organisation of orthopaedic services at Hervey Bay Hospital. The information collected in regard to clinical standards is circumstantial and not validated at this time.

Nevertheless the Inspectors have been sufficiently concerned with the organisational matters and the implied clinical impact of those issues as to recommend principally the cessation of orthopaedic services at HBH. As you would be aware, this recommendation has significant clinical, legal, industrial and community implications. It would in my view not be wise to take such dramatic action without first recourse to attempts to seek alternative solutions to the issues of concerns identified in the report. Indeed any such decision would be challengeable on the ground of failure to take due care to seek alternative solutions.

I therefore recommend that you take a number of actions to address the issues of concern.

1. That the performance of the Director of Orthopaedics should be reviewed in detail by an appropriately qualified senior medical administrator and a report provided to the Director of Medical Services.
2. That improvements in the quality and safety arrangements should be explored by the Acting District Manager to include clinical outcome audit, selection and recruitment, credentialing and clinical privileges scrutiny, and development of clinical guidelines.

3. The orthopaedic coverage of the two hospitals be reviewed urgently to ensure that the senior Medical Officer have appropriate specialist supervision.
4. That you meet urgently with the Australian Orthopaedic Association and the Inspectors to seek their assistance in identification of methods by which clinical orthopaedic services may be assured.

Suggested speaking points for the Director-General

- I am in receipt of the report of the two Inspectors from the Australian Orthopaedic Association who reviewed orthopaedic services in Hervey Bay Hospital on behalf of Queensland Health.
- The report raises serious concerns in regard to a number of issues. Some of these issues concern the conduct of individuals who have been specifically named in the report. The allegations are not as yet tested or validated and have not been put to the individuals concerned. It would therefore be completely inappropriate to release this report publicly.
- I have requested urgent legal advice on the report and have also sought urgent advice from the District Manager on the matters raised in the report and on the action proposed to further investigate the issues of concern.
- I have also requested urgent advice from the Chief Health Officer on the clinical aspects of the report. The Chief Health Officer has provided preliminary advice to the effect that the issues of concern appear to relate to the organisation and management of the service. The quality and safety of clinical services will require a much more detailed audit. The CHO will progress a clinical audit as soon as practicable.
- One of the suggestions in the report is that the department should cease orthopaedic services at Hervey Bay Hospital. The Chief Health Officer has advised that this would have a significant clinical impact on the patients at HBH and therefore its should not be embarked upon until such time as every other alternative strategy to provide quality orthopaedic services has been explored
- I intend to meet with the Australian Orthopaedic Association and the Inspectors to seek their assistance in regard to the provision of orthopaedic services to the people of Fraser Coast.

Dr Gerry FitzGerald  
 Chief Health Officer  
 12/5/05

DG 040735  
 DATE REC 12/5/05  
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CHO  
 Pls see note from DG  
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