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**Queensland
Government**
Queensland Health

**MINISTERIAL
BRIEFING**

Number BR022137
For Noting
DEADLINE April 15 2005

BRIEFING NOTE to be limited to two pages only. Where additional information is required, supporting schedules/ attachments should be used.

SUBJECT:

Bundaberg Health Service District and Dr Patel

PURPOSE:

To provide a brief on the issues surrounding Dr Patel, former Director of Surgery at Bundaberg Base Hospital.

BACKGROUND:

Dr Patel commenced work at Bundaberg Base Hospital March 2003 after being recruited from overseas (USA). Dr Patel resigned from Bundaberg Base Hospital on 25 March 2005.

Four patient complaints were received by the District between April and November 2003. The District responded to each of the complaints within appropriate timeframes. In two cases further surgery was required and provided.

In July 2004 a sentinel event occurred which resulted in considerable concern being expressed by staff with regards to Dr Patel's competence to practice. A further adverse event occurred in August 2004 which resulted in a meeting between concerned staff and the District Manager followed by formal correspondence being submitted to the District Manager in October 2004.

In October 04 the District Manager contacted Operational Audit regarding the need for a Review to be undertaken into Dr Patel's performance.

The CHO commenced the Clinical Audit on 14 February 05.

The issue was escalated on 22 March 05 when Mr Messenger tabled in Parliament a letter from Bundaberg Staff regarding staff concerns about Dr Patel.

KEY ISSUES:

The CHO's Clinical Audit findings were as follows:

- The complexity of procedures being undertaken by Dr Patel at Bundaberg Hospital were outside the service capability of the facility,
- Dr Patel's complication rates were found to be higher than complication rates in other hospitals of similar size and service capability,
- Dr Patel's reluctance to refer patients with complex conditions to tertiary level facilities.
- Lack of clinical governance framework in the District.
- Lack of team work and poor interpersonal relations both within the District and with key external stakeholders

The Minister announced on the 9 April that there would be a departmental Review of Bundaberg Base Hospital.

The team to undertake the Review includes four senior clinicians including 3 Senior Medical Officers and a Senior Nurse. The Team commenced preparation for the Review on 11 April 05. The Team will commence in Bundaberg on 18 April 05. (Terms of Reference for the Review are being drafted and will be provided as soon as they have been endorsed)

The CHO went to Bundaberg Base Hospital on 13 April to provide a summary of the outcome of the Clinical Audit and to also advise staff of the review that is now to be undertaken.

The District Manager notified the Director General on the 14 April 05 that he would stand aside pending the outcome of the Review. He stated his intent to be available for the Review Team. The Zonal Manager is currently managing the District until Monday 18 April at which time Dr Michael Daly will act as District Manager for the duration of the Review.

A Ministerial Press Conference was held 14 April 05.

A Public meeting was held on Thursday 14 April in Bundaberg where patients of Dr Patel and their families expressed severe displeasure and discussed coordinated legal action.

The Medical Superintendent notified the Senior Executive Director Health Services of his intent to take leave from the 15 April 05. He stated that he would be available to provide information to the Review Team as required.

A staff Forum was held at Bundaberg Base Hospital at 3pm 15 April 05 by the Zonal Manager to brief staff on the interim management arrangements and the Review process.

A further Ministerial Press conference was held on 15 April 05.

MEDIA IMPLICATIONS:

The issues surrounding Dr Patel at Bundaberg Hospital have already been widely reported by the media. Several patients have spoken to the media and voiced personal concerns regarding treatment provided to them by Dr Patel. At least two law firms are involved with patients and their families in discussions regarding class actions.

Key Messages:

1. The Government and Queensland Health have committed to a comprehensive, open and transparent process of review with regards the patients treated by Dr Patel at the Bundaberg Hospital, and to understand any quality and safety issues within the system to prevent recurrence of similar events.
2. Queensland Health is meeting with affected patients and families in order to offer support, facilitate and meet the costs of second medical opinions and to arrange further treatment where necessary.
3. The Health Rights Commissioner has made staff available to provide another avenue for patients and families to address their concerns.
4. The Medical Board has agreed to review administrative processes for registration of overseas-trained medical officers.
5. It would further compromise natural justice to make public comment about the competence or otherwise of Dr Patel and other staff at Bundaberg Hospital until the review process is complete.

CONSULTATION:

Dr Gerry Fitzgerald, Chief Health Officer

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Minister note the contents of this brief.

ATTACHMENTS:

Nil

MEDIA RELEASE: (Optional)

YES

NO

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY / SPEECH: (Optional)

ATTACHED

NOT ATTACHED

Cleared by:
Graeme Kerridge
Manager
Central Zone

Cleared by:
Dr John Scott
Senior Executive Director
Health Service Directorate

Date: 15/4/05

Date: 15/4/05

(Please include Contact Officer details below)

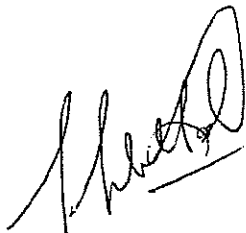
RECOMMENDATION:

BRIEFING

Noted:

COMMENTS:

Noted.



GORDON NUTTALL MP
Minister for Health
Member for Sandgate

23/4/05.

Cleared by:
Graeme Kerridge
Manager
Central Zone

Cleared by:
Dr John Scott
Senior Executive Director
Health Service Directorate

Date: 15/4/05

Date: 15/4/05

(Please include Contact Officer details below)

Prepared by: Sue Jenkins & Leanne Patton
Unit: Chief Health Officer Office & Central Zone Management Unit
Contact No:

RECOMMENDATION:

BRIEFING

Noted:

COMMENTS:

GORDON NUTTALL MP
Minister for Health
Member for Sandgate

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