

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 117**

**Asked on 15 February 2024**

**MR S KNUTH** ASKED MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN (HON S FENTIMAN)—

### **QUESTION**

With reference to the closure of the helipad at Innisfail Hospital for over two years, the redirection of the rescue helicopter to the airport and the increased travel time and potential impact on lives—

Will the Minister immediately investigate why the hospital helipad remains unused and immediately rectify any issues to get the helipad operational?

### **ANSWER**

The safety of Queensland Health staff and members of the public is a top priority for the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service.

The helipad was constructed over 20 years ago and is located in very close proximity to hospital buildings and public walkways. Since that time, aviation safety requirements have changed, as has the size of rescue helicopters.

Accordingly, following a helicopter rotor wash incident, the use of the Innisfail Hospital helipad was suspended while an independent expert assessment and review was undertaken to improve safety. General consultancy advice was also requested as part of this assessment in relation to aviation safety, compliance and public safety risks.

Clinical care and supervision of patients is provided by Queensland Ambulance Service paramedics and doctors during the journey between the airport and hospital. I am not aware of any patient safety incidents that have occurred as a result of patients being transported by ambulance between the aerodrome and Innisfail Hospital.

During the expert assessment and in conjunction with Australian Transport Safety Bureau, Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service and Queensland Health's Retrieval Services Queensland implemented the use of an alternative landing site at Innisfail's Mundoo airport, which is an eight-minute drive from Innisfail Hospital.

The independent assessment report was received in February 2024, and identifies an unacceptable public safety risk posed by rotor downwash from helicopters operating to the helipad.

Currently an options analysis of potential solutions presented in the independent assessment report is being completed; this is expected to be returned in April 2024.