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DOCTORS WELCOME NEW MEDICAL WATCHDOG

AMA Queensland has congratulated Rachel Hunter on her appointment as the state's new Health Ombudsman.

Ms Hunter, a senior public servant and chair of Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service, will begin her new role on March 5.

AMA Queensland President Dr Bill Boyd said doctors were pleased the State Government had selected a candidate with significant experience of the health system.

"Ms Hunter has an impressive resume and her experience of overseeing the Lady Cilento Hospital will be invaluable in her new role," Dr Boyd said.

Dr Boyd said that Ms Hunter would face many challenges in her new job.

"AMA Queensland holds concerns about the performance of Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) to date," Dr Boyd said.

"We have long been calling for reforms to overhaul the OHO's current deficiencies and inefficiencies.

"We would like to see the state's new Health Ombudsman increase the speed at which medical complaints are investigated and reform the organisation to ensure it functions as effectively as possible.

"More than half of its investigations into practitioners take more than 12 months to complete.

"Complainants deserve swifter answers. These long drawn-out assessments also place a huge strain on medical professionals, whose careers and personal lives can be badly affected by such long delays.

"We believe these delays are partly due to under-resourcing of the Office of the Health Ombudsman and will continue to press the State Government to increase funding of this key organisation.

"AMA Queensland will meet with Ms Hunter at the earliest opportunity to discuss the range of reforms that need urgent attention to ensure that the OHO becomes an efficient, fair and streamlined complaints management system for both Queensland patients and doctors."

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