



Speech by

BILL FELDMAN

MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

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MARYBOROUGH BASE HOSPITAL

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (Leader of the One Nation Party) (11.50 a.m.): The big issue in central Queensland last week and this week has been the attempted downgrading of the Maryborough Base Hospital, which would have brought untold sorrow and confusion to the people of central Queensland. Having heard the rhetoric here today, I am pleased to say that obviously 6,000 people from Maryborough got it wrong.

The public of Maryborough were originally informed by a branch official of the Labor Party on an ABC program that the attempted downgrading of the Maryborough Base Hospital was a payback—retribution for the public of Maryborough having the audacity to vote out Labor and vote in One Nation. One doctor has stated that the previous elected representative had six years to work this out. It took the One Nation member three months to get it right.

It seems that when the public of Queensland exercised their democratic rights in the recent election they were unaware that they may be subject to retaliation by the Government, which was formed with less than 40% of the vote. If this type of victimisation represents the way the Government will conduct its business, then Queensland has entered a very sorry age of pork-barrel politics.

It is incredible that the Government could even contemplate moving hospital facilities from Maryborough to Hervey Bay without first consulting the local people, but it did. This week it has had to change its position as a result of utter contempt on the part of the local people. Just think what would have happened if the Government had succeeded in its plan. The hospital would have been located remote from Maryborough—away from all the major heavy industry and away from the main highway on which major accidents occur.

Was any consideration given to what would have happened if the highway to Hervey Bay had been flooded and if transport and communications had been disrupted? Certainly not! If that had been considered, this absurd situation would never have come about. In a flood, the proposed hospital would have become flood bound. Accident victims could not be guaranteed fast and efficient transport to that hospital, even if it could be accessed.

Indeed, even if people could have made it to the hospital, full intensive care facilities would not have been available. More incredibly, if an accident had occurred there might not have been the emergency triage facilities available to respond totally. Anything happening in Maryborough would have resulted in the harrowing experience of travelling from Maryborough to Hervey Bay—a long distance under any circumstances and most certainly a terrible experience for anybody with a serious illness or injury.

If this downgrading had gone ahead, would the people of Maryborough have had to settle for maybe a dual highway or the establishment of another helicopter service? The people of the Maryborough and Hervey Bay districts, as well as those of the surrounding rural regions, will believe the Government when its stated intentions materialise.

There has been a massive backlash against the Government and its decision-making methods. That will last in the minds of these people for many years. It will have a devastating impact for years to come. People will remember this blot on the good name of Queensland.

This is the mongrel pup of the workings of the coalition and the Labor Party—the stripping of the guts of operating theatres. Now, doctors and nurses must place their bodies in the firing line to stop the

stupid acts of unthinking Governments with agendas that they have not informed the people about and a Minister who obviously is not in touch with the people or has any appreciation of the devastating impact that her decision would have had on the major community there.

It is a distressing fact of life that the Beattie minority Government has attempted to play Maryborough off against Hervey Bay. This miserable attempt has failed and failed badly. It has only upset everybody. The Government has retreated from its high-handed, bureaucratic attitude and this, I must say, is most welcome.

So much has happened to turn the people off that they will not believe the Premier, his Minister or the Government until they deliver the goods of reform and until they stabilise the turmoil that they have created most unnecessarily. Certainly, One Nation is very hopeful that this does not become the lengths to which the community must go to save precious and essential services. These services are designed to protect and save the lives of members of the community whom we are elected to serve.

It is very tragic to see our trained physicians and surgeons having to put their careers in jeopardy by locking hands to prevent removalists coming in to strip the guts out of hospitals. It is a terrible state of affairs that some 1,000 people have felt the need to march and that some 5,000 people have put their names on a register. It is very tragic to see physicians and surgeons having to lock arms to prevent that from happening in this good State.

Mr Sullivan: What did your local member say? He said, "Come back to me later. I'll find out what is happening." He did not even know what was happening to the hospital.

Mr FELDMAN: It took him three months to clean this up. The Labor Party had six years to do it. Let us keep a very close eye on what goes on from this point in time. Let us make very sure that the Labor Government keeps the promises it has made to the people of Maryborough. Let this not be the action that has to be taken by the public of Queensland when their essential services are threatened.
