



Speech by

**DESLEY BOYLE**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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Hansard 12 November 1998

#### **QUEENSLAND HEALTH**

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (6.39 p.m.): It is important to me to take the opportunity to speak to this motion and, in doing so, to go back a little bit further than the immediate discomfort that is being expressed in the House about Queensland Health services. I recall well the years of the 1980s—although not the 1970s—in Queensland when Queensland's per capita health spending dropped further and further behind the spending per capita of the other States of Australia. The truth is that the National Party Bjelke-Petersen Government ran down services. While medical discoveries allowed us to live longer, Queenslanders were disadvantaged.

I recall in 1990 visiting an Aboriginal community in Cape York and seeing the kind of health services that had been provided by successive National Party Governments—a little tin hut. Inside that tin hut there was a chair and an old school desk. On that school desk there was a bit of bedding and that was the health centre that was provided to Aboriginal people—1,200 of them—in Cape York. One of the fellows there said, "Don't lift up the bedding", but I did and saw white ants through the top of that desk.

So it is with absolute shame that tonight the National Party members in this Chamber should dare to criticise Labor's performance. It was the Goss Government that faced the facts about health in Queensland and began to pour in the billions of dollars needed to turn around the situation. The evidence of that spending is still apparent in the Cairns area, and certainly in Cape York and the Torres Strait.

Then the National Party were back in Government—thank heavens only briefly. What did Minister Horan do as Health Minister? I know it well in Cairns: he slowed it down. The decision to redevelop of the Cairns Base Hospital, a difficult decision for any Government, had been made by the Labor Government. The standard of services to be provided were specified clearly and all of us in Cairns knew what they were. As the costs went up, Minister Horan reneged on the deal and we had less and less redevelopment provided, to the point at which earlier this year it was necessary for the doctors, the nurses and the administrative staff of that hospital to protest to Minister Horan that the redevelopment was much less than had been promised under the Labor Government and that the funds were not available.

The honourable member for Maroochydore, the Opposition spokesperson on Health, has difficulty reading. I would like to read to her and to the honourable member for Tablelands some easy print in the State Budget papers. I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, which states on the cover "Capital Outlays". I turn to page 7. One does not have to read far to see that there is \$17.9m additional funding for the Cairns Base Hospital over two years. It is there in black and white. If members choose to flick through to page 96, they will see listed again the Cairns Hospital and the particular expenditure, which includes the previous Government's funds as well as this Government's additional funds, listed for this budgetary year at \$26.379m. Then page 105 of Budget Paper No. 2 states that for 1998-99 there is \$26.4m for the Cairns Hospital redevelopment.

The facts are there for those members who do not want to be mischievous, who do not want to use the feelings of the people of Queensland and who are beyond frightening them for their own political gain. The facts are, and I place them on the record of this House, that through the Labor Government the Cairns Hospital has secured an additional \$19.1m for the redevelopment. The evidence of that funding is on the ground already. The evidence is attested to by our staff.

What irresponsibility, what fear, what mistrust, what ugliness in politics! I suggest that many honourable members from the Opposition side of this House go home and think again about what assistance they offered the people of Queensland tonight, what positive suggestions they put forward as to how we could do a better job to give the people of Queensland the very best possible health service with the amount of money available. What constructive suggestions did the members opposite offer today? How did they use their intelligence to further the lot of the people of the State of Queensland instead of frightening them? It is shameful politics, it is lacking in fact and it is lacking in honesty. There is no public health crisis in Queensland; there is a political crisis of character.

Time expired.

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