



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard 16 September 1998

CENSURE OF MINISTER FOR HEALTH

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.24 p.m.): Other speakers preceding me in this debate have dealt with the specifics of the situation at the Maryborough Hospital. For me, this is matter of simple honesty—or, particularly, an issue of dishonesty on the part of the Minister for Health. There can be little doubt in anyone's mind that in Opposition the present Government gave a clear pre-election commitment to the people of Maryborough to maintain their health services to a level that was guaranteed them by the then Minister, Mike Horan. That pre-election commitment was clear and cannot be denied; neither can it be denied that the Minister's intention last week was to break that commitment in a very blatant and arrogantly dishonest way. I will quote from a statement made by the Mayor of Maryborough, Alan Brown, a very well respected local government leader. That statement was reported in the Fraser Coast Chronicle on 12 September. The article states—

" 'Attempts by the Minister to muddy the waters with statistics and so called agreements on services are a waste of time. It's quite simple' Mayor Brown says. 'All I want is for them to honour the commitment they gave before the election.' "

I believe that Mayor Brown summed up what people all over this State and all over this nation want: they want politicians from whatever party to honour, after they are elected, the commitments that they give prior to the election. They will no longer accept that these commitments can be avoided by muddying the waters, being clever with words and twisting their meanings. They will no longer accept it. All of us as politicians need to be aware of that. All of us need to be honest. The Minister for Health and this Labor Government have not been honest with the people of Maryborough. They have not been honest with the issue of the Maryborough Hospital. To their credit, the people of that area refuse to accept that dishonesty. They have forced the Minister and the Premier to abandon their original dishonest intent.

We in this House tonight have an opportunity to show that we are in touch with the people whom we represent, that we will no longer accept the type of dishonesty that the Minister tried to perpetrate, albeit unsuccessfully. Because of the determination of the people of Maryborough and district, she failed in her dishonest intent. There is very little point in standing up here tonight and making more promises that no-one will trust her to keep, given that immediately after the election her intent was to break the promises that she had given.

The Independent members of this House, who, realistically, will decide the fate of this censure motion, have talked much about improving standards and lifting the reputation of politicians. They have an opportunity tonight to show to the people of Queensland that their words are more than just shallow rhetoric. The member for Nicklin in particular has a chance to show to the people of Queensland just how fair dinkum he is about some of the things that he has said. How fair dinkum is he about some of the things that he has made much of? Tonight we will see just how fair dinkum the member for Nicklin is about improving the standards of honesty in Government in Queensland. Tonight we will see just how fair dinkum the member for Nicklin is about improving the standing of politicians in the community. Tonight we will see how fair dinkum he is about acceptable levels of honesty and integrity in Government. This opportunity should not be forfeited to some silly amendment that the Health Minister has moved. The Minister for Health should be censured, and censured strongly by this House, for trying to perpetrate this dishonesty, just as she was censured by the people of Maryborough and district. This

House should make it clear that, were it ever so in the past, this type of dishonesty is no longer acceptable to the people of Queensland. By carrying this censure motion tonight, we can make that very, very clear. We can indulge in a little bit of self-regulation. We can make it clear that this type of dishonesty is not acceptable from any political party, from any Minister, anywhere.

Time expired.
