



Speech by

JOHN KINGSTON

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

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CENSURE OF MINISTER FOR HEALTH

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—ONP) (6.35 p.m.): This morning the Minister for Health said that the people of Maryborough wanted a second-rate hospital rather than the first-class hospital that she and her bureaucrats were offering. That is untrue. For six years now, the redevelopment and future of the Maryborough Base Hospital has been subjected to continued uncertainty. Staff and the public have been stressed and insecure. Only two to three years ago, in their own time at their own expense, the staff members made substantial inputs into a comprehensive plan for the rehabilitation of the Maryborough Base Hospital. This plan—which at that time was agreed to—now appears to have disappeared.

What was offered to Maryborough initially by this Minister was almost a cottage hospital with limited facilities, particularly out of hours. That ignored the central position of Maryborough in the Wide Bay district. This proposition was put to the people of Maryborough following some years of evidence that the local administration—the local bureaucrats—were eroding the Maryborough Base Hospital in favour of the new hospital at Hervey Bay.

In the meantime, the Hervey Bay Hospital was perceived by the public to be providing a low level of service. Both the member for Hervey Bay and I have received numerous complaints. For example, a young boy was presented at Hervey Bay Hospital at 5 past 5 with a broken femur. He could not be treated by the highly paid specialist at Hervey Bay. At 7 p.m. he was moved to Maryborough and at 10 p.m. he was operated on by a private specialist/VMO. Such events are not uncommon.

Last Wednesday night I convened and chaired a meeting between the Director-General of Health and the majority of the key medical staff. At that meeting, the staff made it clear that in their opinion, with the limited amount of money available for the refurbishment of the Maryborough Base Hospital, it made more sense not to bulldoze the theatres but to rehabilitate them and maintain other vital services. They were highly influenced in this decision by their mistrust of Queensland Health, but, I stress, not necessarily of the director-general himself—he is present in this room—who listened very carefully to what was said. He earned the respect of the staff for his actions. However, the predominant fear was that the theatres would be destroyed, never to be built again. I add that, from memory, one of the existing three theatres was built in 1981. It is certainly not old. The library has already been removed.

The mistrust generated in Maryborough has resulted from a long series of statements that have been shown to be incorrect. One such unfortunate event, followed by deception, concerned my 90-year-old mother. Several weeks ago, she broke the head of her femur. The orthopaedic VMO, Jim Khursandi, was on holidays. The Hervey Bay specialist, whose contract obliges him to cover both hospitals, was unavailable for five days. When I suggested that this hardly resembled a professional service and that Hippocrates must be rolling in his grave, the Hervey Bay specialist became available to operate at St Stephens, the private hospital in Maryborough, within two days.

I was told that a special concession had been made to provide a service for my mother. However, I ask: what if the injured lady had been somebody not likely to lodge an official protest? Would she have been left for five days? I now know that that specialist has a theatre list organised at St Stephens for later this month. He has the right of private practice written into his contract, and I have a copy of that contract. I am told that he has operated privately at Hervey Bay, Roma and some other locations.

When the Minister, the deputy director and the local CEO were explaining my mother's situation to me, they told me that the fact that they could not provide orthopaedic cover was due to the fact that Jim Khursandi had given them insufficient notice of going on holidays. As they said——

Time expired.
