



Speech by

**LINDA LAVARCH**

**STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH**

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Hansard 12 November 1998

#### **QUEENSLAND HEALTH**

**Mrs LAVARCH** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I second the amendment moved by the Minister for Health. I congratulate her on her competent, honest and responsible approach to the administration of Health. I oppose the motion moved by the Opposition because it is nothing more than dishonest, sensationalist, scaremongering, base politics. It is opportunistic, oppositionist politics at its worst. It disappoints me that the shadow Minister has chosen to be so irresponsible when it comes to the health and wellbeing of the Queensland public. The member for Maroochydore's approach to the job as shadow Minister has been to do everything within her power to undermine public confidence in the public health system. She does not even have the decency to stay in the House to hear what members have to say.

**Mr Johnson:** I'm staying here for her.

**Mrs LAVARCH:** The member for Gregory disappoints me, too. The very thing about which he complained in relation to the power industry, he is doing here tonight in relation to health—only worse. Does he know the effects of what he is doing to real people in Queensland? On talkback radio, after the shadow Minister had been taken to task over the Gold Coast Hospital, a woman rang in and said that her mother had to be admitted to the Gold Coast Hospital but that she was too scared to go in because of the reports that she had heard on radio from the Opposition.

**Mrs Rose:** Absolute scaremongering.

**Mrs LAVARCH:** It is scaremongering. The effect that it has on real people is disgraceful. The woman's mother went into the Gold Coast Hospital, and that woman felt compelled to tell everyone who was listening to that program that the facilities at the Gold Coast Hospital were excellent. She had nothing but the utmost praise for the staff at the Gold Coast Hospital. She felt awful that her mother had been put in that position when there was no need for it.

As for the member for Toowoomba South, the former Minister, I wonder how the thousands of dedicated health professionals and operational and technical staff in our hospitals—not to mention all the employees within Queensland Health—feel when they know that he is going to speak to this motion tonight. He now condemns them five months after he was their Minister.

The member for Maroochydore and all other members of the Opposition should apologise to the employees of Queensland Health. They are demonstrating tonight that they learnt nothing from the last election. They have demonstrated clearly, through this motion, that they are not listening to the people in their electorates. They are not listening to the people of Queensland, who want their elected members to be constructive and to work for them. They do not want them to undermine their confidence. They do not want them to work against them. It is this kind of slanging off across the Chamber that they regard as the worst side of politics. I ask members to consider the motion.

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Gregory!

**Mrs LAVARCH:** The motion starts with an assertion that there is a health crisis. I ask: what is the crisis in the health system? Is it a crisis that hospitals have to stay within their budgets? Does anyone dispute that hospitals should stay within their budgets? Is the Opposition suggesting that hospitals should be allowed to have budget blow-outs and then write them off as technical difficulties and adjustments or negative carryovers? The former Health Minister, Mike Horan, assured us during the

1997 Estimates debate that all districts stayed within their approved budgets. But let us look at the facts.

Fact No. 1: the Labor Government inherited budget overruns at Toowoomba— over \$3m; Townsville—over \$1m; and the Royal Brisbane Hospital—\$2.5m. The Opposition has made a false accusation. It is base politics to accuse Labor of creating these budget overruns. It is ridiculous. I say to members opposite: please stop treating the community and public health workers like idiots. The Government is addressing the problem with the hand that it was dealt.

Fact No. 2: the Government has increased the district budgets in 1998-99 and has given major increases to Bayside, Fraser Coast, QE II and Torres Strait.

Fact No. 3: The Queensland health system needs responsible managers more than ever—managers who will look at working within their budgets, like at the Royal Brisbane Hospital and the Gympie Hospital. Is this a crisis in the health system? Is it a crisis when managers are asking staff what their views are and involving them in discussions on how to run a better hospital? Is it a crisis, like in Gympie, where staff and managers are trying to generate some savings to introduce more services? This is not a crisis; it is managing the health system.

Time expired.

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