



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

Hansard 16 September 1998

CENSURE OF MINISTER FOR HEALTH

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.10 p.m.): I second the motion. Tonight's debate is all about politicians delivering on their election promises. If ever we have seen a monumental and disgraceful stabbing in the back of a community, it is what the Health Minister has done to the people of Maryborough. Just a couple of months after taking Government, she went up there and downgraded their hospital. She downgraded their intensive care services, their accident and emergency services and their paediatric services. She ripped out the heart and soul of a decent community which, for decades, has had a base hospital that provided intensive care services.

The Minister made promises before the election, as did all her compatriots. Then she did this to the people of Maryborough. It is no wonder that people are becoming cynical of politicians. I ask the member for Nicklin: how would he like this to happen to Nambour? He probably got the money that was switched from Maryborough to Nambour when that Cabinet meeting was held there. How would he like this to happen to Nambour? Will he have the decency and the character to vote tonight on behalf of the people of Maryborough? The people of Maryborough are no different from the people of Nambour, Bundaberg or Hervey Bay. They have had intensive care services at their hospitals, and they want to keep those services because they are absolutely essential to them.

When the new Hervey Bay Hospital was built, funded and staffed, it was never meant to be done at the expense of the people of Maryborough. But that is what the Labor Party did, and that is what it did during its previous term, when it built the Logan Hospital. It ripped the heart and soul out of the QE II Hospital. It downgraded that hospital from 160 beds to nine some time before we took over Government. We fixed that. The only way that the Maryborough Hospital was ever going to keep all its services was if a coalition Government was re-elected. Sadly, that did not happen. If it had, the people of Maryborough would never have had to face the trauma and distress that they have been through.

This Labor Government is still intent on bashing the people of Maryborough. The coalition put in place the \$17m redevelopment of that hospital. We lifted the funding from \$6m to \$17m so that the people of Maryborough could have a good, decent and modern hospital, just like other regional cities of similar size along the coast. Now the Labor Government is talking about refurbishing. In fact, it is not simply talking about it; this Government is going to drop the number of beds from 120 to 80. I ask members to bear in mind that those 80 beds include about 19 or 20 beds for mental health patients—additional beds which we promised—and additional units for palliative care. So how many beds will be left in that hospital for people who are sick, people who are having babies or people who need operations?

This has been a treacherous act. Are we going to reward a Health Minister for incompetence and broken promises? Or is this the new era of Parliament? If a party goes to an election promising, "We are going to keep your 120 beds. We are going to keep your intensive care. We are going to keep your paediatric services, your high-risk birthing and your obstetrics. We are going to keep all of that, which you have had for decades", is it not fair enough that it should deliver on those promises? The Health Minister should not be going up there a few weeks later saying, "It's gone. We are changing it."

I say to the member for Nicklin in particular: what would he do and how would he vote if this Health Minister went to Nambour and did to Nambour what the Health Minister did to the people of

Maryborough? Are we about having a decent Parliament? Are we about having Ministers with character who will stand up for the people? Or are we about having Ministers who swan around and throw around promises before an election and then turn the tables on those people as soon as they get into office? That is what this debate is about.

The people of Maryborough reflect the people of Queensland—hardworking people whose town and community have relied for years on shipbuilding contracts and so forth. They have always prided themselves on their hospital. The Minister has been a disgrace to the Queensland Government. She has been a disgrace to the people of Maryborough. With this broken promise, she is one of the worst Ministers ever seen in a long regime of failed, dud Health Ministers.

Time expired.
