



Speech by

**Mr M. HORAN**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

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### QUEENSLAND HEALTH

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.44 p.m.): Tonight's debate is a very serious one and it is a shame, indeed a tragedy, that we have to have it. The great public health system that used to exist in Queensland is in crisis. The previous coalition Government brought to that system a whole new professionalism and a pride within the staff that they were once again part of a great public hospital system. The coalition Government filled in all the funding for all the cuts that had been made over six disastrous years of Labor. We took up the cudgels and fixed up the entire system. The legacy that we provided to the Beattie minority Government was the best public health system in Australia.

In just two short years, the coalition added \$1.2 billion to the system. Throughout the years of the Goss Government, promises were made for hospitals such as Cairns with money that was not even there. The coalition Government had to increase the funding by \$35m to give the people of Cairns a decent hospital. It was one of the worst political lies foisted on the people of Queensland. After the Goss Government made unfunded promises—it was \$1.2 billion short—every centre in Queensland needed more money to get a decent hospital. The coalition took an elective surgery system, which in organisational terms did not even exist under the Goss Government, with the worst waiting times in Australia for Category 1 surgery of 47% of people waiting for more than 30 days, to the best in Australia, and it did that in only two years. In the coalition's last year in Government, something like 7,000 extra operations were performed. That was a great achievement, but as I have always said, that achievement was brought about by the staff.

Tonight it is important to speak up on behalf of the staff, because they deserve better. They do not deserve an incompetent Labor Government. They do not deserve a bumbling Minister such as the one they have. That is why they are marching in Maryborough, that is why they are marching at Wolston Park, and that is why they are marching on the Gold Coast. After five months of a Labor Government, the staff have had enough. During the early 1990s, they saw then Premier Goss stand by idly and let the system go down and down until it got into such a mess and fell into such an abyss that nothing could be done about it. That was one of the reasons Labor lost Government. Now, after just four and a half months of this Labor Government, the staff are seeing the same thing happen—crisis after crisis starting to develop.

With Christmas coming it is time to have the Christmas turkey; it is time for the chop. The member for Logan, Mr Mickel, must be champing at the bit, waiting to have a go as Minister. He seems to be the de facto Health Minister. He is the one who fires all the shots. He is the one who abuses the AMA. He is the one who abuses the doctors down at the Gold Coast Hospital, even though they give a sterling service. He is the one who is doing it all. How do the member for Sandgate and the member for Nudgee, a couple of fairly competent fellows, feel watching the bumbling fool who seems to carry on being the Health Minister?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! That is unparliamentary.

**Mr HORAN:** They watch the Health Minister lurch from crisis to crisis, not only in this House but also around the State.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member will withdraw those words.

**Mr HORAN:** I withdraw those words. If anything shows the current lack of competence and the lack of leadership of the Health Minister in this State, it is the slashing of the Kids Alive program that Laurie Lawrence ran, which cut the number of toddlers drowning in this State from 25 to 11. This incompetent Health Minister slashed that tiny program that did so much for the kids of Queensland.

If there is anything that demonstrates the tragedy that is before us now it is what is happening at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. With recurrent money the coalition Government reopened fully two wards that had been closed during the Goss Labor Government years. What is happening now? Twenty-four beds have been closed. That is the most important hospital in this State. For a lot of other hospitals it is the end of the line; it is where they send their most critical cases. Hospitals such as the Gold Coast Hospital and many others send their most critical patients to the Royal Brisbane Hospital because that is where the super specialists are. Yet this Minister is closing down the beds in the most important major hospital in this State.

If anything shows the incompetence of this Minister and the incompetence and the failure of the Beattie Government it is what they are doing to the Royal Brisbane Hospital—a major tertiary hospital. How on earth could the Minister close 24 beds in a hospital that is almost always 100% occupied, a hospital that takes the most serious cases in this State, a hospital that has all the super specialists? That is the epitome of the neglect of the Beattie Government.

Time expired.

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