



Speech by

**SHAUN NELSON**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

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Hansard 12 November 1998

**QUEENSLAND HEALTH**

**Mr NELSON** (Tablelands—ONP) (6.25 p.m.): I move the following amendment, which deletes all the words in the Government's amendment and inserts the amendment circulated in my name—

"Delete all words contained in Mrs Edmond's amendment and insert the following—

'with alarm the health crisis overtaking Queensland's public health system, including—

- mass meeting of combined unions on 6 November 1998 against unnecessary and unfair job cuts at Wolston Park Hospital;
- public rally planned for 29 November 1998 protesting against a lack of funding and public attacks by the Health Minister on medical staff at Gold Coast Hospital;
- a proposal to slash 150 nurses from the Royal Brisbane Hospital by Christmas, due to budget blow outs;
- petition by staff working at the psychiatric unit in Townsville expressing anger at cuts to nursing staff and the Minister's lack of insight;
- overwhelming public outrage in Townsville at Health Minister Edmond's plan to downgrade the status of the proposed North Queensland Medical School which was announced by the Coalition;
- escalating problems in Maryborough with a high level hospital staff committee established by Queensland Health rejecting Health Minister Edmond's redevelopment plan announced for Maryborough Base Hospital;
- \$13m shortfall in funding for the Cairns Base Hospital, not provided for in the budget; another broken promise by the Health Minister;
- community outrage in Gympie at plans by the State Government to close the surgical ward at the hospital on weekends; and
- the unacceptable downgrading of the Mareeba and Atherton hospitals, two important hospitals for remote communities in the far north.'"

This is a serious debate. I endorse the words of the member for Gregory; it is very sad that members even have to do this. In the Atherton Hospital—and I do not know how many members have actually been to the Atherton Hospital; I do not know whether the Health Minister has—

**Ms Boyle:** I've been there.

**Mr NELSON:** The member for Cairns has been there. That is good. It is a very good hospital, and I will be careful what I say. The hospital has very good staff, indeed.

**Mr Lucas:** I bet she's been there more often than you have.

**Mr NELSON:** Whatever! The simple fact is that the Atherton Hospital does not even have flyscreens on its windows. I am sure that the member for Cairns will back me up on that statement.

**An honourable member:** You'll have to sell lamingtons.

**Mr NELSON:** I do not want to get into a discussion about that. I just want to highlight this fact.

**Mrs Edmond:** Did I remove them in the last four months? Is that what you're saying—that I personally removed the flyscreens?

**Mr NELSON:** I am not saying that the Minister removed those flyscreens. I am not saying that anyone did. I am just saying that it does not have them. It probably never had them right from the very start. I am not saying that the Minister removed them.

**Mr Purcell:** How many hospitals have flyscreens?

**Mr NELSON:** I do not know. I have not counted them.

**Mr Purcell:** None in Brisbane have flyscreens.

**Mr NELSON:** They do not need flyscreens; they have airconditioning.

**Mr Purcell** interjected.

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

**Mr NELSON:** I am talking about my personal experience in the Atherton Hospital. As far as I am concerned, regional hospitals are always the ones that are left out in the cold. I am not saying that that is traditionally a Labor trait; I am saying that this has occurred over numerous years under both sides of politics.

When I first read this motion, I found myself nodding in agreement to every single point. Let us face it: all those points are true—otherwise the member for Maroochydore would be appearing before the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee for misleading the House. Obviously, every point is true. Am I right or am I wrong? Can anyone deny that those points are true?

**Mr Nuttall:** What about all the good things that happen?

**Mr NELSON:** The member cannot deny that they are an honest indictment. If they were not, the member would be clearly misleading the House and should be drummed out. I would support drumming her out if she was lying to the House.

**Mrs Rose** interjected.

**Mr NELSON:** I am the member for Tablelands. I am not the member for the Gold Coast or Surfers Paradise. All I am saying is that if anyone can prove to me that any one of these points is untrue—a lie——

**Mrs Rose** interjected.

**Mr NELSON:** Are these lies? They are not lies.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member will address the Chair and continue his speech.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order!

**Mr NELSON:** All I am trying to say is that this is an honest indictment, and it is not an indictment of anyone in particular. I ask the House to recognise the situations that are outlined in my amendment, because they are true—otherwise I would be getting drummed out——

**Mr Nuttall:** Where's the good stuff? It's not there, is it?

**Mr NELSON:** Mr Speaker, they cannot listen.

**Mr Johnson:** They don't want to know the truth.

**Mr NELSON:** No, they do not want to know the truth.

**Mrs Lavarch:** Are you going to go to the Gold Coast Hospital and tell them that you don't believe in the work they're doing?

**Mr NELSON:** No, I am not going to say that. It is absolutely ludicrous for the member for Kurwongbah to suggest that. I heard the member for Kurwongbah say that members on this side of the House have not learnt. No-one can say that I am a supporter of the National Party, but at least members on this side of the House have the common decency and commonsense to listen every once in a while. I will tell the House now that I will be running against the National Party long and hard at the next election. However, I will take one thing into the next election: members on this side of the House have learnt their lesson a hell of a lot harder than have members on the other side of the House; they have suffered a hell of a lot more.

The simple fact is that these are all truthful points or they would not have been moved tonight. If members do not recognise them, they are turning their backs on the crisis that is gripping the health system in this State. Tonight I will go from this House with a clear conscience, knowing that I voted to recognise the crisis, and I want it fixed.